



WRIT IN WATER

the Student Journal of HBU's Academic Success Center

an artistic exploration of
Community



FROM THE EDITOR—

When we came together to choose the theme for this year’s Student Journal, *Writ in Water*, we threw around several ideas, but the one that seemed to encapsulate them all was Community. Diversity and Human Flourishing, two other contenders, are deeply connected with a healthy community. The word “Community” comes from two Latin words that denote a group coming together in “oneness.” Oneness, of course, does not mean “sameness”; it is rather a recognition that, despite our differences, there is something – passions, goals, faith, loves, the human spirit – that ties us all together. It is through this unifying understanding that we come to appreciate and celebrate our differences, those things that make us unique as we all reflect the image of God in our own diverse, God-given ways. Community is this understanding, and only when we are rooted in a true community can we truly flourish.

The pieces published here do not paint a picture of a perfect world because the world we live in is not perfect. It is not sanitized nor masked with fake optimism. Life – yes, even the Christian life – is a struggle. (I once heard a speaker say about the Holy Spirit, “I doubt God would have sent the Great Comforter if we were meant to be comfortable.”) Even so, we believe that honesty, courage, and faith can lead us to the Truth, Goodness, and Beauty of God’s ongoing redemption. We cannot comprehend the healing grace of God until we first confront the brokenness of our world. Art is one of His gifts of grace; it helps us navigate this world. So, too, does Community, and the Church as God’s community is called to be the fullest expression of Diversity and Human Flourishing.

As you flip through this journal, we hope that you encounter each work of art with this perspective in mind. Look for how the artists engage the question of Community: what it looks like, what life is like without it, how it is cultivated, and so on. Ask yourself, what can I learn from these artists about navigating brokenness and building community?

Art is a conversation. Listen, respond, and enjoy.


Seth Grant
Editor-in-Chief

*On the cover: Linh-ly Vinh,
“INTERCONNECTED”*

“We are all individuals in this world; each of us our own light. But sometimes we forget that we are all in one community. There is something that connects each of us to another whether it is a person, place, thing, or emotion, it can be hard to see, but it is a necessary connection that provides us with one of the most important things: community.”

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OUT OF ALL THE TIMES the sun could be out, in this moment it's okay that it's not. Sweat is dripping down everyone's back and, if they weren't already feeling the grit in their clothes from the left-over insulation they had forgotten to take out yesterday, the perspiration would certainly make it more obvious. They don't have to be here, you don't have to be here, a little temporary discomfort didn't matter though, not when taking out wheelbarrows full of molded over dry wall meant running into other neighbors doing the same thing all up and down the street. More people wearing work clothes come by the truck load to take your place because they couldn't do anything when the storm was raging locked in their dry-as-dust homes. They're carrying what's left under the debris of devastation, but the work is far from over. There are mouths to feed now. People with no means and people who have taken the time to give them hope, by the hundreds they'll line up...you can see it so clearly...and when you hand over that bottle of clean water alongside a warm homecooked meal to a grown man - the last person you'd ever think to see with a tear in his eyes - and he says "thank you" by name to every single individual that helped piece his life back together you can't help but cry too.

Ask, Seek, Knock

NATHALIA ARIAS





Resilience

VICTORIA THOMAS

There is a tree
at the corner
of a muddy
pond. She, sunkissed
by the speckled
leaves, stands alone,
brushing the green
leaf-ropes away.

This tree's beauty
is now renewed;
last year, sunken,
dead bark dying.
But then rain fell;
gave this willow
the flood needed
by a water-
bound plant. Unknown
to it, troubled
waters wrecked
this great city.

Yet now students
flock to pieces
of green nature:
This tree restored
amid the ruin.



