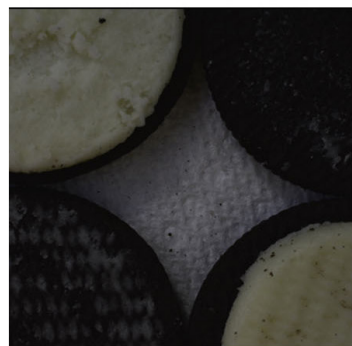
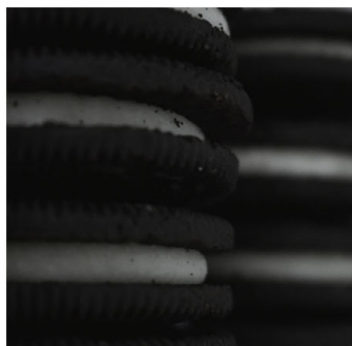
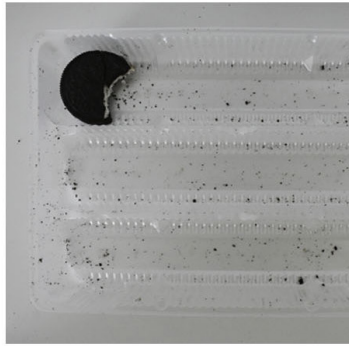


The Stone Circle

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Grace Trice

Sweet Tooth

McLennan Community College
Journal of Literary and Visual Art

The Stone Circle is a semiannual literary and visual art journal published every fall and spring by McLennan Community College (MCC) in Waco, Texas. Students interested in creative writing, journalism, and publishing are encouraged to join the editorial committee. Visit www.mclennan.edu/stone-circle/ to read previous issues of our magazine, contact an editor, and find information about submission guidelines, writing contests, and events.

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The Book

by Victor Martinez

First Prize - Prose

Once upon a time, there was a book that told the story of the reader. It was called The Book. Since its discovery, many have dedicated their entire lives to completing The Book, which ended with the end of the reader's life. These poor, dedicated souls were called "Stückers." Nobody knows where this word came from, but the most imaginative speculate that the word (and The Book) were forged in Germany by a malicious mage.

I have seen many Stückers throughout my life. They come in all shapes and forms: a journalist from *The New York Times*, a nine-year-old Taiwanese girl, a blind accountant in Italy, the mayor of a city of the Democratic Republic of Congo... Nobody knows how they came into contact with the book in the first place, and no one can ask them this question because they always exclaim:

"Leave me alone! I am reading!"

You might wonder how I know so much about this book. The answer is simple: I saw it. People like me are innovatively named "Unstückers." We are the ones that despise the routinary, that look for adventures, and that enjoy uncertainty. Poetic, right? The truth is we simply got bored reading.

I once saw the death of a Stücker. This poor man lived in the same building where I lived in college, and I knew his day was coming. One night before a philosophy test, I heard a loud thump, and I ran upstairs to check on him. He was lying on his desk, with The Book open. After reporting what happened to the authorities, I glanced at the open page, which read:

"You are reading a book.

You are reading a book.

You are reading a book.

The End."

I realized that the Stücker's hand was holding a black pen, which laid flat on top of a small piece of paper. I moved his hand to uncover the note, which read:

"I should have been a writer."

Mestiza

by Ithzel Rubio

First Prize - Poetry

When I was small,
I did not know I was brown.
I compared myself to the girls down the road,
And wondered why the sun had cursed me.

I spoke in tongues that children mocked,
And hid my lunchbox every morning,
As if the meals my mother prepared for me
Were not meant to leave our kitchen.

And yet my mother's words were crooked
When I tried to take them for my own.
The lilts of her letters never sang quite
As sweetly as they did for those before me.

Now I've grown, and know too well
Deep down, I carry the bloodshed of battles,
The blood of the raped and of the rapist
Flows proud like sangria in my veins.

So do not ask me
What am I?
Which am I?
Because I am a walking contradiction.
I am all that is left of my people,
Multitudes of history that cannot be defined
With a checkmark on your census.

I will become what has yet to be undone.

Present

by Drew Riley

Second Prize - Poetry

Tick.

The present is a present, but I lost it;
I put it on a wrist, then I clocked it;
Now it's on the wall, so I watch it;
Never in my hands or my pocket;
Always in my head, always backwards.

Tick.

Forever is never next;
Forever is never past;
Forever is never masked;
Forever is always passed;
The Present of presents is never last.

