

# Dearest Readers—

Mid-March of this semester, we traveled to the cactus-clad city of Albuquerque, New Mexico for the Sigma Tau Delta 2015 International Convention. When we weren't seeking out the most delicious food in the Southwest, we were clustered in conference rooms attending presentations by some of the strongest undergraduate and graduate students across the country. We went to panels to support our peers, but we were also drawn to the research and presentations of other schools. Some of the most resounding work we encountered was a panel discussing "The Politics of Racial Identity," and a roundtable titled "Exploring Transgender and Bisexuality in Young Adult Literature." These papers and discussions, as well as the audience's obvious interest, lead to thought-provoking questions and conversations on these culturally relevant topics.

Invaluable writers Simon Ortiz, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Gary Soto were the three featured speakers at the conference. Their speeches addressed the theme of cultural marginalization due to racial identity, and discussed how we, as writers, readers, and artists, can break these borders and engage in an ever-needed conversation about these topics. At his book signing, our professor thanked Ortiz for his work, his powerful words, and the way his legacy has inspired younger generations of writers, particularly writers of color. Ortiz responded in his quiet and gentle voice, "Stories are all around us. Stories connect us. Stories are everything."

As human beings, we are constantly telling stories. As writers (and readers), we see stories in our every day—in our families, our politics, in the nightly news, in the smallest of conversations. These stories sometimes find their way onto a page or a word document in the form of fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or art. They tell us something about ourselves, our relationships, and the world we live in. We're excited to bring you this issue of *Gandy Dancer*, which we feel has particularly compelling storytelling, engaging with important issues about race, gender, and sexuality. Some pieces stay closer to home, gently asking us to reexamine our ideas about family and the kind of shelter it provides. No matter what the genre, we believe each piece in this issue carries a resonance that will stay with you long after you've closed the pages of the journal. Indeed, we have been touched in our reading and arranging of them. We hope you'll agree. They bring to mind Ortiz's words: "Stories are everything."

When we stepped into the role of Managing Editors early this spring, we were, to be honest, a little daunted by the host of new changes from the last time we'd worked on *Gandy Dancer* as poetry readers two semesters ago. *Gandy* had moved to the WordPress platform, started using Submittable, become an increasingly active online presence via Facebook, Twitter, and our blog, and of course, we had a completely new team of editors and readers. However, as the semester has progressed, so have we, becoming more and more excited about the advances our class has made and the pieces included in this issue. We're thrilled to see where *Gandy Dancer* travels next: becoming a larger presence at FUSE (Forum for Undergraduate Student Editors), expanding our reach to include a larger number of other SUNY schools, and adding new elements such as translation and music more regularly to the journal. As graduating seniors, we look forward to following *Gandy Dancer's* progress from the "real world" and cheering its successes and expansion onwards.

Yours in storytelling,  
Erin & Amy  
*Managing Editors, Spring 2015*