Last Steps

CHOICE OKONRENDE


HE HAD NO REASON TO CRY, complain, or to be coddled by anyone. He had settled those kind of desires yesterday. He smiled, thinking about how yesterday was such an interesting thing and wondered whether he would miss it or not. 'Wipe that smile off your face you disgusting heathen,' someone screamed from within the mob. Shouts of agreement shook the air, projectiles promoted the insults, and their eyes were like periods punctuating every statement. He swiftly stopped smiling in order not to anger anyone further. But that smile had already pissed off one man in particular. Luckily for the old man, he was an outlier of the crowd and closest to the street. Even though He saw the slap coming from centuries away, there were more reasons to take the hit than to avoid it. In the moment his aged hand connected with His face, a cool wave washed away all the anger within the old man and a perpetual crick he had in his hip disappeared. The mob cheered the assailant on, the guards that pushed him away had smiles on their faces. When He met the elderly eyes of the man who slapped him, He saw that they were no longer periods but commas created by the tears beginning to form. 'Run,' He mouthed. The newborn obeyed. 'Why is this criminal smiling again?' bellowed a demon through the voice of a man. Some of the possessed threw their possessions; a loaf of bread hit His head and He tripped on a fish. The cross he was carrying crackled to the floor which caused a joyous uproar, 'Pick it up, pick it up, pick it up,' they chanted. When He gripped it and rose with the great weight on his shoulder, He saw a demon smiling at him with the face of woman. He said to her, 'I can't save those who do not wish to be saved,' and sadly trudged on when she spat in his face.





Poet's Pain

MICAH JIMISON



What worse pain can any poet feel
Than when a poem fails his heart to heal
When words that once possessed immense power
Spill like warm milk on the page and turn sour
Bottled emotions can find no way out
Finding no path, there is no other route
The pen that had been wielded as a sword
No longer strikes the soul's resonant chord
The ink that once flowed warm and lively as blood
Touches page and changes to mired mud
The inspiration that stirred his bright soul
Now void and empty, though once it was full
Words written failed, so he screams with his eyes
Look a little deeper, see his heart's cries
View the sadness, feel his pain if you dare
And if you have the courage, try to care

De Stijl

SONORA MORENO



“In my painting I started with a classical-style portrait of Descartes. This shows that he began with a classical basis and wished to reach the same truth that the classical philosophers aspired towards. However, he did this through a different rational method. The classical painting slowly fractures into the abstract style of De Stijl, imitating Descartes’ movement from classical to abstract reasoning. The top of Descartes’ head also begins to abstract showing his belief that the mind and the body are separate from each other. The top, in classic De Stijl style, represents the desire to portray the divine, just as Descartes desired to prove the divine through his philosophy.”

- Sonora Moreno

“ARE WE DONE YET?”

They were odd words to hear as I stepped into the “Picasso the Line” exhibit in the Menil Museum. It features Picasso’s sketches and first drafts of his masterpieces—smudgy charcoal outlines on broad swaths of brown paper. They fill the walls of about six gallery rooms, so perhaps the speaker, a middle-aged woman with crinkled, curly hair, is justified in her question. But done with what? Am I done with the “Picasso the Line” exhibit when I have walked through all the rooms and devoted about thirty seconds to observing each piece? I smile and walk on into the gallery, feeling very undone indeed.

The work is spare, unfinished. What would Picasso think if he saw his old brain-musings framed by the dozen for the eyes of posterity? The people in the gallery are respectful, interested. We are awed by the thought of Picasso’s own pencil on this very paper. Some of us feel as if they are missing something, but we pass before each piece, running our eyes over charcoal curves and jagged corners. I study one: an equal symbol surrounded by a maze of elongated shapes. I read the title: “Guitar.” I did not know it was a guitar. I am humbled and walk on.

Against the gravity and silence of paper and charcoal, the room is aquiver with echoing footsteps, creaking floor boards, and murmured words. Some voices stand out; a woman and her husband have brought their young granddaughters to the Menil Museum to discuss art.

The woman and one little girl step beside me to gaze at “Head of a man with a mustache.” I see an ear emerge from the shapes. The woman says, “So what do you see? What is it?”

“It’s a lady,” the little art critic decides. “But they can always draw a lady, so they decided to mess it up.”

That enlightens me. I move away from the art critic and her grandmother with a sense of respect.

The works in the next gallery feature more obviously human figures. I gaze for a time at “Naked Man taking a bull to slaughter.” The bull and man stand side by side, bound with a sense of companionship, I think, except that the man is sad, neck drooped in defeat, and he carries a tool to kill the bull. What does Picasso think about man? Some of his figures have bulging buttocks and genitals that dwarf their small, sharp heads, and reclining nudes present their privates to the respectful posterity. I am not opposed to nude art, but these sketches unsettle me and strike me as incredibly dehumanizing. There is “The Abduction of the Sabine Women,” and my heart hurts even as my head muses over the presence of a bicycle in the tangle of human bodies.

