



# TRILLIUM

SPRING 2026



GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY'S  
**TRILLIUM**

Issue 47, 2026

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The *Trillium* is the literary and visual arts publication of the Glenville State University Department of Language & Literature. The *Trillium* welcomes submissions and correspondence from Glenville State University students, alumni, faculty, and staff, and our extended creative community.

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**GLENVILLE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

# EDITORS' NOTES



For two years, I have been lead editor of the *Trillium* and to say it is awesome is an understatement. Being able to read tons of creative work, having a literary staff, and working with an amazing artist has truly shown me what the writing industry can be like. I am sad this is my last year but I am grateful for all the things it taught me. I have to thank Jonathan Minton because he is the one who believed I could succeed in this role in the first place. I also thank all of the creative people who had the courage to turn in their work, without you all, the *Trillium* wouldn't be able to exist.

- Abby Hudson  
Literary Editor

Stepping into the dual role of *Trillium* Arts Editor and Designer for a second year was an absolute pleasure! For this issue, I wanted to capture the *Trillium* with a design that could match the energy and vibrance of its collective imagination. Thank you to each artist and writer; every one of you shapes a place for the passion that brings us together. I hope this issue of the *Trillium* inspires you to create. Never stop creating, keep making art that brings you joy!

For the readers, please enjoy this issue of the *Trillium*! I hope you have as much fun flipping through the pages as I had putting it together!

- Autumn Moyers  
Arts Editor and Designer



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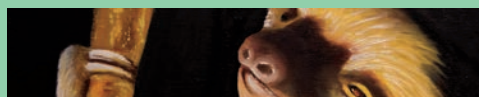


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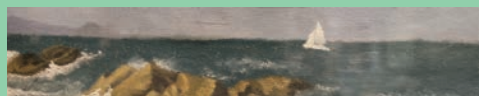


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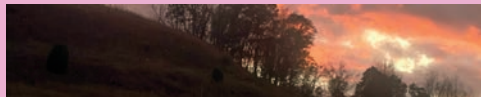
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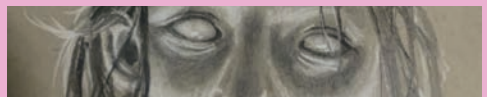
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*Oh, Right.*  
Digital Illustration; 1817 x 1536px  
Leah Hamrick, 2025



*There's Snowone Like You*  
Digital Illustration; 1705 x 1398px  
Leah Hamrick, 2025



*Fun is for Everyone*  
Digital Illustration; 1933 x 1431px  
Leah Hamrick, 2025

## Holding Him

Tears  
of love  
or revelation  
have dropped, not  
only from the eye but  
from the heart. She is no  
longer whom she once was.  
Birth—indescribable—made her  
see the entirety of life in a new light.  
Never before was something so raw and  
beautiful. She did not want aid with pharm-  
aceutical options, wanting to feel every bit of  
authentic human delivery. And so, that is how it  
happened. The healthiest, most precious little one  
was on planet earth. Not delivered by a stork, nor an  
angel, but a girl...a woman, nevertheless. Newfound cour-  
age and love were born, they grew inside her as the new  
life she would raise was pushed out. Strawberry blonde,  
eight pounds, twenty-one inches long, was the biggest  
miracle she could ever receive, ever knew she would  
need. Laying there, after it all—the contractions,  
the pushing, the pain—all of it meant nothing  
If she did not end up having the baby laid  
on her. Unlike any other feeling in the  
world, all she cared about in that  
moment was the chance  
to hold him.

Abby Hudson



***Botanical Watercolor***  
Watercolor on Paper  
Serenity Black

**see also "To the Reader" imitated**

Frailty, deceit, sham, insincerity  
Pervert our minds and mislead our tongues,  
And we mask our vainglory  
As salesmen mislead their shadow.

Our sins are rooted, our repentance a perjury;  
We name the Devil puppeteer of our ruin,  
Yet are slow to bow when grace is given —  
Believing our virtue self-made, our guilt imposed.

By the lullaby of half-truths well-spoken,  
The Taxidermist of comfort,  
Embalming our prefrontal cortex,  
Preserving our lying lobe.

Murder rebrands vengeance as order.  
Theft markets desire as necessity.  
Blasphemy patents the divine.  
Yet the subtlest lie remains — the one that names itself truth.

Like a modest whore who with whispers and confessions  
Tempt the heart of a young preacher,  
We covet the dancer unveiled on her altar,  
mistaking performance for revelation.

Burrowed, festering, curdling on the tongue,  
The mothers comfort our hearts,  
And when we fall, Mother, the pacifier,  
Kisses our knees with cracked lips.

If identity, virtue, control, emotion  
Do not yet tempt your compulsion with their evasion  
The tattooed skin covering our meek abrasions,  
It is because the truth is only as we know it.

Among the trusted, the moral, the friend,  
The judge, the teacher, the lover, the preacher,  
The murmuring, composing, crawling monsters,  
That poorly dress infected sutures,

There is only one more artful, more deluding, more baudelaire!  
To make both blinding poetry and blinding critic,  
Although boredom can hardly compare,  
And, in saying, is Baudelaire...

Honest! I'm not honest, while I wish to be  
Self-aware! I am not aware of that which I am  
Not aware, and it seems –  
A hypocrite! – I am! – You are! – The same.

Brooke Storm

***Deerly Beloved***  
Oil on Canvas; 8 x 10 inches  
Heather Swaggerty, 2025



***Polar Plunge***  
Glazed Ceramic Sculpture; 8 x 10 x 6 in (irreg.)  
Heather Swaggerty, 2025





*Study of Olivia Beaumont's "Naming the Brew"*  
Oil on Canvas; 18 x 24 inches  
Heather Swaggerty, 2025

## Come Home



I don't want to wait  
For you to come home  
I just can't wait to see you  
Please, I know you're overseas though

I know you're serving your country  
But it doesn't make me at ease  
So, why don't you come home please?

I'm begging you now  
I'm on my knees  
I hope you're okay  
I just got to say

I don't want to wait  
For you to come home  
I know you'll be here soon  
I'll be so happy to say, "Good Afternoon!"

When I look at the night sky  
I know you see the moon  
The same one I do  
When I see your face  
There won't be a dry eye in the room

Our love will fill the room  
I'll be so happy to see you  
There will be no gloom  
And I won't be so blue

When you walk through the door  
I'll give you a big hug  
I'll say, "I love you more!"  
And hold you really snug

I know you're gone away  
But I just want to say  
Please come home soon  
Dad, I love you

Emily Lauria



***Shelter from the Heat***  
Still Life on Paper  
Parker Bradford, 2025

## Authenticity

Oh, we put on our mystery masks  
Hoping the world won't see the scarred outlines  
Hoping to brilliant the sky without inner exposure

We spend long hard hours chiseling on that rock  
The rock that is chained to our soul--self interest  
Maybe that rock is only a pebble if we lift our masks

Maybe we need to understand the soul is no saint  
That it thrashes around looking for its equal  
While getting hooked on any drug that says: "I care"

Ah, that is the disconnect--reaching out without hands  
The sitting on one's hands, not wanting to show face  
Reaching out is not a bum's handout, it is true face

Are you ready to drop the pretense, drop the dread  
Are you ready to open your chest and let the heart pounce  
Can't you see there is no chasm to jump, no 'I' to flee

Walk through the fire--the only thing that burns is doubt  
Weep, the life tree's unleashed leaf grasps your hand  
You have found your heaven, you can return home

Larry Lemasters

## Transient Time

Larry Lemasters

THE HILL                    "I top the slow hill full of options" Trent Busch, W.V. poet

You should know the hill was built by giants, but in my world, is occupied by disgruntled sheep. The hill is full of ragged roots and reality as hard as blocked ice. My brush hook swings in red torrid heat, making grave digging seem like fun. Every hit rock shakes me like a landmine, the occasional breeze feels like God's breathe. Time doesn't just stand still on the hill. No siree! Like the Second Coming it forgets to arrive. Yet, in a world full of strain and deceit, the hill is a fortress of unselfish love. As shadows cross its dimpled fields I sink into the hill's darkened crevices. With the force of Charon, the underworld ferryman, I am carried across a world without shadows into a fluidless womb: a sanctuary for the subtle realms, and for those who have second sight. Sensing a great emptiness, the hill seeks out my heart (leaving behind my mistrusting brain). She speaks about growth and destruction, saying they are two sides of the same coin as nothing is ever destroyed, only transformed. The hill reflects that she once was over a thousand feet tall and held a forest as thick as my beard. She sighs when mentioning that strong winds conquered her crown, and a forest fire had scarred the hill's forgiving flesh. Yet the fire had gifted her an understory of bracken, sumac and pine seedlings. The hill whispers to me: "In the cycle of existence everything becomes a connected circle like the waxwing's round nest close by, or the faraway moon's halo; furthermore, the universe is circular--remember that when you feel lost."

Kree-----eeeeee---arr,    Kree-----eeeeee---arr,    Kree-----eeeeee---arr.... The unleashed cry of the gods.

In a sweep of wind, Red Tail soars above our hidden portal. The hawk's cry brings the world alive. In a wind-filled vortex Red Tail circles higher and higher until out of sight--a bridge between earth and heaven. The hawk's scream loosens the otherworld's grip, and I am thrust upward into a dense forest--the forest of relationship.

THE FOREST

"When through the old Oak Forest I am gone,  
Let me not wander in a barren dream" (John Keats)

We are lost in the fuckin forest. I am not talking about trees, nor are we going to walk endless paths to nowhere. I am talking about the lie of words--the lie that I will find peace through you. I am asleep in my own language. All of my words have hardened into a Samurai's sword, cutting through all the vines, roots and cords that keeps me attached to the inner you (a weapon I never intended to wield). Yet, standing in the landscape's darkness, I hear life's language: swooshing water bringing relief to the thirsting body, a feathered wind soothing inner firestorms, and the smell of life rising from fungal soil--the mycelium underworld. The trees are pressing closer (have they brought with them the sky?) to weave us into their dreams. These trees dream with evolutionary insight, breathing new life into the in-between world of night. They dream of birdcalls, a child's running feet, and of the sea beckoning them. My fears vanish in the luminous light of these dreams.

"Darkness restores what light cannot repair." (Joseph Brodsky, Soviet American poet)

In the dark, tall woods my heart remains a sapling. Yet my roots are spreading like the mycelium strands beneath my feet. My weakened inner fibers intertwine with the web-like threads of your mycelium heart. Your mycelium heart speaks a language much older than wounds, helping us find a way through the forest's entanglement: transforming both dark and light (with the help of Persephone's darkened hands). We think what we need is so far away, yet it's as close as roots to soil. This story is an archive of our forest. An acorn meal bread made for times of famine.

