

# THE LOOKOUT



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY  
CENTRAL TEXAS™

Volume 6 | Spring 2019



# THE LOOKOUT

*A Journal of Literature and the Arts*

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by the students of  
Texas A&M University-Central Texas

Volume 6 | Spring 2019



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*The Lookout: A Journal of Literature and the Arts* features student works and is published annually by the College of Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M University-Central Texas, Killeen, Texas.

**Editor, Layout, and Cover Design -**

**Ryan Bayless**

Associate Professor of English and Fine Arts

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Special thanks to Dr. Allen Redmon, Chair of the Department of Humanities, and Dr. Jerry Jones, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at TAMUCT.

# Contents

THE LOOKOUT

Volume 6 | Spring 2019

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## *Poetry*

NICOLE METTS	Strands of the Cosmos.....	9
ANGELIQUE FORBIS	A Deer.....	10
JORDAN EMILSON	In the Distance.....	11
PAOLA LLOMPART BERRÍOS	A Free Bird.....	12
FELICIA JULIANO	Invisible People.....	13
PHYLLIS D. SMITH	Now Trip Some More.....	14
HAZEL TIBERIUS LEE	Sarcastic Praise.....	16
PAT SONTI	Desert Erosions.....	25
JORDAN EMILSON	My Father is an Autumn Tree.....	26
STEVIE ZYCHA-ESTRADA	Power & Full.....	28
KRISTOFFER IAN CELERA	Christmas in July.....	29
B. LILLIAN MARTIN	growth.....	36
B. LILLIAN MARTIN	freedom.....	37
NICOLE METTS	Upside Down on Monkey Bars.....	38

## *Fiction*

JORDAN EMILSON	A Dance with the Moon.....	18
KATAHDIN BENARD	The Storm Inside.....	31

## *Art & Photography*

ANGELIQUE FORBIS	Over the Rainbow Bridge.....	17
JOSEPHINE DAVIS	Felicity.....	23
STEVIE ZYCHA-ESTRADA	Music's Natural Consciousness.....	24
ANGELIQUE FORBIS	Vitality.....	27
HAZEL TIBERIUS LEE	Should I?.....	30
KATAHDIN BENARD	Meadow in Flight.....	35
NICOLE METTS	Bloom.....	Front Cover
KRISTOFFER IAN CELERA	Riverwalk.....	Back Cover

Editor's Note.....	5
Contributors' Bios.....	41
Submission Guidelines.....	45



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## *Editor's Note*

Along with the Department of Humanities and the College of Arts & Sciences, I am proud to present Volume 6 of *The Lookout*, the literary and arts journal of Texas A&M University-Central Texas, which features creative works produced solely by the students of the university.

This year's issue is once again packed with talent. The poems and stories contained in these pages inspire deep contemplation of both social and natural environments, and ask readers not only to think, but to act on the issues raised. There is no shying away here from the often complex and difficult realities and relationships that arise in our modern society, and yet a sense of purpose and peace can be felt with each turn of the page. Likewise, the vivid photography and art works in this volume compliment the literary texts in both direct and indirect ways, furthering the collective message that seems to be implied in every work: *wake up, look around, discover who you are, and sing!*

Enjoy diving into this issue, and thanks to all those who have contributed to and supported the arts at A&M-Central Texas over the past year.

Ryan Bayless

Editor, *The Lookout: A Journal of Literature and the Arts*

Associate Professor of English and Fine Arts

Texas A&M University-Central Texas

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# THE LOOKOUT

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Volume 6



NICOLE METTS

## Strands of the Cosmos

The tide is in my hair  
    in the waves of saltiness  
        with the green things of mountains  
    and meandering rivers  
even love  
smelled in its sweetness of spring  
    and the music's snared notes  
        through gusts of sea  
    it is inside the circling language of leaves  
I know this wind  
this same wind has caressed you  
        in the coolness of the north  
    across the vibrant blue bellies of berged ice  
I hear ancestral chants, crackling signals of smoke  
as even clouds return  
    carried by the same wind that braids the world  
        that plants oceans in your mouth  
            that releases soft tones in your ears  
    of moving night's séances in stardust  
as the universe is strummed through your fingers.

ANGELIQUE FORBIS

## A Deer

It's cold.

The frost crackles in the trees,  
Stirring to angry, slurred words.  
Silenced, the music of the birds.  
Ears, alert, twitch in the breeze.

Breath, slow and steady.  
Heart racing, not from will.  
Stuck, frozen, still.  
Doe eyes wide, the mind is already

Made up.