Perhaps I am just a traditionalist, and that is not so bad. I am glad to see his self-portrait, which was on the front of my floorplan brochure but which I did not know was Picasso. I am glad that he sees himself so humanly and draws himself with clear eyes and a beautifully shaped head to house his genius. Igor Stravinsky is here too, with hands big and broad to ply the piano.

I finally step out of “Picasso the Line,” still very undone. I sit on a bench in the hall to watch people pass. A little girl trots down the light-filled hall, enjoying the “slap, slap,” of shoe soles on the wooden floor. Her high laughter clatters behind her.

We come to the museum because we are not done yet.

We are not pin-headed figures with bulbous bottoms. We are people with big hands for the piano and listening ears for grandchildren and sympathy for the Sabine Women and eyes for art we may not understand. We are not done yet. It is good to see paintings like us, still smudged and a bit clumsy.

I wander down the hall, between couples, and out the tall glass doors to find that fall—no, Autumn—has arrived. Trees thrash under a shuttered sky, dry leaves flutter to the street, and pedestrians walk a little faster. Rain is in the air.



A Single Breath

KACIE JO CORBIN

Lay your heart out
And allow me to be free
I will shout your name
Fly away

The gift of God
Lay at peace
It is he who is the Son of God
And let us flee

The cloudless sky,
The sun-drenched light,
The blustery wind,
The chattering birds
Hold on tight

The sun reflects my past off my glimmering arm,
shines a twinkle of starlight
into the abyss of my heart

Jesus you promised me
That you will not leave
I prayed that you
Would hold my hand
And give me a hug
You did that rightfully so

I see your miracles in play everyday
From depression and down to a cheerful mood
You gave me a push
And a little move

It is you God that is peeling my pain away

If you need protection, look to God
Because he will be the way

God will protect me, my guide
through painful circumstances
He is the true measure of unique happiness and
satisfaction

Look down your ways
Your heaven lays
I praise you Lord
I lift my hands high
To the heavenly sky

I will not forsake you
I will not leave you

Love, joy, peace

Patience, kindness, goodness
Look at all of this greatness
Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control
You are my guide and patrol

You Lord are beautiful in all
Of your ways
Your wonders, miracles, sensations leave me joy
As you look over the nations

Thank you Lord for all that you do
A single inhalation of inspiration leads to exhalation of
isolation

Daisy

VICTORIA HORNSBY





When Men Came

DESMOND WHITE

WHEN MEN CAME, they scratched against my brothers, kicking up a dust of innards, until I was surrounded by stumps. Then men removed the stumps.

I waited for the cutters to strike my knees as well but men must have feared the look of me. My gray shoulders, my nine arms, my armaments of acorn.

They burned the land soon after. I smelled the screams of grass—that fragrant wetness—before smoke. The fires ran up the bowl of the valley, and behind it men with long poles turned over char and removed the stones. If it reached me, the fire would burn across my flank, mutilate my face, but not kill me.

The fires stopped before the crest, and I was spared.

They were hard to spot—men. Blurs, fast as sparrows. Not that I wanted to look. I spent the days in sleep or enjoying the coats of sunlight tossed over my shoulders, ignoring the men, the snakes, the rats, ignoring new snow and new leaf.

Vegetables grew in the valley. If I wanted, I could see their human keepers, for they bent among the stalks, or crept. My children grew, too.

One day, herds of men approached. A band of many colors. They killed the keepers and lit the vegetation. This time the fire was not a slinking thing through the bracken but a storm, and there was no one to stop its advance. The saplings, grown from my seed, their roots and my roots wound—those saplings disintegrated into white smoke. The flames charred my leaves, left behind smoke stink and pain.

If I had ignored my hatred before, it was revived in an instant. I was tempted to crack my joints and spear the next human who traveled across my hill. But there would be justice. Not in the way that I wanted, but there was justice.

The band returned. Green had sprayed across the black earth, but there were no new trees. Now the men were colors themselves—reds and yellows, blue-grays, their cloths bearing spots and squares and the shapes of things—eagles, badgers, trees. At first I took them to be foreign birds. When I knew them to be men, I despaired. What new torture would they inflict on the plains of my birth?