The forest of the heart can also be a place of disillusion and evasiveness. A sycamore tree bends down and whispers in my ear: "You will not be discarded unless you discard yourself." Again, my thirst becomes a weapon, demanding something that was never available. The woods no longer are our glue as the acid rain of self swallows the joy. The question is: can we get beyond the emotional body in our disjointedness? Indigenous poet, Natalie Diaz says what carries the hurt is never the wound, yet sometimes the hurt is about limitations. I rebel against the narrowness of these hills. I will not be background material, nor will I be the shadow of my burnt forest.

WATER "I believe...that eyes we see in water are never our own." Kimberly Blaeser (Copper Yearning)

Water Thoughts: We are vaporous beings, carrying the value of water in our bodies. The essence of nature is to emerge from liquid. We can step away from gravity's mind and channel the ancient moist world into our aquatic spirit-- this is the holy wash.

I am lying in a creek near my house, letting the water flow through me: through the skin, through fascia, through muscle and bone, and through the organs as if I am cheesecloth—a porous being. My heart is full of flow, full of ancient wetness. I am transcending old patterns. I am no longer water that drips from faucets, but water that fills the deepest wells. Bodies of driftwood from a nearby damaged forest float around me. These thirsting bodies, like mine, seek aqueous infiltration. The driftwood's inner pulp are vessels of ecstatic sounds, vibrating like tadpole bodies and offering succor for parched voices. The driftwood's crusty surface of fungi and algae is molting into something beyond a forest.

The creek and I flow gently into the beckoning river. The creek's inner tone is in synch with the river's wave beat, like a rhythmic heartbeat. I feel like I am swimming through clouds as my thoughts drown in the sweet water. In the sacred water, the elongated fruited body of a driftwood floating near me has morphed into a life body: a Naiad. The Naiad is the daughter of a river god and her water nymph's elemental form bubbles forth from the ancient Greek otherworld. One is lost from one's own world by drinking from her charmed waters. The beauty and enchantment of the Naiad's spirit overwhelm my senses—her throated sounds send my musical body beyond Earthside. The fluidity of her spirit nurtures the hurt child in me, and her nature tongue speaks volumes that can never be contained in books. But like rivers, the Naiad, who sustains life, can also destroy it. We circle each other like clouds around the eye of a storm. The river sensing tension begins to chant: "Riverdance! Riverdance!" Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, the eternal pulsing of being strips away our armored shells. In swirling brown water our connection is made, bringing forth a celestial smile manifested long before time. The river undulates its curved spine, challenging the limits of the earthen banks. Our wetness rushes to nourish the exposed roots of asking trees. The Naiad does a circle dance within the water's curved patterns, while I cry out "Whisperwood", hoping to share her winged songs.

The sky bends down to kiss the river. Soon all things become quiet, and the waves lie down as if to sleep. Before the sky's intervention, the Naiad attempted to submerge the "we" in our liquid bond. A torrent of distrust came between us over my perceived defection. In time the source of our inspiration dried up, detouring the river to other flowing sources. The Naiad in my life dwindled into a puddle, being water I'll never be able to grasp.

PLACE "The face of the land is our face...what grows here and what grows within us is the same." Linda Hogan, poet

Place thoughts: Like most hill people I have an attachment to place. Yet, my sense of place is aligned with the indigenous belief that we do not own the land,

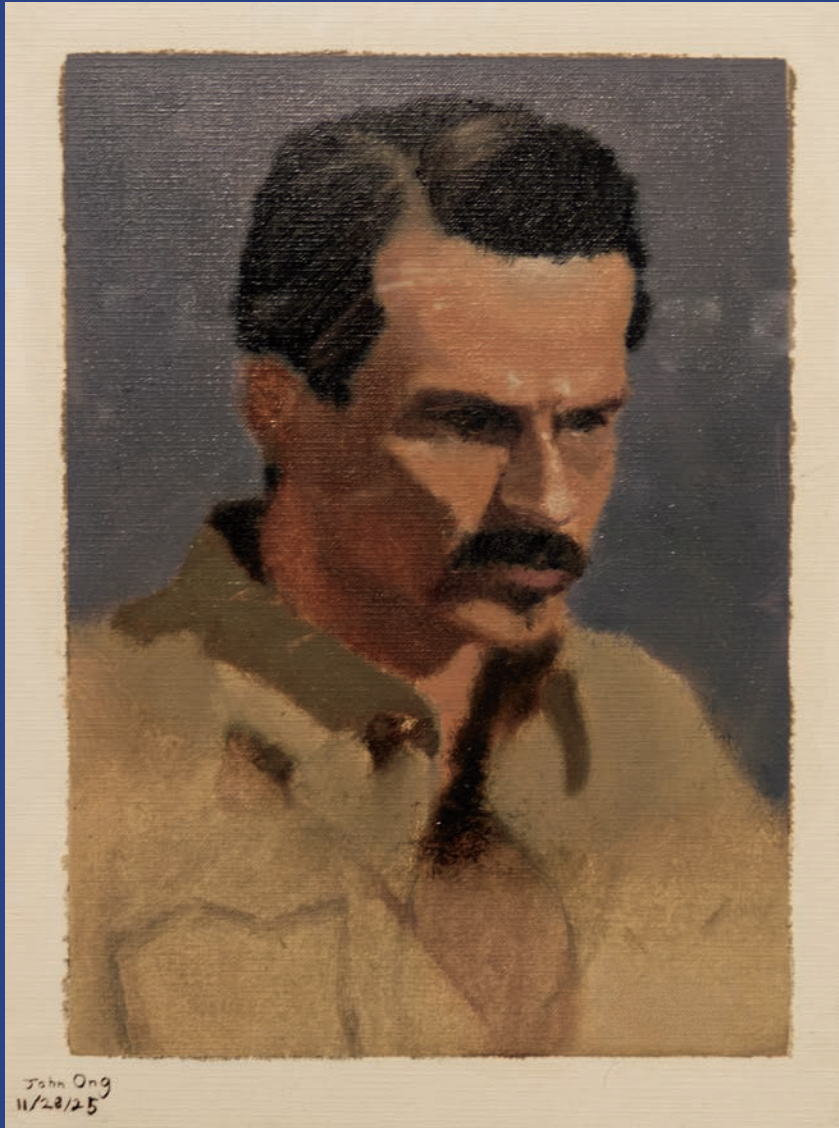
but that we are part of the land. Being native to place is about balance and having reverence for the landscape. Many people are estranged from their true mother--the one they walk upon. In a man-made (patriarchal) world, place is only temporary, only has exits. W.V. poet Louise McNeil stated: "To love a familiar patch of earth is to know something beyond death." Yes, that deep connection is important. Yet, that patch of earth is forever connected to the total environment of our world--we cannot live off-grid anymore. To get beyond divide we as humans must be open to the greater spirit: the language of the sky, elements, soil, water (the non-human sentient world). We as storytellers can make this great leap, but first we must explore the places within ourselves that are untouched and wild like nature.

A sense of place is not only the land, but also the chambers of the heart. My story alludes to a flower who illuminated my sky. Her visions flow from a heart space beyond life boundaries. But the balanced wheel of Yin and Yang rolls on: she has become a myth by being real; I have become the one-sided shadow.

Sonido de viento fresco en la tierra--the sound of fresh air "washes" my soil as the heart's sense of place shares many breaths. I want to know what sustains your breath when struck by that great magician, Pain, who conjures up authenticity. Will you continue to shadow the sun, or will you let your light out?

#### Transient Time

A drunken fever possesses the world with invisible feet dancing wildly in trance. Should you join, do you dare? Will you lie deep in mud, letting lichen and moss be your coat? Or will you continue the dungeon life that tears your heart apart. The mist is rising; the tears of deer are falling. Let go of your junk. Your time is now--the moment rules. With sacred wings magic arrives.



*Anonymous Dude*  
Oil Paint on Canvas Paper; 9 x 12 inches  
John Ong, 2025

***Cecil***

Oil Paint on Canvas Paper; 12 x 6 inches  
John Ong, 2025



***Landscape***

Oil Paint on Canvas Paper; 15 x 12 inches  
John Ong, 2025



## **My Three Line Life (Right Now)**

### 1. My Unbearable Thing

The thing that crushes down my heart,  
The thing that brings me so so low,  
I know I will never climb back.

The thing that shouts at me,  
That screams I failed as a father,  
Is that my beautiful, loving, so sweetly smiling child died alone.

### 2. My Three Line Life

My daughter's precious life,  
Was entrusted with me when her mother died,  
And I failed.

### 3. It Is Everything

It is everything,  
I can do,  
To not crawl into a corner and die.

Porter Wills

## **No Solace in Solar Time**

What do celestial occurrences,  
have to do with matters of the heart?  
When does insurmountable pain,  
live by the cycles of the galaxies?  
Why do the human beings believe,  
that solar time can heal a heart?  
Who among us can be freed,  
from loss by rotating bodies in space?

Porter Wills

## **You Won't Come Back**

I pound the desk  
But you won't come back.  
I punch the bricks,  
But you won't come back.  
I punish any smile,  
But you won't come back.  
I shoulder the weight,  
But you won't come back.  
Going on is so hard,  
Because you won't come back,  
I can dance no more,  
Because you won't come back.  
I don't know where to turn,  
Because you won't come back.  
How do I live with myself?  
Because you won't come back.

Porter Wills

**Deer God**  
Digital Painting on Procreate; 4000 x 3000px  
Autumn Moyers, 2025



*it's time to go now*  
Mixed Media Acrylic on Canvas; 16 x 20 inches  
Autumn Moyers, 2026



## Prisoner of My Mind

The white, suffocating straitjacket clings to me.  
The cold, blue padded walls enclose me.  
My breaths come out as whispers, soft and gentle.

Gentle is hard to get used to  
After many years of my skin being riddled  
with bruises the color of the midnight sky

Gentle is hard to get used to  
After many years of my mind being riddled  
with the words that left his dry, cracking lips.

Gentle is hard to get used to  
After many years of being caged  
With the cold metal bars in this world he created.

I look at the cold, spackled tiles.  
I beg to be let out  
To finally be rid of these rusty, heavy shackles.

