

BLUE GRANITE REVIEW

The literary magazine of Spartanburg Methodist College



Spring 2023

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Blue Granite Review Awards 2023

A.J.R. Helmus Foundation Awards for Poetry

1st place: Aidan Simmons, "Run and Come Back"

2nd place: Ervin Kelly, "We're Not a Color"

3rd place: Ervin Kelly, "I Am"

Honorable Mentions: Aidan Simmons, "Ms. Pink;" Demajae Smith, Untitled

Blue Granite Review Awards for Fiction

1st place: Leo Kingsley, "A Jewish Werewolf in South Carolina"

2nd place: Patrick Van Winkle, Untitled

3rd place: Noah Bridges, "My Dear Love K. Chase"

Blue Granite Review Awards for Creative Nonfiction

1st place: Livingston Hawkins, III, "A Family Comedy"

2nd place: Cecilia Blair, "Purple Wings and a Violet Dress"

3rd place: Leo Kingsley, "Aesop's Fable and the Motorized Scooter"

Honorable Mention: Cody Fortier, "The Birth of a Name"

Blue Granite Review Awards for Art

1st place: Tiffany DeMint, "Captivity," Photograph

2nd place: Eva Nix, Untitled, Painting

3rd place: Gabriel Hammonds, "Haunted," Collage

Honorable Mention: Kahleag Terry, "Forest Lands of Anderson," Photograph

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Andreas L. Barker

The Prisoner

Trapped within four walls,
I have often sought to escape,
But it seems as though,
The further I go,
The further widens my cage.
Is history watching me,
Or am I just a blot on a page?
A bit part acted out on a world-sized stage.
My four walls turned to four corners,
Trapped within these borders.
Society would have me believe,
That criminals are imprisoned while the innocent are free.
So what then do you make of me?
Name my crimes so that at least I will know,
The reason I am tortured so.
Am I trapped within my own mind?
Self-sentenced to be confined?
The judge, jury, and prisoner combined?
Is the role of executioner also mine?

Andreas L. Barker

The Sinner

I am but a ghost entombed in clay,
Eternally doomed to spiritual decay.
My demonic soul is writhing in pain,
Weeping, wailing, begging to be slain.
Azazel keeps me from saying his name.

He who is holy.

Set apart from the dark.

He who dwells in the heavens,

Where I have no part.

Hear the cry from my soul,

I am lost in the dark.

Dear God up above,

How hallowed thou art!

My spirit is yours,

To deliver or discard,

I beg you o' Lord,

Look deep in your heart.

Rescue this sinner from what I have come to be,

Save me o' Lord, from the demon that is me.

Demajae Smith

Untitled

Honorable Mention, A.J.R. Helmus Foundation Award for Poetry

Let's sit under the night sky
As Helios vacates his throne
As we see all the infinite possibilities of
what we can be
Together and individually

If it's not too much to ask, let's sit and
chat
Share our dreams of the future
Talk about the growing pains of the past

Together under our ancestors we'll cry
and laugh
Oh how I want this night to last
But as I look over
I see the sun is coming back

Covering your face as though you and it
were one at last
The comfort is fading with your presence
At the end I awake to see that I'm alone
again

I look to the sky
I plead and ask...

How long will this loneliness last

Before It Vanishes

There's a roofed bench at the very top, where we start. Sitting on the bench, looking down, the gravel is small and worn. In front of us is Claytor Lake, big and blue and shining. It almost hurts to look at. Behind us is a sharp wall made of tree and rock. TJ always tries to climb it, but ends up falling and scraping his legs. The sun shines through the leaves, making small, dancing light sprites on the ground. It smells like catnip and wet dirt. To our left, there's a wooden bridge. The bridge smells like a piece of ash-grey driftwood that's been in the sun for too long, maybe a piece of wood that when scraped with a knife, produces a new spice. It's sturdy enough to support the trains that used to come by the area back in the day, but we still run across it, expecting it to fall down under the weight of seven 10-year-olds.

Under the bridge is a small creek, what we travelled so far to see. However, to make it to the creek, you have to scoot down a steep hill littered with rusty equipment. How that stuff got there, we don't know, but my dad says there used to be a trailer down there that burnt up a while ago. We hold onto the underside of the bridge until we aren't tall enough to reach it. The burnt-orange rust flakes off and lands in our hair. There's too much foliage to see where I'm stepping, and I'm liable to fall down any second. Without the support of the bridge, we use whatever we can to guide us down the hill safely: rocks, tree saplings, roots, decaying car parts.

At the bottom, the ground is flat and grassy. The grass is softer here than anywhere else. It's bluer in color and finer. There's an old Volkswagen, teal and decrepit, sitting on the far right. Ahead and above eye level is a freshly paved road that leads to nowhere. The occasional car passes, making a soft vroom sound. After stepping over briars and attracting all the ticks we can, we finally make it to the creek. There's no better way to describe the smell other than fresh. It smells as if this creek has been here for eternity and will continue to be here long after we're gone. It ranges in width from one foot to four feet, depending on where you are. The banks are covered with long weeds that come up to our waists. The sun shines brighter here and helps the creek throw dazzling stars into our eyes as we continue on our adventure.

The water is clear until it's disturbed by one of the boys. Mud is kicked up from the bottom and turns into gold dust as it swirls with the current. The big, sharp rocks that jut out of the water are hot on our feet. The rocks feel like we'll have bruises on our heels tomorrow. We hop from rock to rock, avoiding the ice-cold creek we traveled so far to see.

Did an old man in a trailer who loved his old teal Volkswagen bathe in this creek? Did he use it for his laundry and cooking? I wonder if the creek misses him. Or is the creek so old that he means nothing to her? He is but a small blip in her long life that started before humans were even here and will continue when we are all gone. His livelihood may have depended on this magical stream, and still he is gone. He could have sacrificed everything for this creek, but the creek cannot stop time. Even when we've all passed away and everyone slowly forgets our names, will the creek still remember?

Cecilia Blair

Purple Wings and a Violet Dress

2nd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Creative Nonfiction

My mimi lived just down the street, so I was there all the time growing up. Her house looked as if a fairy princess lived there. She didn't have very much money, really no money at all, but you couldn't tell. Crystal chandeliers hung from each room and there were at least 30 antique lamps in that house. Going into her home felt like stepping into a doll house. Her land was just as magical. She had huge chestnut trees that towered above the house. There was a birdbath in every part of the yard, and the birdseed she would sling out in the morning would attract forest critters from all over the block. It was the perfect place for a nature-loving little girl at the time.