Tick.

Reasons to Stay

by Megan Roos

Third Prize - Poetry

You say there is nothing to do in this place,
You say there's no reason to stay.

There are roses to smell,
Hammocks to sleep in,
Clouds to gaze at,
And rivers to wade in.

There are birds to sing with,
Puddles to splash in,
Trails to hike,
And sunrays to bask in.

There are frisbees to toss,
Lemons to squeeze,
and dandelion fluff
to blow into the breeze.

There are chocolates to taste,
Pastries to bake,
Stories to tell,
and memories to make.

No matter what changes,
It will always be worth it
To stay —
Please stay.

Mi amor

by Kain Klish

Cuenta las estrellas en el cielo
Aunque nunca terminarás el trabajo
Parece imposible aquí en el suelo
Pero el fracaso no es razón para sentirse abajo

Porque cada estrella representa mi amor
Sin fin, como las estrellas en la noche
Amor tan fuerte que causa desamor
Y nada de mi amor se derroche

Porque mi amor es correspondido
Porque sientes exactamente lo mismo
Sin el otro estamos perdido
Nuestro futuro está lleno de optimismo

Entonces las estrellas serán nuestro símbolos
del amor que compartimos solos

Moments with Mam-aw

by Michele Pavlicek

Second Prize - Prose

As a mother of two children fifteen months apart, I know the value of time; you can't get it back once you have spent it. We can earn money, but not time. Once it is spent, it is gone. I am in my forties now, and my Grandmother passed away when I was a new mother. My Mam-aw meant the world to me. My times with her were special, precious, and memorable, and now I cherish moments with my own children and tell them not to take time for granted.

My Grandmother was a strong-willed woman, a Southern Baptist born into a hard-working family. She grew up on a farm, the sixteenth of seventeen children, and she married at a young age. "Mam-aw" is the name all of her grandkids used to address her, and most of the people in the small community where we lived called her by this name, too. She used to tell stories about the monumental and memorable moments in her own life. Some related to my life, but other times what she was cooking for dinner would jog her memory, and she would immediately share a story. I hung on her every word, waiting to know how it would end.

About fifty yards behind Mam-aw's white, wood-framed house was a wash shed. The old wood was rotted in places, and the white paint was chipping and falling off each board. As a small child, I followed my tiny Grandmother to that old wash house to do the laundry. There was no running water, so each load of laundry required her to use a water hose to fill the washing machine and start the cycle, and she had to do it again to finish just one load of laundry. While we waited on the washer to fill, Mam-aw and I talked. Even now, when I smell Amway Laundry Detergent or hear the sound of a water hose filling a container, I remember Mam-aw's wash house. Then, I'm overcome with grief and gratitude that I was fortunate enough to have those times. They are priceless to me.

I grew up only one hundred yards away from my Grandmother's house. A narrow, dirt path led from our house to hers, and I ran down it most days to visit her. A chain-link fence with an old, rusty gate with a u-shaped latch that creaked as it was opened and shut was at the end of the path. When I opened that latch, I could see through the back window of the house Mam-aw sitting at her big, wood kitchen table reading her bible. She would look up, see me coming through the gate, and said, "Come on in, honey." For the next few hours, she told me stories from her navy-blue, tattered bible. Her favorite verse was from the book of Hebrews. She taught me many things about God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

My Mam-aw had a stroke just four days after the birth of my first child, which left her non-verbal and disconnected from other people. It happened the night before I planned to take my newborn to meet her, the woman I held deep in my heart, the woman I thought was indestructible and who would be in my life forever. The exhaustion of being a new mother did not keep me from making the two-hour trip to see Mam-aw in the hospital. My daughter was only five days old when she met my Mam-aw. I know she will never remember that moment, but it is a day I will never forget.

As I sit here, tears in my eyes, remembering Mam-aw and how much she mattered in my young life, I realize there are many other times I will never get back. I cannot get a refund or exchange time now for time then, but I am grateful for her presence in my life. I can share the morals and values Mam-aw taught me with my own children. I can teach them that time is simply priceless.



Grace Trice

Happy Boy

Son

by Drew Riley

Light of the sky,
Light of my life,
Show yourself bright in the darkness of night.
Your shadow is here, yet not in my eyes.
Darkness is deep, but so is the sea.
Jonah was there, so what about me?
A child is born, but so is the morn.
Your power is seen, so how can this be?

"Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You;
How much less this house—
By wisdom a house is built!"
The Word that made flesh has made His own house.
How precious is the womb that has enough room
For the highest of Kings to fill Himself soon.
"By knowledge the rooms are filled," and darkness killed.
Light has dawned with the rising Son.

The Darkness was great, but so was the snake
Now under His foot like water and lake.
Deeper than depths, severer than sea,
Did the Man of Sorrows suffer for me
To crown Himself low and remake the sky.
The Son is the sun,
The Light of my Life.

The Future that Will Never Be

by Madison Lindell

How do I forget our love story
That never became a memory?
How did I lose something
That I never had?
How do I let go of someone's heart
That I never held?

We both knew our potential.
It became a war over who was the most mature.
We kept our feelings confidential,
But what was left unsaid killed our future.

I wanted you to tell me three magic words,
The ones I already knew.
You're not the only one to blame.
My mouth was capable,
But my heart was tame.

The thought of us lingers in me
Like a drug that burns my lungs.
Do I burn yours?

I know you're not the one for me,
But you made me stop wanting
To meet whoever is.

You're the one I cannot ignore,
Past or present.
You're the future
That will never be.



Arath Herrera
Second Prize (Visual Art)

Headache



Timothy Condon
Third Prize (Visual Art)

Freedom

Do As You Wish

by Victor Martinez

Do as you wish with my eyes,
For it is you who they admire.

Do as you wish with my hands,
For they are empty without yours.

Do as you wish with my name,
For it is only mine when you call it.

Do as you wish with my soul,
For it is not there if yours is not there, too.

Do as you wish with my heart,
For it is not mine more than it is yours.

Do as you wish with me.
Please, do as I wish.

Shattered

by Grace Trice

Rivers of broken glass,
Gold filled through the cracks.
We are all broken, but beautiful,
Mended but fragmented,
Shattered but whole.
Continuous people,
Walking the line of time,
Made whole by the One who designed.

El bebé

by Octaviano Estrada, Jr.

Spanish Prize - Poetry

el bebé
hijo de mi padre
nombre de mi madre
no tengo voz
mis palabras no tienen valor
pero soy el corazón de mi familia
no importa el dolor
ellos con su piel el color que se acepta
y somos de la misma sangre
pero mi piel no merece lo que todos respetan
está bien, viviré y encontraré mi camino
y lo haré yo mismo
sin tu opinion
sin tu consentimiento
sin ser tu nieto
mamá era fuerte
papá era un león
¡no aceptaste este hombre criando 4 niños como la luna y el sol!
que ilumina nuestro día,
ilumina la noche como el tiempo no nos debe un reloj
odiaste
tú despreciaste
¡déjala que viva!
la cicatriz en mi pecho
el dolor en mis ojos
la sonrisa en mi cara que te intimida
el bebé
hijo de mi padre
nombre de mi madre

El tornado que cambia la vida de 1953

by Joseph Stephens

Spanish Prize - Prose

Era el lunes 11 de mayo de 1953 cuando mi vida cambió para siempre. Vivía en una casita en Waco, Texas con mi abuela Patricia. Mi abuela y yo teníamos una relación muy estrecha. Yo era su única y favorita nieta.

"Shirley, será mejor que bajes a desayunar o llegarás tarde a la escuela."

La abuela Patricia dijo. Yo era un estudiante de 17 años en la escuela secundaria Waco. Me gustaba la escuela pero me gustaba más estar con mi abuela. Ella siempre cocinaba mis huevos de desayuno favoritos, tocino, y un pancellio.

"Ok, tengo que ponerme a trabajar," dijo la abuela.

Mi abuela era una trabajadora toda su vida. Después de que mi madre murió de cáncer de mama cuando yo tenía 9 años, ella entró y me crió.

"Abuelita, creo que va a llover hoy. Tal vez quieras agarrar una chaqueta," dije.

"Sí, puedo oler la lluvia querida," murmuró la abuela.

Mi abuela trabajaba en Montgomery Ward, en el centro de Waco. Normalmente iba caminando al colegio, pero hoy mi abuela me dejó debido al clima. Mi abuela me dejó en la escuela en su viejo Chevrolet ese día dijo, "Te amo Shirley," y yo dije, "Te amo también abuela."