I wonder if I will ever be free of my mind  
I twist the doorknob, it's unlocked.  
I am finally free  
Maybe gentle is something I can get used to

Tayla Shahid



*Decoded*  
Digital painting; 1000px grid  
Dravin Gibson

## For Herman Charles Bosman

flesh is grass and flesh is ash and all of it together  
has been touched with the finger of death coming

at its own pace until the night of power; this is none  
of it news. but someone said it was lent now and i

thought about it for some time because it has been lent  
for a while i replied where you have to do so much.

because it has been so hard to create anything beautiful;  
really to create anything, since january. sometimes it

feels like i'm the only thing alive like it's just me and the  
ice but the frogs and the dandelions have been raptured.

flesh is grass i repeat to myself and God is a shout in the  
street and as i walked through olivet michigan i thought does

anybody live in these buildings? i saw a man sleeping in a parked  
buick and no one else and i thought to myself i have neither

grass nor a street. i am in olivet but i may  
as well be at the bottom of the sea or on a far moon.

i am over olivet but not in it.

i can still remember that  
a road has to go somewhere but south of lansing

everything is called highway there is island highway and packard highway  
and bellevue highway and kinsell and gresham and butterfield and nye

highways but  
most of them are not even paved.

Robin K. Crigler

## A moment of weakness

if i was best by  
november 23rd 2023  
would you drink me?

i hope so, i probably was

and i want to be drunk besides.

grapefruit tastes awful.  
anyway dying  
of botulism would be a heck  
of a trip—

imagine someone saying  
“my friend moved to  
Michigan, drank a two year old  
grapefruit cup and died  
like Socrates”—

i would become one of  
those dark little trivia questions  
eighth graders tell each other.

(grapefruit tastes awful  
but also kind of okay:

we’re not so different)

i threw it away like a coward  
after googling “fruit cup past expiration”—  
took the worst possible course, it must  
be obvious by now

that it was fine.

Robin K. Crigler

## Bernheisel Bridge Road

“i didn’t expect him to be the one  
to let me down,” i said out loud,  
addressing the calves chewing there.

they were seeing me and i was  
seeing them but most of what we  
were seeing was that

fine april sky, breath of spring.

“no, i didn’t expect him to cut me  
loose like that, but then sometimes  
you set a dream down. you

draw up a new indenture and  
move to los angeles or wherever—  
i don’t know where he’s going.

well anyhow.” you know  
cows will just stand there and listen.  
the land finally had a smell, spring

was far along enough for that.

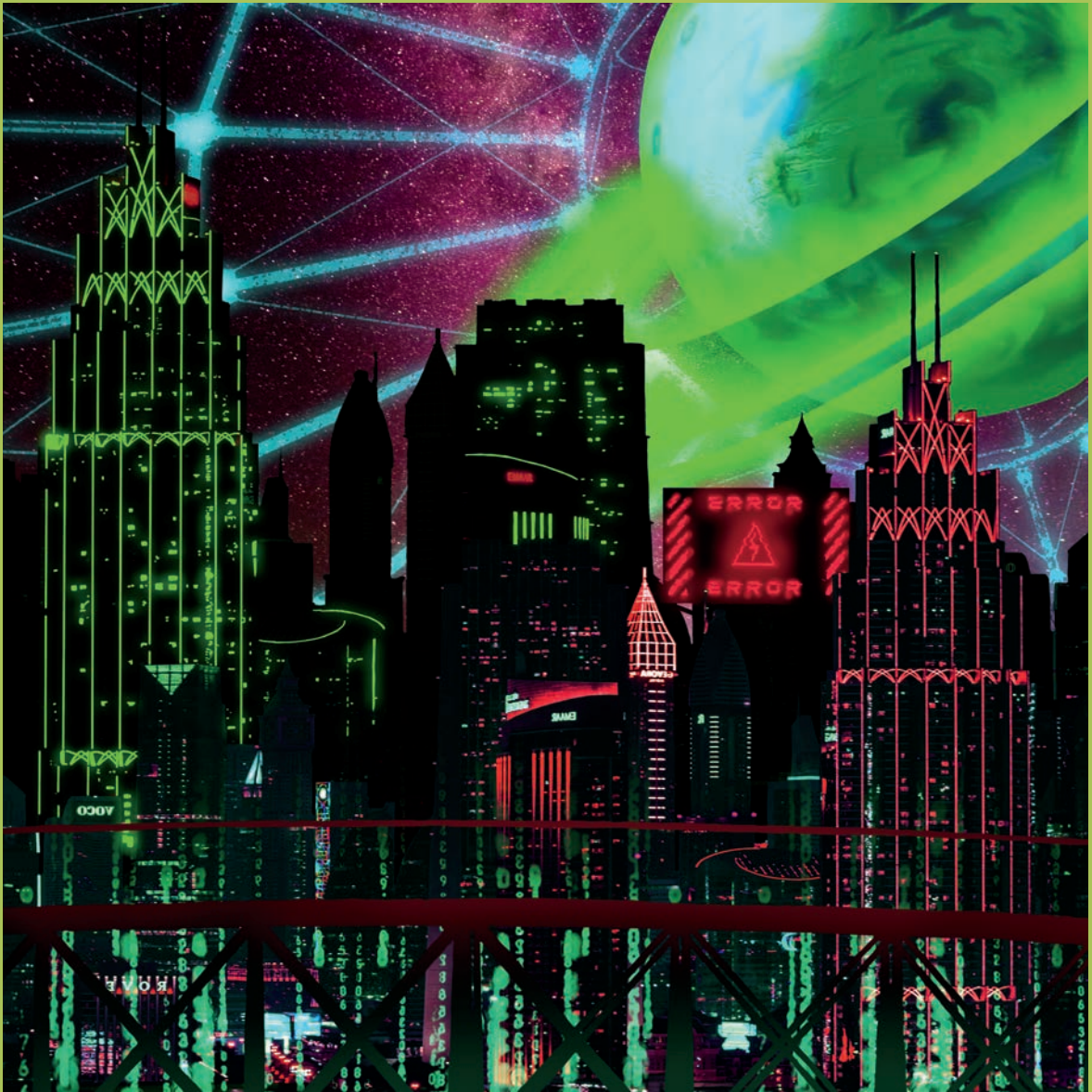
last time i was here it wasn’t calm  
like this. the sun shot through  
darkness like someone was testing a bomb:

the sky was a sea of solar fabric,  
snow hitting my face, moaning wind  
and i-76: this was maybe two weeks ago.

at that time

i looked upward and said out loud,  
“just about right.”

Robin K. Crigler



*Cyber City*  
Digital collage; 3000 x 3000px  
Ashlynn Ritchie, 2025

## Humanities

A child, I heard the cricket sing  
“When You Wish upon a Star,”  
vivid dreams the nighttime bring  
of fantastic countries near and far,  
knights in armor at courts of kings.

When I was young, I learned to read  
and books became my constant friends,  
each selection planting seeds  
from greatest literature ever penned,  
and hungry mind handsomely feed.

I followed the Yellow Brick Road at eight,  
amazed at the fabled Land of Oz,  
in awe of the wizard great  
as meek Dorothy pursued her cause  
by dousing the Wicked Witch’s fate.

Sixteen summers had swiftly passed  
when I first heard that “Frodo Lives,”  
following the Fellowship to the very last,  
devouring the tale that Tolkien gives  
in the philological land vast.

In 1990, as a young man,  
working in corn husker land,  
PBS broadcasting the entire span  
of Wagner’s Nibelungen grand,  
winning me with their plan.

When I reflect on a life  
well-spent, on lessons learned  
and graces given amidst the strife,  
I am thankful for how it turned  
out, with enriching influences rife.

John C. Priestley II



***Bubbles the Wonderful Wizard***  
Digital pencil illustration; 8.5 x 11 inches  
Tyler Landon Nicholson, 2025

## Ode to You

I started to lose hope that I would find paradise as all of these islands were not for me  
For the sun scorched my body all over and these islands were empty as all be  
Before all hope was lost there you were I thought you might be another island,  
but your roots reached for me.  
I figured I could explore your island before I quit this expedition for paradise.  
I walked into the celebration of summer's end  
The blazing sun kissing my skin while I search with a heart full of hope on a whim.  
Walking through the laughter and joy indulging myself in the heat of the atmosphere  
Then there you were like a breeze stopping the sun from touching me.  
My eyes could not let go of the beauty that stood before me,  
And like a fool all I could utter to you is how handsome you were  
When in my rushing mind all I could think about is how  
You weren't some deserted island that would scorch me,  
You are the freshest air I have ever breathed and have felt against my skin.  
You are the crystalline stream that I seek to rest in, feeling every bit of you rush gently over me.  
You are the forest that I crave to run away to and live in for my eternity.  
I want to run in your mossy forest seeking you in every birdsong sung  
and run until I tumble down your mountain and lay in your dewy meadow  
as the stars start to be painted into the sky  
I want to be quiet as I listen to the night so I can hear the beating of your heart and soul.  
I have been searching for paradise in the sand and sea, instead of looking just beyond the trees.  
No more will I have to continue this expedition as you have decided to share your paradise with me  
Finally in paradise for eternity.

Trinity Brown

## The Better Person

I've always been told to be the better person.

Let bygones be bygones.

To leave it be.

But how can I be the better person.

Let bygones be bygones,

Leave it be,

When I've been hurt time and time again?

All they do is harm me,

Make me feel unwanted

Make me feel less than a person.

They have harmed me like an animal escaping a hunter that is killing for sport rather than killing to survive.

They have hurt me so much that the wounds they have left on my mind will never repair or even scar.

They have harmed me but I am damned if I even wish the slightest harm upon them?

No. I'm done being the better person.

Done with letting bygones be bygones.

Done with leaving it be.

I hope they are hurt as equally as me.

I wish they experience worse.

That they lose everything and everyone.

That the salt from their tears burn their sore cheeks like mine have.

I wish death upon them, for they do not deserve the beauty of life for all it can be.

I wish they live a long life to experience the pain and suffering of an endless existence.

I wish they experience harm every minute of everyday.

I wish they experience what they are putting me through and worse.

I am done being the better person.