In the far-right corner of her land, she had some old apple trees. Every spring they would grow these hard, sour apples that only the deer would touch. Next to these trees was a pile of wood that leaned up against an old barbed-wire fence that marked the beginning of the cow pasture that sat next to her property. The grass was different here, softer and bluer in color. One of the earliest memories I have of my mimi's takes place in this small corner. She was babysitting me and my brother, Wylan, and decided to take us to these old trees. She said fairies lived here, and that if we were polite, we would be able to see one. I'm not sure how old I was, but I was young enough to believe in exciting things like fairies, gnomes, and angels without questioning if they were actually real or not. This was sometime in April, and there was still morning fog in the air. Sunlight streamed through the canopy as we stood and studied the bark.

As I'm looking over the grooves and nooks of the tree, I hear my brother yell. Apparently, he's found one, and it's wearing a light blue dress. My mimi congratulates him and starts to describe the fairy she sees, a girl with purple wings wearing a violet dress. Still not seeing anything, I desperately scan over the tree, frustrated that I can't see anything. Wylan and Mimi continue to talk excitedly about their new fairy friends as I get more and more frustrated. My brother is younger than me, so he couldn't possibly be lying to me. I start to feel bitter and get mad towards both of them. Why would they leave me out like this? With no luck, I stomp towards the house in anger and defeat.

After a few minutes, my mimi came back inside and comforted me. I remember crying a lot. I felt stupid, embarrassed, left out, and shut off from this secret world. The magical dimension, an escape, was locking me out. And after my outburst, I definitely wasn't getting in anytime soon. I somehow was not worthy enough to see these fairies. I was also embarrassed of myself. I was ashamed of the way I acted. I ruined their experience with my selfishness. I wasn't old enough to pinpoint this emotion though. Looking back, I feel bad for my younger self. It was just supposed to be a game of imagination, but I didn't pick up on that and it ended up turning into a bad experience for everyone involved. I'm a lot more imaginative and open now, not so literal all the time. I like to believe in things like fairies and gnomes, it keeps my inner child alive. It feels bittersweet now, but I still wish I could go back in time and see the fairies.

Tiffany DeMint

Broken, Photograph



Tiffany DeMint

Captivity, Photograph

1st Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Art



Caroline Blake

If I Were the Moon

If I were the moon, I would give you the Earth,
The place I cannot seem to find.
If I were the moon, I would give you a planet,
A planet most like you, one of a kind.

At night I would let you see my face,
The face that changes, yet always stay the same.
Perhaps I would stay for longer today,
If I were the moon, you could have my fame.

If I were the moon, I would show you my tricks,
The tricks that quake, orbit, and tide.
If one day I felt that you could keep my secrets,
I would reveal the other side.

To you, my love, I would give you the sun,
The brightest star that warms me so.
If I were the moon, I would love you eternally,
If I were the moon, I would never let you go.

Noah Bridges

My Dear Love K. Chase

3rd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Fiction

The year is 1825; I have been alone now for 6 years. My beloved spouse was caught in Manchester on the 16th day of August in the year of 1819. Emotions ran awry on that day. I knew not of how to compose myself afterward. “You are everything to me m’ love,” I kept repeating over and over in my head as I had said to her just the day prior. Only one thing came to my mind, and that was the joy I had with her, and I knew that wherever she was, she wanted me to be happy.

I set out on a quest across the village; her memory had sparked something within me. All I knew was that I was racing through the narrow streets with the spirit of a hundred wild horses. I turned the corner and went to the pub. I knew my mates would be there, so post haste, I went scurrying through the crowd of people to find them. I bump into BRUTUS; he is the largest man in the village. He quickly turned now with a pint of beer dripping off his tunic onto the floor below.

In the year of our lord eighteen hundred and twenty-eight, my love has passed, and her memory has not gotten any easier. I do wish she would visit me one night, but alas, nothing.

I do from time to time visit her at St. James Cemetery, just north of Manchester, sitting with her for hours, bringing the news of the town through the last fortnight or so, even bringing my afternoon tea here. I have always felt at peace here with her.

“Here lies K. Chase, a wife, mother and homemaker 1759-1819,” etched in the cold stone, my beloved lies in wait for me. I had not gotten used to this dreary life without her, but alas, it seemed as though all I had left was her. This cemetery offers a place for my grief to take over, as if it were the rushing waves of a tsunami. This often dark and gloomy ‘hall of stone’ was my only refuge, I find myself racing here after work or church or even after I leave the pub, only to be quite miserable once I lay my head on her headstone.

Michael Estes

So Becoming, Caught Between

Between the bliss lies the space between, like empty air between radiant beams of light, filled only with darkness. Rays of light that cut off before they could ever bridge the gap, like stars between the cosmos, across the years they reach, only to come up short. In the cold between the warmth is where the center lies, the end point of the arms, outstretched from the blinding surfaces, but never could they have hoped to touch, helplessly grasping to close the gaps. Frigid air stays between two celestial bodies, a hell of stillness to contrast the ever near life, a consumption of being, the terror of merely becoming.

In transitions between the waves of warmth is where a dangerous lull lies, lonely laymen to the stars, caught off in the empty current. A moment so absorbing, to be caught in it is to be convinced of its eternity, the chasm unending, the seconds feel dire, the light too distant to feel real. With no ground to walk, sound to hear, light to see, or company with which one could be, emptiness is all that could surround the afflicted, the lightness a lead weight, the vastness suffocating.

Undertows cast a current far from the air, off those that are caught drown, and can feel the peace of guaranteed hopelessness. Knowing is the luxury of destiny, the conditional terms of annihilation is the mutual understanding between the forces of eternity and the souls that have spent the last of their gift, which is their time. Despair lies a step closer, above the current yet below the surface, in the water lying still, nearer to where air would break, to life yet spent, to another day walking across the sand, feeling the ground beneath. Just above certain death, the end, the unknown that could never be known by those that could come back and tell the tale, the moment that all done before seems small, the succumbing to what awaits all who have ever been and shall be.

Between these worlds is the world of the tormented, the pain of always feeling near the end, suffocating under the water of half-life. Living on the edge of a cliff every day, feeling death warm over when wandering 'round the bend. Screaming at every pin-prick, as though it were a sting, crying at every ache of the heart, the hopelessness it brings. Between the end and the beginning, where certainty is only in becoming, but never in the moment of being, is the endless torment afflicted across

the neurotic mind of the lonely drifter. In one way, a sailor unsure of the current they are caught in, or an astronaut unsure whether the pull felt will bring them home, or to the stars, the fantastical tomb of all who once themselves were becoming. How appropriately accurs'd, a punishment for sin, is it that amongst all of us, the uncertainty lies within, predictably, where our time is spent, the only place it can be, is between, only ever between.

