



The Lion's Eye

VOLUME 34 :: SPRING 2014



BLUR II
AMY CHEN

The Lion's Eye



Spring 2014

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*"Bloom where you're planted."
- Mary Engelbreit*

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THE FIRST LOOK



A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

It was not long ago that I received an email from the previous executive editor informing me that I was to serve as her replacement. This was in January, and I remember being at home and nursing a hangover. Upon reading the particular email, I thought, Well, it seems that I will have to get my act together. After all, I was soon to become the executive editor of *Lion's Eye*, and there I was with an ice pack on my forehead watching an episode of *Adventure Time*. I thought my situation that day very unbecoming for my position, and I believed that if I wanted to be an effective leader I would need to become the voice of *Lion's Eye*.

I was wrong of course. I am not the voice of *Lion's Eye*. You are. I only handle the managerial end of the magazine, and while sending weekly emails might seem the sine qua non of *Lion's Eye*, it is you, Reader, who gives this magazine life. The question of whether or not an audience will appreciate the artistic work is undoubtedly an artist's concern. Even Sylvia Plath laments for the poems that failed to be appreciated by other readers. In her poem "Stillborn," she writes, "these poems do not live..." She loved them, and perhaps they would've become excellent poems, but they lacked a community to nourish them. Nobody discussed them, and so they died. Without you, the poems within this magazine would also die. Yet, you refuse to make that happen. Not only do you read and discuss them, you cherish them, and with your love they blossom into treasured pieces of art. Reader, this is *Lion's Eye*, and you are its lifegivers. These poems will not die. They will live and grow within each of you.

Finally, I would like to extend a great thanks to the e-board: Anna, Rachel, Julia, and Christine. Thank you for your critical insight and your endearing kindness. I would not have been a competent executive editor without your support and guidance. Working with you four has been one of the best experiences of my undergraduate career. Congratulations on your new e-board positions and best of luck to you in the coming semesters. May you continue to serve as paragons of TCNJ's literary community.



Aaron Pinkard
Executive Editor



PARKSIDE
CHRISTINE AUSTIN

Michelle Lesniak

LANGUAGE OF THE STARS

“Here lies One whose Name was writ in Water.” – John Keats

Your mind is its own private universe.

I’ve watched galaxies within you burst into existence
and implode upon themselves, all while thoughts
are coming to life in your very head – thoughts that
erupt and flow and cool into obsidian dreams.

Behind your eyes, oceans are raging and black holes
are sucking up the doubt that lingers within you.

Don’t let fear eclipse the sun you can create,
even though you struggle daily to have your name written
not in water, but in something much more permanent,
even though you fear that this may never occur.

Make up your mind to live not on the moon’s dark side,
but to have your name written in the language of the stars –
Your mind is its own private universe.

Brennah Ross

STITCHED

thread yourself
like yarn, through the needle
piercing each layer
you puncture
and weave through
tangle yourself between the pieces
loose odds and ends
knitted together
your mark holds them close

BULLETS

I need to write this down before I forget what it feels like.
And I know it's bad when I can't scribble you into prose.
Figuratively speaking you don't
Fit into my figurative language.
We are not fully-functional;
We are a semi-colon wedged into the world of the colon couples.
Not quite sure if we should end this paragraph
Or let the words linger.

You are the period to my Friday night finalities,
Ending with a gust of winded words that spiral onto my page and
Fill me with breathless thoughts,
Disturbing my 2 am peace;
Shattering it into fragmented pieces.
You are a stuttered speech;
I couldn't even utter a word without your inconsistencies
Burning my mouth,
Exciting my tongue like a flare gun.
A far too familiar hit and run.
I shoot you off into poetry and prose,
Bullet points drip like diamonds from my teeth

With the taste of
· You
· You
· You

I never knew that
Three letters could start a riot in me.
I boycott that arrangement of sounds and syllables.
You;
You;
I am so sick of writing about you.

BRITTLE

The coffee sat in the cup, which rested on the table which slept on the floor that enveloped part of the earth. I wasn't sure if the beverage was fornicating with the milk yet. Taking a sip, my tongue gagged on itself. No, definitely NOT in coitus.

"So, yeah, they got a divorce," she repeated for the seventh time. Her hair undulated as she spoke, the insincere maroon choking the grey roots nestled incredibly close to her scalp.