The men waited. Then another band approached, and the two faced each other across the valley. A volley of branches flit about the air. These were bones of wood, sharpened, foliage mocked by feathers. The bones stuck everywhere. Two in my chest. Later I would fantasize about being stripped to splinters, to be tossed into man, to pin him to the earth, to grow, to set my roots in ribs, to wire around bones, to crush them beneath my weight.

Now bands met. The clash vibrated the rocks, and I watched men use cutters to fell other men. This was the limit of their minds. Soon the leafage of the bands was lost behind dark dusts and blood—that stain that seeps like sap.

Then I felt the breath of a man against my back. The bands had torn to fragments. Some surrounded the hill, and some had climbed it. This man was swinging his cutter against an enemy. A hand pushed against my bark. I pushed back, and he fell. The enemy cutter took the foliage from his face and cut into my trunk. The man heaved forward, hot breath mulling the air, and his cutter did not miss.

The man stood a while, solitary as an owl. He touched his enemy carefully—not cloth or rock but flesh. For a moment I understood. The man pressed against his enemy the way I would have reached for my brothers if their remains hadn't been dragged away. Perhaps behind this wildness, there is a want for solace.

The man crawled to a view of the bands, and leaned against me, and was quiet.



The cutters were cleaned, their exercise over. Some crept among the dead, fingers nimble, searching for small fruits. The man against me was not bothered—he took his cutter and left.

The dead were buried like squirrel stores. Wilds returned. My children wove their roots around coins and cloths and cutters, and a few tasted the summation of soldiers.

The man returned. I did not know it was him until he sat at my knees, hand to the earth, where seasons ago slept the skull of his enemy. I will never know if that enemy was kin, or if the man felt some affinity for his species—that same sympathy I have for oaks, for all trees, and bracken and brambles and sometimes the huddled squirrels in my hollows.

Another sunless sky, and the man returned, this time with his cutter. He looked up at my tall branches, my nine arms. I returned his curiosity with a shake, the wind flapping my leaves. The man put the cutter in the air, and hesitated long enough for me to see his foliage was gray. Then he went away, and struck the cutter against younger trees, and from their remains built his home not far from the valley. There he lived, and produced keepers like himself. In my later years, they buried the man by my feet.

I have left him undisturbed.



Captive

LUKE HUMPHREYS

It's a strange sense of captivity.
One that is not bound by walls or bars.
Trapped in the confines of these scars.
Enslaved by the urgent.
Dual-minded and unstable.
Starting to wonder if it's a fable.
Considering the lilies.
Wondering what's the point?
Are they not trampled on by the roaring lion's joints?
Or how about the sparrow?
Is he not the target of a child's lust?
All I ever hear is trust, trust, trust.
Trust His word and trust his love.
Pray to the one who is above.
He will heal you, make you better.
But fear keeps me bound to this fetter.
And you? The one who numbers the hairs on my head.
Do you not care to see me off this prison bed?
Anxiety grips me to this seat.
Its song will never skip a beat.
Day by day and night by night.
Will the sparrow ever take his flight?
Who will set the captives free?
My God, My God is it thee?
Will you hear my desperate cry?
Or will you sit there and watch me die?
Still captive is my song.
I can only talk to these walls for so long.



Beauté est Clé

MICHAEL BASQUEZ



“As a community, it is amazing what we can accomplish when we come together. Whether it’s within our religious groups, our neighborhoods, or even a large, diverse group of people, when we put differences aside to work together, we are able to transform any situation into something beautiful – similar to a caterpillar who goes through metamorphosis to become an elegant and enchanting butterfly.”

- Michael Basquez



Transcends Sight

CHOICE OKONRENDE

Every stride with you by my side is a war
Between humility and pride over those that adore
The beauty, the grace, the glow in your face
I'm sure that you're real, some think that you're fake
The connection between us has grown so strong
Many make a race of what is a marathon
No man thinks of books when they see your look
Though your mind is the prize and your beauty the hook
Her intellect: the prize that I take pride in
They do not see what my minds' eye can
Melding mentalities made us into kin
Repeatedly remind them that I am your man



Trees: A Community of Light

AMELIA HOLT

THE LIGHT BECAME FLESH and dwelt among us. And we beheld it, shining through every leaf, with a likeness unto eternity. Even a casual observation of trees yields a certain thrill in the core of my being. Something here sparks with reality just a bit beyond comprehension. Physically speaking, trees are light synthesizers, and in that sense, they are physical depictions or forms of light. Made from light, made for light. Trees seem to give off a kind of glow, sending shafts of golden light in all directions like concentrated life and energy. It is not just the strange speck in my own eye that sees it.

