



5-1-2018

From the Literary Editor of Calliope 2017

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Recommended Citation

Harlan-Gran, Kathryn (2018) "From the Literary Editor of Calliope 2017," *Calliope*: Vol. 49 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/calliope/vol49/iss1/3>

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“I am a writer,” I declared at sixteen in a stumbling letter that explained why universities should accept me. It was a small assertion of self, at the time a powerful but shapeless conviction, but it did the trick and has been lighting the road for me ever since. The surety that I am a writer carried me to University of the Pacific. It landed me my first job, as a writing mentor for the academic work of my peers. It earned me my first teaching position. In the fall, it will fly me to the East Coast to pursue my Ph.D. in English, transplanting me from my native California soil for the first time.

Perhaps most importantly, though, being a writer landed me in a nest of other writers—like most other birds of a feather, our kind tends to flock. As a writer, now, by both passion and profession, one of the most remarkable things that I have witnessed is the way writing shapes the writer. It is easier to appreciate how writing influences the reader; how it moves audiences, informs cultures, molds worlds. The writer stands at the epicenter of

that motion, essential to the words on the page but by no means immune to their weight. In a time of rapid change and constant tension—between selfhood and otherness, between love and loss, between putting walls up and tearing them down—we turn to writing to anchor who we are.

What, then, does writing do? It creates us, author and audience, speaker and witness. We write because we must. Every poem we put to paper, every essay, article, and story, challenges us, shapes us, allows us to unfurl. The authors represented in this volume have dared to assert their voices, to say, “I am a writer,” and to demonstrate it for the world. They have completed the circuit between writer and reader; our hope for you is that it ignites a spark.

—Kathryn Harlan-Gran, Literary Editor-in-Chief 2017