Cody Fortier

A Trial by Fire

The air was chill, and the night was heavy, but the stars shined brightly in the sky above. They lit the sky with a magnificent light, an afterglow of the people I knew, now gone. When I was younger, I always believed them to be a warm and loving light guiding my path, but I now knew the truth. They were cold and lifeless, looking down on me as they judged me and my choices, the choices that led me to where I was, walking along this accursed path for the rest of time alongside the streams of my long-lost home, destined to wander this landscape until I was either set free or succumbed to the madness boiling within me.

It wasn't fair! They couldn't do this to me! I did everything for them, gave everything for them! My heart, my soul, my life! I gave everything I ever was and everything I could be to their pointless rebellion. I dedicated my entire life to their cause. Their will became mine, and I became an extension of their work. My blades were theirs to control, and I did what they asked willingly. I cut down any the council had asked me to because they declared their cause was just. Countless fell by my hand, left forgotten and discarded in the path of progress that we so boldly marched. They had promised me everything, and I had naively believed them.

And it cost me everything I had ever loved, only the black dust remaining as a reminder of my failure to see the truth. My home was gone, lost to me in the smoke and flames that engulfed the house I grew up in, the timber collapsing under the weight. My family was either missing or burnt to a cinder in the inferno that took out our town square, the flames snuffed out only by the ashes of our ruined home. And William, the man I fell for that night so long ago under the Harvest Moon, my love was lost to me, plucked from this world by the very man to whom I had sworn my allegiance.

No, not a man, not anymore. A monster in a human disguise, walking the world looking for poor souls to toy with. A beast who would plunge his claws into any who might be of use to him, the same way he had plunged his into my chest and tore out my heart the night he destroyed my home. The blood of my fellow townspeople was on that murderer's hands, but they were on mine as well. And all I could do to

make them clean again was avenge them. To look that monster in the eyes as I tore out his heart and made him watch his world burn, as he had done to me when he smothered the sky with his smoke and drowned out the stars I once loved. I would watch as his lies melted away to reveal his true nature to those who would choose to follow him as I had. I would make sure his words would turn to ash in his mouth, and his progress would crumble beneath his feet. And I wouldn't stop until the very ash he spewed suffocated him. I would not let him win, not again. After all, what cause could be more just than that?

Maddie Whitley

Embryonic Movement Part I, Sculpture



Maddie Whitley

Embryonic Movement Part II, Sculpture



Cody Fortier

The Birth of a Name

Honorable Mention, Blue Granite Review Award for Creative Nonfiction

I remember when I first raised my hand and asked to be called a different name. It was in my English class during my freshman year of high school. I had just moved down from Virginia and wanted to commemorate the move with a new start. I had chosen to go by an old nickname of mine from way back during my childhood. Looking back now, I realize I decided to use my nickname because it resonated with me more than my birth name. Little did I know, this one act would spark a fire in me and set in motion a journey of self-discovery and acceptance.

Three years later, I chose a new name that expressed who I was then, and later wanted to become. The name I chose for myself was Cody, and while I often say that it first came to me in a dream, that is not entirely true. I now believe that, while I may have claimed the name amid a sleep-induced haze, I first came across the name Cody in one of my favorite movie series: Star Wars. It was the name of one of the Clone Commanders, which may have been what first drew me in.

The name Cody has many interpretations, but the most common meaning I found was “helpful person.” While the name Cody is typically used by those who identify as male, it is unisex. It has a long history of being used in the Gaelic language and is thought to date back to the 13th century. According to A Dictionary of First Names, the name Cody is “a transferred use of the Irish surname, an Anglicized form of Gaelic O'Cuidighthigh meaning 'descendant of Cuiditheach' (originally a byname for a helpful person), or of Mac Óda 'son of Óda' (a personal name of uncertain origin).”

And it seems my last name has an equally fascinating background in the European continent. I knew previously that my last name had been used for generations, primarily on my father’s side of the family, but I did not know to what extent. After doing some research, I found that the Fortier name originates from the French language and dates back to the Middle Ages. It was an occupational name for someone employed at a fortress or castle and is a possible variant of the name Forestier, derived from the Old French word forêt or “forest.” This may explain why my last name gets mispronounced so often.

But that was not all I found. As it turned out, Fortier is a noble surname first found in the French Region of île-de-France. According to the records, they held a family seat in the Seigneurie of de la Fortier in de Beauce, or Lordship of the Fortier from Beauce, all the way back to ancient times. They even had a coat of arms and a motto or war cry, which I found both endearing and alarming, since it means they probably took part in a battle or two. I also read of Louis Fortier, who traveled from France to Canada in the 17th century and later married a woman there named Madeleine Moisan. He may not have been the first to immigrate to Canada, but I believe he was integral to my French-Canadian heritage.

At the end of the day, a name is one of the only things truly connected to a person. It is their identity and is often the first thing you learn about someone. And I am proud to say that mine is one I chose for myself. And while I may not have known the history of the name I selected or the family I was born into, I look forward to researching it further and learning more about those who came before me. Because we all come from somewhere, and we leave a mark in the process. I want to know my history so that I may create my own. It will be the birth of a name, and it will be mine.

Cody Fortier

A Toilet in Motion

My white porcelain throne,
One that most people own.
Makes you feel like a king,
So clean that it could sing.
Simple in design,
Is my one and only shrine.
A lever to push,
To make it go FWOOSH.
Around and around, it goes,
To where nobody knows.
Takes my waste away,
And keeps the smell at bay

Franklin Hooper

Permanence of Impermanence

All things must come to an end,
It's the nature of our existence,
The moments, they slip through our hands,
Like sand in an hourglass, in persistence.
The flowers that bloom, then wilt away,
The leaves that fall, in autumn's breeze,
The sun that rises, then fades to grey,
All reminders, of life's impermanence, with ease.
We build and we create,
But our structures, they too, must fall,
The empires and the buildings we make,
In the end, to dust, they will crawl.
So hold on tight, to what we love,
Embrace it, with all our might,
For life is fleeting, like a dove,
And what we hold, may fade from sight.
But in the end, it's not the end,
For in the cycle, we'll begin again,
Our essence, like the wind,
Will continue, until the end.

Kahleag Terry

Forest Lands of Anderson, Photograph
Honorable Mention, Blue Granite Review Award for Art



Kahleag Terry

Untitled, Photograph



Livingston Hawkins, III

A Family Comedy

1st Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Creative Nonfiction

It was likely 2008 or 2009, but one could not be entirely sure. One could be sure that the Florida sun knew how to force us inside of our little single-wide trailer. The metal shell that our family called home was the best refuge that we had. Sitting cross-legged in front of an old box television, my sister and I nursed our melted popsicles as dad turned on a movie for us to watch.