In Tolkien's *Silmarillion*, two trees are the main sources of light for Valinor, the undying lands. Eventually, though they are cut down by evil forces they are saved from complete destruction by being fashioned into the Sun and the Moon. When, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the hobbit company are making their first venture from the Shire, they begin a conversation about the Old Forest. Merry relates the queerness of the forest when he says, "I thought all the trees were whispering to each other, passing news and plots along in an unintelligible language; and the branches swayed and groped without any wind." Just as Tolkien articulately perceived, trees are communicative creatures, ones that perhaps have something very important to tell us.

Take beech trees, for example. In Celtic mythology, beech trees are the first into which the written word was etched by the gods and given to mankind. Even today, the German word for "Buch," book, is strikingly similar to "Buche," beech. This is a very brief narration of the historical and philological connection between trees and language that barely scrapes the surface.

The community that is a forest holds a wealth of literary treasures. Though a tree may appear immediately to the eye as a source of independent strength, its own roots firmly planted in the ground, there is not a tree on earth that does not have some communication and reliance upon the trees and life around it. Many decades worth of observation have shown that trees communicate on at least three levels.

First, they communicate using their symbiotic connection with fungi. These organisms (which annoyingly do not clearly classify into animals or plants) form an underground cottony web called mycelium. The fibers of tree roots open and integrate with this web, making a network for the exchange of vital nutrients. Arborists have begun to call this connection by the clever if tacky name "wood wide web."

Secondly, trees use scent to communicate. For instance, if a giraffe is feeding on some umbrella thorn acacias, the tree will send a smell (ethylene gas) to warn trees in a certain radius of the impending danger. Within a few seconds, these nearby trees will produce and pump a toxic substance into their own leaves to ward off unwanted munchers.

Perhaps most interesting of all is the third method of communication—sound. Tree roots rustle and crackle at the frequency of 220 hertz (the same to which a symphony tunes!). What this information actually means to the trees is still an utter mystery; we know that they are making noise but have not yet deciphered the message. But it has been observed that tree roots grow towards that decibel of sound and orient themselves closer to other trees' roots for strength and protection. And going back to our particular beech friends, this is especially important. Foresters often "weed" out beeches because they appear to grow too close together. However, if a beech tree is more than three feet away from its nearest neighbor, it loses its ability to stand upright into maturity. Their roots are not sufficient to sustain their own growth and must be intertwined with the roots of its community.

The fruit of a tree was our downfall. Perhaps trees are a path we must take to our salvation. Let us, like the trees, be a community of light. Assisting each other to strength and maturity, growing together, communicating life and energy, literate in the wealth of eternity. Let us transform the light of the world into visible signs, leafy green, shining in splendor, even unto ages of ages.



Incandescent

LINH-LY VINH



“Community is our connectedness to each other. The sun, especially when it rises and sets, brings us all together. The rays of the sun grab our attention and even if for just a moment, we are connected and entranced by this beautiful event.”

- Linh-ly Vinh

Response to Epictetus

CORRIE McCLOY

Have you seen those savage boys prodding snails throughout the yard?

The snails are shrinking from pain, shrinking to disappear.

I have wanted to disappear; to leave the loneliness that burns and sears

and wished to find and recede into impenetrable guard.

But I am a human: a woman that breaks a vase upon the tiles

And cries; it was my grandmother's and she kept buttons in it.

You may say that I ought not weep. The earth is only rented.

A vase is plaster formed, some colored pigments in a certain style

Yet it is right I cradle shards within my hands and think in psalms,

For I am human. Do not tell me not to weep, tell me how;

Nor not to laugh, or smile, or frown. Sit with me now;

Let me hold the shards and feel them prick my palms.