One irate step, a twig snaps.  
Panicked snort, first chance to jolt.  
Run, faster than a lightning bolt  
To the meadow to shirk the traps.

Twenty-four seconds to the edge of the aspen.  
Cold wind, fear spurs the synapse.  
Seconds to hours, days to years, a time-lapse.  
Twenty-four years, into the field of my haven;

I awake.

JORDAN EMILSON

## In the Distance

There is rain outside, slow and steady. The ground has flooded as water can no longer seep into the cracks. As you sit and watch out of the window you remember something distant. Streams on the ground carry debris toward the unknown.

A frog appears on the windowsill, dark spots slick from the rain. It hops around in search of something distant. Raindrops slide down its back.

Water has risen and drowns you now; the frog seems unfazed, though with every hop it melts into the stone. The animals will survive the flood. Can you?

PAOLA LLOMPART BERRÍOS

## A Free Bird

I once had a bird.  
He was cooped up in a cage.

I thought it was beautiful.  
Until it wasn't.

He plucked his feathers  
And pecked fingers that touched his bars.

These white lines were a part of him.

It would flop its wings;  
Featherless, with a scream of rage.

Sometimes I feel like a bird  
Staring at the oblivion of my own freedom.

Shackled in a cage,  
I call it home.

I close my eyes,  
Pluck my feathers,  
Wishing for a Raven to make a free bird out of me.

FELICIA JULIANO

## Invisible People

The Night-Watcher's eyes  
stretch the black Sky-Cloak—  
and uncover a nation of invisible people  
suffering in comfortable falsehoods.

Invisible People—  
Eating out of invisible bowls—  
Drinking out of invisible cups—  
Taking up invisible space—

How hypocritical are they that say—  
“We see no invisible people here”—  
While invisible bodies sit at their tables  
and decompose in their beds.

Their insipid mouths fester—  
Moldy voices reek of ghosts devoured—  
Greedy, ravenous, universal Man-Grendel—  
Until the Invisible Child—the Key-Finder—

Stands over the Corpse-House  
of his ancestors—  
And  
Sings.

PHYLLIS D. SMITH

## Now Trip Some More

*A Reaction to Nikki Giovanni's "Ego Tripping"*

Upon his invasion of Egypt, Bonaparte  
defaced the Sphinx, I found the specs, crafted a new  
one and reattached it, through a perfectly innate  
frequency, I glide the River Zaire, I simply  
make my visit there, without a scintilla of care  
I'm a bold soul

I took a seat upon planet Neptune and sipped hot tea  
with McLeod Bethune, and when time permitted, I  
scheduled events with King Solomon, Ben Banneker,  
and Marie Curie, which was indeed, the trifecta  
I'm quite erudite

I levitated over Lake Superior, and found the  
body to be inferior, but I hovered  
anyway, and signed my name to  
conclude my day  
Like the MIG-25, I soared with style

When the season turned to fall  
the Malian King gave me a call  
and offered space, with his royal grace,  
whenever I choose to tour the place  
The connection is real



My daughter Dihan acquired the sun, and gifted  
it to me, because I'm her mom, her birthday  
came in June, and I gave her a harvest moon  
I always give my best

I walked on sacred ground as a strong wind swirled,  
and the leaves from the trees regurgitated pearls  
my smile can light up the earth, even on the  
darkest turfs...  
It's a power thing

In search of fine art along the Champs Elysées  
while there, I reveled in such a fine day, and  
I exhaled an excited sigh, and cylindrical jewels  
fell from the sky, filling the pockets of those  
standing by, many Parisians let out a cry,  
"another, another, just one more sigh,"  
I indulged them immediately, and  
precious gems fell repeatedly  
Mistakes I make are self-corrected

I'm from another place, and of another mind,  
and truly transcend all things in time  
no worries, frets nor fear of loss, because  
I'm posted without question, as a reputed, undisputed,  
Poetic lyricist, and a bona fide, BOSS!

I burn an eternal light, making my existence infinite

Receipts!

HAZEL TIBERIUS LEE

## Sarcastic Praise

Land of freedom, land of peace  
How great it is that natives and those oppressed  
Cannot be heard for we only like to hear of our success  
And though our country may like to stay humble  
We will always beat our chest

All the resources we possess  
Kept and thrown since we have success  
Once we own, let us get some more  
So we are adored  
What better way to show our world  
How much it means to dress up and impress  
While being surrounded in toxic debris?