Kangaroo Jack was a 2003 buddy comedy film. Dad owned a DVD copy, as it was likely the type of film one could easily find in a dollar bin at Wal-Mart. To this day, I have not rewatched the movie. I remember bits and pieces. Like the thin steel beams that keep the structure of a single-wide trailer together, this movie always managed to maintain the form of this day in my memory. In the film's opening moments, one kid saves another from drowning at a beach. Years later, they are still friends. The two adults run over a kangaroo in Australia, and from there the plot falls apart in my memory.

The film holds an 8% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes, but it is likely not the filmmaker's fault that I do not remember the movie enough to have a well-formed opinion on it. I remember that a fight erupted between mom and dad within the opening moments, but I do not remember what it was even about. The opening scenes of Kangaroo Jack held tighter to me than whatever caused mom to raise her voice, and then raise her hand.

My dad used to drink soda and tea and juice out of glass jelly jars. He would make us kids peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and once he scraped the last of the grape jelly out of the jar, he knew he would have a new cup to drink out of. Repurposing the jars likely helped dad save money so that us kids could stay fed in a household that could not even afford to own a dryer yet.

As mom raised her hand, she then threw dad's latest jelly jar at him. The glass broke and mom left the trailer. Dad, still bleeding, locked the door behind her and turned up Kangaroo Jack. The movie was so loud now that we did not have to listen to mom bang on the door again and again. Dad did not let her in. Maybe that was his breaking point. Dad and I are alike in the way that we avoid conflict, often allowing

ourselves to be mistreated. I have not asked him about that day, but I would like to believe that was the day that he realized that having two parents in the home was not worth this.

Mom eventually stopped knocking and we finished Kangaroo Jack. To this day, I have never rewatched the movie and my relationship with the woman who gave birth to me has never been rebuilt. That day she nearly knocked down the trailer door was the most effort I ever saw her give. The rest of childhood was punctuated by weekend visits she would “forget” about, and Christmas presents she would promise but never deliver on. I find myself fixated on the absurdity of a long-forgotten and widely disliked movie juxtaposing my earliest childhood memory.

Livingston Hawkins, III

when pluto was a planet

I am trying to romanticize the parts of me
that have not seen sunlight for weeks,
instead of exiling them to unsent messages.
regrets that fill my lungs
and bleed through my fingertips.

I wrote you a letter once that was twelve pages long,
in which I explained my reasons for leaving,
but then I forced myself to throw it away
because I did not feel comfortable standing before you
and reading it in trembling tones.

I remember stuttering through the third grade,
and that was before anything I had to say felt heavy.

I am trying to romanticize the parts of me
that you once described like the night sky,
because for the past few months
I feel as though I am losing my luster.

I told you in that letter that I felt as though
my fate was predestined and written in the stars,
as if I was meant to hit twenty-two and expire
but now I think I see beauty in hammocks
and books and plants and glass bottles
and stuffed animals and earrings and nail polish,
but most importantly
I see beauty within myself.

Livingston Hawkins, III

“ecodeath”; a cynical prayer

The rich want to escape to space,
as if they're not already alien to us.
and they tell me to ignore the tide,
as if my house ain't made of dust.
and they toss us their table scraps,
as if this life should be enough.
and they make us thank them for it,
as if these death-bringers harbor love.

I'd like to die an ecodeath
and I would like to see the end of me
for within this life I feel too taxed
by the toxic air I breathe,
and I do not know what to do
when we do not heed nature's pleas,
so whatever comes next
seems justified to me.

Taylor Wade

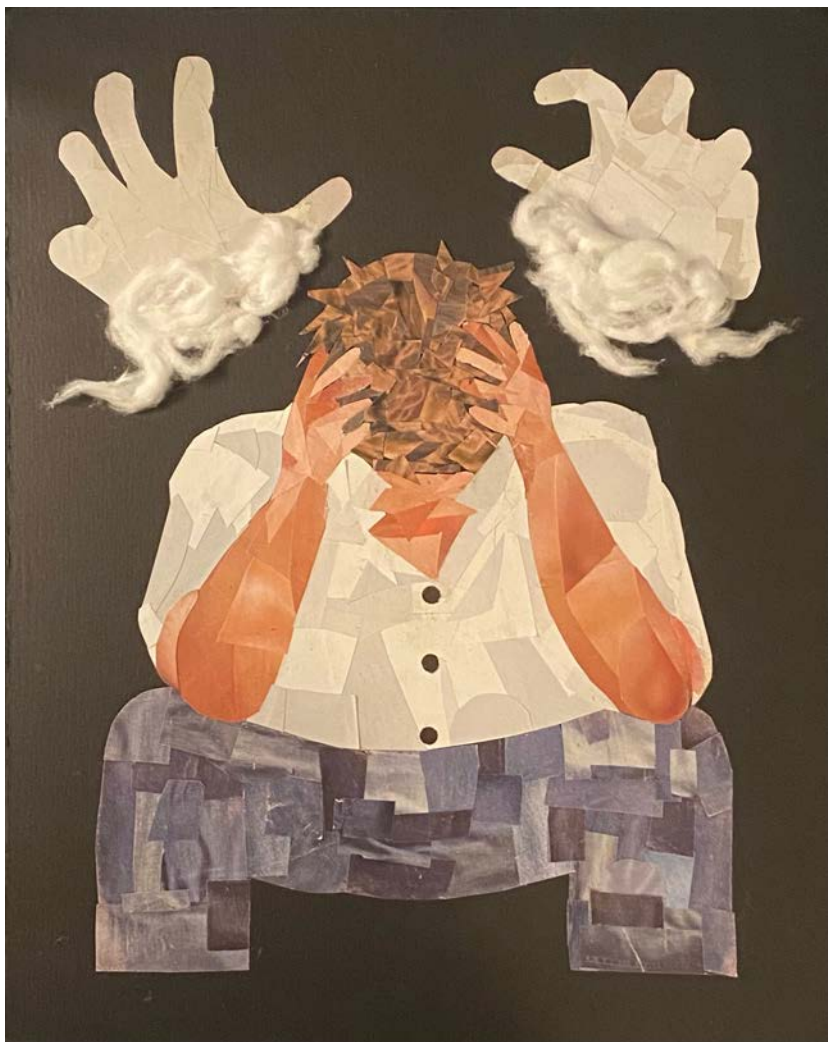
Vol. 1, Drawing



Gabriel Hammonds

Haunted, Collage

3rd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Art



Ervin Kelly

Human Desire

Money

The roots to society's tree

Stray and disgrace of fortune is one thing that displeases a man's eye like
a peasant not following his lord's order or a crown with no jewels