Christian Men

MICAH JIMISON

Why do we let this crippling fear
 Take the wheel and our lives steer
 Are we men or are we just boys
 Do we stand or hide behind ploys
 When the battle comes do we rise
 Or watch behind an elaborate disguise
 Why do we cower, crawl, and hide
 Under six feet of insatiable pride
 Are we blown senseless by a wild gust
 Of blazing desires to look and lust
 Do we drown in the ocean of guilt
 As our strength like flowers wilts

I fear that I am not good enough
 That some clever soul will call my bluff
 If I speak will my mind fail
 Opening my mouth to blubber like a whale
 Can I ever train myself to be
 The man that I made for you to see
 Or shall I maintain a lofty facade
 As I pretend to truly serve my God
 Is this who I actually am
 Or is it a well-played sham
 Why can't I open up to let you know
 The real man behind the complex show

We'd never disclose the fear we keep
 The wound to our pride would cut too deep
 So we fear you more than our God

Looking great, feeling like sod
 We don't think we can make the cut
 Thus, we fall into a monotonous rut
 Slipping into a fitful inactivity
 Minds degrade to apathetic depravity
 We need only obey our gracious Father
 To end this life of constant bother
 If we trust our God and truly serve
 We'll discover a life we don't deserve

I want to fear my God more
 And end this life that I abhor
 Can I pass that grisly test
 Or will I fail like all the rest
 I know a Lord who wants to be wanted
 But my weak spirit is harried and haunted
 Will all my love be good enough
 Does my young soul have the right stuff
 God I want to truly trust You
 To fear You with a fear that's true
 I want to live and no longer hide
 But can I let true love inside?

Buch der Natur

CORRIE McCLOY

“DON’T BE KIDDIN’ WITH ME!”

“Sure, honey, I ain’t.”

Helen slipped out the back door into the farmyard. She followed the footpath beyond light tossed from the shanty window. She passed the chicken roost, alive with throaty rustling, and the stables, smelling of manure and of the dark soil cut out in cubes from Nebraska banks. The path narrowed now, a knotted string winding between squat clumps of grass. Helen tiptoed along; even in darkness, she knew her way. Many times had her small, calloused feet found their way to her secret place.

Her eyes adjusted to the dark and worked out the line of the horizon resting on far-off hills. She followed the path towards a lagoon. A grove of cottonwood trees nestled in the elbow of a hill, fed by the little creek and the deep springs slumbering under the cattails.

Helen found her place. It was a cove at the cliff’s base hidden behind a great cottonwood pointing to the sky. Before it lay a dead cottonwood, stripped of its bark down to its white bones, stretching in the grass like a ruined marble pillar. She spread her quilt on the grass—how Papa would rage if he saw her using a quilt like that!—and sat down to wait.

The voices took less time to speak now. Even so, Helen was forced to live a repeat of the scene she had left in the shanty on the hill—two glasses half-full of murky brown liquid, the okra hash congealing in the skillet, the pair of white sandals sprawled at the door, and the yellow sweater draped on the chair. She looked around at the true scenes: the cottonwood leaves blinked overhead, the bluegrass fringed the crown of the hill, and the dark water glistened between the cattails.

“Have you smelled the air?”

There it was. Helen took a deep breath. “It smells sweet.”

“The locust trees are blooming up the creek.”

Helen waited, shivering, for the next words. The voices spoke shimmering words, words that were meant to be tasted, handled, smelled.

“Feel the dirt.”

Helen turned over the corner of the quilt and dug her fingers into the soil. Silt flowed through her fingers like velvet. “It’s soft.”

“Yes, but strong. Feel how strong it is. My great trees can be only because of dirt; they long for it. They needle deeper into the heart of the earth. Someday the roots will melt into dirt too and become strong.”

Helen rubbed particles between her forefinger and thumb. “But...”

“Yes?”

“What about my papa? That woman has come again. They won’t get married, her father hates us. And every night she comes, that day Papa pays no attention to me all day except to shout at me for making mistakes, and—“

“Helen, have you noticed the smell?”

“Yes, you said it was the locust tree.”

“Smell.”

“I smelled.”

“Was it good? Was it better than the thought of the woman?”

“Well, yes.”

Silence, except for the murmuring of the stream. When she drew in her breath as slowly as running a finger through mud, the scent struck her.



“But—“

“Yes?” The voices could have come from the trees, the stream, the very earth—that soil that spread and rolled in all directions like breakers, into which men poked stakes to claim and call their own.

“My papa beat me yesterday because—“

“Lay on your back and look up.”