If only the homeless would just work  
The abused remained silent  
Neglected stayed put  
And patients stopped dying  
Then maybe we can convince even for a moment  
To the rest of the world  
That we are perfect



ANGELIQUE FORBIS

*Over the Rainbow Bridge*

## A Dance with the Moon

Wind chimes clinked together, their song carried by a warm breeze. Joel hummed a tune softly to himself as he strolled through the mid-summer night. Air blowing along his shaved head sent chills down his spine. Light from the moon above illuminated his path along the sidewalk. Joel's dark colored eyes looked nearly black in the night.

Joel continued his brisk walk, allowing in the evening's embrace. He took deep breaths of the humid air, and scents of nature filled his nostrils. As he progressed, the sounds of wind chimes morphed into the relaxing repetition of a cricket's ballad.

A calming melody.

One of the moon's unequal faces served as Joel's sole source of light.

A sweet yet powerful voice began calling to him, as it often did. Garbled words swirled in Joel's head on repeat like food in a blender. They soon became clear.

"Is that enough light?"

"Yes, as always." Joel responded aloud.

"If not I'll move. I don't mind," the sweet words nipped in his mind.

"No you can't. The tides wi—"

"I'd turn them for you. They are unimportant," the moon

interrupted.

In the distance Joel could make out the faint sound of waves crashing on the beach.

He continued his walk, letting the words she spoke simmer. He couldn't think of a response worthy to what she said, so he asked what he always did.

"So...why me?"

"Because you're the only one who replied."

"So I'm not special?" Joel mocked.

"No, that makes you the most special."

"I know, I know. I'm just teasing. So, what are the perks of dating the moon anyways?"

"Well, what are the perks of dating Joel?"

Joel glanced to the sky and smiled.

As he continued walking through the suburban streets, the moon began to speak less. Suddenly a spotlight shone down on him from the cosmos, showering him with moonlight. Shadowy shapes danced around him.

He spun, attempting to follow them as they rotated. Before long his vision began to swirl from tracking them.

The shadows danced and linked slowly, forming what resembled a human body, but before it could become complete, the shadows faded.

"You almost got it that time!" Joel exclaimed

"It was close I guess. I'll only be happy when I finally project it."

"Have you thought of how you want to look?"

“I have an idea. I’m just unsure of how to display it.”

Several times during his conversations with the moon Joel would wonder if he had gone insane—if his brain had blown out of his ears like dust, and he had been functioning off pure, wild instinct for the past two weeks. He didn’t really mind either way, and maybe that alone determined his sanity.

Joel sat on the curbside and thought to himself, as the moon spoke about the difficulties of projecting. His moonlight shower had long since dissipated, and he was left in darkness. The moon failed to notice his distraction, and instead mistook his silence for deep listening.

“It’s getting late Lune. I think I better get going.” Joel spoke, trying to sound as natural as possible.

“Oh...yeah, okay. I’ll talk to you tomorrow night then. Goodnight Joel.”

Joel’s mind twisted during his walk home. Previous smells of nature became replaced by underlying scents of rust and muddied water. The heavenly moonlight that once lit his path, too, was replaced by artificial light from suburban street lamps.

Thoughts continued to cloud Joel’s mind. “What am I thinking? The moon?! I must be having a psychotic break. Even if I’m not then how can this work? I can’t truly *be* with her, and she can’t be with me.”

As Joel approached his home, shadows danced around him once more. They morphed together, except this time they formed a full body. The figure was slim with shadowy hair floating up by her head. The moon’s projection blocked his

path.

“How long have you—”

“Always, but it’s never as good as they imagine. It’s never enough. They all leave.”

Humidity gathered in the air creating a thick mist. A short distance away Joel could make out the sound of waves crashing violently against the shore.

The moon continued, “I’m not good enough am I? I have to wait hundreds of years to talk to...anyone! And because I can’t be with you physically, you’ll leave me.”

“No, I—” Joel stuttered.

“You what?!” The moon’s voice projected from the shadowy being.

“I have my whole life ahead of me. What if I want kids? What if I want companionship?”

The sound of waves grew louder, threatening the nearby homes.

“I like you. I like you a lot, but you’re cosmic. I’m flesh and bone. You’ll be here after I’m gone. Long after.”

The three dimensional shadow paced up and down the sidewalk, formulating a response. The sound of waves grew faint once more, and the mist thinned.

“So I should just be alone? I won’t find another Joel anytime soon.”

“And I won’t find another Moon, but maybe that’s how it should be.”