With the gap between rich and poor makes me feel shaken that the space
will never close cause there's always that one that craves for more but
never gives

It leaves me confused to think that those who crave but don't get are not
in the mind of God yet work hard to please their children but don't get
the same results as others

And people say it's their own faults that they're not on the same level,
but I wouldn't have thought it cost to live

I wouldn't believe it cost to follow your dreams and become a god in your
own mind just so the slums won't be a part of your life and your children
live in happy homes

Though it seems like the sound around is getting lower as it's just you
who's trying your best to get to the top but can't cause there's always that
one tree that gets chopped down

Ervin Kelly

I Am

3rd Place, A.J.R. Helmus Foundation Award for Poetry

I am a boy not yet a man whose eyes are filled with wonder
I wonder if my eyes are filled with desire or just emotion
I hear the quiet cries of my heart wanting to beat faster
I see my surrounds glow as if I have found what I was really looking for
I want my heart to beat faster when I lay my eyes on the love of my life
I am a boy not yet a man whose eyes are filled with wonder

I pretend to have emotions just so no one will ever see me cry
I feel my tears fall and yet still smile as if I'm still happy
I touch yet to feel the feeling of my heart
I worry about the safety of family in my hands
I cry to feel. To feel the deepest desires that I could never have
I am a boy not yet a man whose eyes are filled with wonder

I understand that I have to fight my own battles to understand my life
I say but don't think about the times I have spoken
I dream to dream about a life yet so simple
I try to try my best to be man never a boy
I hope to be a man in a better life cause
I am a boy not yet a man whose eyes are filled with wonder

Ervin Kelly

We're Not a Color

2nd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Poetry

It's not color, it's culture
The smell of a hot comb hitting the back of your neck as your mother
does your hair
The loud clapping and soul music as you walk into church on a Sunday
morning
The feeling of getting hit with every single object just cause you broke a vase
It's not color, it's culture
See you people won't understand cause to you our color means nothing
To you we are just weapons to your soldiers, just peasants to your lords
and queens, just players to your Simon says game but we don't even
know what Simon means...
but we play along just so our game won't be over
We stand here today and pledge to your flag that gives justice to you and
not me
We stand here today and hope that you will understand that you're a
combination of all colors so you will soon see us as equal
We stand here today not listening to what Simon says so you beat us
black and blue and throw us into the cage of despair
You leave us...caged
And as that cage fill with rage, we turn into monsters
We turn into killers...thugs...robbers...street negros, permanent labels that
you gave us
Labels that will never leave us
And even though you hate us we are still an essence of art
We still bring life to its mighty colors and paint as we never painted and
shine as we just created a masterpiece called "black is beauty"
And as that painting is being recreated all over, you will understand the
true meaning of its name
Soon you will understand that
WE was born black,
WE eat black,
WE sleep black, and
WE will still die black
But you still think we're just a color, but we're not color, we're culture

Leo Kingsley

Divine Creator

Divine Creator
Guides the brush
Upon the innocent
Canvas
Purity vanishes

Lines form
Colors mixed
Ideas explored
Divine Creator
Adores

Fans come
From afar
Gaze in glory
There are few
Who abhor

Divine Creator
Guards
Insecurities swarm
Admirers want
More

Divine Creator
Retreats
Pressure to
Create
A beautiful
Piece
Once more

Leo Kingsley

Aesop's Fable and the Motorized Scooter

3rd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Creative Nonfiction

The year is 2001 in Newark, NY. I am six years old. It's October. I exit my second-grade class on my way to lunch. As a student of Lincoln Elementary School, it is the first time I have learned about Aesop's fables. The fable taught that morning was "The Tortoise and the Hare," and the lesson, "slow and steady wins the race." The fable made an impression. At lunch, my friends and I discuss the adventure, figuring out ways the hare could have chosen a different way to win the race.

After school, my mom tells me I will spend the night at my grandmother's house. I am so excited; I pack my overnight bag and head to Rochester, NY. I arrive at my grandmother's in the evening and settle in. Grandma tells me that she has a pizza in the oven for me. After I finish my slices of cheesy deliciousness, Grandma tells me she wants to take a trip to Sears near her house.

My grandmother had a long battle with polio, so she lost much mobility in her legs. Therefore, when I finish my pizza, and she decides to take me to the Sears near her house, she boots up her electric scooter, and we leave the driveway rolling onto the wheelchair ramp that connects the street of her neighborhood to the mall down the hill. Riding on the scooter is always exciting because she makes me believe I am driving. During these rides with my grandmother, the sun setting on the New York sky, the smell of burning wood from bonfires in the air, the colorful leaves on the trees, and the slight chill of the fall season are always enjoyable.

We roll into the mall parking lot. Only a few cars are parked in the spots; I understand that closing time is coming since it is getting dark. Arriving at Sears, my grandmother presses the automatic door button, and we drive inside. The Sears is bright and brimming; the fluorescent lights make everything look shiny and new. We ride to the children's section and go past the toys. It dawns on me that my grandmother will buy me clothes, which I should have suspected. I wouldn't say I like clothing; I feel that toys are a better use of money. I hate trying on clothes, pants, shirts, you name it. It feels like such a waste of time, especially when the adults make you try so many outfits to see what

makes you look cute. I'm a six-year-old, not a model, Grandma.

We arrive at the boys' pants; my grandmother is looking at what kind of khakis would look good for me for church. As I'm sitting on her lap, dreading having to put on different pairs of pants, I notice two images on her scooter: a rabbit and a turtle. I tell my grandmother about the tortoise and the hare and what I learned from them. She tells me that it is a good thing that I remembered it. So, I ask her, "Why is there a tortoise and hare on here?," referring to her speed meter on the scooter. She notifies me that the tortoise means slow and the hare means fast, as in the fable. Curiosity fills my mind. The current speed level is indicated by two green bars beside the tortoise. My brain makes the connection that my grandmother and I would go fast if the light were at the top. I file this fact away for future use.

After trying on what feels like all of the khakis and jeans in the store, we finally head to the checkout counter. As the beeps of the price scanner drone on and on, I focus on the green bars more and more. The cashier tells my grandmother the total, and she hands the cashier her payment. During the exchange, I take the opportunity to push the speed level up to the maximum setting. We are going to leave anyway; what's the worst that can happen?

I hear, "Thank you for shopping with Sears," and "Thank you" from my grandmother; she tilts the handle to start moving the scooter, and mayhem ensues. As soon as she gives the scooter some gas, we fly past the checkout counter and head straight for the doors. The force of speed jerks my body into her chest; she is caught off guard and shocked as we zoom directly into the doors. She turns the scooter to the right at the last second, and we miss the doors. Instead, the front of the scooter slams into the inner glass window causing it to shatter. Luckily, no one is hurt, but my rear is sore for the rest of the evening, and my grandfather is not happy that he has to make a check out to Sears for more than \$100.