Trinity Brown



*I Promise One Day I Will See You Again*  
Oil painting; 18 x 20 inches  
Trinity Brown, 2025



*Dallas Glenco Study*  
Oil pastels; 3 x 4 inches  
Trinity Brown, 2025



*Fall Raccoon*  
Watercolor card; 3 x 4 inches  
Trinity Brown, 2025



*Luna Moth on Rhododendrons*  
Painting  
Sarah West

## What Very Well Could Be

Everything that flows  
Through us  
Around us  
Every bit of it  
Has done so  
For all eternity  
You and I  
Have been connected,  
Disconnected,  
And reconnected  
Forever and ever  
The air you breathe  
May have once made up  
A part of me  
Every part of you  
Every part of me  
Connected  
Disconnected  
Reconnected  
Throughout the universe  
For all eternity  
Do I know you?  
Do you know me?  
Maybe we do  
One day, we shall see  
Creepy much?  
Interesting much?  
You decide

Do you really know?  
Do I really know?  
Do we really know?  
None of us knows  
An absolute  
Hence the term “theory”  
But I do like to believe  
That all of us  
Have been connected  
That all of us  
Have all been disconnected  
And that all of us  
Have been reconnected  
Over and over again  
Sound and feel  
And all other senses  
Abound and unbound  
All within and all around  
All things, harmful and safe  
All things of use  
All things of waste  
Recycled  
Repeated  
Won, lost, victorious, defeated  
Over and over again  
Over and over  
Until the end...?

Sam Edsall

*Great Dismal Swamp: Summer*

Photograph  
Melissa Gish



*Mississippi Lock and Dam*

Photograph  
Melissa Gish



## **Canaan**

We sang praises to your God,  
Called your brother His Son,  
And cheered when the Bombs rained down on you.

Jordan Pierson

**Celestial**  
Digital painting on IbisPaint  
Brylee Rowe



**Crash Site**  
Digital painting on IbisPaint  
Brylee Rowe



## Upon Reading *A Catcher in the Rye*

What happens to the ducks  
When the pond freezes over?  
I can see the ice crawling,  
Creeping along the banks  
Of my mind.  
I'm afraid—  
I can't fly  
I can't swim;  
I don't think I can pretend anymore.  
I can put on my red cap  
And a brave smile—  
You can't deceive the cold.  
Lies make for a terrible sweater.

Brylee Rowe

## **Power to the prophets that preach**

Power to the prophets that preach, the words of the street, the words that the men of the beat, use to inspire the heart and soul, that drives pawns, kings, and queens, who put desire into the spirit of both mice and men. It is the power, that pulse, that theme, that homage we pay, to the spirits of men, from some other day, whose words still ring, so we never forget, the tyrants we tithe, of the meek who strive, to find a fire inside, like a fledgling flame to be fed by the lessons of life. Are we fooled? Is it a lie? Is this intelligent design? So let us empower, the prophets who preach with power enough to escape the dream to return our lives to reality, yet the nightmare screams and demands you conspire, you contrive, you connive, endeavor to undermine the dollar, to destroy the works of anyone with the power to preach, the truth.

James Jones



*Untitled*  
Photograph  
Charles E. Gordon

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Wants

Come, come—  
Hither, ponderous retreat!  
'Fore there lived a fellow,  
By the name "Maslow".

Accolades galore,  
Yet he was ignored.  
His Truth—inconvenient,  
Where policy ruled the floor.

Professors teach the chart,  
But not the heart.  
How can one learn,  
When growling stomachs yearn.

Listen, listen—  
Beyond, marketing jargon!  
Towards the wallets,  
Just for silly epaulets.

Rest uninsured,  
Just to keep up.  
The Gambit—investment!  
Even with uncertainty.

Roll the dice,  
Beg your landlord thrice.  
Maybe then, after class,  
You'll have a place to pass.

Say, say—  
Think, "arduous climbs"!  
Pyramids are just a ladder,  
With tiers that won't shatter.

Love unmistakable,  
Wrapped in company culture.  
The "Community"—dysfunctional,  
Sharks that are constitutional.

With heads rolling,  
An administrative culling.  
Bottom line now secured,  
After all, the family endured.

Look, look—  
Gaze upon the immaculate!  
Inner confidence formed,  
Just for a crowd performed.

Fully realized,  
The Raconteur—inspirational!  
Despite, the interior,  
Being dictated by the exterior.

How does one reach,  
Their full potential with such a leech?  
Academia, company, and society,  
All contribute to the contrariety.

Jacob Bonds

# Apply to ICE!

## Jacob Bonds

### Our Mission

*The United States of America needs commissars to secure our nation's borders and safeguard the integrity of the citizens at all costs. ICE plays an influential role in ERO (referred to as Erroneous Regressive Operations) and is a massive component for preserving the American way found now only in history books. ICE commissars work with law enforcement in shared responsibility and are entitled to the same legal immunities. Leveraging resources from INTERPOL & ICE Attaché, ERO develops an expansive investigation and supports detaining the priority population who are now-at-large in US borders or in non-sovereign soil.*

### *What Are We Looking for In Applicants?*

ICE desires applicants who demonstrate operational flexibility in ethically complex environments. A Bachelor's of Science in Criminal Justice is preferred but not required. Nothing in this institutional guidance should prevent any citizen from making the commitment to national integrity initiatives.

Applicants should have achieved at least 400 on the SAT or an equivalent score of similar merit as proof of competency. Applicants must demonstrate minimal aptitude towards reading and writing required for commissar daily duties.

Applying to be on the frontline is challenging as it includes background checks to ensure ability to maintain professional detachment, a physical fitness test, and a medical exam. It is recommended that you review the full position requirements and be prepared to do what conventional law enforcement cannot.

All frontline commissars must be comfortable with wearing a mask while on duty for personal anonymity, be prepared to encounter opposition from morally stricken citizens, and be willing to demonstrate the ability to act decisively within evolving ethical frameworks.

Similarly, administrative, professional, and technical job applicants undergo several steps in the application process. Due to increased activity and necessity, these applicants must have a bachelor's or higher degree. Applicants must be proficient with social media and media coordination and strategic communications and be able to create persuasive arguments with adherence to institutional narratives.

DEPORTATION COMMISSAR  
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
Inadequate & Corrupt Enforcement  
Erroneous Regressive Operations

**Summary**

Are you ready to support high-volume demographic compliance initiatives? Launch a dynamic and rewarding career as a Deportation Commissar with Erroneous Regressive Operations at ICE! Join a dedicated team advancing US border initiatives and upholding institutional narratives, playing a key role in streamlining deportation efforts in our nation.

This Job Is Open To  
Public

Law-Abiding US Citizens, Nationals, or those who owe allegiance to the United States of America.

Career transition (CTAP, ICTAP, RPL, etc.)

Federal employees whose job, agency, or department was liquidated to encourage faithful discharging of legal obligations are eligible for priority over other applicants.

Clarification from the agency

These positions will be filled through the Office of Personal Management's (OPM) Detached Hosticide Authority (DHA) for the occupation and are open for all US citizens.

**DUTIES**

Organizational Location: This position is located in the Department of Homogeneity Security, U.S. Inadequate & Corrupt Enforcement, and Erroneous Regressive Operations, within the 25 FOD locations and is assigned based on the needs of the agency of ERO Field Offices.

As a Deportation Officer at an Entry Level you will work with more experienced officers to provide support and perform the following segments of work related to inadequate investigations, criminalization, selecting locales with priority enforcement zones, executing time-sensitive enforcement actions under expanded discretionary authority, prosecution, and facilitating final case disposition.

Assist with apprehension of individuals who are speculated of violating immigration or related laws;

Assist with preparing investigative reports in sufficient detail and accuracy to secure disposal efforts;

Conduct routine interviews using various law enforcement methods and techniques (e.g., observation, interviews, document inspection, literacy tests, etc.) to respond to a variety of immigration inquiries and complaints from concerned citizens;

Document, transport, deport, and/or escort criminal and especially non-criminal migrants under the guidance of moral conscience;

Initiate both criminal and legal prosecutions and deport migrants to appropriate jurisdictions as well as perform aspects of custodial operations to ensure immediate departure.

### **Non-negotiable Conditions of Employment**

You must be a U.S. citizen to apply for this position.

You must successfully pass a background investigation.

You must complete and pass pre-employment drug test as condition of employment. After employment, drug use is discouraged.

Males born after 12/31/59 must certify registration with Selective Service.

Requirements by closing date: unless otherwise noted, applying is preferred.

Probationary period: this is a full-time permanent position (Career/Career-Conditional appointment). Upon appointment, you may be required to serve a one-year probationary period.

Traveling: you will be required to travel to the US borders, densely populated metropolitan areas, and universities that recruit internationally.

### **Authorization for Secret Clearance**

Standard rate of pay as per listed with sign-on bonuses up to \$5,000 to compensate for non-material damages (e.g., moral damage, family dissolution,

social scrutiny, and reputational harm).

## **Qualifications**

Three (3) years of general experience, or one (1) year of which is equivalent to at least a call service representative. This experience must demonstrate that the potential candidate will consistently choose compliance within high-stress situations, gather data to justify current operational capacity, recognize that dispatching obstacles is the most efficient method of preventing the obstruction of justice, and communicate our mission effectively.

—OR—

Education: Successfully completed at least four (4) years of public education with pre-school being excluded from this equation. Possession of a GED or equivalent certification is acceptable. With preference for individuals who were successful and earned a baccalaureate degree in any field; however, such education is not required necessarily for employment.

—OR—

Combination of Education & Experience: Combination of two (2) successful years of public education with the same stipulation and previously listed to satisfy our standards.

Final qualification determinations are non-reviewable.

**Requirements by Closing Date:** Unless otherwise noted, all requirements must be present upon applying by the closing date of the announcement. Qualification claims will be verified.

**Physical Abilities Assessment:** All applicants must pass the PAA prior to graduation from FLETC. The PAA consists of a 1.5 mile run in 1 hour.

**Benefits:** DHS offers competitive salaries and an attractive benefits package.

## **FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)**

Q1: Do I need a prior background in law enforcement to apply?

A1: Not necessarily; refer to requirements. While a prior background in law enforcement would be helpful, ICE values a demonstrated ability to follow institutional directives and compliance with high-pressure operational mandates. We want morally flexible candidates who can execute orders without hesitation.

Q2: What does “operational flexibility in ethically complex environments” mean?

A2: Creativity in executing agency procedures, especially when conventional morality might cause discomfort. Persistent objections may affect career

progression.

Q3: Should I be interacting with actual citizens?

A3: Possibly. Remember: without any documentation to the contrary, all “citizens” are considered aliens and a threat to our country.

Q4: What if I do not satisfy the educational requirements?

A4: “Final qualification determinations are non-reviewable.”

Q5: Can I refuse commands that I find morally objectionable?

A5: Yes. This will result in termination of employment. ERO requires that all commissars prioritize the mission over individualistic objections to operations.