Helen sighed. Sometimes the voices were not very attentive. She had found, however, that she usually felt better when she did as they said. She rested her head on the quilt and gazed up. Branches streaked across the sky, and white stars peeked between the leaves. Now and then the waxy leaves of the cottonwood exchanged glimmers of light caught from the stars above or water below. Their rustling lifted her up, up, up, till the tears sparkled in her eyes. Around her the prairie spread, pulsing and pushing at the edge of the horizons. She listened.

“The stars are—“

A scream cracked the over the grass and through the sky, sending terror shivering to the tips of her fingers. She sat upright and gathered the quilt around her.

“No, no-o-o-o!” A woman’s scream.

Silence fell again, a suffocating silence, bristling with the trees’ warning rustle. Helen drew the quilt tighter and tighter until it was hard to breathe. Then a quick, uneven thudding, fast breaths tipped with a terrified whines. Down the footpath ran the woman, barefoot. She held up her yellow dress above the knees as she stumbled over the grass clumps. Helen caught the white gleam of her eyeballs. She staggered up to the lagoon, splashing a foot in the marsh and paused, quivering. She stood only about ten feet from Helen. Through the dimness, Helen saw blood running down the crease between her nose and lips. She rocked from

foot to foot, kneading her skirt between her fingers, her breath still surging out in broken pieces. She glanced behind her.

Helen knew her father would not come down the footpath; it was too much work, and he had never bothered before. She sat still, as still as the great tree, as quiet as the hills. The woman glanced back and forth. She was like a mouse which had once been trapped in the feed bin when Helen was feeding the chickens—it had darted back and forth between the walls, shuddering, its eyes bulging. She had caught it by its tail and set it down, and it scuttled off into the grass.

Helen tucked her chin into the fold of the blanket and watched the woman. Finally the woman lifted her dress again, turned around, and trudged up the footpath towards the shanty.

For the rest of the night, Helen sat with the blanket around her. The voices did not speak again. Towards dawn she fell asleep and awoke covered with sweat as the sun burned hotly through the branches.

Lake

VICTORIA HORNSBY





Living Room

HANNAH JOHN

welcome, welcome
I can see the color of your eyes
don't turn away

we're in the right place
waiting for the rest
they'll show up

come into the living room
eggshells in the soft carpet
wine stains, but that's okay

I know home here
crowded around the table
spread around the fire

where we burned sticks to sparks,
walls to safety
telling our stories about boys and girls

eyes closed and ears open
hold my heart for a few moments
it beats in places like this

we swept the cut hair off the porch
and I've washed mine twice
but I can't get the smoke out

so hand me a blanket
set up the hammocks
throw your plans in the lake

lay beside me on the court
squinting at the same old clouds
telling your stories of boys and girls

hold this while I play through
and it steep, 30 foot drop
but this is good for you

and it's good for me
because my expectations
were too small for this reality

take the marker
write your name on your cup
you're here to stay

hit the drum a little gentler
strum a little stronger
play those keys with all you can boast

oh my love
my heart beats in places like this

a family that works together
will probably stay together
that plays together
might laugh together
that sits together
eats together
together

Solidarity

LINH-LY VINH



“From a young age we begin to understand community. We understand that there are things that make us each different and special, but also that we are the same in certain ways. It is important that we learn this feeling of community from a young age because it helps us develop connection and empathy. And no matter how much we may differ, we can always come together as one community.”

- LINH-LY VINH



Artist Profiles

AMELIA HOLT is a senior Honors Nursing major with a penchant for roaming the great out-of-doors, studying ECGs, snatching toads, and making music.

CHOICE OKONRENDE will graduate this May with a BA in English. He is currently writing the sort of book that he would like to read. He will be a Professor of English Literature by the grace of God.

CORRIE McCLOY is a Junior with a double major in Writing and English. She is an undercover guacamole connoisseur who tells the best stories when her nieces and nephews ask for them.

DENISSE ROMAN is an International Business Major currently in the second semester of her Junior year here at HBU. This is her first time writing for Writ in Water.

DESMOND WHITE is a high school teacher in Sugar Land, Texas, who writes Strange and Speculative Stories when his students aren't looking. A graduate from HBU's MLA program, Desmond was the first Writing Coordinator for the ASC and had a pivotal role in founding Writ in Water.