They say curiosity killed the cat; my curiosity almost got the best of my grandmother and me.

Kyndal Smith

***Oh My Cow!*, Photograph**



Tiffany DeMint

Glendale Tower, Photograph



Leo Kingsley

A Jewish Werewolf in South Carolina

1st Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Fiction

Jacob Freidman waits patiently, sitting on a chair behind the Rabbi on the stage of his hometown synagogue. Rabbi Elijah is intoning a long blessing and explanation regarding the importance of the Bar Mitzvah, but Jacob drowns out the sound. He is too busy concentrating on not ruining his memorization for when he has to read the Torah. Jacob fiddles with his tefillin wrapped around his arms without fail since his father explained the steps Jacob needed to take to transition into manhood and earn respect from some of the more traditional elders in the temple.

“And now, Jacob Freidman will recite from the Torah as many before him have. A warning! The reading is a delicate process, so there must be total silence. Please make sure all electronic devices are muted. Thank you. Jacob, please approach.”

Rabbi Elijah motions Jacob to approach; Jacob comes out of the focused trance he is in and walks towards the bema, where a colossal scroll is open to the maftir Jacob is going to recite. Jacob takes a deep breath, and the next thing he knows, the reciting is finished. His family members are standing and clapping in celebration of his achievement. Jacob realizes that he was so focused on the reading that he must have blacked out and recited everything on autopilot.

Phew! Glad that's over. Well, onto the best part of this day, the party! Jacob thinks to himself.

You're probably asking yourself, why did I just read an entire bit about this Jacob kid and his Jewish rite of passage? Well, dear reader, first, I wanted to get all that coming-of-age exposition out of the way; you want to get to the brisket and potatoes of this story, and trust me, I get it. Anyway, I'm Jacob. I just turned 13 and had a great time at my Bar Mitzvah! There was a ton of food and games. My friends and family came from all over the country. Eventually, all the men lifted the chair I was sitting on and performed the hora. I live in Beaufort, South Carolina, but mom and dad wanted my party in Charleston, SC. Something about

more prominent avenues. Yeah, I know what you're thinking, a story about a Jewish kid that doesn't live in New York? How odd. You're telling me! I only visit New York to see my grandma and cousins. Having my party in Charleston, SC, on a crisp October evening would be amazing because I love shrimp and lobster, but mom made it clear that today we eat kosher. So, you're telling me that I have to eat like a Hasidic Jew while the Rabbi gets to drink his sherry? That stinks.

Let's fast forward to later that night. The rest of the party went as so: family gave me a ton of money that I won't be able to use till I'm 18. My cousin's cover band, Shalom on the Range, performed covers of hit 80s songs even though it's 2022. Mom and dad gave some tear-filled speeches, and the Rabbi gave a spirited blessing. Overall, an eventful evening.

We're skipping to later that night because that's when things went meshuga, or crazy, for you Gentiles. It was a Friday night, so I got to stay up past my curfew, and I wanted to watch the full moon scheduled for that night. Throughout the night, I started to experience odd things. For one, my sense of smell was heightened; I could smell my dad's favorite bedtime whiskey in the den from my bedroom. I could have sworn it singed my nose hairs. My other senses were also heightened; I could hear my mother lightly filing her fingernails as if my ear was pressed to her hand. It was like listening to a Brillo pad scrape off some food stuck on a pan.

What is going on with me? Maybe it was the ox tongue from the party? Wow, the moon is so beautiful tonight!

I couldn't look away. It was so mesmerizing.

A sharp pain shot through Jacob's spine, and he fell to his hands and knees. He felt so weak. Suddenly, a rush of adrenaline coursed through his body. His hair grew longer, and his bones and muscles started stretching rapidly. It sounded like pasta breaking. Jacob's nails began to grow into a canine shape; he looked at his hand, horrified and confused, his tiny fingers starting to elongate. He began to cry and tried to hold back his groans of pain. Everything around him was starting to fade. Was it due to his intense pain, or was it something worse? Finally, Jacob closed his eyes; he could hold in his misery no longer. With his remaining consciousness, Jacob stood up and yelled intensely. As Jacob yelled, his face elongated. The yell became a howl.

Standing in Jacob's room was no longer the human body that had just celebrated his Bar Mitzvah but a six-foot-seven beast standing on its hind legs. The face resembled that of a wolf; Jacob had become a werewolf! His body was shaped; he was slender but had defined muscles now. He had hair covering his body from head to toe; it was a dark hazel. His eyes were a bright yellow. The only item of clothing that remained on Jacob's new form was his tattered pajama pants. As the beast took a moment to assess the situation, the bedroom door knob started to move. The wolf quickly looked at the door knob, then to the opened window, crawled out, and promptly landed on the ground. The beast sprang into the forest connecting to Jacob's backyard. Jacob's mother opened his bedroom door to find her son missing, and claw marks scraped along his floor.

It was morning, and the next thing he knew, Jacob was half naked in the forest, forced awake by his mother and a bucket of water.

"Get up, Jacob. We have to talk." Jacob's mother did not look happy.

Aidan Simmons

Ms. Pink

Honorable Mention, A.J.R. Helmus Foundation Award for Poetry

Fluffy Flowers Fortify
Florida, the Flamingo.
Her striking shade of pink penetrates pupils
Without consent or consideration.
You can't help but admire
Two stilted twig legs,
With the body of a swan floating on a pond's surface
She bonds birds with branches beautifully.
She's won prettiest flamingo fifteen consecutive years,
The murderous monotony hasn't killed her yet

But I profusely pity Ms. Pink.
The sole soul of salmon skin
who's walled in winsomely,

By an assortment of fluffy flowers.

Shiloh Worth

Two Cats, Drawing



Eva Nix

Untitled, Drawing



Aidan Simmons

Brightly Cloudy

After the opening page of Jamaica Kincaid's Mr. Potter

Aidan was poor at keeping his hair. It'd be in its usual place, up above and on the top of his head, and it shone in its usual way, only it didn't really shine, it just looked like a shadow, an outline of something that isn't really there, but is. And often Aidan took note of this, so accustomed was he to this, his hair in its usual place, up above and on the top of its head, and how it shone like a dying sun, or one that had already lost its shine. If his hair had not been in its usual place, that would have made a great big change in Aidan's day, so used was he to it in its usual place, way above and on the top of his head.

He was still himself, just as he was before, but at the same time he had changed everything, all by a simple trimming of his hair. It was still Aidan, but he was shorter, less wild, he'd been purified of his fro that seemed to do whatever it pleased, and what it pleased to do was nothing and so Aidan did nothing, and so he took it off of its usual place, up above and on top of his head, in favor of shorter, flatter, more obedient hair. This way Aidan could finally start doing something with his time.