Tears tugged at the back of his throat as he spoke.

“Maybe I’m not ready for this now, but I can try to be. I

need time, space, experience.”

“Experience? Yeah. Okay.” The thick mist subsided, and the waves pulled back into the ocean.

“I’ve never seen your projection. I like it.”

The shadowy figure of the moon glared up towards him with empty eyes. Its hair floated softly by its shoulders. The projection was loose, yet elegant.

Joel reached for his pocket and took out his phone. He scrolled through the interface and found the cheesy love song he had been saving. His thumb tapped the play button, and music cut through the silence of the night.

“May I... have this dance?” Joel extended his arm towards her as he spoke.

He couldn’t be sure, but it looked as if a smirk had spread across the projections face.

“Of course Joel. I’d turn the tides for you.”

He gently took hold of her shadowy hand, and they danced for the first, and possibly last time.





JOSEPHINE DAVIS

*Felicity*



STEVIE ZYCHA-ESTRADA

*Music's Natural Consciousness*

PAT SONTI

## Desert Erosions

From where I lay, the “truth” isn’t an erosion.

Monstrous fingers of sand,  
made plain by a giant hand.  
The mirage is the maze of illusion.

From where I sit, the “bird” isn’t a bird.

Giant insects who come and go,  
dropping fodder and cargo.  
The shadow is hidden in the glow.

From where I see, the “people” aren’t people.

Just rabble, speaking in babel,  
hope and courage held by a staple.  
The dust of time is churned and swirled.

From where I survey, the “plan” isn’t fair.

Life weighs less than its measure,  
laid waste by four pounds of pressure.  
The copper is the colour of despair.

JORDAN EMILSON

## My Father is an Autumn Tree

He cradled me gently, rocked to sleep  
A helpless body lain in heap.  
With hands of amber,  
And feet in firm summer soil.  
I loved him as my own.  
A family of two, with one belonging,  
And the other wishing.  
Nature does not hold me as my Father  
With rugged perfection, and heavy arms.  
In the dark, worlds disappear  
Like hands of ash, just him and I.  
My Father is an Autumn tree  
In a Forest far away.



ANGELIQUE FORBIS

*Vitality*

STEVIE ZYCHA-ESTRADA

## Power & Full

Into the deep lagoon.  
Crystals of purple  
lay about.  
Pointy & sharp & growing apart.

Into the deep lagoon.  
Water of stillness  
plays a part.  
Voiceless & smooth & mysteriously a ruse.

Into the deep lagoon.  
Monsters of peace  
swim vamoose.  
Slow & steady with rattle rum air.

Into the deep, the deep, lagoon.  
Boat of wood  
floats up space.  
Power & full & going someplace?

KRISTOFFER IAN CELERA

## Christmas in July

If I counted all of the steps you took in your years,  
If I went back to the start and told you your sum,  
Would you shy from walking, shaken with mortal fears?  
Or would you start running, daring death to come?

If I did the same for every time your heart will beat,  
And offered you a device with the numbers mounting,  
Would you take it to know when the two values will meet?  
Or would you toss it and say "To Hell with counting!"?

If I named every holiday you planned on having,  
Every party and festival that you have come by,  
Would you turn down invitations - for life avoiding?  
Or would you find yourself singing Christmas in July?

If I told you the hardest you fought, you'd fight harder.  
If I told you the greatest you lived, you'd live greater.  
If I told you the longest you laughed, you'd laugh longer.  
If I told you the strongest you loved, you'd love stronger.

But you don't need lifetimes for this lesson. This I vow -  
All that you need is the right person that you are right now.



HAZEL TIBERIUS LEE

*Should I?*



## The Storm Inside

Fluorescent lights flickered and the familiar classroom became eerily quiet as the power gave out. Thunder rumbled all around us. Little seven-year-old eyes jumped open like popcorn, quickly expanding and freezing, wide. Those eyes, full of fear and desperate for comfort, stared up at me. All 22 of them.

I shuddered a little inside. Storms had always made me uncomfortable, but I didn't have the luxury of showing that here. "Okay," I thought to myself, drawing in a slow, deep breath, "Think of something for them to do. They need to be busy."

Forcing on my biggest smile and clapping my hands cheerfully, I brought their attention to me and wrapped them up, safe in my calm. A flash and a crack momentarily tugged their eyes away, but trust forced them back to me, their light-house.

