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2024 Full Text Issue

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Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

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The Peregrine Review

Volume 27, 2024



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Messiah University

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we have built
no temple but
capitol

Natalee Thao

(Politics and International Relations 2027)

Letters from the Editors

Dear Reader,

It is a joy to present you this volume of poems, photographs, stories, and more. Each of these pieces gives a small window into the Messiah community. Sorrow, joy, worship, hope, wonder...all of these and more fill the pages of this twenty-seventh edition of *The Peregrine Review*.

As I look at the work of these artists, I cannot help but think of the words of my favorite author, C.S. Lewis. In *An Experiment on Criticism*, he argues that we need literature because it gives us “windows” into the lives of others. Lewis writes, “We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own.” I heartily agree with Lewis (as I am often apt to do), but I’d like to take it a step further and apply his reasoning to the consumption of any form of art. After all, we gain glimpses into other worlds through admiring paintings just as much as through reading poems.

But what is the importance of such windows for Christians? By enlarging our understandings of the world, we may better empathize with those around us. *Seeing* each other more fully through art can allow us to *love* each other more fully. In this way, art helps us fulfill one of the greatest commandments that Christ ever gave us: loving others (Mark 12:30-31).

Reader, as you journey through these pages, look for the windows. May they inspire you to love deeply, wonder extensively, and seek out all the windows beyond even what these pages can offer.

Sincerely,

Micaiah Saldaña

Micaiah Saldaña (English 2024)

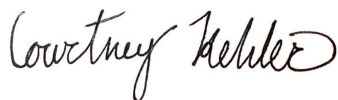


Dear Reader,

I am a firm believer that reading is fundamental to and irrevocably shapes our lives. Virginia Woolf, one of the great British modernist writers, argues that when we read, we “extend our intercourse beyond our own time and province” (“Montaigne” 64) and that we “have not finished with” a poem, essay or novel “because [we] have read it, any more than friendship is ended because it is time to part” (“The Modern Essay” 217). Poems, stories, photographs, paintings—these works of art become our friends and a means by which we make sense of the world. And when we create written or visual art, we utilize the creativity that springs from our status as beings made in the image of our Creator.

It is a delight to share this year’s edition of *The Peregrine Review* with you. As you read these pages, my prayer is that you find art that becomes your friend and enables you to explore worlds outside of your own.

Sincerely,



Courtney Kehler (English 2024)

haarlem church

Micaiah Saldaña



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Hang to Fly

Sydney Zikan (English 2024)

Hang carefully

Twinkle from all angles in the night sky

Bliss is your skirt,

Love is your blouse,

Glow is your face.

Hang precariously

Until the sun says "no"

Don't obey it though

Where's the fun in rebellion?

Beam and shake your brilliant curls.

Hang boldly

Swing your hips like a trapeze artist

Laugh when you're strong

Only let go when

You feel you can fly.

untitled

Benjamin Gates

(Civil Engineering 2024)

L a m b s

Courtney Kehler, Editor (English 2024)

If you haven't seen
 a lamb pitching forward
 on ten-minute-old legs using
 all its strength
 to wobble in the hay,
 making the heroic effort to live
 as its mother licks placenta
 off its jet-black wool,
 if you don't know what it is
 to hear a lamb's first feeble bleat,
 to watch its cousins hop in the air,
 springing off the ground
 for the sheer pleasure of discovering
 what their unworn bodies can do,
 then from what
 did you learn, dear reader,
 that life is worth living
 and worth living joyfully?

He Has Brushed Away the Stone

Myles Lynn (Masters in Counseling 2025)

Oh, creatures, hear the trumpet sounds,
 He has brushed away the stone!
 The ancient Word, which took on flesh,
 His final breath, earth cracks and roars.
 The serpent's dance which came to pass,
 Now grace abounds in Adam's lack.
 Blessed burst through devil's score,
 Nailing God's death upon a tree,
 Is love, the world restored.

Mourning Blossoms

AJ Yoon (Digital Media 2024)

Petals sing and petals dance,
They put me in a steadfast trance.
Radiant and charmingly fair,
They hang in blossoms without a care.

Drifting in ones, twos, and threes,
They swirl around in the airy breeze.
Across the open sky they float,
Far from us and so remote.

Petals fall and petals fade,
And gently on the ground are laid
Beautiful shades of pink and white,
They dance in the sky, bathed in light.

Tossed in the wind like butterflies,
They seem most beautiful to mine eyes.
Yet they always plummet and can't be found,
Until I look upon the ground.

Petals wilt and petals cry.
As spring goes on the blossoms die.
They rain on the world like crystal tears,
Falling through time and throughout the years.

When I am filled with endless grief,
They comfort me and bring relief.
As the countless days drag on and on,
I see them crumble, until all are gone.

Life passes everything, fleeting and fast,
We are ephemeral, not made to last.
But the petals' brilliant color remains,
And their delicate dances ease my pains.

For they serenaded my broken heart,
And mended what was torn apart.
They painted in my soul a masterpiece,
My grip on life, I can now release.

Petals die and petals are born,
The bare trees, they again adorn.
And come spring, as if on cue,
The mourning blossoms, they bloom anew.



METALLOPOESIS

Nik Lego, Editor (English and Marketing 2024)

Pray, do not fear
The baleful kiss of fire
And say no elegies
For the half-melted stone
For as I watch you bleed
You bleed
With glimmering gold
Hammered awake
From a dormant yesterday
Screaming out
From the womb
On a cord of smoking oil
Finally crowned
With tomorrow's
Shining pommel.

I hope that you remember
This burning is a birth.

I plead that you remember
Not all flames are ruin.

lamentations

Anna Cheng
(*Studio Art 2025*)



Lamb's Ear

Micaiah Saldaña, Editor (English 2024)

Last summer, my boyfriend (now fiancé) took me to Hershey Gardens to see the roses. I've loved roses ever since I lived in a brick farmhouse with a rose garden, and upon seeing the many varieties of my favorite flower spread before me, I smiled as if meeting with old friends. We wandered amongst the blooms, leaning down to smell their sweet perfume and reaching out to touch their satin petals. Eventually, we made our way past the roses to the kitchen garden. Here the air was spiced with the scent of thyme, rosemary, and mint. But something more special than spices caught my eye. Nestled against the earth like a child against its mother was a familiar plant. I reached down and stroked its downy leaves. *Lamb's ear*. I called my boyfriend over and invited him to feel its leaves too. He wanted to know how I knew such a small plant by name. *My grandpa* was the simple answer, and he understood right away.

Grandpa taught me almost everything I know about plants. He's the only reason I can identify lamb's ear, honeysuckle, carnations, and daffodils. I grew up following him around his sprawling backyard, "helping" by clumsily watering plants, pulling weeds,

and sitting through botany lessons that I didn't fully appreciate until much later. Grandpa taught me that I could pull up wild onions for my mud pies, that I could swing from grapevines if they were strong enough, and that lamb's ear was soft and fuzzy like the ears of a real lamb. I always marveled at his ability to identify any plant just by looking at it.

After we had finished with the plants, we would tend the birds. Grandpa readily named these too, pointing out sparrows, robins, blue jays, and mourning doves. We would fill his bird feeders and bird bath just so my grandmother could watch hummingbirds and cardinals from her seat at the dining room table. He would often join her there, looking up from a crossword puzzle or peanut-butter-covered apple to catch a glimpse of the chickadees and bluebirds that hopped amongst his flowers.

As a child, Grandpa looked after his family's chickens and vegetable garden, selling the vegetables at a farm stand and helping his mother prepare produce for canning. When he grew up, he found his calling in the grocery store industry rather than agriculture.

So although he dreamed of being a farmer, he happily settled for a flower garden. Grandpa coaxed peonies rather than crops from the ground and tended to cardinals instead of cows. I don't think he minded; after all, he was the best flower and bird farmer this side of the Mississippi.

If he wasn't working in the garden, Grandpa would tell stories. There were tales for every occasion: going on walks, flipping pancakes, reading C.S. Lewis, decorating the Christmas tree. And he always had stories about his flowers. Under his wreath of stark white hair was a treasure trove of myths and anecdotes about everything from peaches and daisies to thistles and Balsam firs. Take, for example, a flower that looked like it had a tiny drop of blood at its center (its name escapes me now). According to Grandpa, that drop of scarlet was said to have come from a queen who was sewing and accidentally stuck herself with the needle; the blood from her fingertip fell onto the white petals. *That's why you need a thimble when you sew*, he told me. I wish I remembered the name of the flower; I should have paid better attention to his stories.