"Can't say I didn't see it coming," I reiterated, most likely for the seventh time as well, although it could very well have been the sixth time or the eight time or the second time. "The divorce rate in the U.S. is fifty percent so it's not that shocking."

She stared directly at me, corneas wrapped in the color of bags used to safeguard the lunches I brought to school as a youth.

"Do you think she loved him?"

I didn't need to think. "No. She wanted a kid. She got fucked once, but only once. She would never let it happen again." I broke the gaze with invisible, emotional hammers, wishing I was reckless enough to smoke to provide me with a Hollywood-sanctioned method of splitting my sermon sweetly, punctuated by outbursts of addiction.

I continued, "And now the house is empty. The one thing that provided warmth and illumination flew, off to skies overlooking a green world or some other suburban Saturnalia. So now their house will only be a house, never a home. The various onomatopoeias of motion no longer harass the floors. The shouting matches full of spastic anger and love, once soaking the walls in sound, have dried and died. The point of no return passed by, silently, grasping the hand of Thanatos and blessing the edifice with an inaudible moan, and left for Boca Raton. Yeah."

She fidgeted, unsure whether to laugh or cry. She always reverted to this shield of silence when my words became too dense and I forced my listener to confront life as it was. I was a buzzkill.

She stopped fidgeting. "So they found that missing Malaysian plane..."

Julienne Richards

AS IT BURNS

What was soft red has now gone cold.
What was eternal has now been slowed.
How many letters must turn to ash
Before I read your heart?

Alexa Logush

UNTITLED

Annie became a mountain last Thursday. In the middle of the living room she stayed and small trees grew from her spine after they moved from the old house with the blue carpet to the house on Kensington Street where Molly met Max in the rain on a Tuesday. They played for hours in the shade. Nana makes Molly wear a visor. She slathers sunscreen along her arms and legs weekend mornings after breakfast when Papa has already eaten his toast and scrambled eggs. While reading the newspaper, he shakes the salt and pepper shakers over his plate leaving small piles of snow and ash across yellow land. Mama loved Papa more than Annie understands. Although Annie can see it when they're eating dinner or washing the dishes together. Papa is reading another one of his books and Mama passes him a plate. Their fingers brush and Papa turns the page. Annie is still playing mountain in the living room. She can see them touch each other's elbows and knees in the kitchen. Mama's knees are weak. She tells Molly to fetch a pail of water from the puddle out back. Her back aches. The sun is just about to rise in another place.

Alyse Taggart

UNTITLED

I like the way that when rain falls,
It knits the world together into a
Majestic multi-colored blanket.
Earthy tones, from sandy white to muddy brown,
Form fitful strands of yarn which no one would ever buy.
It is a skein where the colors don't fit a pattern
And often don't seem complementary,
But when we set the needle to work
And yarn over our presumptions,
Cloaking them and hiding them
Till they no longer exist,
They meld together perfectly.

I like the way that when rain falls,
Its sweet symphony can be heard for miles and miles
And as I lay back to listen
I know that those who are unknown to me
And those who are well known to me
And those who are in some ways alike me
And those who are in some ways unlike me
Hear the same music
And we are united by those woolen strands
Which are woven together by the needles
Of glorious glue gun drizzles.

Aaron Pinkard

WHEN THE STINKBUG CAME

The sound was like a lawnmower
cutting high grass on a spring evening,
then a din percuss.
Its wings, clipped the air
in a rapid tempo
while its body beat against the bulb.

OBSERVATIONS

I.

I saw a glove
magenta with black palm and finger pads,
hanging from a low, broken branch.
I wanted to give it a high-five –
it was at prime high-five height,
about six inches above my head and to the right.
I envisioned my nonchalant greeting to the lone, worn glove;
it would have been poetic for whoever was watching.
But the glove looked a little dirty.

II.

When people put up one hand in front of a car when
they're crossing the street,
they may think they are trying to communicate something
to the driver, but all it looks like is someone unconsciously
thinking they could stop the car from hitting them with one
outstretched palm.

III.

The jocks are in the library.
They come to order coffee in a pack of three.
I can see their large arms and defined bodies through their
gym wear.
As their V-formation exits the café,
each of their steps has them swaying in that direction.
They are in sync,
a swaying gang of muscled boys holding coffee.
The scene is beautiful and absurd.