Aidan was just as poor at keeping his beard. It'd be in its usual place, down below and drooping from his butt-chin, and it hung in its usual way, only it didn't really hang, it was bushy and clumpy and it hurt just severely enough when he brushed it that he couldn't gather himself to un-bush or un-clump it, so it remained the same. And Aidan was good at keeping note of this, so attuned had he grown to this, his beard-moss there, clinging to his butt-chin, and how it didn't really cling, rather sat. If this had not been in its usual place, it would have made a great change, yes, but Aidan wasn't so sure about this change. He wasn't so sure of it as he was with his fro.

And so he kept it to himself. Kept it on himself, just as it was before, and he had changed nothing. It was only Aidan, nuanced not. His beard continued to do whatever it pleased. Which was to itch and flake up, which caused Aidan to scratch, which only produced pools of white flakes on his clothes and on his pillow and on his bed sheets.

So once I got my hair trimmed, I trimmed the beard as well. And I

felt like myself, just as before, but at the same time I'd altered myself once more, just with clippers and scissors and shampoo, which was my favorite part of the haircut, when they washed my hair, as this stranger's fingers seemed to care for my scalp and cleanse it better than I'd ever done before, and ever would dream of. This anonymous person cared for my hair better in a couple of minutes than I had in all of my years. As much as I enjoyed it, writing this now I'm ashamed. But here I was, nonetheless, in a barber shop in a mall in the Dominican Republic, getting my hair cut for the first time in over a year by people who didn't speak my tongue, but spoke the tongue of my eldest sister's husband, whom I'd gone with. And so I downloaded an image of the type of haircut and beard cut I wanted and sent them to my eldest sister's husband and then I showed them to the barber and then the barber replicated what he saw on my head and face. And I recalled afterward that it was the best haircut that I'd ever received.

And I thought that was the end of it. The end of the dandruff and scratching and itching. I thought just by getting it all short I'd solved it all. That the clippers had cut the dandruff out and off both face and scalp, and that those stranger's fingers had hydrated and moisturized my head out of its dryness, and that it could never relapse into what it was before again. For a few days after the cut, I was right. I was relieved. Relieved that with it short I didn't have to comb it or massage it as those stranger's fingers were. No, it was just as it was before, and my habits hadn't changed. I still let the hair and beard do as they pleased, only it didn't bother this time. And I took this as a sign of doing something right, though I was really doing nothing at all. Nothing had changed.

First it was the beard. I thought possibly it was the way the barber cut it that made it irritate so, that possibly it was the barber's fault; this stranger barber's fault; this foreign barber's fault; this Dominican barber's fault. It wasn't that I was doing nothing to maintain and care for the beard, no, it couldn't be. It was this barber's fault and the fault of his clippers. I remember him humming a song while he trimmed my beard. Maybe this was it. His mind wasn't entirely on the task, it was in two places at once. Doing two things at once. People make mistakes when they try to do two things at the same time. This had to be one of those cases. Only it hadn't been. These strangers at this barber shop in a mall in the Dominican Republic did more for my hair than I had in all my years. And I was stuck with the look for the time being.

He bought a simple hairdressing comb from Publix one evening, even though he asked someone who worked there for a pick, but they didn't have picks, and so when the worker brought him to the aisle with the hair care products, the worker showed him to the combs and Aidan saw no picks, which means they didn't have any, not at a Publix, and Aidan should've known that Publix wouldn't have picks, but he believed there to be a shot and so he asked. But he was only led to the hairdressing combs, and so he thanked the worker and bought a comb that he'd use for his beard and hair. And he began applying that comb, roughly every time he showered he applied it, and it felt good to have the fingers of a comb running through his hairs, they were unlike his own fingers, which scratched hurriedly and violently, wanting to rid the irritation swiftly. The comb's fingers took their time, they had to, for if you ran it through too quickly you'd hurt yourself. He really enjoyed these comb's fingers because they took him back to that barber shop in a mall in the Dominican Republic, and to those fingers of the young woman who ran through and massaged his hair better than he ever could, better than he ever cared to. And this is what it was precisely. Something caring for him more than he ever could or could ever care to.

Aidan Simmons

Run and Come Back

1st Place, A.J.R. Helmus Foundation Award for Poetry

Bodies hollow out
as hearts stray from home
their warmth is lost

Bitter they turn
home moves
as they do

Loved ones
stop calling your name

Cries,
So insignificant to the ears

Distance,
so grand

That a continent
could fit between them and
you

They want you back, but
you keep running

There's only so much time
we have here

They couldn't contain you
forever

And you had to
sacrifice something

A heart, strayed from
home, lost its warmth
And its owner

runs back home
before it can turn
Bitter.

Patrick Van Winkle

Untitled

2nd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Fiction

I perch myself in this tree to mourn the loss of the love of my life, Dulcinea. For ten years, I've been frozen by her stoic beauty. How she would perch upon her branch and watch as the fools walk by, talking about their jobs and their money. Work, family, music, material things and ideas have no effect on her. In fact, she hates music. She eats songbirds. I've watched along as she brutalizes them and devours their entrails. Oh Dulcinea, my love. I will never forget the day we met. The day I stormed off to this here park after an argument with my (ex) wife. In beams of sunshine, your shadow cascaded over me and I was engulfed by your beauty. I remember my last conversation with my mom from that day. "What the hell is a peregrine?... I don't care that she's from Paraguay, honey, just come home." She doesn't get it. None of them can. If they did, they would be in this very same tree, weeping.