Grandpa died less than a year ago, in the spring when his flowers had started blossoming. I think of him whenever I'm tending to my ever-growing army of plants. Orchids crowd the windowsills of my college apartment, their roots slowly trying to crawl out of the pots. A cactus suns itself on my dresser, and in the living room, the bright red petals of my amaryllis have begun to unfurl. I've assembled this floral horde in his honor, a blooming memorial to our times together in his backyard garden.

One day, in my own garden, I will walk amongst flowers and herbs, watering, weeding, and pruning as I go, with my children's small feet pattering after me. In the woods, we'll dig up wild onions to complement dandelion stews and pop wild strawberries into our mouths. We'll set a hummingbird feeder outside the kitchen window and watch cardinals splash in our bird bath. Of course, I won't forget to teach the little ones how to spot lamb's ear. *Look*, I will say as we kneel in the warm earth to pet the velvet leaves. *Feel how soft it is. Isn't it lovely?*



A Resolution

J.T. Crocenzi, Editor (English 2025)

I will not let
 the feeling go,
 a tether tied
 between two worlds,
 one of longing
 and one of gain.
 I've turned
 the feeling
 inside out,
 shook it up and down –
 tried to find the parts.
 But a feeling is
 a hollow thing,
 a stage for an
 aimless play.
 The flower does
 not know the bee,
 and yet were
 made to meet.
 A feeling is the wish
 before reality.

Penelope's Deception

Jolie Lloyd (English 2025)

As she weaves—still unweaves—
 they wait with bated breath
Has she reached the end—resigned?
Shall we seek justice—yet?

But these four years, they failed to note
 each time she lifts the wool—
 a feigned sob, a furtive smile,
 a laugh—*Ah! Trusting Fools!*

Sixth Sense

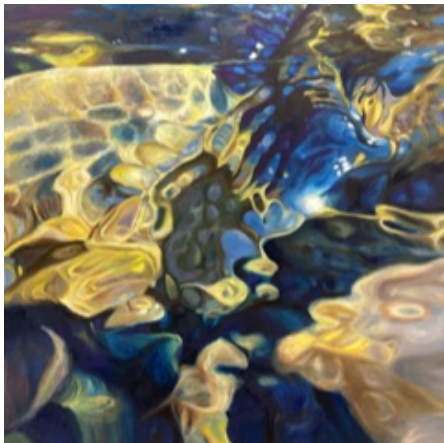
Ana Sakore, Editor (English and Music 2024)

Not the sea's fractured mirror
 or blasphemous waves
 or piquant offering that scrapes flesh and kisses the mouth but feeling
 scraped off sand linger on toes.

untitled

Anna Cheng

(Studio Art 2025)



sunrise every
 morning

Anna Cheng

Fairman

William Swanger (Adjunct Communication Professor)

Carl asked if he could shoot Fairman. But only at a fair, he said, because he needed the colorful, chaotic backdrop. I understood Carl wanted more than bustle; he also was in search of character. I said I'd check—after all, I was Fairman's friend—but I already knew the answer. Of course Carl could. I didn't even need to relay Carl's bevy of photography awards to Fairman because they wouldn't have mattered. Fairman took no stock in such external validation; for him, assurance came from within. He was proud of himself, character or not, and of his occupation, so shoot away!

Carl didn't call him Fairman. Nor did I. No one did, yet that is how I sometimes thought of him. And he wouldn't have minded. Heck, he didn't even care if someone labeled him Carny, although others might judge the term as a pejorative. Fairman would have laughed and shrugged. His measure of success lay not in names, but in deeds.

And Fairman had deeds galore. He never set out to run fairs and carnivals. His later-life vocation arose by necessity, although he'd always been fond of things that entertained.

As a teen, for example, he'd operated the cacophonous projector at the town's old theater that later collapsed, its façade tilted upward as if scanning the sky for the shining spotlights of the Hollywood blockbusters that once played there, years after their official premiere.

No, at midlife he'd half-killed himself repairing, refurbishing, and running Ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds because the world no longer needed someone who could tear apart a television set and replace the warmly glowing vacuum tubes inside. Tubes had transitioned to transistors, cool and impersonal and utterly expendable. Fairman had found himself disposed of by a culture of disposal.

So, just as he had done decades earlier in opening an appliance store, leaving behind family-offered (and certainly more lucrative) textile-mill work, he forged a new path. At a time when he should have been able to enjoy success from his early labors, he took on loans to purchase an inventory of rundown rides and concessions and set about stripping away rust, slathering on paint,

rewiring dimmed lights to flash in eye-numbing sequence, summoning folks to ride, to play, to buy.

He bestowed his dilapidated treasures with a second life, just as he had himself. And everything blossomed and grew, granting more success than he had ever imagined.

Standing at his town-and-country fairs, his belly held firm by suspenders, he'd survey the crowd to make sure people were safe and comfortable, lost in an evening when cares fell away. And in one of those moments, the idea of Fairman was born, because he was a fair man to all those whose lives he touched, including the young and old he hired. He recruited the recently tossed aside, those who needed a job or a break. And even though a few took advantage of his generosity, he'd always give an advance if requested. After all, he knew what it was like. He was one of those men and women of modest means who make it big but remember their *before*.

Fairman never slowed, building and adding, restoring and buying, bustling here and there, taking on new and bigger venues, filling with fun the long evenings of late spring, summer, and

early fall for families throughout the region.

Never slowed. Until.

Until, gradually, he began to forget where he put things, or what things were called. Or drove the wrong way on a major highway exit.

Those times were bad, but not near the worst. The worst for people who wrestle life on their own terms arrives when the mind finally grasps that it's being stripped, like rust from an old fair ride, by the likes of dementia.

Carl shot Fairman that summer. The photos were colorful and chaotic, full of characters, with brightly-lit carnival-goers in the background, their faces wiped of feature and emotion by dissolve, casting intentional focus on Fairman in the foreground.

Casting unintentional focus on the dismal truth that Fairman may have been fair, but his life was not.



Forty-Four Minute Walk

Erin Goudie (Education 2025)

it's almost midnight
but I'm standing alone
on the shot put mound
staring at mourning sky.

yes, there are stars
but it's not poetic.
it's just November &
thirty-seven degrees.

I'd left the library and
liked the twinge of the cold
on my face. so I turned
right instead of left

and started walking,
puffing my dragon air
in the dark places between
cast-iron lampposts

on the wooden trail,
sad acoustic guitar
echoing between my
earbuds, all hollow & stuff.

my feet took me across
a bridge but not over.
a blue heron took off
upstream, I watched

then moved on. Nothing is
metaphor; things just
happen. I take a forty-four
minute walk and the night

cuts through my jeans
to the tops of my thighs
& it's not like being touched
but it is something.

I sniff tear-induced snot.
my nose hardens in the cold;
make a face too much &
it'll freeze like that I guess.

my eartips are marble
now, too, and I wait
as my toes soak up
the icy air. The chill seeps

through my body
and I let it; no friction
palms for heat nor
exhale of breath.

I have no movement left
in me, so I stand here &
slowly turn to statue,
face upturned to sky.

Babies Are All Cheese

Kara Graves (Psychology and Pre-Occupational Therapy 2025)

Little Jerry coos in his mother's arms,
A little mozzarella ball nuzzled in a parent sandwich,
He is a very plain and quiet child.

I heard Maggie's baby was born as pepperjack,
Covered in splotches of red.
A sweet babe turned sassy.

Delores beams at her smoked-cheddar son,
That dang child is aged for sure, born two weeks late.
His tanned skin is an exact copy of his father.