My years of sitting criss-cross-applesauce on the scratchy green rug of Mr. Case's grammar school music room came to me just then. "Everybody to the carpet. Circle up. We're going to play a game!" While there were no complaints, the usual frantic raucous when games are mentioned was replaced by a hasty shuffling of feet. The circle was decidedly smaller than usual as everyone seemed to huddle just a bit closer to their friends. Placing my palms together I asked, "How would you

like to bring the storm inside?”

Apprehension took shape on the tiny faces, but mine was alight with expectation. “It may sound scary, but this is a storm you get to control. You get to choose how fast or slow or loud or quiet it gets. Do you wanna try it?” The uneasiness drifted away with the nodding of heads and I saw a few corners of mouths pull upward.

One little face did not soften. His brown eyes stared back at me, unblinking and suspicious. I wondered briefly what had caused him to lose trust and the possibilities weighed heavily. Kaden was always late to class. Early in the year I would admonish him, suggesting that he needed to get up earlier, leave the house sooner, or get his things ready the night before. “Yes ma’am,” he would reply, expressionless. But my frustration mounted as his tardiness tarried. Until the morning I saw him walking along the sidewalk leading two smaller versions of himself in worn, oversized shoes. He answered my inquiries politely, “Mom works at night, so I gotta get the little kids to school, Ms. B. I tried like you says, gettin’ all the stuff ready at night, but mom tells me be quiet...so I can’t.” He shrugged, “Anyways, I gotta get them to the cafeteria afore they close breakfast line.” That morning I explained to the class that Kaden had a special pass to come in late. Instead of a scolding when he arrived, I offered a smile and gestured to his seat. Glancing around uneasily, noticing no reaction from his peers, he slid into his seat and a new routine was established.

The worry was mine.

“Kaden, do you want to be the conductor?” I asked in my best nonchalant voice. His eyes narrowed, but he nodded slowly. “Okay, here’s what you do. You’re going to rub your hands

together like this.” I slid my hands up and down on each other making a swishing sound. “Then, when you’re ready, you’re going to add the big raindrops like this.” My swishing turned to clicking as I snapped my fingers slowly. “When you want it to rain faster you speed up the snaps.” My rhythm quickened and I drew my eyebrows up into a surprised expression. “And when it really starts raining you slap the ground like this.” I stomped my open palms against the rug making the little eyebrows around me raise, surprised a grown-up would do something like that. “When you want it to slow down you just do it in reverse.” I worked my hands back down to a swish, then paused. “You got it,” I asked encouragingly. Again, a slow nod. But Kaden was a smart one. His eyes said that he had taken in everything and would remember it perfectly. That’s just how he was. “Everybody else, just follow Kaden,” I spoke to the circle, then I focused on him.

The class was his.

He didn’t falter one bit. His palms rubbing together, eyes darting around the circle making sure everyone was focused on him. Kaden’s gaze was firm but gentle as he led them in taking the tempo up to snapping. Again, focus. Intense focus. And the circle stared back, following his lead with passion. Our storm grew faster, then louder, and Kaden wouldn’t move on until everyone was following...including me. He would lock eyes with me, waiting for me to challenge his authority, but I followed his every move.

As the little hands beat out their own tempest, the one outside was forgotten. Hearts pounded from exertion instead of fear. Just as the patting started to slow from fatigue, Kaden brought the storm back down to a snap, a slow snap, a swish...

and silence. Jenaya pushed her pink glasses up her nose and exhaled, “That was amaaaaazing!” She said it right to Kaden, and Kaden smiled. Then he turned to me and passed off the little eyes. Clapping and excited chatter erupted.

The storm was ours.

Walking out the door to line up that day, Kaden hung back. “Thanks Ms. B. Most grown-ups won’t let me do something important like that. It’s like they don’t see what I already do,” he said, expressionless. “You’re welcome Kaden. You really are a great leader,” I replied, with my most sincere expression.

Kaden straightened his shoulders. He didn’t smile. But he stood taller, more confident. Like he had just been given a storm all his own.