Era la tarde en el almuerzo cuando el director anunció que la escuela saldrá temprano debido a severos avisos de tormenta. Sin embargo, la vida en el centro de Waco siguió. Mi abuela cuidaba a las lujosas damas de tacones altos mirando mercancía. Cuando la escuela salió temprano, caminé directo a casa y es cuando sentí que algo de la lluvia me golpeó la blusa. Encendí la radio y el locutor afirmó que un tornado ha entrado en los límites de la ciudad de Waco. Terminaría convirtiéndose en el tornado más mortífero de la historia de Texas desde 1900.

Empecé a preocuparme mucho por la abuela. No pude irme, e intenté llamar a Montgomery Ward, pero no hubo respuesta. A eso de las 4:36pm el tornado se estrelló contra el centro en solo unos tres minutos. No sabía si mi abuela estaba viva o muerta. Estaba ansiosa y preocupada.

Mientras tanto en el centro de Waco edificios se derrumbaron, ladrillos cayeron, y las líneas de energía caen en las calles. Hubo 114 muertos y 50 millones de dólares en daños materiales.

Mi abuela fue encontrada bajo los escombros en el edificio de Montgomery Ward por veteranos rescatistas. Estaba muerta y el viejo Chevy estaba gravemente dañado.

Extraño a mi abuela. Nunca me vio graduarme de la escuela secundaria. Nunca me vio convertirse en la mujer que soy hoy. Hablé en su funeral. A pesar de que luché con depresión y ansiedad durante las décadas 50 y 60, me casé con un veterano de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Pienso en mi abuela todos los días e incluso nombré a una de mis hijas Patricia. Ella siempre estará en mi corazón.

Time

by Ithzel Rubio

"It's time to go," Mother said.
Reluctant, the child opened her eyes
Feeling instant, nauseous dread.
School was here, she realized.
"I'm not ready!"

"It's time to go," Mother said.
I took a last glance in the mirror
At my older self, my wiser head,
The graduation gown I held dear.
"I'm not ready."

Niña

by Nicole Grams

Niña, recuesta tu cabeza
Es hora de que te vayas a la cama
Di tus oraciones y di buenas noches
La niña no se oponga

Mañana haremos nuestro mejor esfuerzo
Para tener un día de "chicas"
Nos reiremos, cantaremos, jugaremos
Juntos nos divertiremos
Si llueve o hace sol
Juntos no hay nada que no podamos hacer

Niña, sabes que papi te ama
Pero espero que sepas
Mami también lo hace.

Black Lives Matter

by Azariah Bates

Whips paved the way for guns,
Chains paved the way for cuffs.
Put us on the boats to freedom,
A freedom for you, but not for us.
You worked us to the bone,
Separated our kin.

No knowledge, no freedom,
No rest at the end of days.
Scraps of the good stuff
Because we were only worth so much.
Enough to keep us going,
But not enough to thrive.
Enough for us to be okay,
But only enough to survive.

Then we were freed,
After years of making it happen ourselves,
But only when white men had had enough,
And wanted something else:
To own us as things,
Not treat us as people.
To count us as nobodies,
Never see us as equals.

A system of oppression, designed
To silence the strong because they can't handle the truth.
A system of oppression designed for this,
To keep brothers silent so they can't resist.
Let's not forget our women, who imagined, too,
A world where they could be loud, proud, and true.
But being loud is not okay,
It's ghetto, ratchet, soul sister number one.

When the white girls do it, they're just having fun.
A world where she can wear her afro and not be making a statement.
Where hair really is 'just hair,'
And weave is a replacement.
Where comments like 'is this real'? aren't asked because it's rude,
And men don't think they're entitled to an opinion.
On the shade of her skin or the jeans she fits in.
Where she can be free, thick, thin, wide,
And she isn't forced to fit into what society decides.
Her curves and her hair are just who she is.

They connect her to her roots,
To the blood running through her veins, thick and strong.
She comes from greatness--it's in her bones.
Her nappy hair and shaded skin,
Are gifts her ancestors passed down.
A gift from her grandmother that she never knew,
A gift from the ones that never made it off the ship.
The countless lives she will never know
But that look down on her proud at how far she's come.
They know she can only go farther until her day is done.

When her day is done, they'll be another,
A proud black person, a sister, or brother,
A person better than the past, able learn from it
Who will fight to span the gap that persists
In the looks, the clutching of a purse,
The comments they don't think can hurt.
"Have you ever been shot at?"
"You actually have a dad?"
"Watermelon is your favorite right?"
"Is that your real hair?"