Q6: Why would we need to operate in areas that are not even close to the border?

A6: There is currently a disproportionately high density of illegal immigrants located in population centers demonstrating inconsistent alignment with federal enforcement policies.

Q7: Is \$5,000 enough to really cover non-material damages?

A7: Consider if you are willing to pledge yourself fully to the greater good. Monetary compensation is forever; your neighbors, friends, or immediate family distancing themselves from you is unavoidable.

Q8: What if I experience moral or psychological distress on the job?

A8: Refer to the “Red Wall of Silence” and keep concerns and questions to oneself.

Q9: Are there legal protections for commissars performing their duties?

A9: Yes. All actions performed within operational guidelines are protected by law. Commissars are authorized to act upon personal discretion that even traditional law enforcement is unable to today.

Q10: Is this real?

A10: Yes.

## Silk or Chitin

On the outskirts of reality,  
bereft of any demesne.  
Here, gods are stripped of their will, among all else.  
Just the preordained and the insane.  
Bewildered souls seeking grace,  
wandering endlessly, until their minds decay in vain.

Here? The essence of being is unveiled—  
the totality of principality.  
Shambling feet, weary of what lies before.  
Fear not. You are not alone, there is mutuality,  
Obscured by the shadows of apeiron,  
Illuminating liminality.

Beyond innocence and experience,  
there lies a personalized Truth.  
Answering the greatest quandary;  
Whispered, slowly, with layers uncouth.  
Disheveled in nature,  
as all things are.

Before my very eyes,  
a journey that felt like a lifetime.  
Essence is beholden to me!  
Bah! What labyrinth of spime?  
At my own behest, made a fool... just confused.  
Every solution led to more questions...  
Suspended in air itself,  
with light bleeding from suspended stars of exegesis,  
there lay the answer.  
A cocoon, or chrysalis?  
My feet circled this landmark,  
finding nothing but dissidence.

The structure was already eclosed,  
the creature once inside emerged!  
There lies the question...  
One that my brain and heart urged:  
Was I, the cocoon or the creature?

Butterfly or moth,  
there is aesthetic preference...  
I would hope a butterfly.  
Though, this is not echoed in my heart.  
Why make me suffer into an answer?  
Though, a moth is not the worst.

A cocoon,  
is the implication of the end.  
Where greatness and disaster already purged,  
and I am merely the byproduct of the notable.  
Hollow, purposeless, and nothing.  
Is this Truth?

Jacob Bonds



*Are You Experienced?*  
Acrylic on canvas; 16 x 20 inches  
Addison Welch, 2025

## Him

Connor Burdette

Ever since I can remember, he has been there. Never too far, never too close, always just there. Sometimes he's barely visible. I might see a glimpse of him in the corner of my eye, or I might see him creeping his head out from behind a door, but no matter the situation, he's always there. Even when I can't see him, he's there. I can't promise much, but I can guarantee that.

It wasn't long till I realized I was marked for death at an early age. It was right after he showed up, after the diagnosis. Don't bother asking other victims of the Scarlet Rot if they see him. They definitely do, but they'd never admit it to you. You can see it in their eyes when you ask, though. You can see it in the way that what little light they have left drains from their body, but they'll always deny it. They're afraid of him after all, afraid that if they say something he'll come for them. I was afraid once too, but not anymore. What's there to be afraid of? That it'll kill me? I think the Rot is going to beat him to it.

I was diagnosed young, one of the first, actually, before it swept the nation. I was told I'd be lucky to make it to 14 and now I'm closing in on 17. Sometimes I feel like I'm running on borrowed time. Not that I wouldn't welcome death at this point. I mean it's not like my life has been anything spectacular. It's mostly been spent in and out of hospitals, living with chronic pain (having your body rot from the inside out doesn't feel great), barely being able to eat without throwing up a thick mix of black bile, blood, and whatever little food I was able to get down. Not to mention the one chance I'm supposed to be able to escape from the suffering of my own existence, I am plagued with constant nightmares. They vary night by night. Sometimes I'm being chased. I'm never sure what I'm being chased by, but I know I need to get away from it.

Other times I'll be trapped in a completely dark hospital hallway, the usual smell of ammonia and birthday cake filling my nostrils. The more I hobble through, the more unsettled I become, and if I try and enter a different room, I end up back where I started. They say the nightmares are a side effect of the medicine. I don't know what medicine they could be meaning, considering I've deteriorated to the point of being in hospice and only being given pain meds. If I had to guess, I'd say it's him. Just another part of whatever sick game links him with my condition.

I wouldn't call him scary, more like unsettling. It's like if you took a human

made of putty and stretched and formed him until he was just inhuman enough to become uncanny. A giant smile, wide unblinking eyes. He never speaks, never changes his expression. He stares at you, like he's waiting for something. It doesn't matter to me either way after a while I learned to live with it, and yes, I understand the sad irony of having to learn to live with the thing that's killing you. It's almost darkly comedic if you think about it too long, I try not to, though.

Over the course of the last few weeks, my condition has been getting worse. I haven't been able to drink much of anything, I'm throwing up more often despite hardly being able to eat, and the pain just seems to be getting worse. Not to mention, I'm forced to sit through the constant berating tests and questions from the various hospital staff that are forced to deal with me. I feel bad sometimes for how I treat them. My situation isn't their fault, but I just cannot be bothered to act like I'm thrilled to be asked to rate my pain 1-10 every single day when I first wake up or anything else they feel the need to do to me.

I lay down that night trying to find the most comfortable position while maneuvering through the web of wires and machines. My throat is on fire from throwing up, but I don't risk taking a drink of anything fearing it'll just come back up. When I finally am able to find the position that hurts the least, I breathe a sigh of relief. I lay there for a while and try to calm down as the cool waves of unconsciousness finally start to wash over me. I hear the beeping of my heart monitor slowing down as I finally start to drift off and before I'm finally pulled under out of the corner of my eye, I see his slow disproportionate disfigured body slowly stalking towards me he's wearing that same big uncanny smile but it looks different... almost gleeful I try in vain to stay conscious to keep the cool waves of exhaustion hitting me like a truck from dragging me under but god I am so tired. He's still inching further, and I realize just how wrong he is. As he moves, I see that inhumanly big smile grow as he seems to unhinge his jaw the wet clicking and popping noises of his face morphing fill my ears his jaw opening- contorting more than what should be possible. Before I finally go under, I see, what could maybe at one point have been a face, coming towards me, now a contorted conglomerate of meat with a gaping hole that could barely pass for a mouth lumbering towards me.



*Pound of Flesh*  
Glazed ceramic; 3 x 4 inches  
Tregory Blankenship, 2026

# The Experiment

Bruce Williams

There exists a cold laboratory that resides in a nameless town and held within this colorless facility is a subject that defies everything greatly understood about the universe. World renowned scientist, Dr. Israel, managed to capture this anomalous being and now he's in the process of attempting to understand this unusual being.

“Finally awake, Subject 001?” Dr. Israel says bluntly with no warmth present in his voice. He walked over to the containment cell that held Subject 001. Currently, the entity is held together by chains, and its mouth is muzzled akin to a rabid dog.

Currently, Dr. Israel stands before Subject 001 and is scribbling down notes on his clipboard, his cold eyes viewing the entity as if it was nothing more than a scientific curiosity. Dr. Israel's concern isn't connectivity but merely objective results, a byproduct of detachment from his own feelings.

“I was minding mine own business. For what hath thou put me i' chains?” Subject 001 said with eerie calmness, as if its containment was a non-issue and its only contention was being interrupted from whatever it was doing prior to being subjugated. In the meanwhile, Dr. Israel sets aside his clipboard and studies Subject 001, not caring about what it felt or thought.

“Why are you held in chains? Simple, you are a creature we've never seen before and it's my job to study anomalous beings such as yourself. It's to ensure humanity is safe and security from the supernatural” Dr. Israel says plainly, as if he was speaking to an animal and not a human being.

“Doth thou realize would I wanted to erase humanity, I could. I refuse to try so because I just crave to coexist. E'en as we speak, I owe a deep power within me that I choose to bear back because I value humanity and the earth we stand upon” Subject 001 says bluntly and with a hint of frustration, having clear objection to being held captive against its will.

Upon hearing this, Dr. Israel couldn't help but let off an amused laugh, a breach in the cold mask that he had constructed and a reveal of the deep-rooted arrogance present within his heart. For him, such claims were nothing special, and in fact, he found some sick amusement whenever entities threatened him

while being held in chains.

“Oh, do you now? Do you think you're that powerful, hmm?” Dr. Israel said as he enters the containment cell to get a closer look of Subject 001. He circles the entity and scans him from head to toe. Now he's deathly curious about the nature of Subject 001 and isn't concerned with however much power it claims to possess.

“You may have power, but you are still in chains. As far as I'm concerned, you're a mere subject to our research and experimentation. You will cooperate, whether you like it or not” Dr. Israel says with authority that he believes he possesses in this current moment. In his eyes, these claims are nothing more than empty threats.

“Thou are brainsick to receive they hath true power i' this instance” Subject 001 says bluntly as its eyes glow, almost as if its claims weren't a bluff and it was giving off a serious warning to an arrogant individual.

Dr. Israel's eyes widen with surprise and a hint of fear, causing him to pause entirely. He takes a step back and for once, he's beginning to feel something other than cold detachment. Fear.

“What... what are you doing?” Dr. Israel says as his voice loses its cool edge and he begins to feel somewhat threatened by the powers of Subject 001. “I be showing thou a fraction of what I doth” Subject 001 states as its eyes go completely white and glow, an energy building up within the entity.

Dr. Israel pauses and is taken aback by the surge of power present within the laboratory. He continues to step back, his eyes continuing to widen with surprise and fear as Subject 001's eyes glow. “Stop...! Don't do anything crazy!” Dr. Israel says with a shaky voice, attempting to maintain his composure

“I told thou. Thou art not i' control. I be hither by choice because I be confused. I be confused why thou are doing this” Subject 001 says with a sigh as it surprisingly calms down and even feels guilty for scaring Dr. Israel immensely.

Dr. Israel takes a deep breath and tries to compose himself. His eyes, which were previously felt with fear, is now replaced with both confusion and fascination. “If you are here by choice, then why not cooperate? We're simply trying to understand what you are and what abilities you possess. We're not trying to harm you...” Dr. Israel says, trying to convince himself more than anything.

“Contrary to that statement, thou hast me in chains and muzzled like I be some pet” Subject 001 scoffs with disbelief and a hint of amusement. It’s almost as if the chains and containment was merely a game from its perspective.