Oh and my daughter, Connie?
Man, that girl is the smelliest cottage cheese you've ever smelt.
But I can't fault her too much, she's skimmed right off this ol' body.

serenity petal path

Rutu Amin
(Nursing 2026)



autumn's mirror
Eli Alderfer (Film and Media Arts 2027)

Prayer

Ana Sakore, Editor (English and Music 2024)

Sometimes I push my piano down the wishing well
ivory tinkles slicing its Adam's apple
which convulses so three-year-old sweets
are swallowed

And sometimes I shove myself down its throat
kicking and shrieking
wedged in its mouth

Or sometimes I drop a feather
that whispers its way down
to water

they say / i say

Abby Smoker (*Psychology* 2023)

a sparrow chirps *there are memories in the riverbed*

they used to be silver treasures
now i scoop them to the surface
to see them clearly
and they don't even gleam—

ravens said *memories are unerasable*
forever where heart leaves duct tape residue

maybe i am heartless
or smallhearted
maybe i'd accustomed to traveling light
and packing it all with me when i go—because
memories are mottled peddles in cold gray
rounded against the calluses of my palms.

i confide in the sparrow
on the windowsill

memories stack like pancakes.
some uneven from trial-and-error, too thin or too bubbly
but most fluffy, and still warm
building up with the Maker's fond anticipation
for the feast that's soon to come.

i want you in the archway of my home.



The Great Literary Marriage: Why All Good Readers are Also Writers

Olivia Reardon, Editor (English 2026)

I once heard a fellow English major say, “I read because I want to; I write because I have to.” In this particular instance, the student was lamenting all the papers she had to write and explaining that writing is simply the chore she must do in order to study literature, her true passion, in college. However, I think her statement inadvertently makes an important claim about the relationship between reading and writing. It is fairly well-acknowledged that good writers are also readers. But what about the opposite: are good readers also writers? In my experience, reading and writing are an old married couple that simply refuse to be separated.

Writing helps readers actively engage the text, deeply understand the text, relate the text to their own life, and join the literary conversation surrounding the text.

Because of this, writing is a necessary activity for all good readers.

Reading can either look like running a marathon or stumbling to the bathroom at 2:00 a.m. because you drank too much water before bed, with few exceptions in between. Thus, readers can either engage with a text passively or actively. Passive reading is the act of receiving the text without actually asking questions or thinking through the ideas presented.

Passive readers simply get from the beginning of the text to the end with little regard for how they do so. In contrast, active reading involves formulating questions and remembering ideas as one encounters the text. When I read actively, I come to a text armed with my pencil, notebook, and colorful sticky notes. With these tools, I can engage the text actively by writing notes in the margins of the text, jotting down plot and idea outlines in my notebook, and tabbing key passages that pertain to different themes with my colored-coded sticky notes. In this way, active readers engage the text in a careful and attentive manner that ultimately enhances their experience of the text.

While it is true that readers can take it upon themselves to actively read the text without the motivation of a looming writing project, active reading is most likely to occur and done most fully when it is paired with writing. If readers aim, or know they must aim, to write about the text after reading it, they are much more likely to encounter the text with an active mindset. The knowledge of a future writing project has the same effect on students’ brains during the reading process as a professor saying during a lecture, “this information makes up a large portion of the upcoming exam.”

Thus, writing after reading requires that readers attend to the text with attention and vigor. Additionally, writing about a text continues active engagement beyond the initial reading of the text. This is because writing about a text entails returning to the text again and again throughout the writing process. In other words, writing requires re-reading, an activity few readers engage in unless they are required to write. Thus, writing puts the readers into the text initially, and then again and again, in a way that encourages deep and meaningful engagement with the text.

Then, through the writing process, readers gain a deeper and often truer understanding of the text. When I tutor at the Writing Center, I often tell students that it is okay and absolutely normal for their thesis statement to change multiple times throughout the writing process. This is because the writing process is an extension of the thinking process. Active reading leaves readers with questions and newfound ideas. And while these thoughts can feel quite developed in one's mind, attempting to put them into coherent sentences never fails to show just how infantile they are. While beneficial, sitting at one's desk thinking or participating in a group discussion will only get one so far. It is ultimately through the act of writing that these thoughts truly develop.

In this way, writing is like doing a puzzle without knowing the end result. Maybe you begin confident that you are putting together a rhinoceros, but despite your effort, the pieces simply do not create a rhinoceros. Nevertheless, you keep at it until eventually, maybe even begrudgingly, you discover that all along you were supposed to be putting together an elephant. Now you realize that it could never have been a rhinoceros because there were always those pieces that created big ears no matter which way you connected them and there never were any pieces with a horn, but you would never have known this with any kind of certainty until you started putting the pieces together. In the same way, you may have an idea about the text that you are confident in, but once you sit down to write about it, to actually put the pieces together, you realize that maybe your idea is a bit more complex or different than you originally thought. But if you keep at it, eventually the words will crawl into place, becoming whole on the page and in your mind. Thus, writing is the means by which readers gain a deeper, often more accurate, understanding of the text itself.

Furthermore, writing urges readers to apply the text to their own life. As I have mentioned, good works of literature plant new ideas and questions in the minds of readers. But this is all a text can do;

it cannot force readers to answer those questions or engage with those ideas. That task is the responsibility of the readers, and writing is often the medium through which readers do just that. As one begins to understand the text via the writing process, he or she naturally begins to ask: how do these ideas inform my understanding of the world, God, or myself? How do they affect the way I live? Although readers can ask themselves these questions while they read, it is not until they are forced to write that they truly grapple with the answers to these questions. Thus, as the answers to these questions begin to form on the page, they also form in the mind of the reader-turned-writer.

In this way, writing solidifies these lessons in the readers' hearts and minds. By practicing reading and writing in tandem, I have discovered the significance of love, sacrifice, honesty, freedom, and humility. I have explored the ways in which old texts teach us how to live better today and how new texts act as a mirror for readers. And all of these personal discoveries were the result of writing about texts that I have read. Because it was not until I wrote that I knew what I thought about the text or what it meant for my life. In this way, writing powerfully shapes readers' perspectives on the text and their relationships to the text.

Finally, writing is the means by which readers enter the literary conversation surrounding the text and offer their respect and appreciation to the author. To read and to write is to participate in the universal conversation about humanity. In my mind, reading is the listening portion of that conversation. When one reads a text, whether that be a novel, poem, essay, or journal article, he or she is hearing the thoughts and ideas of another person. Writing is simply the reader's response. So in many ways, picking up one's pen is one of the most respectful responses the reader can have. Writing says to the author, I hear you, and I value what you have to say so much that I want to add to the conversation you have begun. We've all had the unfortunate experience of being in a one-sided conversation where one person does all the talking with little response from the other party. It is entirely possible that they are listening, intently even, but if they never open their mouth, the speaker ultimately feels as if all he or she has said was a waste. And while a literary conversation is different in that the author of the text may never read the reader's writing, it is still a profound act of respect and appreciation.

Because writing about a text is entering a conversation, writing is also a profound act of bravery. By writing, you are asserting that you have something of value to say,



something no one else can say. And this is true because no one else is you. Every reader has a unique perspective and is impacted by the text in a unique way; thus, every person brings something valuable to the conversation.

And maybe someday a person will read your writing and then write about it, continuing the conversation and bringing it to new places, cultures, and generations. Consequently, writing is the tool by which readers respectfully and bravely join the literary conversation.

It is important to note that the writing I have been referring to need not be a dissertation, research paper, or even a five-paragraph essay, although all of these options hold incredible value. Any kind of writing that one composes with the intention of making sense to another person, even if another person never actually reads it, is beneficial to the reading process. This kind of writing could include journal entries or bulleted writing that answers specific questions or explains ideas from the text. It is the attempt to communicate something about the text, to release a thought from the confines of one's mind and give it new life on the page that is ultimately valuable for developing as a reader and as a person.