KATAHDIN BENARD

*Meadow in Flight*

B. LILLIAN MARTIN

## growth

every seed inside was born from another  
a seed of grief, a past love  
a seed of betrayal, a past friend  
a seed of disgust, the reflection in the mirror  
and seeds of darkness, from an unspeakable time

despite these planted stories filling up every free space  
my outside has bloomed

B. LILLIAN MARTIN

## freedom

watching my hair fall to  
the ground

some cried

i cackled

NICOLE METTS

## Upside Down on Monkey Bars

If it rained up  
    instead of  
    down  
and puddled above  
    replacing clouds  
and loose leaves  
    floated  
    like birthday  
    balloons  
gently rippling  
    reflections  
    of mountains and  
cityscapes  
    below  
    and night stars seen  
through the water  
    seemed brighter  
than ever  
    beating  
    like a heart  
    in bursts of light



we would walk  
    more carefully  
    among the flowers  
and lay inside them  
    waiting for them to be  
unbelievable too.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Katahdin Benard** is in her final undergraduate semester at Texas A&M University-Central Texas working toward her Bachelor's degree in English with a Linguistics minor. She aspires to encourage and educate high school students in English, as well as coach girls' distance running.

**Paola Llompart Berríos** transferred from the University of Puerto Rico to Texas A&M University-Central Texas and is majoring in English. Her writing has also been published in the journal, *Bridges*.

**Kristoffer Ian Celera** is an immigrant from the Philippines, a US Marine Corps veteran, and a junior at A&M - Central Texas majoring in history and hoping to one day become a teacher. His photography and poetry has also been published in Central Texas College's journal of arts, *BYWAYS*, as well as Texas State University's literary journal, *Persona*.

**Josephine Davis** is a junior majoring in Liberal Studies at Texas A&M University-Central Texas.

**Jordan Emilson** is a junior majoring in English at TAMUCT.

**Angelique Forbis** is a senior at Texas A&M University-Central Texas working towards a Bachelor's degree in English with a minor in Biology.

**Felicia Juliano** is a graduate student at TAMUCT working towards a Master's degree in English. She is the President of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society and serves as the President of the Warrior Artists' Guild. Felicia also works in the writing center at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor as an administrator. Her poetry, fiction, art, and photography have been featured in volumes 4 and 5 of *The Lookout*.

**Hazel Tiberius Lee** is the pen name of a senior at A&M-Central Texas who dips in the arts. Her visual art and poetry has been featured both online and in print. You can find her work on Instagram @hazeltiberiuslee and at <https://hazeltiberiuslee.wixsite.com/artist>.

**B. Lillian Martin** is a recent graduate with a Bachelor's degree in English from Texas A&M University-Central Texas.

**Nicole Metts** is a senior at A&M- Central Texas majoring in English with a minor in Fine Arts. Her work has been previously published in *Creative Talents Unleashed*, the 2017 & 2018 *Waco Wordfest Anthology*, *Local Gems Poetry Press*, AIPF 2018, *Haikuniverse*, and volume 5 of *The Lookout*.

**Phyllis D. Smith** is a junior at TAMUCT working towards a Bachelor's degree in Sociology with a minor in Business. As a student at Central Texas College, her poems were also featured in multiple issues of *BYWAYS*, CTC's journal of arts and literature, and she has also been published in *The National Library of Poetry Anthology*, *Tears of Fire*, as well as volume 5 of *The Lookout*. Phyllis has also written and performed a stage play,

*If God Was a Blues Singer*, with Jomandi Productions in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Pat Sonti** is a graduate student at TAMUCT in the Liberal Studies program. He also received his Bachelor's degree from A&M-Central Texas in Liberal Studies with concentrations in History and English. He is an Army veteran with many overseas combat deployments, and his poetry depicting war has been featured in volumes 4 and 5 of *The Lookout*.

**Stevie Zycha-Estrada** is a junior majoring in Liberal Studies at TAMUCT.



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## *Submission Guidelines*

*The Lookout* is published annually by the College of Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M University – Central Texas and features poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction, photography, and visual art submitted by current students and recent alumni of TAMUCT. Any student currently enrolled in classes at TAMUCT (or recent graduates) may submit their previously unpublished creative writing, photography, and/or art work for possible publication in the spring.

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To submit your work, save your complete and polished manuscripts in Microsoft Word and send as an attachment to Professor Ryan Bayless at **ryanbayless@tamuct.edu**.

**Poetry:** submit 1 to 3 poems

**Prose:** submit 1 short story or creative non-fiction essay

**Photography and Art:** submit 1 to 3 works

(Attach photos as high quality JPEG files; black-and-white images preferred, but color photography and art will be considered for the cover.)

-Please use the body of your email as a cover letter that includes the titles of your submitted works, contact information (email, physical address, and phone number) as well as a brief bio that indicates your class (Junior, Senior, etc.), your major and minor (or degree), and a list of any previous publications in the arts.

-Also, please write "LOOKOUT SUBMISSION" in the subject line of the email.

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*Submissions accepted October 1st - March 1st each year*

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by the students of  
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