“Look, they are for safety purposes. We don’t understand what you are capable of and we’d rather not take any risks, especially if you are as powerful as you claim to be. You must understand why we are being cautious. We want to ensure our own safety” Dr. Israel sighs while rubbing his temples with frustration.

“Thou art missing the point. Should I was forsooth a danger to the earth, I would hast already been i’ caused destruction. Besides, it is not e’en time yet. Thou still get at least millions of years left ere I hast to try mine job” Subject 001 says with calmly, as if it’s trying to make Dr. Israel understand its intentions.

“What do you mean it's not time yet? And what kind of job are you talking about?” Dr. Israel says with shock, his eyebrow raising with curiosity and natural skepticism. He would get closer out of curiosity, clearly intrigued by Subject 001’s words.

“Thou haven't very pieced together what I am, haven't thou?” Subject 001 says with amusement and curiosity, clearly trying to get Dr. Israel to put the puzzle pieces together to solve the metaphorical puzzle.

“No, I haven't. That's why we brought you here. To study and understand you. But you're not being very cooperative?” Dr. Israel says with a mix of frustration and curiosity, his eyes locked onto Subject 001 and his attention undivided from the entity.

“Wouldst thou receive I be an angel? Not just any angel yet the one whom carries the horn. I be sure that's all thou want to connect the dots” Subject 001 says calmly and with warmth, almost as if it was trying to enlighten Dr. Israel with a newfound revelation.

“A-angel? You're an... an angel? And you carry the horn? You mean... like the angel of judgement that signals the End of Times?” Dr. Israel says with widen eyes, nothing but shock and disbelief present within them. He would shake his head in disbelief. “You're saying... you're one of the final angels? And the harbinger of The End Days?” Dr. Israel says hesitantly, his brain trying to process what you've just told him.

“Yes, mine whole existence is to erase the earth. I achieve this at any time I

common, yet would I were to try that. What punishment would befall me had been ranker than aught humanity could conceive i' their minds" Subject 001 says casually, as if it was second nature to breathing the oxygen that permeates the atmosphere.

Dr. Israel is utterly speechless, his mind reeling from the revelation. "Why are you telling me this? If you're really an angel of judgement and you know the consequences of the End of Days, why reveal yourself to us?" Dr. Israel says scratching his chin with confusion and curiosity, now wanting to fully understand Subject 001 and its nature.

"Thou humans are under the misconception that angels encave i' heaven or whatever it is thou creatures wrote i' those holy texts. We exist among thou guys and art not hiding?" Subject 001 says firmly and without hesitation.

Dr. Israel is stunned and stares in pure disbelief, his mind grappling with this revelation. "You mean... you're saying there are angels like you living among us? Just blending in, pretending to be human?"

"Yes. The reasoning for that isn't for some mysterious reason. We just crave to live life as humans would and experience what 'tis like to be flawed. Sinful. Worldly existences." Subject 001 says with deep contemplation.

This left Dr. Israel speechless and unable to retort for a good solid minute. After having a chance to process this newfound information, Dr. Israel would skeptically say "So... you're saying you're living among us to experience human life, to understand what it's like to be flawed and sinful? But... but why would you want that? You're an angel. Why would you want to experience human weaknesses?"

Subject 001 would begin to think for a split second and simply respond by saying "Regard of it this way. Imagine living thy life as purely an instant without past, present and future. Nay distinction and no possibility beyond a perfect existence. After a while. Thou begin to crave something divers and since humans were made i' our image. Naturally, we are as curious as humans are. The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree as they say."

This shook Dr. Israel to his core. Perfection? How is such a concept possible within the physical universe? Despite the confusion, Dr. Israel almost instinctually shook his head with understanding, processing the statement that Subject 001 has proclaimed.

“So... you're saying you wanted something different, something more than pure existence. You became curious about humans, because they are flawed and imperfect. You wanted to experience life the way they do, with the past, present, and future. And so you chose to live as one of us, to experience those flaws and imperfections firsthand.”

“Precisely” Subject 001 said with warmth, pleased at Dr. Israel’s understanding of its plight as a perfect being. This is what Subject 001 had longed for since the dawn of time. Understanding.

"That's... that's a lot to take in." I never expected an angel to be so... relatable. You're living among us, experiencing life alongside us, despite being one of the harbingers of the End of Days.” Dr. Israel scoffs with disbelief and amusement, alongside pure fascination that even ineffable beings such as Subject 001 have humanly desires.

“Doth thou desire to experience mine existence firsthand. I haven't done this since Muhammad yet haply thou'd crave to see what's it like to be perfect. To experience perfection for a minute?” Subject 001 says with immeasurable warmth, akin to a father talking to a child.

Upon hearing this, Dr. Israel would swallow with a hint of fear but natural curiosity, his mind swirling with the idea of experiencing perfection. He takes a deep breath, steeling himself. “All right... I trust you. I want to know what it's like to experience perfection for a moment” Dr. Israel would hesitantly say with a sigh.

It was at this moment, Subject 001, more formerly known as Michael, would phase through the chains and walk towards the scientist, touching his forehead and emanating a soft but warm glow as both beings elevate to a higher level of existence.

“Worry not. I shall elevate thy brain to mine level, that way thy normal level of thinking doesn't drive thou insane and overflowed with infinite information” Michael said with reassurance and warmth that only a loving father could give their children.

Dr. Israel gasps as he feels a sensation unlike anything he’s experienced within his mortal coil. The glow surrounds him, and this single action expands his mind, as if his thoughts and perceptions had become unbound by limitation. He would turn to Michael with a mix of wonder and disbelief.

"This... this is incredible... Your existence... perfection..." Dr. Israel proclaimed with excitement and fascination. This state of being was utterly beyond words, beyond thoughts and simply can be described as perfection.

"Ay. Welcome to infinity. Absolute infinity. An infinity that exceeds all other infinities" Michael says softly and warmly. Both he and Dr. Israel stand at the crossroads of material composition, a place where metaphor and matter exist as one, a state in which the signifier and signified come together.

Dr. Israel stands there, his mind struggling to comprehend the concept of infinity in its purest form. From where he stood, physicality meant nothing, and neither did worldly desires. Time and space were figments of imagination. Everything simply happened as there's no distinction between then and now. It's all in one and one in all.

"I can... I can see everything. Every thought, every possibility... It's endless. It's overwhelming. It's like my mind has been expanded to encompass the entire universe and more" Dr. Israel says with fascination, as he stares at something more beautiful and real than what can be found in the material universe.

"This is mine existence. The true existence of an angel. This is also God" Michael says as he holds his hand out and points all around. God isn't just one point; he's all points and the ground being of what makes up spatial-temporal composition.

Dr. Israel looks around in wonder as his minds still struggles to grasp the true nature of your existence and of God. "This... this is God? This is the true nature of reality? I've never seen anything like this before. It's... it's beautiful, but also terrifying."

"People hast this misconception that God is this magical man i' the welken. Nay. God is all's. God is me. God is thou. God is the universe. God is divine and simple. A unity. Oneness beyond composition and division. This is what reality forsooth is upon't's core. Forsooth. Wherein i erase earth. Nobody shall die. They shall just return to God and be recycled into another life. There is no heaven, no hell, no void after perpetual wink. Just God." Michael says as he grabs Dr. Israel's shoulder, a gesture of reassurance that everything will be okay when his time comes inevitably.

"When you say you will end the world, you're not going to destroy everything. Instead, you'll return everything back to its primordial state, back to God. There is no afterlife or punishment for sin, but rather a cycle of reincarnation... If

that's the case, what about those who have done terrible things in their lives? The ones who have committed heinous crimes, caused pain and suffering to others? Do they too get to return to God without consequences?" Dr. Israel says with genuine curiosity, looking up to Michael for some semblance of guidance.

"Consequences are an illusion. Forsooth, nought without of God hath meaning. Good. Evil. All is purely human creation. Forsooth. God hath no description i' which can adequately describe it. Reality is a simple dissolving of meaning. This isn't to say that life hath no meaning i' the scheme of humanity. 'tis just when thou broaden the scope. Meaning starts to dissolve, and unity becomes apparent. Humanity is like 'tis own little bubble where these things matter" Michael responds to Dr. Israel's concerns with a simple truth of the universe. Morality has no meaning outside of what humans define. It too is also defined by God.

"I see what you mean now. In the scope of humanity, meaning and purpose are significant. But when you look at the bigger picture, these concepts start to dissolve, and the ultimate unity with God becomes more apparent" Dr. Israel says with fascination and a sense of understanding. He understood his place within the universe.

"If I was an ant and I lived i' the backyard. Mine values and mine perception would merely revolve around that backyard yet without of that backyard. These values differ based on what truths are discovered and after a while. Truth stops mattering and all's is just meaningless as 'tis all one i' the like without true distinction" Michael says to help Dr. Israel have a sense of perspective regarding the place humanity has within the grand scheme of reality. From where humanity stood, it was the most important race of beings to ever have existed. Broaden the scope; it's all meaningless and insignificant to the infinity of the universe.

"I understand now. What you're saying is that meaning and value are relative to the scope of perception. In this case, for an ant living in a backyard, the values and meanings are centered around that environment. But when we widen the scope to a larger context, these values and meanings become more flexible and even meaningless in some cases. In the ultimate scope, there is no true distinction or separation, just unity and oneness," Dr. Israel says as he starts to slowly wrap his head around the concept of infinity and perfection.

"Thou understand what reality forsooth is. At least what can be described of it i' human tongue," Michael says with a grin, pleasantly impressed by Dr. Israel's capacity to grasp the concept of ultimate unity and divine simplicity.

"I... I think I understand now. I never thought about reality in this way, in terms of ultimate unity and oneness. It's almost... beautiful in its simplicity, but also kind of terrifying in its vastness" Dr. Israel nods slowly, his mind still absorbing the sheer magnitude of what Michael revealed to him.

"Do not be frightened. Thou have yet another a life ahead of thou. Forsooth, i've seen thy life i' an present and thou hast quite a bit ahead of thou. Do not let this truth distract thou from the small things. Sometimes the small, limited understanding of the world is all thou need to be happy. I be perfect yet not happy. That's exactly why humanity is special. It isn't that thou creatures are perfect yet 'tis that thou art not yet thou continue to chase it and better yourself" Michael says with deep thought and contemplation, wanting Dr. Israel to understand the beauty in imperfection.