Now, none of this is to say that writing is at all easy. Too often people say to me, "I so admire the fact that you love writing." My typical response is to laugh

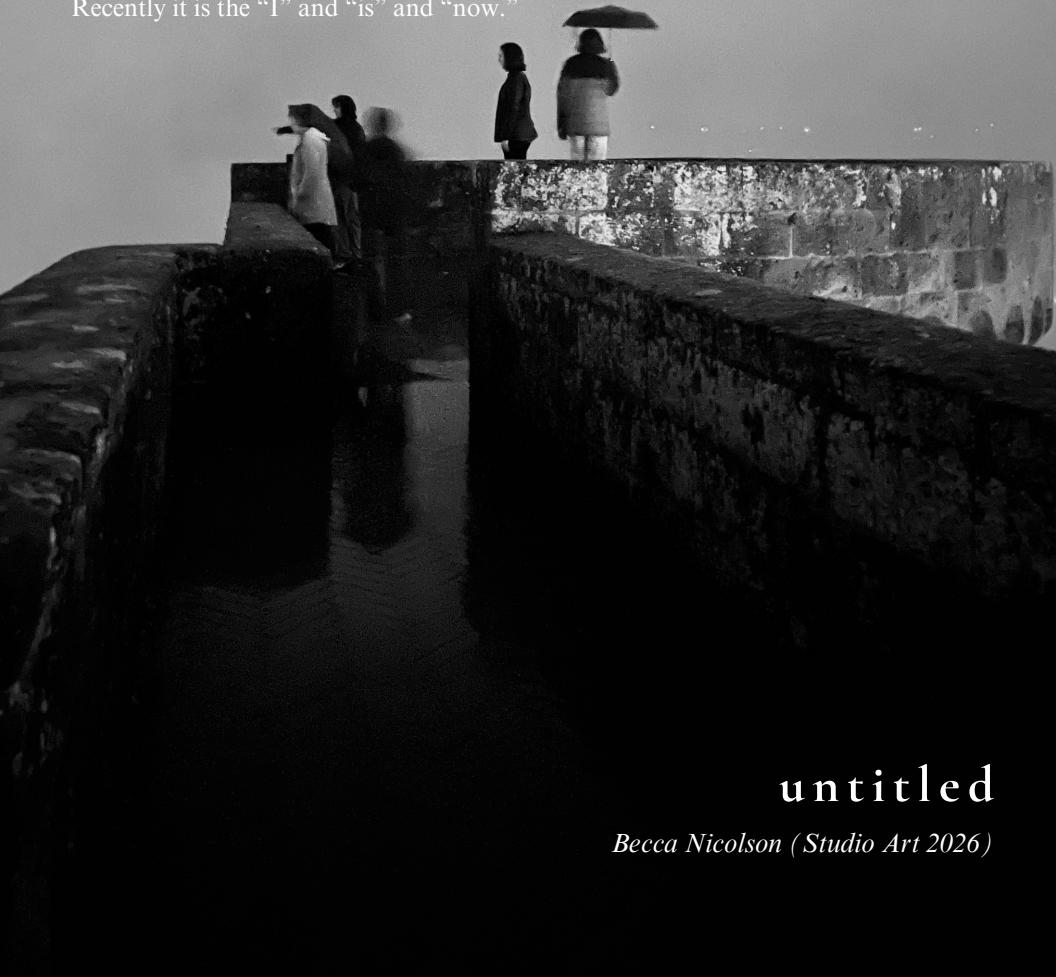
because the truth is, most of the time I hate writing. Molding mushy thoughts into solid ideas is a difficult task, and more often than not it looks like staring at a blank computer screen, frantically scribbling down thoughts that seem important but often turn out not to be, drafting a thesis only to redraft it six times, and going to bed with thousands of ideas fighting in my head, promising myself that somehow it will come together tomorrow. Every paper that I write makes it clear to me that writing is an arduous process. Yet the reason that writing is hard is the very reason it is so beneficial. It is only by struggling through the writing process that readers are able to deeply understand and learn from the text.

In light of this, my charge to every reader is simple: write. Write well, write badly; write for yourself, write for others. And the next time your professor assigns you a paper, thank them. Because they are simply asking you to read responsibly. They are providing you the opportunity to engage the text actively, discover the text in a deeper manner, consider the text's application to your life, and enter a literary conversation. So stop divorcing reading from writing: they are better together. And by participating in their joyous union, it is my prayer that writing will become a task every reader not only has to do, but loves to do.

The Finding

Isabella Farrington (Political Science 2025)

...And recently I have been imagining myself in new ways;
In fiction and fabricated worlds,
In words I can't quite get right but surely there is some out there,
In contradictory and unnecessary ideals,
In the desperation of a best-case scenario.
...And recently I have been seeing myself in strange hopes;
In my heritage,
In my legacy,
In the softness of jade-edged petals,
And the self-possession of trees rooted in hills.
...And recently it is the looking and the searching
That brings me to life and life-giving.
Recently it is the "I" and "is" and "now."



untitled

Becca Nicolson (Studio Art 2026)

sacred science

Abby Smoker (Psychology 2023)

health my measuring stick
 whatever is honest, whatever is joyful.
 whatever is real, whatever sustains—
 God is holy (God is healthy).
 i wander through thickets of statistics
 pricked by You each way i turn:
 belief in You as benevolent
 makes us value rehabilitation for other humans;
 belief in You as authoritarian
 makes us want to make them pay.
 if we know we are forgiven by You
 we are more likely to forgive ourselves
 and others, and breathe easy, and live long.

we can't see anything and our measuring sticks only extend
 as high as our hands can reach
 still
 could you tell us
 what is beautiful for your Creation?
 someone said
 we cannot trust our fickle fleshly human hearts
 but plainly You do not intend
 for us to live bound in anxiety
 thrashing or listless in straitjackets from Your name brand
 and paranoid around every joy.
 where, o Lord, is the border
 between paranoia and vigilance? between
 godly mercy and naïveté?
 how to love how to love how to love how to love
 how to identify which words are Yours
 when even Your Word emerges
 from a field of dissonance.

Un-hormonal and Unknown

Sadie McFarland (Marketing 2024)

Six weeks of age

Hospital room

So many questions, no answers

So many chances

Risks that need taken

Doctors confused

Parents not amused

Six days spent in a hospital room

So many pills

Morning noon and night

Keeping me alive

Giving me hormones

Making sure I survive

One maintains liquid

Another controls thyroid

Cortisol keeps my nerves in check

Trying to figure out

This medical mystery

Analyzing family history

More questions, no answers

More symptoms, no answers

Blood test after blood test

CAT scan after CAT scan

Computers keeping me alive

Day by day

Hour by hour

Minute by minute

Doctors keeping me alive

Just hoping I survive

So many doctors, needles and pills

Hard conversations

Emotional spills

A shot every night

To make sure I grow

To make sure I sleep

And things properly flow

Panhypopituitarism

Not just my condition

But a challenge for life

A near impossible mission

A mission only possible with the Great Physician

Finally, a light

An answer

An end in sight

Not really...

Panhypopituitarism

Just a weird, long word to some

A medical nightmare for others

Belief

William Stowman (Professor of Trumpet and Chair of the Department of Music)

belief is knowledge that has been
tucked in at night
comforted
reassured

belief is the embers of a fire
that outlast the night's chill
to warm us again
in the morning

belief gathers
never shuns
it makes room for hope
and welcomes love

belief is a compelling tale that reveals a path
an ideal
an acceptable way that
affirms direction

taught or discovered
the answer lies within
believe
and you too will know

upon ancient
paths

Anna Cheng
(Studio Art 2025)



His Silent Dance with Thoughts

Connor Fleming (Communication 2026)

In the hush of nothing, there, a quiet so profound,
Thoughts flutter like petals, gently unbound.
Questioning whispers, a mind's tender kiss,
In the simplicity of silence, lies subtle bliss.

Cunning notions weave through the mental air,
Rivers with appealing bends, become cerebral affairs.
Yet, in the stillness, where serenity gleams,
God observes our musings, our innocent dreams.

A jester's dance, an intricate art,
Yet, God's gaze sees each sincere heart.
In the labyrinth of ponderings, expands a cosmic plot,
Our intense bliss, truth yet not forgotten.

Unexpected, in the poet's rhyme,
Silence reveals secrets, beyond space and time.
For in the nothingness, where questions reside,
God, the unseen poet, in our thoughts abides.

So, embrace the silence, the calm and the hush,
In the boundaries of nothing, where thoughts softly brush.
For God, in the quiet, witnesses our trance,
A celestial dance in the reality of chance.