REMEMBER, THE KEYS

I never thought so much of doors
until the doors were locked I never thought
so much of locked doors until the keys
were mine to keep I never thought so much
of keys until they weren't in the front pouch
or the back pouch of my pocketbook the
pocket of my jeans I never thought
so much of keys perhaps I should
and hold them tightly in between my eyes
the thoughts I have of keys I mean the keys
themselves would be between my fingers
maybe if I thought so much of keys there is
no guarantee but I believe that I believe
enough for this to be for me to think so much
of keys that maybe tightly in between my
eyes I'll think myself a key and think the
locked door unlocked open

Alexa Logush

WINTER I

It is winter. Subtle the sun. Put his glasses on. He pushes his glasses up, along the bridge of his nose. Mouth crooked and eyes slack. Reading his newspaper on a Thursday in front of Annie at the train station when Annie is annotating the pages of a book her friend let her borrow. Gold fills Annie's stomach and she vomits into her lap, a sun shower puddles at her feet. Golden thread; Nana knit Emily a blanket for her baby. The spool caught, tangled in her hands. I am eleven and Molly is thirteen. She kisses Max behind the shed. Max swallows thread. And it gets stuck in the pipes and tubes behind his abdomen. We call a plumber. And watch the clock. It is Sunday and the train is late. Annie comes home after ten, untying the scarves around her head. Put his glasses on. He reads to her from the shower. The pages get wet. And I am eleven, still reading to Danny even though he learned to read in kindergarten. Danny likes listening, pretending that Annie is home. And that the house is a boat. And that the yellow grass is a pool of Nana's yarn and Mama's candle wax. Her teeth chatter. She spits black snow into her hands.

Carly DaSilva

PAPER LANTERNS

You would think we'd dipped our hearts
in gasoline the way they caught.

We thought the warmth between our ribs
was just a bit of porridge, stuck.

To taste you was to taste
a sun's corona, or a supernova.

In the day it's hard to see but in the dark
we're fireflies too big for jars,

errant spark, tiny
stars a breath away from dust,
from ash.

ORPHANS

I just realized that my mom's an orphan.
Her dad died long before I was born,
Addicted to cheap cigarettes and bad behavior.
His heart black from tarry smoke
He was one of six children and I think his parents forgot to tuck him in at night.
So his yells became brown belt slaps on my mother's foot soles
And in silence they would eat their potatoes and meat
Scared to chew or breathe because the evening radio was tuned in.
And their dining table was a full-on crowd, with 3 children, 2 of which were a mistake,
But now they're the only two left.
"Your aunt's all I have," my mom says.
I'm scared she isn't sad enough.

My grandmother's been gone for two years.
I don't think I ever had a real conversation with her.
A polite thank you and a kiss on her wrinkly cheek after being given \$20 on my birthday.
Then she began to forget and my mom would hand me cash,
Saying it was just easier this way.
She was \$20 without the card.
I got what I wanted, but I never saw her sign "love" on paper.
I played the flute at her funeral,
I got the notes right and all,
My fingers pressing keys through muscle memory.
It was a simple psalm for a groggy Tuesday.
But I forgot why I was playing as they lay her in the ground
Like a bulb in the hungry, wormy earth.
She's all bones and teeth now, and my mom has her wedding ring
That she wears perched between her own emerald bands.
I remember the way her vocals rang when my grandma
Lost the ring in her old leather suitcase and never told anyone.
I think it's all lost now, and my mom's a veteran orphan,
She's used to not being tucked in at night.
But she's scared as she twirls my grandmother's ring
On her finger and touches her cheeks,
Looking in the mirror saying,
"I look more and more like my mom each day."

BLACK

cherry pie
so lonely it cries
in dreams of outerspace
it swims thru disgrace
and out the otherside
onto a heavenly stage
beyond rage
and into the sacred heart of the sun



DREAMS OF A FLYING MACHINE
AMY CHEN



CLOUDS
ALYSE DELANEY

FIRST WORLD LENSES

When I realize that my cylinder is a cold can of Coca Cola and hers is
A forty pound jug of water
Pushing her left down right from a
Precarious position atop her
Worried head
And I realize that as cool bubbles trickle down my throat,
Her polluted tributary load
Breaks her bones
 Poisons her children
 Evaporates her hours,