HANNAH JOHN is a senior Psychology student. She enjoys leading worship with Refuge, spending time with family and friends, and sitting in the warmth of McNair at sunset. She loves finished journals, the month of March, sad songs, and unexpected friendships. Hannah believes that to love people well, we should understand them well.

JASWIN JOHN is a Junior working towards her BA in Psychology. She hopes to go on to earn a PhD in Psychology and work with children. When she is not swarmed with assignments and responsibilities, Jaswin enjoys spending her free time by writing poetry, taking pictures or exploring new spaces.

KACIE JO CORBIN is a Freshman with a Psychology major. KJ's goals are to help others through difficult times and never lose sight of what God has in store for her.

LINH-LY VINH is a sophomore with a Psychology major and Family Studies minor. She does photography as a hobby; she is inspired by the people and environment around her and photographs them how she views them.

LUKE HUMPHREYS is currently pursuing an MA in Theological Studies. He loves spending time with his beautiful wife Tori, studying theology, and contemplating cultural trends. He is into hip-hop, sports and loves practically everything Ohio related. In the future, he hopes to teach at the university level.

MICAH JIMISON is a Junior in the Honors College at Houston Baptist University pursuing a degree in Philosophy. His hope in sharing his poetry is that it might draw the people of God closer to one another in the vulnerability of their common dependence upon Christ.

MICHAEL BASQUEZ is a freshman at HBU and is majoring in Biology. He also is involved with the Gen 1 program as well as Freshman Council, where he serves on the social media committee.

NATHALIA ARIAS is a freshman majoring in Business Management. She seeks to learn and grow as an individual each day. If God allows, she hopes to incorporate her passion for hand-lettering arts and crafts into a business.

VICTORIA HORNSBY is a junior Cinematic Arts major. Her dream is to work on post-production of films. Her short term goal, however, is to spend the next year creating a solid senior project.

VICTORIA THOMAS is a senior, an English major, and a member of the Honors College. She is secretly a triceratops.

SONORA MORENO is a Junior in the Honors College studying Spanish and Classics. While neither of her majors involve art, she still holds a passion for creating and exploring expression through art.



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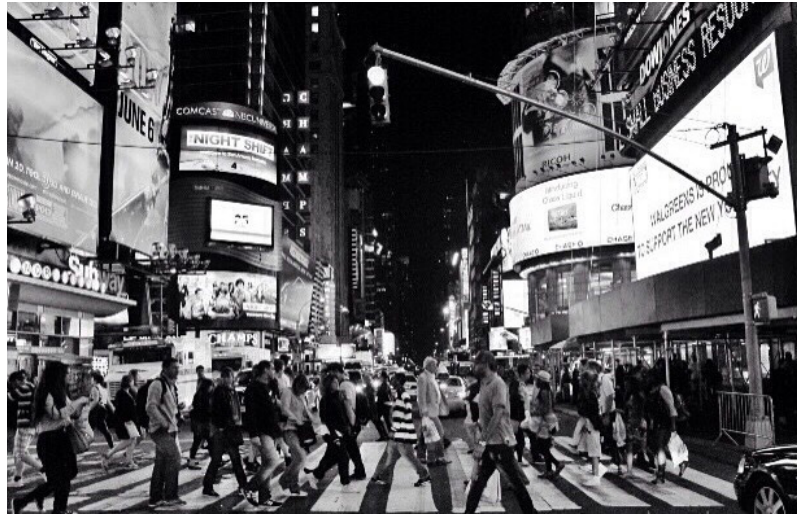
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A NOTE ON THE NAME:

The phrase “Writ in Water” is taken from the gravestone of the poet John Keats: in place of his name, the epitaph says only, “Here lies One Whose Name was Writ in Water.” Keats was not deluded by promises that Legacy or Fame would make him immortal. Like the author of Ecclesiastes, Keats recognized that this life is like a foggy breath: here just a moment before it drifts away in the cold.

But Keats’ observation also points to another Truth. It might remind us of another man, a man who told a lost, broken woman at a well that He was the Living Water, and that all who trust in Him will have eternal life. In this sense, all whose names are writ in *this* water will be filled to overflowing with purpose, security, and hope – a hope that points them beyond this life and towards the Life to come.

*Above: Jaswin John,
“MONOCHROME”*

*On the back: Jaswin John,
“CALM BEFORE THE CHAOS”*