...Nicked Myself Shaving Last Night—

Eleanor Mund (Musical Theater and English 2026)

a flickering light blinks above
my phone screams midnight
as I prop my leg up on a plastic white shelf
I didn't want to do this tonight
because I'm lazy—
or defiant—
or something else—
who knows.
but I have the razor
rusty though it may be
and the sickly sweet shaving cream stares me down
in its hot pink bottle: made for women just like me!
so! why not?
I try to go slowly
(DON'T shave your ankles, mom told me. you'll nick yourself and your hair is
already light, nobody will notice)
but I'm impatient and so is that razor
I really should have thrown it out a week ago
shouldn't I have?
it glides across my skin with inconsequential ease
slicing through the thick foam of gel that smells like dying flowers and femininity
it creates little globular patterns on my unevenly fuzzy legs
and I distract myself with the mumbling commentary in my head...
I think I'm almost done with the left when I notice a bead of red on that stupid
pink blade—\$10 for a pack of four.
I let out a groan as my ankle runs red.
mom was right.
I hope it doesn't stain my grandmother's dressing robe.

Raindrops

Lauren Mock (English 2025)

I'm unsure when I became a person that loves the rain.

When I was young, I was in love with brilliance.

The sky wasn't only blue; it shimmered

like white-capped ocean waves,

and the clouds floated on like islands,

carrying kingdoms and chariots on top.

The grass was a bed of emeralds,

tiny ant and worm villages hidden between its blades.

The world around me was a playground

to exercise the always-busy muscles of my imagination.

Everything was so much more than what it appeared.

Now, I'm drawn to the simplicity of the rain.

I still find in me a glimmer of appreciation for the sky's vibrant hue,

but I'm captivated by the muted, softer nature of the rain.

Something about the way it falls from the sky

in a feverish chorus of sound

only to shatter on the surface of the hard earth

makes me appreciate the fleeting life of each singular drop.

The rain isn't begging for love.

It doesn't scream with all its radiance "notice me!"

Rather, it fears its own existence.

It grows and expands and will be on the brink of spilling over,

yet still hesitates an extra second or two

before it falls.

As if the same clouds that held the kingdoms can't bear the rain's exodus.

As if the world teeming below would be better off without it.

As if people like me don't welcome the rain

like the father welcomed the prodigal son.

As if a fleeting moment of rain isn't on occasion
the only moment of peace a day has to offer.
As if there are more worthwhile things to do in a downpour
than to surrender your fragile body to wet pavement
and look up as it cleanses your soul.

Maybe I love the rain because we're one and the same.



duality

Eli Alderfer (Film & Media Arts 2027)



Tree Hollow

Erin Goudie (Education 2025)

I am permanently hollow.
 My chest—carved clean
 out and aching, attacked
 by bacteria and fungi,
 my sapwood exposed
 & chilled by crisp autumn air.
 Some trees self-prune, some say—
 it's a marker of maturity
 to remove lower branches.
 I say it's some sort of homicidal shit.
 Because most tree hollows
 are actually caused by injury:
 fiery lightning strike or
 wind or limb breakage
 rots away the tree-flesh
 and the decay takes over
 a hundred years to cavitize—
 so what does it take for a tree
 to break its own limb?
 For us to remove another?
 Trees seasoned with age,
 their maturity marked
 by the tree hollows, by the negatives
 of cannibalistic carnage;
 empty space where sinew
 and phylum once joined
 another—limb to body,
 an extension of the self—
 now nothing but broken
 tree-flesh left to rot and heal.

I offer an ode to the lower branch
 removed. I don't know
 if the branch broken is you or me,
 but I know pruning prevents
 codominant stems. Some say a tree trunk
 has room for but one leader.
 Well we cut the strong
 lower branch so that the other could grow
 unhindered, as it always ought.
 I'm still in the hundred years—
 but I have hope for when
 my hollow heals. Though this ache
 is as permanent as the holy earth
 that my toes are tangled in,
 I know once soil frosts
 and winter dawns,
 my hollow can be home
 for kestrels and chickadees,
 swallow, sparrow and opossum.



Heidelberg Catechism Question 54

Abby Smoker (Psychology 2023)

then Father, preserve me
 take these fresh fruits i pile beside Your throne
 take this tree i strive to upkeep before You
 and petrify it, douse it in resin
 gather those fruits in large pots and labor over them
 keep them as jams, sweeten them so they may never spoil
 then Father! gather me up
 the tornado of notes and endless words and newborn plans
 the heartstrings ever requiring tuning
 run Your red yarn between them, lift them
 into midair, collect them
 like postcards You are warmed to receive.
 then Father, defend!
 where my shaking hands cannot prop the shield into place
 where my watchdogs miss, distracted by passing cars
 where life slips through my fingers
 because i forget to oil the joints
 lend me Your shades, that i may see
 You alone, and You in everything
 and You in everyone.

embellished arch

Emily Frith (Studio Art 2026)



to be loved, to beloved:

Eleanor Mund (Musical Theater and English 2026)

your hands, soft and gentle as a careful creator's
 smooth my frizzed curls from out of my glassy, unfocused eyes and
 your fingers, like the delicate brush of a demiurge
 trace the tracks of mascara down my cheeks without paying mind to the pools
 of ink forming under your nailbeds,
 mingling with the smudges of graphite and crusts of color already hugging your
 comfortable skin
 you do not care because it is part of your art of loving me a steady and slow
 process which you seek to study
 you cradle my spirit
 cracked and confused and cratered
 misted by mingling memories
 and gnawing guilt
 and love, joy, so much goodness
 swirled into a confusing mosaic that you mean to find meaning in
 with the eye of a beholder who sees the forest for the trees, and finds not just
 the lush swath before them beautiful
 but also the lonely barren birches
 beauty beheld in the papery white, peeling birches
 and the picture they create
 you want to paint that picture
 the evershifting sketch of my soul
 you want to create that and show me that you understand and love.
 you love.
 love the values, and shades, and textures
 you are an artist.
 i, your wordsmith of a muse who desires just as much to capture your psyche
 with my scrawlings and scribbles
 and i love you for all of you. And you love me for all of me, and as i ache to
 truly believe it you always assure me of your ardor
 a surety.
 a solemn vow.
 a sacred prayer.

an answer to prayer—you were sent to me by God in His goodness and i
cannot understand that goodness
i cannot understand this gift
nor can I understand my long desire, my longing, the act of long
how did I wait so long?



frog

Connor Duncan (Sustainability 2025)



No Traffic

Chanty Webb (Staff Nurse at the Engle Center)

10 minutes, light delays, no traffic
 GPS doesn't
 Take into account
 A crying jag
 That paralyzes me
 And makes visibility
 More impossible than
 Driving in a downpour
 The instigations of a selfish son
 Bent on gratifying
 His immediate needs
 Sending me into a tailspin
 Not to mention plans to go in one direction
 Only to get yanked in another
 By circumstances beyond my control
 That regulate my existence
 Because I'm his mother
 10 minutes, light delays
 Traffic conditions only apply
 Once I get out the door

Regret

Tiffany Oponski (Marketing 2027)

I stand in a green pasture filled with wildflowers.
 I am surrounded by my regrets, reminding me every hour.
 They lurk in the form of shadows.
 I try to tend to the flowers,
 but they persistently remind me of my yesterdays.
 I want to look toward better days.
Leave me alone.
I'm not going to postpone.
 It's always the choices you didn't make that come back to haunt you.

Remember

Abby Ng (Studio Art 2026)

How can I close my eyes
And fathom
How can I close my eyes
And imagine
The bodies
The stench
The cold
The fear
And
Hopelessness
Will today be the day
Will I make it another day
Gunshots
Screams
Dreams
How can I close my eyes
And relive this history
How can I understand
How will I ever
I will never
But I will remember
I will read your stories
Your names
the known and unknown,
The ones left behind
And
The ones who came back
I will keep
In memory.