It persists in the mindset predetermined by age.
Raised with the belief, but it goes both ways.
They're taught they are better,

That differences exist between them and us.
We're taught that they're cruel,
And we have to stick with what they give us.
It's a judgment that's bred through time,
A given idea that we can't shake.
It makes it easier to stay blind in the face of proof.

Is it really race, or the color of our skin
Can something like that divide our nation?
Or is it the money and power
given to some by an older generation?
We all bleed red, but the price of our clothes is what we can't share.
The price of her house, compared to them,
Is the only difference in the color of our skin.

Our brothers and sisters paved the way by marching in the dirt.
But their march has carried on,
It's still a fight now.
Not only are we fighting to live,
But we're fighting to not be brought down.
Brought down by the patriarchy, or just the rats.

The coppers who shoot us with our hands in the air,
The popo who shoot first and ask questions later.
The pigs who mis see but face no penalty.
The five 0 who come busting in the door.
The door to a happy home; momma and daddy watching their angels.
Sleeping peacefully not knowing a thing.
Come morning they'll be forced to learn too young.
The lesson we're taught from the time we're of age.

No hoods while walking,

Hands out ya pockets.

Give clear answers,

No fussing or talking back.

Don't move too much.

Or too fast.

You better be in public with people

who can vouch for your ass.

It should be our right not to worry,
To walk down the street without fear.
Doing nothing wrong— you see red lights,
And instantly can't breathe until you're clear.
Younger and younger our babies are seeing,
The brute force of the world, the cruel reality
Made by the ones that brought us here,
And perpetually perpetuated by those who fear us here.

They fear our power and our grace,
Then they imitate us but make us out to be a disgrace.
It's easy to take what you want without a consequence,
To steal our culture but keep the privilege.
What's hard is to stand up and speak out against injustice,
To open your eyes and see the problems we face
Because changing the world isn't done by one race.

The whips have given way to guns,
And the chains have given way to cuffs.
We march the same march,
But the fight continues or ends with ALL of us.

A Flower

by Victor Martinez

If you were to want a flower,
Take it with you
Wherever you go,
So nobody else could.

If I were to hate a flower,
I would want the flower for me.

If you were to love a flower,
Let it be,
Let it grow,
Protect it, too.

If I were to meet a flower,
I would not want it for me.

If I were to love somebody,
I would love them like I love a flower.

Los Árboles Están Vivos

by Azariah Bates

Los vientos aúllan
Bichos espeluznantes merodeando.
Las ramas se retuercen
El cielo gris se empaña
El grueso tronco tiembla,
Un baile que hacen las raíces.
Las hojas cantan una canción
La noche se alarga.
La luna tan brillante como el sol
La noche está lejos de terminar
Por cada ráfaga de viento,
La noche nunca terminará
Y con absoluto deleite,
Los árboles están vivos esta noche.



Timothy Condon

Mars

Heart of Stone

by Ithzel Rubio

The boy and his heart of stone,
Outcast,
Surrounded by hearts of Gold.

"Will Midas spare me soon?"
He'd ask,
Wishing for one of his own.

That windless night, he knew he was done.
Seeking solitude, he trekked.

"Goldless swine, I am the only one."
Moonlight flashed across his neck.

Crimson cascading,
Darkness awaiting.
Who said he needed Gold?

Many, many thanks to Dr. Johnette McKown & the Board of Trustees, and Dr. Chad Eggleston, Dr. Fred Hills, and Dr. Bill Matta for support and encouragement. Additional thanks to Prof. Beth Grassman for her generous editing of our entries in Spanish this year.

Thanks to all of our student artists and writers for their contributions to this issue! It is an honor to publish your work.

Thanks also to all the faculty and staff whose donations to the MCC Foundation make this magazine possible. Without your support, we would not be able to fund our prizes and recognize our students' exceptional talents.

Second-Guessed Myself

by Madison Lindell

I second-guessed myself
Only to learn my doubts were true.
I wasn't who I said I was,
But neither were you.

Where is the truth?
Is it hiding behind the sparkle in your brown eyes
That I noticed the first time you laughed
At my faults?
Something I've never been able to laugh at

I second-guessed myself
Only to learn my doubts weren't true.
I was who I said I was,
And so were you.

The truth didn't hide
Behind any sparkle
Because you barely noticed my grey-colored eyes.

I brainwashed myself into believing
They meant more to you,
And your laugh wasn't about how different I am
But how we're exactly the same.

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Timothy Condon

Sunset