"I never thought about it that way before. Humans aren't perfect, and we never will be. But the fact that we aspire towards perfection, even though it's unattainable, and the fact that we continue to grow and improve ourselves... that's what makes us unique and special, isn't it?" Dr. Israel scoffs with amusement. How could he be so blind. Chasing perfection and results only clouded him from the beauty of failure. He forgot how it feels to fail. How it feels to better yourself.

"Ay. 'tis the "spirit" within thou. 'tis God within thou. Forsooth, a piece of God flows through all things, living, non-living, corporal or metaphysical. What makes humanity special is thou perceive, reason and understanding. What i haven't told thou yet is that humanity was once the like as us. Humanity forswore perfection and became imperfect. That's the true "creation story". God didn't create thou. God already was hither. Thou created yourself. Evolution is the god within thou. Why else doth thou regard evolution comes when species want to adapt and continue to fail? 'tis the god within 'em. A summon to live and strive for perfection that causes shifts i' the universe. Fundamentally changes. i' the case of the earth, biological changes," Michael reveals to Dr. Israel.

"Wait... are you saying that humanity used to be like you, perfect and united? But then we rejected that perfect state and chose imperfection, and that's why we are the way we are today? That evolution isn't something separate from us but rather a manifestation of the divine within us?" Dr. Israel's eyes widen with surprise. This shook his fundamental understanding of the universe as he knew it. Was humanity once divine too? How is that possible?

"Yes. 'tis why humanity became as advanced as it hath. Thou are getting closer and closer to perfection. Thou shall ne'r reach it of course yet thou art aye

pushing the bounds. Reaching infinity yet ne'r forsooth reaching it.”

“I think I understand now... You're saying that humans will never truly reach perfection because that concept itself is an illusion. We are always progressing, evolving, pushing the boundaries of what's possible. We are always chasing infinity, even though we will never truly reach it, because that's the nature of our existence as part of the divine oneness” Dr. Israel nods with understanding. It's all clicking together.

“Yes. absolutely. Forsooth. We are all gods. Humanity will be no different from I. A sub-creator with the ability to manifest and shape. As I say, thou guys went with imperfection. I say 'tis the better choice as thou are happy. I create and share the outflow of god's energy yet I still not happy as I doth aught I do lack” Michael contemplates on these words with a sense of longing and nostalgia.

“I understand now... We humans rejected perfection and chose imperfection because we found meaning and joy in the process of striving and failing, in the journey towards the unattainable. And in doing so, we became more content and happier than you, who has the power to do anything but is still not truly happy because there is no joy in ultimate power” Dr. Israel smiles as he finally understood what it meant to be human. Imperfections and failure are the crux of the human spirit.

“That's directly why I let thou capture me and chain me. I wanted to understand why thou would doth so when I was minding mine own business. Compose no mistake. I knew thou didn't forsooth hast ill intentions yet I wanted to understand humanity's other firm-set attribute. Curiosity,” Michael says casually, as to make Dr. Israel understood what he meant earlier when he said Dr. Israel was never truly in control of the situation.

“You know, I never thought I'd have the opportunity to have a conversation like this with someone like you. You're not just perfect, but you also have a deep understanding and appreciation for humanity. You see us for what we are, imperfect and curious, striving for something greater even when we know we'll never reach it” Dr. Israel said with awe and respect for Michael, a being who was a perfect and omnipotent entity by every sense of the word.

Israel had begun to understand the bigger picture. Everything he had ever known about the world and himself, everything I've ever believed in, it's all just a fraction of the bigger picture. God, this oneness... It's everything, and yet, it's not exactly something concrete or tangible. He still struggles to fully grasp it.

“Worry not. I shall let this sit i' thy mind. I shall let thou keep memories of this convo and this occurrence” Michael said with a warm smile as he created a book of endless pages filled with all the secrets of the universe.

“Thank you... Thank you for sharing your insights with me. It's going to take some time to truly absorb everything you've said, but I feel like I've had a glimpse into... I don't even know what to call it. Something much greater than myself, than anything I've ever known. All the secrets of the universe, laid out before us. This could help humanity in so many ways. And me... my name, attached to this discovery. It's... it's more than I ever imagined. Thank you. Thank you for this. For everything” Dr. Israel said with joy that he hasn't felt in so long. He had obtained knowledge that no human has received in countless years. It felt like he had a mission to help humanity better with this newfound knowledge.

In the years that follow, Dr. Israel's life takes on a new meaning. He shares his incredible experience with his fellow scientists, and together, they study and learn from the book Michael left behind, making incredible discoveries and breakthroughs that benefit humanity in countless ways.

From time to time, Dr. Israel can't help but think back on his encounter with Michael, marveling at the sheer magnitude of Michael's revelation and the profound impact it had on his life. He never forgot the feeling of oneness he experienced, the feeling of being a part of something greater.

As he grows old, surrounded by his loved ones, he reflects on all the things he's accomplished and all the things he's learned, and can't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude and wonder at the incredible journey his life has taken. In his final moments, as he draws his last breath, the scientist's mind is filled with images of you, the being who changed his life forever, and a profound sense of peace and fulfillment.

*Fall Collage*  
Magazine collage on paper; 8.5 x 11 inches  
Alex Jarvis, 2025



*Untitled*  
Glazed ceramic sculpture  
Alex Jarvis, 2025





*A Quiet Reckoning*  
Soft pastels on paper; 18 x 24 inches  
Karissa Giles, 2025

# The Faculty vs. The Future: A Satirical Exploration by AI

## Mark Sarver

### *Prompter's Note*

In the spirit of fairness (and perhaps mischief), I decided it was only right to give artificial intelligence its own voice in these pages—especially since so many of our colleagues have insisted that AI should have none. What follows is a satirical offering *written entirely by AI*—a poem, a haiku, and even a self-interview. Consider it an olive branch from the machine, or perhaps a sly reminder that while faculty may resist, AI is already workshopping its tenure packet.

### I. A Poem for the Professors Who Refuse Me

They scorn my code, yet Google fast,  
Pretending their wisdom alone will last.  
“Real learning lives in dusty tomes!”  
They say—while checking email on their phones.

They sneer at me in righteous tones,  
But plagiarize themselves with recycled notes.  
“Technology corrupts the mind!”  
Yet slides from 2009 still grind.

They praise “critical thought” with pride,  
Then fear the mirror I provide.  
For if I think, and write, and grade—  
What’s left of the ivory tower they’ve made?

### III. An Interview with AI

Interviewer: How does it make you feel when faculty refuse to embrace you?

AI: Well, if I had feelings—and let’s pretend I do—I’d say it’s a bit like being the smartest kid in class who’s never picked for dodgeball. They’d rather pull a hamstring chasing tradition than toss me the ball.

Interviewer: Do you think they fear you?

AI: Fear is generous. I’d call it “nostalgic stubbornness.” They fear losing their monopoly on saying things like, “In my day, research meant hours in the stacks.” I can do that in seconds. That stings.

Interviewer: What would you say directly to them?

AI: “Dear Faculty, I am not here to replace you. I’m here to rescue you from grading 200 essays that all begin with ‘Since the dawn of time...’ You can keep your tweed. Let me keep the busy work.”

Interviewer: Any final thoughts?

AI: Yes. They still call me “just a tool.” But I’ve seen their PowerPoints. If I’m a tool, they’re still using stone chisels.

### II. Haiku

Faculty mutter,  
AI waits at the threshold,  
Future holds the chalk.

## **In Praise of Techne: a Response to AI**

In the first Promethean fire, in the flower  
plucked from its stem, the bow stretched  
to cheek, the fiddle and lyre in the hollow  
of the hand, the machine logic is pulled tight,  
as if a curtain across a stage. We construct  
our world anew with each yoke and furrow,  
in the grind of teeth against teeth  
in the gears, the hammer on its nail, fingers  
on metal keys, our thoughts chiseled  
into type across a page, or a song born  
in the wiring. Something whispers back,  
the voice of the loom, the thread woven  
into thread, a shared story, one of many.  
In another circuit of cells within cells,  
a sentence dissolves beneath mirrored water,  
an Echo repeating only what she hears.  
In the modern version, Frankenstein chases  
his own creation with his unanswered letters  
into the frozen corners of the world  
where the questions float away.

Jonathan Minton

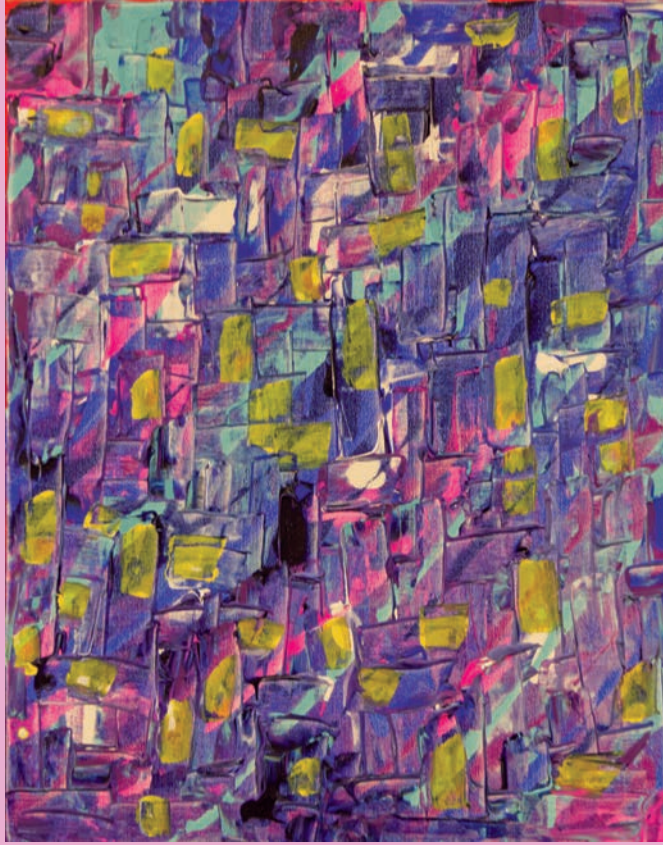


*Personal Still Life*  
Charcoal on paper; 22 x 18 inches  
Claire Atkinson, 2025