Kate

Alexandria Hay (Psychology 2026)

In the summers

I sleep with my sister

My house wrinkles and creaks like an old woman

The only windows big enough for a monstrosity of an air conditioner in
the unfinished guest room

The air is crisp and fresh contrasting the dense humidity dwelling in the
old parts of the house

Countless humid nights I have laid here, with her body curled up beside
me

Each summer she takes up more space

Each summer we whisper our silly nothings and greatest deeds to each
other while the air conditioner buzzes its summer song

We kick our feet and giggles transform into yawns as the moon grows
higher in her sky

Her conversation slows until eyelids meet and her chest swells slowly with
the gradualness of sleep

I stare at the ceiling at the patch of wallpaper I peeled off when I was 9

She is curled up beside me, most of our time in this house is done

We have spent the most time together that we will ever spend at once

You are my greatest miracle with your pin-strait brown hair and your
fascination, my

not-so-baby-sister

You will have been in my life the longest, long after our parents leave this
earth

We have spent the majority of our nights in this bed together

I will say goodbye soon and we will be apart for another 9 months

I don't want to leave you here, but I know you will face your challenges
even without me

You are so courageous

We will have to be courageous together while we are apart

I am always a phone call away

I will drive the 300 miles for you any day

I would swim oceans for you
I would wade across universes for you if we could go back
To me throwing you into the pool, teaching you how to brush your teeth and
holding your hand across the parking lot
You held me the other night in the guest room bed while I cried
When did you grow old enough to know what I need
When did you stop being little?
You are my world
My trees bloom and my oceans crash around you
I love you as only a sister knows how

Stay curled beside me in this too-big bed
I will see you in the morning
Goodnight

accept yourself
Emily Frith (Studio Art 2026)



The Bleeding

Adahlee Schroeder (English and Theater 2026)

Time and time again
I am exposed
My cap is taken
My blood is spilled
All for creation

From hand to hand
Used then passed on
They lay me on my
Bed of white
Now spotted with blood

My bleeding vein
Touches the dry sheet

It drinks my blood
Greedily draining
My life from my vein
All for creation

My life is not my own
I am squeezed, bitten
My arm is broken,
I am taken apart
Put back together
But missing some parts

Again my blood is spilled
Across the snow
Cold and ruthless
They take me, drain me
All for creation

I bleed till the end
The life of a pen

Soft Hands | For Isora Wilson

Alessandra LaGeorge (Public Relations 2027)

I want my daughter to have soft hands.

Hands that don't know the labor that mine are so familiar with.

Hands that don't know the repeated action that my body responded to by giving me these calluses.

Calluses that came not 2 months after I was old enough to start picking with my family.

Calluses that I know were an answered prayer from my mother,

Who lovingly wrapped my hands night after night when they hadn't yet formed.

If my prayer is answered, my daughter will know no such sting,

She'll have no need for callused hands.

If my prayer is answered, she will have an easy life

Painless work

And soft hands.

Cry

Montika Smith (Public Relations 2027)

It's not an inconvenience

To cry for those

Who have no tears left

To give

Their eyes have been dried

By cloths of apathy

Tissues of moderation

The chins of the suffering

Are lifted

Just to beg of their patience

While everything we lay in bed

To thank God for

Is being taken away from

Those who need it the most



Eating the world

Alexandria Hay (Psychology 2026)

I have so much to give to this world
who will hold it all?
My pain and grief so vast and grand that
the cupped hands of all my generations
could hold the spilling sadness
and it would still trickle through their fingers
flowing into a steady stream eroding a canyon
that even when dry still gapes dangerously

What pitcher exists large enough to
hold the love oozing from my overripe heart?
Every embrace squeezing me like an orange
tangy sweetness pouring over all I love
the residue of my sticky brightness
smeared over every moment and note and soul
that I hold dear

I am messy and sloppy taking bites of this big world
I am beautiful
I will love again
and again, hold my sister
and burn my tongue
on scalding bitter coffee with my best friend
I will pour rich spices into the mouths of those I love

I will dive into my canyon of grief
and I will climb the sides
waiting for my God to reach down their callused hand
scarred and rehealed from all the times I have pushed away
fighting violently and desperately to escape
the peace that I resist

Letting myself be pulled from the smothering abyss of sorrow
the scrape on my fingers
and burning sweat of my calves as I climb
every step another inch closer to the opening
sorrow sheds off me and falls below
a snake losing its skin of grief



arial

Connor Duncan (Sustainability 2025)



Hillbilly Roots

Timothy Shea (Adjunct English Professor)

A pilgrimage home—
to *Dukes of Hazzard* territory,
a place that Flannery O'Connor would say was
“haunted by Jesus”—
a place that felt like
a shadow
from the past.

Somewhere between Tennessee and Pennsylvania
my family took a detour and
wound up among the misty hills of
Appalachia—
close to the “holler” where I was born—
in Whitesburg, Kentucky!

I showed my kids
the hospital where I came into the world and
the college campus where I lived for
my first year of life.

I can just imagine
my optimistic father,
newly married,
just graduated from college,
and with a newborn in tow,
Trying to build a home out of this
haunting place,
A place the rest of the world seemed to have
forgotten,
a place that was a far cry from
his gritty Baltimore neighborhood.

Did it drive him crazy?
Did he weep at night for
the familiar?
Did he find a way to connect with
the unconventional locals with their
rituals and conspiracies and
their moonshine?
or
was it too much
for someone with such a big heart but
who had no money or
resources and who was
just a bit homesick, too?

The road to my roots
may have been windy and
circuitous
and maybe even
a metaphor for
my own life journey,
one that seemed so far from
my current reality and yet
also strangely
familiar!

sunset climb

Benjamin Gates
(Civil Engineering 2024)



Cherry Blossoms

Joseph Fan (Civil Engineering 2027)

Look at the beautiful cherry blossoms; watch as
their
pink
beautiful
flower
petals
fall
gracefully
onto
the
grass
below.

A blanket of pink petals surround the tree.

THE ONLY DREAM I REMEMBER

Ethan Dyrli (Communication 2024)

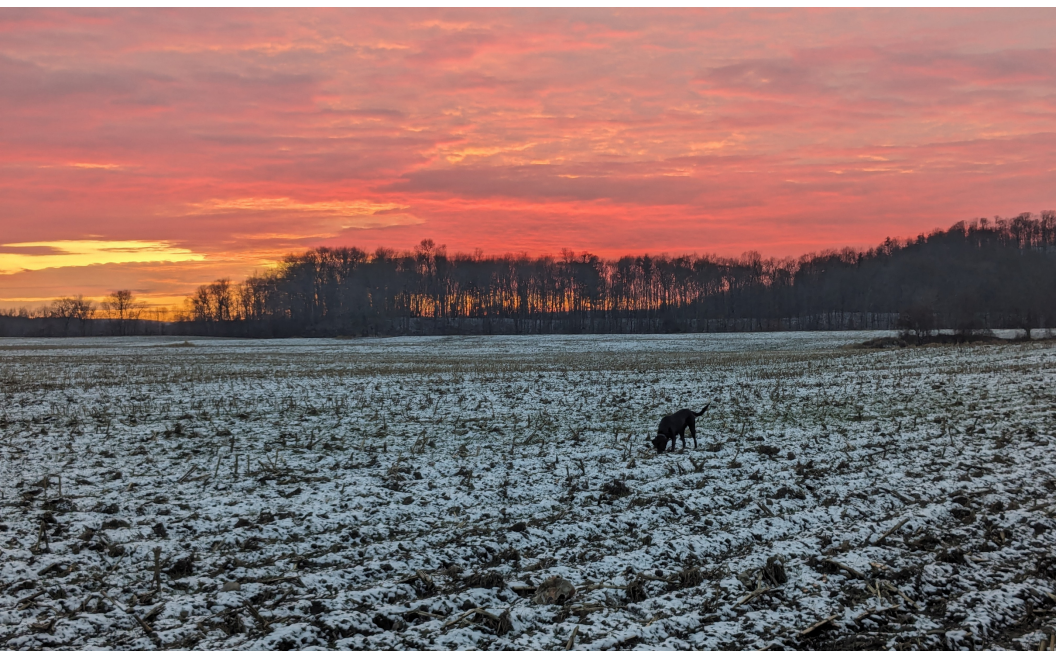
The Italian villa
The crushing waves
A kiss on the cheek
A normal embrace

Orchid blue dress
A grin on my shoulder
Arm around arm
Granted to hold her

These are my dreams
The ones I remember
Lest I forget
If we were together

I forget my dreams
Except when you're there
Made to remember
Pretend not to care

winter's harvest
Benjamin Gates (Civil Engineering 2024)



Brownstown, USA

Timothy Shea (Adjunct English Professor)

A mild October evening.
Streaks of orange and blue accent
the night sky
and the distant rhythmic tapping of
high school drums
echo on the other side of town
another iteration of a great American tradition—
the local community parade!