Then sun-tinted prescription shades turn from purplegray to bloodred
And static jumps from receptor to receptor
And my heart, shot with a Zeus's bolt,
Bleeds out apologies
And infects every ounce of blood
Running through a one-chance-out-of-five-thousand electrocuted body.
Light burns away the \$90 glare proof film
And shakes the two-plated balance scale
That elevated me and mine

Over an unknown world

And creates a balance
That steadies a once tentative tongue
And inspires a song to motivate active hands.
Words flow rapidly, longingly, from heart to brain to mouth,

But steamy showers make heady shampoo flowers bloom and
Wilted leaves seep down the drain, cloaked in manufactured rain.
It's hard to be sad to the off-key tune of
"Happy Birthday to You"
And wind blows cares and new car smells out of
A yellow convertible.
Masseuses pound away distressing memories.

Laughter fills my heart, synthetic butter fragrances fill my nose,
A happy ending and big screen fill my eyes
And my canticle transmutes,

My crescendo metamorphoses into decrescendo.
And my song changes,
My loudness becomes softness
Gradually until when I look at a jug of water,
I feel nothing but my own
Chipped manicured fingernail thirst.

Michelle Lesniak

DELICATE

There is no easy way to say “forever.”

Instead, there are smiles. Softly exchanged,
they are the currency we put to use for something
that is yet too costly for words.

A glimmer of recognition passes between us.
The possibility of something exists, but proving it
would be rather like proving the existence of God.

So we wait. We count weekends like others count sheep.
Winter thaws into spring, which melts into summer
and then pushes its burnt leaves to the ground in a rush.

When things freeze over again, I know we are delicate
because you hold me like sea glass in your cupped hands.
Someday you may choose to drop me.

But I know, not yet. Not today.

Heba Jahama

POST-IT

to be enough
is to let all of your
little personifications
of hurricanes
rearrange your hair
and make a mess
of your furniture,
change the way
you laugh and the
things you laugh at;
leave you shuffling
through heaps of loose-leaf
looking for pieces of yourself
in the margins

and in this
self-proclaimed
state of emergency,
to walk around wide-eyed
at the sound of empty

plastic bottles that your
footsteps make
and to feel like
the sound is familiar;
pinch your nose
and swallow whatever
common sense
you can muster
but decide you
might as well stay for
the ride anyway

Alexis McLaughlin

JAYNIE, 1997

I was freight carried across the blacktop,
kicking in the arms of a friend who knew best.
Samantha didn't know why I didn't speak to Jaynie,
but she would fix it, she insisted.

I saw death across the hopscotch court.
Jaynie's eyes were green vertigo.
The crick of her lip was paralysis.
I bounced over faded numbers, moving
in turbulence to her face ahead.

I was an offering ill-prepared.
Her eyes adjusted to the foreign body,
quizzical and wide at my arrival.
She smiled, and then the word came,
the beginning and the end
of us:

"Hello."

Alexis McLaughlin

ASHLEY, 2005

My head spun against a chain link fence, dizzy
with her image: the eyes brown and large,
the mouth brace-speckled and smiling.

I slumped onto the wet April dirt, staring at the landscape
of sand mounds and see-saws. I looked to forget.
A boy lost his shoe with a kick, and laughed at his own misfor-
tune.
It was her laughter, then—a ripple through the open air,
a chill in the spring night.

I thought of the sweater clinging tight around her chest
Two weeks before, the potential of the buds beneath.
My fingers moved like instinct toward an invisible girl,
reaching for invisible gifts.

I retreated from the air, and settled for the fence's wire.
It bent beneath my grip as I held on tight
for the duration.

Carly DaSilva

SEX DREAM

“I had a sex dream about you,” he said,
rolling over in bed.

“I don’t recall
the details.”

“Was it good?” I asked, taking
his hand in my hand.

He said yes, and slipped
back into sleep, stiff against my tailbone
for the me he took before he woke, not
the me he spoke to after.

Who is she
compared to me? His lover made perfect?

Shaped in my image, refined and enhanced
by his mind, more pliant and passionate,
this undiluted creature of desire
hungry only for him.

I lay awake,

listen to the crickets, the creaking house,
the voice that says he’s hers, and never mine.



TO BE FREE

CHRISTINE AUSTIN

Samantha Miller

STAINED

Ink stains the soul of a writer,
dyes the skin,
fills the eyes, the blood, the breath
until he dies, choking on words still clogged in his veins.