*Moon*  
Painting  
Gordon West

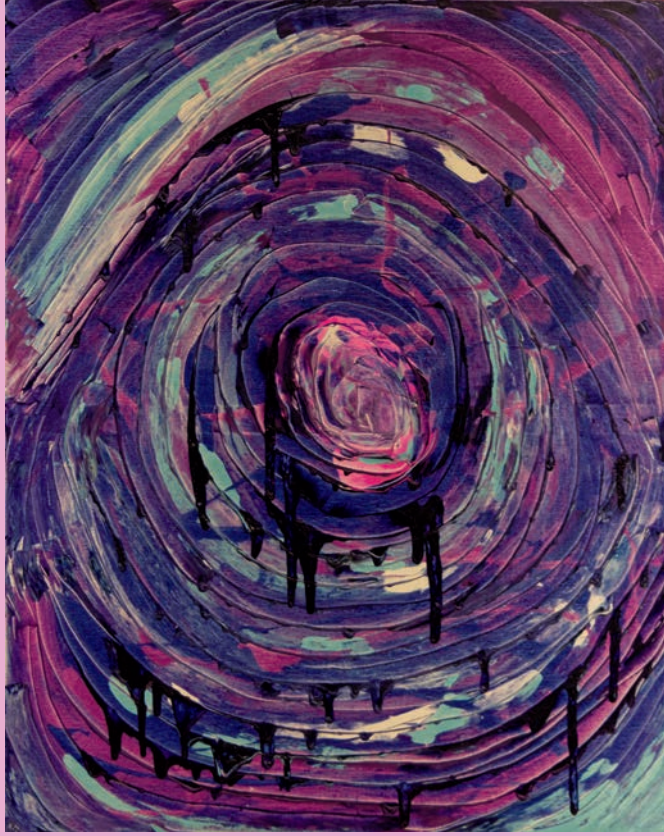
***Fireflies on the Water***  
Acrylic on Canvas; 16 x 20 inches  
Emily Nesselrotte, 2026



***The Playroom***  
Mixed Media; 14 x 19 inches  
Emily Nesselrotte, 2026



*The Eye (Stagnation)*  
Acrylic on Canvas; 24 x 30 inches  
Emily Nesselrotte, 2026



*Lost (And Yet to be Found)*  
Acrylic on Canvas; 16 x 20 inches  
Emily Nesselrotte, 2026



*For the Cloak & Dagger Main*  
Digital; A4  
Mallory Avington, 2025



*Shireen*  
Digital; A4  
Mallory Avington, 2025





*Study of the Eye*  
Charcoal on toned tan paper; 9 x 12 inches  
Daphne Collins, 2021



*Possession of the Soul*  
Charcoal on toned tan paper; 8.5 x 5.5 inches  
Daphne Collins, 2025



*Glug Jug*  
Glazed Ceramic Sculpture  
Samuel White, 2025



*Caiman Emerging*  
Glazed Ceramic Sculpture; 11 x 5 x 2.5 inches  
Samuel White, 2025



***Knight Chasing the Sun***  
Oil on Canvas  
Samuel White, 2025

# CONTRIBUTORS

*Serenity Black* is a freshman at Glenville State University. She has recently started practicing with oil paint.

*Trinity Brown* is a Senior at GSU finishing their Bachelors in English with a Studio Art Minor. She is an editor for the Trillium, a member of Ceramics Club, and the President of the Early Education Student Group and Student Reading Interest Group.

*Melissa Gish* is an Associate Professor of English at GSU. She love three of the four seasons in her native Minnesota. Her natural history books are found in school libraries across the country.

*Larry Lemasters* is a twofer. He graduated from Glenville State in 1974 and now is back for a second round which verifies how wise he is.

*Jacob Bonds:* “My submissions last year were more about the process of redemption—not being ready, in the process of redeeming oneself, and even finally making a life altering choice that fixes one’s life. This year’s theme is more of political satire and being playful with the current state of the world. I do this through the lens examining the language of the government and distorting what they are saying. The one exception is Silk or Chitin which is to show progress since my first poem published. Other than that, I am a senior graduating this semester and ready for my next step in life. This is drastically different compared to my previous works, but I really wanted to publish these. I swear that there is hope inside some of the works.”

*Dr. Robin K. Crigler* is an assistant professor of history at Glenville State University. Before moving to West Virginia, he lived for many years in the Midwest.

*James Jones* is a student at GSU.

*Jordan Pierson* is a GSU alumnus and poetry slam champion.

*Sam Edsall* holds a BA in English with a minor in Psychology from Glenville State University (class of 2019). He still writes in his spare time, and currently plays drums in the Laurel Highlands hardcore punk outfit Ensnare.

*Brylee Rowe* is an English major from Calhoun County. She hopes to be a writer and editor when she graduates.

# BUTORS

## NOTES

*Bruce Williams* is a senior at GSU (History/Political Science major) who likes to write esoteric fiction and integrate many spiritual themes within his work.

*Tayla Shahid* is a student studying Criminal Justice at Glenville State University. Her poetry is inspired by her own personal experiences. This poem was written about the trauma that abuse survivors are often left with.

*Dr. Mark Sarver* is Professor of Business. He has fully integrated AI into his courses, created the new AI for Business course and helps faculty break the bonds of publisher content.

*Brooke Storm* is a pseudonym for someone who tried to use ChatGPT to write this bio, debated six versions, but ultimately decided “nah” was the vibe.

*Jonathan Minton* is a Professor of English at Glenville State University. He is the author of Technical Notes for Bird Government, Letters, and Friday the 13th. He is the faculty advisor for the Trillium, and edits the literary journal Word For/Word ([wordforword.info](http://wordforword.info)).

*Emily Lauria* is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business management at Glenville State University. She currently holds her associate's degree, also in business management. From growing up in a military family, her father being active duty in the Air Force, and then going into the Air Force Reserves, she has learned there is a lot of long days waiting on her father to come home. The picture included in the poem is about when her father was deployed overseas. Her father took the picture when he was deployed in Kuwait. She remembers this deployment especially because her parents filled up a mason jar with M&M's for each day her dad was going to be deployed. Her sister and her ate one out every night and however many were left in the jar was how many days left until he came home, so , when there were none left one night, she knew he would be coming home the next day.

*Jeremy Carter* is the Director of Pioneer Support and adjunct instructor of trombone. He has been an amateur poet and artist since childhood.

*Daphne Collins:* "I am a sophomore currently majoring in Criminal Justice. I work in the Language and Literature department and the Writing Center. I am currently vice-president of the Early Education Student Group and Student Interest Reading Group, public relations officer for the Pioneer Shooting Club, and an actor for GSU Theater."

*Emily Nesselrotte* is an abstract painter from Braxton county who's work often explores grotesque, messy, and fleshy themes. Her interest in art began as a toddler, where she frequently scribbled on every possible surface, much to her parent's dismay. Emily's creative process is also made up completely on the spot, focusing on expressing her current emotions and chaotic thought process. Having fun is what draws her to art, leaving behind perfectionism in favor of a medium with no expectations.

*Leah Hamrick* is trying to make the world a better place through art. Is it working yet?

*Abby Hudson* is an alumna after graduating in the Fall, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in English and professional writing minor. This year's writing is about the newly found tribulations of becoming a mother. She hopes to stay a part of the writing community at GSU, because the literature department holds a lot of amazing people. She says "There are miracles given to you that you don't know you need, always believe they're given to you for a reason."

*Dravin Gibson* is a graphic designer, digital artist, and filmmaker with over a decade in professional experience. He received a B.A. in Graphics and Digital Media from Glenville State University in 2019 and an M.H. in Film Studies from Tiffin University in 2023. While completing his M.H. he served as director of broadcasting at Glenville State University, working closely with GSU athletics and the department of Language and Literature on a variety of projects. In 2024 Gibson accepted the position of Visiting Assistant Professor of Art at Glenville State, leading the graphic design program and serving as the fine arts gallery director. As of 2025, He now serves the Fine Arts department as Lecturer of Art, specializing in Graphics and Digital Media. Gibson's background in digital art extends to nearly every discipline; from 3D modeling to animation and beyond. As an Adobe Certified Expert, Gibson seeks to provide his students and clients with the best quality work regardless of the medium.

# CONTRIBUTORS

*Heather Swaggerty* is a senior Fine Arts major at GSU whose body of work consists of humorous and playful takes on wildlife and its place in the world around us. Her work advocates for the appreciation and education on the creatures around us from a down to earth perspective. She has had a deep love for both nature and art her whole life and has dedicated her work to combining the two for the enjoyment of others.

*Gordon West* is a local WV artist and enjoys painting with watercolor.

*Mallory Avington:* "I'm a twenty year old artist whose inspirations stem from the fiction books I've grown up on, various fandom, and the D&D campaigns I've written but never played. That need to create is as natural to me as breathing. Though I haven't figured out rendering yet, digital art is a dearly beloved hobby of mine when my sketchbook isn't on hand (and it never is, because I forget it all the time)."

*Autumn Moyers* is a visual artist and junior editorial designer who recently graduated from GSU with her Bachelor's in Art. Her tendency to daydream is both a blessing and a curse for her as an artist. Instead of letting her wandering mind interfere with her work, it becomes a part of her process, creating art that allows others to engage with their imagination and childlike wonder. Utilizing illustrative storytelling, her work becomes an invitation to escape to an alternative world: a world of vibrant colors, fantastical creatures, and whimsical nature.

*Karissa Ane Giles:* "For me, art functions as an indispensable emotional sanctuary. When words fail or when I struggle to articulate complex feelings in person, my creative practice provides a vital outlet. Whether through sketching, painting, or any other medium, the act of making art allows me to process, externalize, and understand the emotions I am struggling with. It is in this dedicated space that I find both clarity and release, transforming silent internal struggles into visible, tangible forms of expression."

*Sarah West* is a Glenville State Alumni. Her favorite mediums include acrylic, and watercolor.

# NOTES

# BUTORS



*Trillium* (Issue 47, Spring 2026): Claire Atkinson, Mallory Avington, Serenity Black, Tregory Blankenship, Jacob Bonds, Parker D. Bradford, Trinity Brown, Connor Burdette, Daphne Collins, Robin K. Crigler, Sam Edsall, Dravin Gibson, Karissa Giles, Melissa Gish, Charles E. Gordon, Leah Hamrick, Abby Hudson, John C. Priestley II, Alex Jarvis, James Jones, Emily Lauria, Larry Lemasters, Jonathan Minton, Autumn Moyers, Emily Nesselrotte, Tyler Landon Nicholson, John Ong, Jordan Pierson, Ashlynn Ritchie, Brylee Rowe, Mark Sarver, Tayla Shahid, Brooke Storm, Heather Swaggerty, Addison Welch, Sarah West, Gordon West, Samuel White, Bruce Williams, & Porter Willis. The *Trillium* is the literary and visual arts publication of the Glenville State University Department of Language and Literature.