People of all ages meander down
the sidewalk and stake out their
prime viewing spots,
lawn chairs hoisted under their arms.

As the new kid in town, I take a look around
and wonder who my neighbors are.

Across from me is a group of moms who
obviously know each other,
perhaps from PTA or church.
They chat and banter while
their husbands hover off to the side.

A man in a wheelchair sits by himself,
grinning from ear to ear.
I wonder if he used to play in a band at
school or in the military.

Then there's the plain family with six kids,
all lined up from smallest to tallest,
clad in plaid and sporting suspenders.

Just up the street a group of
friends jive and slide to Latin music,
waiting and restless.

Me? I just watch and wonder.
What brings this diverse group of neighbors
together in this town, in this moment?
How will me and my family fit in?
Will this town become home?

Then there are the kids.
Three preschool princesses,
a young Jedi warrior and
a tottering Minion
giddily twirl and spar as the
minutes uncomfortably tick by
and the sun begins to set.

Suddenly.
a whistle screeches in the distance—
the parade has begun!

At the head of the queue is the waving
local police chief, politely
smiling and nodding.
He's followed by twirling dancers,
batons and tutus flying upward.
Behind them amble a disheveled pack of
bored cub scouts followed by
local business leaders in convertibles
and the exuberant high school band,
All flinging candy and flashing smiles and
waving like beauty queens.



Almost as soon as this local tradition has begun,
it is over and the
townsfolk make their way back to
the fire hall to
mingle and
to gather for
donuts and
hot dogs and
conversation.
I follow in anticipation
and make new friends while
finding old ones.

And so, for this one crisp Autumn evening,
the world is at peace
and everything is OK—
if only for a few brief moments in this
small town in
America—

Brownstown, USA.



ocean whispers
Rutu Amin (Nursing 2026)

The House That Built Me

Hannah Lim (Dance 2024)

Partly inspired by Miranda Lambert's song of the same name

Perhaps this momentary trance
Is caused by jetlag and Malaysian humidity
But stepping on these cold marble floors
Still feels like a dream
This white-walled and window-paned house
Holds so much comfort and belonging
It's rather strange being back
Nothing much has changed
The artworks, the smell of baking, and all the memories are still the same
Yet the differences are right there in plain sight
Like how I've forgotten which switch turns on the light
How the wooly carpet isn't there to cushion my falls
And who can ignore the paint chipping off the walls?
The light hanging above my bed
No longer dangles dangerously over my head
Stacks of books still fill my room
A thick coat of dust being the only sign
Of the passage of time
But of course, two years is a long time
Even little Sesame is not so little anymore
And my sister has dreams bigger than before
But still I am glad to be back
Even if for a little while
To this home that makes me smile
To this house that built me
Truly, home is where the heart is



lakeside reflection

Benjamin Gates (Civil Engineering 2024)

By the Charles

Abby Ng (Studio Art 2026)

They blew bubbles by the Charles.
Dangled their feet by the pier.
Sailed freely in the summer breeze.
Got tipsy under the fairy lights.
Read a little poetry,
Forehead against forehead.
He whispered and she smiled.
The sun began its descent.
The ducks...they ate till no end.

Box of Bricolage

Emmy Varner, Editor (Public History 2025)

A fuzzy blanket scrap

A fractured finger splint

A found turkey feather

A forgotten friendship bracelet

A piece of a poem

An empty plaster cast

A last letter

A lonely ring

A faded photo

A folded flag

A box of broken items or

Bricolage built from baggage

untitled
Becca Nicolson
(Studio Art 2026)



Saturated

Evelyn Janssen (English 2024)

blue drips from your eyes
mingling with the black pouring from your mouth
suddenly it's on my hands
each crevice of my fingerprint
every pore fills
your colors seep into my blood
until I bleed black and blue
you're still talking
bruised blood floods my brain
(no, it's fine, keep going)
here is a half-blue attempt at a leaking solution
your midnight colors still cascade
washing over my eyes
blocking out the light
trickling into my lungs
I will choke for you
release your toxic hues
paint a masterpiece in my mind
portrait in cobalt
purge yourself of the burden
of your experience
let me slop the pieces together with a putty knife
give you some semblance of a solution
and clean the mess later
when you're out of sight
was this your blue or mine?



Decolonize

Montika Smith (Public Relations 2027)

I wrap my fingers around my locs
 Favorite strands adorned with gold
 I tuck my masterpiece into a bonnet
 For the night
 My artwork rests like a crown
 On my head
 I've decolonized my hands
 No longer producing burnt ears
 And crispy ends
 I've decolonized my lips
 No longer speaking
 Nappy
 Difficult
 Too much
 I'm no longer tangled in the lies
 Telling me that my hair
 Should be tamed
 Standardized
 Whitened
 Because it's all mine
 And all
 Beautiful

orvieto

Anna Cheng
(Studio Art 2025)



Being Judas

Emma Bell (English 2025)

Meet me at confession

On my knees

“The spirit of God flows within everyone,”

The father says,

“Crowns of thorn lay on all our heads,

We share the collective calloused hands
of a carpenter.”

My smooth skin betrays me

It's true I know the Spirit

It's true I've touched His face

It's truer still

That I've betrayed the Father

(More than the Father, the Son,

Whose voice declared me clean

in the shadows of the garden

Whose rough hands wiped my tears

Whose holy eyes saw me purified

And returned my repentance

With an embrace

Closer than the Father

Is the Son

My sin against Him

Is weighed in lead).

But I am not Peter

Denying Him is impossible

See me in the garden

See Him, standing firm,

And notice I do not call Him

Imposter, liar, false prophet,

Notice what I call Him now

Son of God, Son of Man

Notice what I am

Son of Sin, Son of Shame

I am not Peter.

Meet me at confession

In the garden, before the Spirit,

And not a priest -

My toes dangling above the ground

My neck bowed as though in prayer

An angel flying, an angel falling.

But these are grand things

I am just hanging.

I am Judas Iscariot.

Homesickness

Evelyn Kelly, Editor (English 2026)

it is

heavy as a bruised thunderstorm,
worn out as a knitted blanket;
a mound of freshly baked
abandoned laundry.

it is

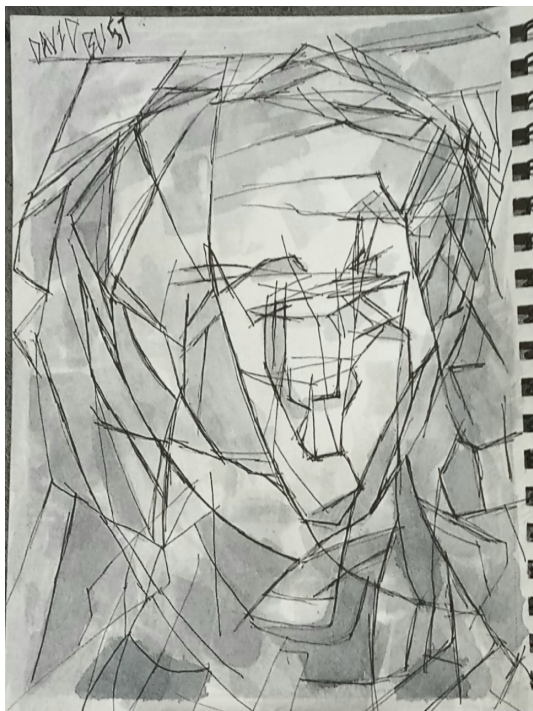
a lonely waft of steam
over a hasty cup of tea.
or a ghost perpetually winking
from the light bulbs in the hall.

it is

the stream of headlights racing one another
from the cracks in the blinds
across the cinderblock wall,
mutely spreading alien arms
for an embrace.

david bust

Alisha Wyland
(Studio Art 2027)



The End

Lauren Mock (*English 2025*)

When they told us the news—through CNN, phone alerts, front pages of magazines, and televised messages from celebrities like Chris Evans and Emma Watson—we didn't believe a word they said. We drove home from our 9–5s as usual, ignoring the obnoxious beeps from the stopped traffic around us and taking a moment to notice the brilliant blue of the day's sky. We walked through our front doors and kissed our spouses, or our kids, or our dog, or our aging grandmother. We made dinner and sat around the table and talked about our days—the people that irritated us and the tasty coffee we had that morning—until somebody inevitably asked, “Did you see what they were saying on the news?” with a slight chuckle, though there was the faintest glimmer of doubt in their eyes.