But I?
I fill my lungs with twinkling stars.
drink the glimmering sunset,
feast on dimmed sunrise;
my soul is stained with life.

Brennah Ross

SLEEPLESS

tonight I am only passing by
the shades of colors
blocked by shades for lovers

television sets dance rainbows upon windows
the panes and glass reflect the vain and crass

lamp-posts like bread crumbs, lighting the way
shining in hues of filtered white and polluted blue
flickering in question
my feet respond with certainty

headlights round corners, claiming their existence
fouling my vision, I slip by without witness

for I am only passing by
the sounds of night
masked by sound design

cement becomes soil, softening with each step
mocking my shoes, copying the tread
dew drops take claim to the undersides of grass blades
I hope to find such peace on the underside of anything

the stars are my compass, illuminating the way
aligning in groups of undefined points and nebulous loops
bickering in doubt
my mind responds uncertainly

darkness envelops, playing games with my head
the patterns and shapes develop like exposures to film

passing by, I am the night
the essence of being
as senses take flight

TO MAKE ME A BIRD

“Hope’ is the thing with feathers” – Emily Dickinson

“Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams die
life is a broken-winged bird
that cannot fly” – Langston Hughes

To make me a bird I must first
resolve to abandon the body electric
remove and reassemble vital parts
remember this is possible

I.

I am a bird
is what I say
while I remove the bones
while I remove the bones
I am a witch
doctor
sawing bones
in two
while I remove the bones
I rummage for
the silver spoon

I saw the bones in two

I scoop the
insides out

I use the silver
spoon

I saw the bones in two

I am a
hollow home

for wind
to travel through

I mend the bones with glue

in part
with saw dust

bone dust
in part

I am a bird
in part

I am
a bird

in bones
a bird

in bones

II.

careful

to peel the

careful

skin away from

careful

tissue tendon

lay it out

flat for kneading

knuckling 'til thin

enough for candling

then sow

sow away

soft white wistful

tufts

downy coat to hold the warm close

feather shield to stop the cold

III.

you could fly

once

you didn't have the thumbs

you have now you couldn't

weigh yourself down with

carpet bags and heavy rings

you didn't need as many

bending things just body

feet and wings a voice

with which to sing keep

this but shape your frame

again the way it shaped itself

back then a baby boat

a fuzzy fluttered heart

I am a bird

in part

I am a bird

IV.

getting

dressed

this is sewing

neat so the stitches

aren't wont to show

this is how to sew

a dress for

getting

dressed

snug against

the face the base of the

beak smooth underneath

the belly blushing

pink rosy

getting

dressed

a bird a heart

a singsong drum is

putting on her feathered

breast and blinking

baby eyes so

wide so

dark

V.

I am a bird

is what I say

this is no world for baby

boats for pitter-patter hearts

with thumbs and heavy bones

I am a bird

though, see

I remember

what it is to lift

off my tender

pie-crust feet

to

fly

fly

too-hweet

too-hweet-hweet

fpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfpfp

THE ART OF REFLECTING

after Émile Bernard's "Iron Bridges at Asnières"

"It's all water under the bridge."
Downstream,
the liquid mirror
meshes the sky and the land,
the iron beams of the bridge overhead
dipping their toes into river's abyss.
Against the overcast dying of light,
shadows overpopulate
 the Asnières.
They shade away
like a last glimpse of twilight
into that ethereal dimension of charades,
that other realm stretching between the mesh
of slated sky and land.

Strolling along the embankment,
two silhouettes flow fetterless
and opaque,
 l'homme et la mademoiselle.
His collar is up; her cloak
draws around her like
the impermeable night,
 visible on the coils
of thickening stratus clouds rolling in.
Within their frames, they are empty,
holes fracturing a puzzle thought complete,
 or,
shadows of what they once were.

As you lean in close to the canvas
to parse through this focal lapse,
you slip into what may have been
his pair of Aubercy shoes,
 his black pleated overcoat,
his contorted attempts to brush against her hip.
As you lean in closer,
you pour through the shadows
to catch the landscape beyond him—
 the water still flowing—
 a vernal light returning—
and your own memories float up through the void in his back.