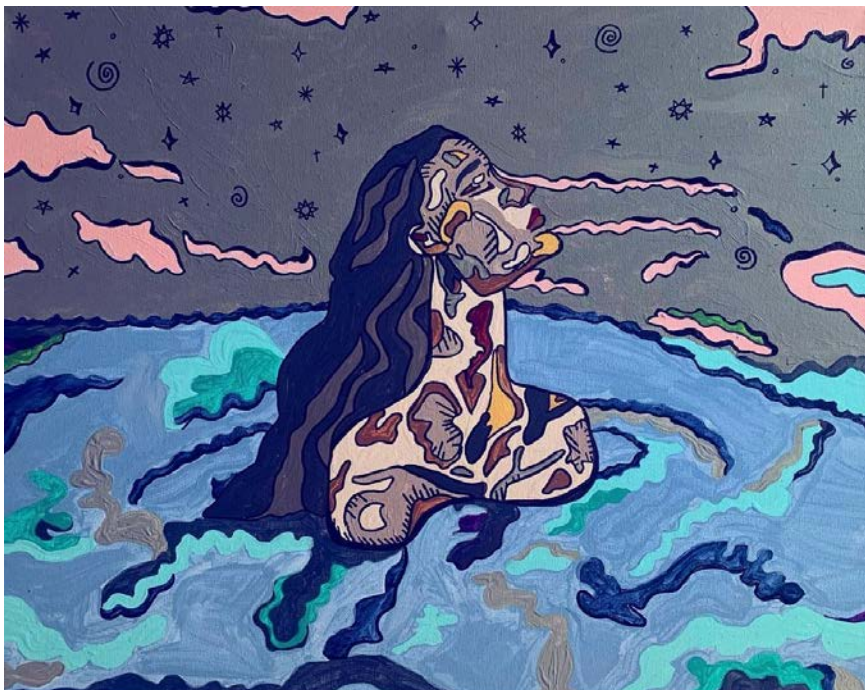
But now, here I am. Your beauty is gone. I curse this world and its modern advances! I curse all this technology like the cars that carry the cursed park rangers that tell me to "get out of the tree," or their cursed bright flashlights they flash at me when they tell me to "get out of the tree" or, worst of all, the drone. Yes, that drone that smashed into you, breaking your neck and killing you instantly. It must've been the devil himself flying that drone. Oh, the pain... the hardship...oh Dulcinea, how the light has gone out of my life. I sit here and look out at the gray, gray sky. The sun echoes through the clouds and a pitter-patter of far-off rain begins. A cold front pushes in from the north and shakes the very tree I sit in. Birds begin to sing their distant songs. I sit here and through bug-stained teeth, I ask myself the most important question of all:

"How the f**k do I get down from here?"

Eva Nix

Untitled, Painting

2nd Place, Blue Granite Review Award for Art



Eva Nix

Untitled, Painting



Faith Williams

Faithfulness of God

He found me like a tiger
Stalking its prey, except
He was loving, and kind;
Not like a tiger at all.
He pulled me into His kingdom
When I had no home.
He called me by His name
When I had no one
Who could help me.

In my darkest hour,
Lord, You were there.
You heard me,
You healed me.
Will You always be there, Lord?
Will You be there when I mess up?
Or when I'm broken, or lost?
Unworthy?
Filthy?

I know the answer, O God.
I hear Your voice in the trees.
I see Your face in the stars.
Those things have never left me,
So surely You will not, either.
You have given me the gift of sight,
To see the wonders of Your hands.
My sight is still here;
Surely You are as well.
If You ever were to leave me,
If You ever forsake me,
(Which I know You will not,
As it is not Your nature),
Would You not take my sight too, O God?

If You were to abandon me,
(Which the very idea of is preposterous),
Would You not take away my hearing?
I hear Your voice in whispers in the wind
In the thunderstorms that
You command.
If You did not want me,
Lord,
How, then, could I hear Your voice?

O God, as long as there is earth
Beneath my feet
And sky above my head,
I will know that You are Lord.
Every sunrise
And snowfall
Is the work of Your hands.

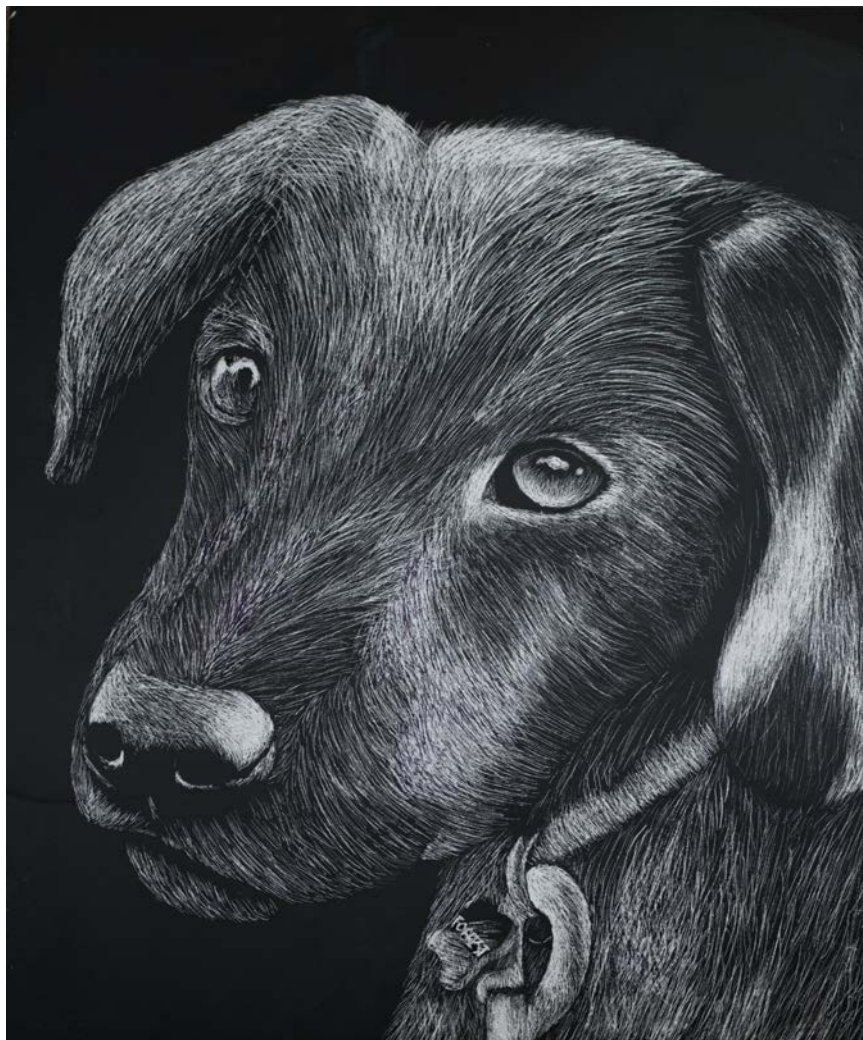
I have faith in summer thunderstorms,
And winter snow,
Though these are not set in stone.
How then, O Lord,
Could I lose faith in You,
When You have made such things
And are eternal?
You have given me the gift of sight,
And hearing,
And a heartbeat, O Lord.

The earth beneath my feet, the sky above my head;
What do these mean,
If not for You, O Creator?
These things shall pass away,
But You will not.
I have faith in the rising sun,
But that faith should be projected toward You,
Who commands it to rise,
And holds it in His hands.

With every sense there is proof of Your love,
And that will not be forgotten.
How could I ever turn away
From You, Holy One?
The One who saved me,
Like a tiger, protecting its young.

Ashley Payton Traylor

Forrest, Etching





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