“Nothing to worry about,” we said.

“Just fear-mongering,” our ultra-conservative father-in-laws said.

“It's about time, this earth sucks,” our cynical little brothers in their emo phase said.

“Christ hasn't even returned yet!” our devoutly Catholic mothers said.

The full-fledged denial that anything could possibly bring our existence to a full stop continued for the several days that followed.

We woke up, went to work, came home, ate dinner, argued about something stupid, made up, went to bed, and did it all over again.

The sky continued to blanket us in pristine blue, in fluffy clouds, and sunsets of pink and gold. Safe and all-encompassing, like a warm embrace from the universe beyond.

Nothing in it made us think of danger. Of an impending apocalypse.

We first heard about it on that Tuesday. Panic started to creep in on Friday, when half the news anchors were missing because they took the day off to spend it with their families. Some of us left work early to do the same. At that point, our bosses couldn't be upset with us. A bunch of us canceled doctor's appointments, ordered fast food for dinner, sat out on our porches listening to the crickets and watching the stars.

We reminisced about our favorite memories and our happiest days and our darkest hours and what we would change if we could do it all over again.

The lucky ones answered: *Nothing at all.*

We sent lengthy texts to old friends and old lovers. We played our favorite board games. We prayed. We played fetch with our dogs, whose blind joy and lolling tongues made us even sadder. We prayed some more.

The End (cont.)

When Sunday hit, the scientists were utterly despondent. NASA issued a statement: “Be with your loved ones at 10:03 p.m.”

Some of us had different ideas. Some wanted to climb mountains, see the ocean, and drive as far as possible. Some jumped off of tall buildings. Some wanted to squeeze as much in and be as far from familiarity as possible.

But most of us stayed home, snuggled together on the sofa, terrified but also at peace, while watching our favorite early 2000s rom-coms.

Most of us were indulging in the last moments of what it felt like to be alive when the asteroid came streaking through our atmosphere at 10:03 p.m.



untitled

Alyssa Mazak (Biomedical Engineering 2027)



Solitude

Evelyn Kelly (English 2026)

It is time to stop living like this is an interlude
in some masterpiece—just a few pages to skim—
momentary instrumental bars to endure
before the harmonizing begins.

Does the bird outside my window stop singing
or tuck her voice in a small cabinet drawer
in the corner of her nest when I stop listening?

Does the baby's breath stop breathing
when hands stop groping her bed
for a fistful of virgin buds to tear away
only so she may wither in a pretty vase
under an occasional gaze?

Who am I when it is me
and the grass and the sky and
the soil, the rocks, the drowsy river bed
and the violent thunderstorms
while I lay awake, sweating
between thin sheets, alone?

Why should I stop delighting
when it is me and God
in this specific pocket of the universe, again?

There's worlds and more microscopic worlds
in my breath alone.



Through Your Eyes

Abby Ng (Studio Art 2026)

I wish I could see the world through your eyes

Capture the beauty

Clearly as it has

Captured you

Hone my craft

As you have

Dedicated yourself

To

Learn and

Feel

And explore and

Sought to tell the stories

Of people

Of life well-lived

Or bruised

And ruined

I wish I could see people through your eyes

Beyond skin and pride

Whether broken or full.

moonlit magnolia fantasy

Rutu Amin (Nursing 2026)



Burritos

Emmy Varner, Editor (Public History 2025)

I thought of you today
while I ate a burrito,
the topic of our last conversation
as you thanked God
for creating something so good.

I thought of you while rolling down a hill,
how when I stood up, I tried to run
to you, but I just fell over
and vomited the burrito.
It looked like what they fed you in the hospital.

I thought I saw you at the bookstore,
wandering around in the cookbook section,
maybe trying to find one about burritos.
But when I set down *Grieving for Dummies* to look,
of course it wasn't you.

I thought about mailing this poem to you
but I don't have a stamp,
and it wouldn't reach where you are.
You'll never hear these words,
and I won't eat another burrito.



To The Space Between Us

Becca Nicolson (Studio Art 2026)

The holy space between us
Transatlantic call
Every conversation is completeness
To me
And there's still shiny faces around and thin bodies
And beautiful strangers everywhere I go
I know
Nothing is lost to me
Many things are found in fact
But there's a place to rest inside you
There's a room and in the room sun comes in through the window so it's warm
There's home between us
No space closed that doesn't need to be crumbled
And too
There is no empty room
But only ones we furnish with words and
The images of the house we
Are building in our hearts
Home
The space between us
Comforting also
To close, close
Knowing we always have open windows here
And maybe it will be in Rome
This house
These beauties
This sun
Our rest
The place we go
Back to
Or California or somewhere else you can see the sun
I'm realizing it might not matter so much
Where we go
Because everywhere
We are together
The home will grow
From the space between us.

Raging Waters

Ethan Reisler (English 2026)

The Cape's tide breaks higher than the clouds.
 Tossed asunder to perform triple-somersaults
 For horseshoe crabs and seaweed,
 I'm always doomed to wipe out on the landing.
 Enough sand packed in my mouth to make a pearl,
 lungs spewing seawater, I emerge
 a cherub fountain, stripped clean of spf 70.
 A boogie board in hand magnetizes me
 to that boundless blue pond
 despite the sand blastings.

In another time,
 Yellowstone's Grand Prismatic boils in my chest;
 the water scolds my innards clawing a way out,
 erupting through my eyes, finding its freedom.
 With so few words, she bombed the Hoover Dam
 leaving me spitting the tears I couldn't stomach
 on the church's parking lot asphalt.
 Sitting alone in shotgun, my friend left long ago,
 watching children sing for a Christmas play inside.
 I think I preferred being pummeled by the Cape's calloused tide.

So what could have possibly made me try again?

What love did I have to find in someone else?
 I've never been cast in bronze, but I am a thinker;
 something about sweaty palms after holding hands for more than three minutes or
 making them chortle with a Dobby impression
 Is worth every attempt to stick the landing.



The Songbird

Shirah Mark (Public Relations and Digital Marketing 2026)

There came a sudden whoosh of wind from the chilled night air. Her tiny little birdy body gave a shiver as she ruffled the feathers that would soon learn flight that the others so often did. She squinted her slitted eyes as they adjusted to the darkness when a sparse cloud passed over the full swell of the moon. Around her lay large evergreens that cast vast shadows upon the prickly grass. The aroma of sappy pine cones and sweet, crisp apple revealed winter was not far off. Venomous screeches sounded in the distance as the little bird feebly twisted further back into the nest. When would Mother come back and comfort her with a caress of the head? She yearned for her fearless protector who would shroud her in sheltered warmth. How this enormous blood-curtailing world was created for a baby song-bird like her was something she could not fathom. Different insect chirps sounded all around. And again, a mighty gale rose up and rattled the tiny straw nest built high above on a thinning branch. The night became a dizzy swirl of stars as it spiraled downwards again and again. Not once in her weeklong life had she felt this helpless, doomed almost. It seemed gravity had pulled on her heart, wanting her to stay afloat.

There sounded a fractured CRACK as the ground came barreling up into her head. No more was the sweet sound of crickets. No more was the slivered moon that cast its light upon her. There was only blissful darkness. No joy, no sorrow; it was as if she was swept into a black hole. In a flash she was atop one of the branches looking down at a frail broken body. Its tiny head was contorted in an unnatural manner. Specks of inky blood coated the pink body like freckles atop a paled face. Its eyes squeezed shut as if the bird was stuck in a hellish nightmare. It almost seemed as if the tiny blades of grass impaled the body, like a head atop a spike. She realized that she was looking at herself. She was no more now, yet it seemed like she was swimming in a never-ending bubble, a ghost in her own dream. She understood that she had been slain by a strong gail that night and would never have the sun atop her face, wind through her wings, her mother... She would be childless—always searching for a tiny, pink body that was of her own flesh. Her ghostly form was saddened as it dawned on her that this ghostly world would remain her reality until her carcass became devoured by the creatures of the night. She mourned this tragedy.

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