If you were him,
you would've extended your shadow hand
and devoured her own.
Through his tunneling eyes
you might finally detect, at its end,
 the Seine,
answers spared from even the omniscience
of impressionist paint,
but not from you.
All that you would've done,
all and all,
if the light had struck the river just right—
 but if you were really him,
 and not just his shadow,
you would've averted your eyes from the
river's reflection—
and you would've said,
 obliquely,
that it was just
water under the bridge.

THE LAST LOOK



A NOTE FROM THE ISSUE EDITOR

Dearest Reader,

It is remarkable to think that another school year is coming to a close. With the warm late April days, it is hard to believe that the never-ending bitter cold and snow days (at least 5) were all part of this semester. Time seems to drag on during the winter cold and monotony of February and March, but when the semester is over, it is hard to believe that we will have to say goodbye to our wonderful friends from school for a while. But nevertheless, the school year is rapidly coming to a close, and the sixty degrees days, final parties, and exam stress are all a reminder of that.

But despite the semester coming to a close, summer's approach can be one of the most exciting parts of the year. There is the beautiful and warm weather and sunshine, but more importantly, there is a sense of freedom that can almost never be achieved at any other time during the year. In my experience, it does not matter if you have a job or internship or if you are taking classes; something about the summer allows me to feel free and almost perpetually relaxed. Maybe it is because when free time arises, it can be spent almost anywhere, as compared to during the winter, where free time is ultimately spent indoors and can be confining.

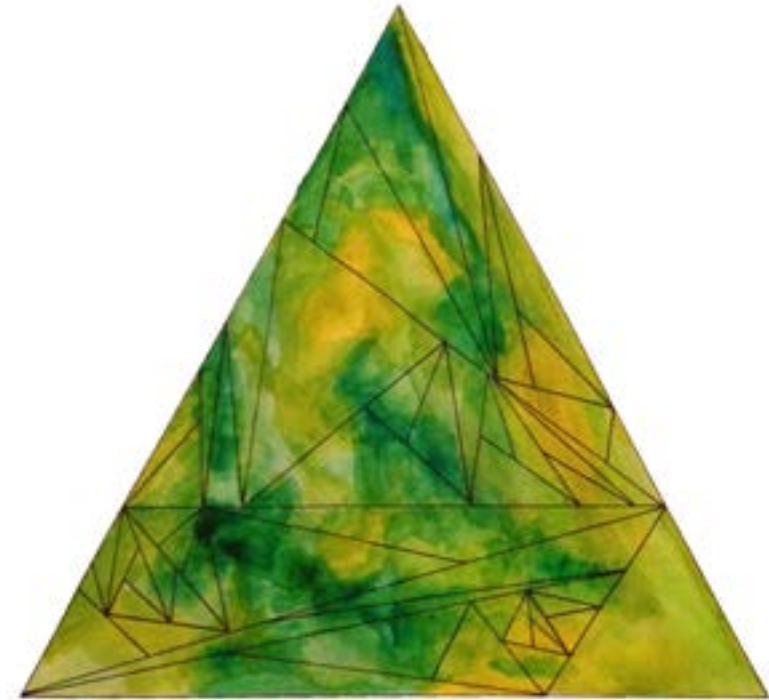
No matter where this summer takes you, I hope you can use it as an opportunity to do whatever it is that you love. Take advantage of every moment of freedom you have this summer. Maybe you love writing, drawing, adventuring, or just breathing in the salty air at the beach. Whatever it is, I hope you do it with love and that it gives you the kind of magical peace that seems to be unique to the summer.

Thank you to everyone who has helped in any way in creating this magazine, especially Aaron, Rachel, Julia, and Christine. I wish the best of luck to Aaron and Christine who are graduating this year, and look forward to seeing what the future has in store for both of you. Also, thank you to everyone who submitted their words to us this semester. Without all of you, we would not have this magazine. I look forward to seeing what all of you have created when we return in the fall. If you need me, you can find me lounging at the beach all summer.

Yours,



Anna Mitarotondo
Issue Editor



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ANNA MITAROTONDO

ABOUT US ::

The *Lion's Eye* is published by the students of The College of New Jersey with funding from the Student Finance Board. The magazine provides an outlet for creative expression, publishing student short fiction, poetry, prose, photography, illustrations, graphic art, and more. To learn more about The Lion's Eye visit: lionseyepbworks.com.

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SUBMISSIONS ::

Although the deadline for our next issue has not yet been decided, submissions are currently being accepted. Please send all submissions via e-mail to lionseye@tcnj.edu.

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