

SPRING 2023

LEES-MCRAE COLLEGE



RAGWEED

VOL. III

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Ragweed

A Literary Journal of Lees-McRae College

Dear Readers,

There were several themes proposed for this issue of the journal. For some time, co-editor Mikayla Hamilton and I spoke about the importance of the spring issue and Ragweed's function as a creative outlet for students. We have spent a lot of time studying, getting lunch, and working in the writing center, which gave us ample time to step back and consider the current state of Lees-McRae College.

We had a wet, snowy January. February was much warmer. March came in like a lion and stayed that way. Ideas such as "Hope Springs Eternal," "Spring Has Sprung," and "Deep Roots Never Doubt" were tossed around for Ragweed. Yet, Mikayla Hamilton's proposal of "When Winter Snow Melts" has made the most lasting impact and shaped this issue into what it is. While the ground was sparse and slick with ice, the undercurrent of life stirred beneath the stillness much like many of our writers. When the winter snow melts, these writers unfurl their colors and spread joy across the campus.

I write this note with the first of May on my heels. Gusts of wind have blown the pale cherry petals from the trees beside Tate dormitory and replaced them with fresh green leaves. The chill has not left us, but the dandelions foretell warmer days to come. Anticipation is on the faces of most students and the creative writing community has banded together in a final hurrah before departing for the summer.

It is one of my many wishes that the writers who have contributed to this journal will brave any cold they face in their lives and continue to show their brilliance to all who are luck enough to meet them. I also dearly wish for those who have not submitted to Ragweed Literary Journal to keep writing beautiful stories and continue to achieve their goals. There is always more to experience ahead. That is the message of this issue.

It would not be possible to showcase these students' wonderful work in this issue without the help of Mikayla Hamilton, Professor Matthew Wimberley, and the Creative Writing Club. Mikayla, I am sure you would feel like a goddess if you only knew how much I look up to your kindness and dedication. Professor Wimberley, your patience and advice got Ragweed to this point, and we are eternally grateful. Creative Writing Club, I have never gone from inquiring to busting my gut laughing as fast as I have with you—never stop unapologetically being yourselves.

The amount of work everyone has done to realize this journal has been astounding. I'm convinced that Lees-McRae College is a gathering place for some of the most passionate people in the world. Please accept my heart along with the bounties of spring. The students at Lees-McRae College have given their all to contribute to a welcoming creative community, and I can only hope to learn how to be so passionate.

With love,

Makayla Gregory

Ragweed, like everything else in life, does not grow linearly. That is something I have learned in the process of putting together this issue. Everyone knows that the fastest way from point A to

point B is a straight line, but I think that everyone must learn that straight lines are also the paths with the least value. Curved paths show different opportunities. Steep paths teach perseverance. Straight paths grant instant gratification. And as good as that feels, over the course of this semester, I have learned that it is better, in the long run, to reach your desired destination through hard work.

As seasons change, as time changes, as the Lees-McRae student body changes, Ragweed must change too. Change is intimidating, but it is only through taking the intimidating things in life head on that progress is made.

I want to finish this letter with a massive thank you to my co-editor Makayla Gregory. She is amazing and every other synonym that exists in the Thesaurus for amazing. Ragweed wouldn't be the literary journal it is today without her.

Thank you to all of the student writers at Lees-McRae. Thank you for sharing your work with us; you truly are talented and courageous.

With love,

Mikayla Hamilton

RAGWEED TEAM

Co-Editor Makayla Gregory

Co-Editor Mikayla Hamilton

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Special thanks to Professor Matthew Wimberley (Department of English), Maya Jarrell, and all students who have submitted to this issue of Ragweed. None of this would have been possible without your enthusiasm and dedication!

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Poetry

Alexis Gathings

“When The Mountain Snow Melts”

When the mountain snow melts,

The temperature finally gets comfortable.

When the mountain snow melts,

The distance finally becomes insufferable.

The miles between you and me no longer feel doubled,

The snow only must be shoveled.

The jobs I would do to finally come home to you,

I will be home quicker than the morning dew.

When the mountain snow melts,

I will grab my luggage and pack away my pain.

When the mountain snow melts,

The pain without you became so inhumane.

The miles will decrease as I listen to the melodies that remind me of home,

Not the building or the structure from which I was raised.

The warmth of your arms, the ocean of your eyes,

The place I crave to be as soon as the temperature gets warm.

When the mountain snow melts,

Spring will begin to bloom.

When the mountain snow melts,

The heart will no longer be a tomb.

The embrace destined to be in your arms leads my drive.

Wanting to be held and be mine.

The time spent behind a wheel will be well spent,

Begging the snow to melt will be dreamt.

Brianna Cortes Rivera

“Forever Hers”

Soaring high above the sky abandoning all we know,

To see you shine and glow,

Brighter than the sunshine,

Forever in my heart, forever mine,

Merry gold and very sweet,

You in my day is such a treat,

Watching the sky change as the sun goes down,

I look at your gaze the has me soaring through clouds,

With this said now for show,

It's time that we get up and go,

To embark on another journey together as one,

Forever together as a union.

Clara Johnson

“Love Falls Silent Like the Snow”

I watch as love falls ever so gently, drifting toward where it's needed most.

So silent, like snow, does it dance in twists and turns of affirmation and affection.

Love that one can reach up and catch as it flows with grace and dignity, like the petals of ice and sky on a winter night.

Love falls silent like the snow, and I am so happy that I can sit in solitude with it.

Mia Escalera

“The Archaeologist”

Pale winter light lay like lace on my naked skin
a soft warmth birthed in my tapering heart
its patient palms around my neck
stalling the brackish air in my lungs

Cabernet and ash
mellow and aged
lingered on my lonely tongue

And the taste of you
of smoke and of earth
the divine grit of scattered shells
wave-smoothed stones and ocean foam
a crisp memory sleeping on my lips

You dug me up like a relic in the sand
extracted me
preserved me
worshiped my body like an artifact

deciphered my soul like an ancient text
my words the crashing shore
inside the blush conch, you held up to listen

You alone
with your tattered hands
stained with the mud of fulfillment and life
wiped the dirt from my empty eyes
and showed me the world
day after day
night after night

Shooting stars and ferry rides
and an indescribable love
that spindles like roots growing out of my being
and pulls you to me
so we can be one.

Sam Cunningham

“Journey, Not Quest”

I hike

Not for the sake of reaching the top

To the destination

To where I am “meant” to be

Instead, I shall...meander

Observe every flower

Ask for their names

Store those names in my pocket

I shall talk to the trees

Tell them

The lichen

And moss

Stories of love, loss and everything I have learned between

I shall wander to the mushrooms

Ask for the secrets of death

Tuck away their answers away behind my ears

To share on my own death bed

For those that will live on after me

I shall ask the rocks if they have any friends

Meet the salamanders, frogs, and other insects that call them home

I will follow bird song

Sing a melody with them before complimenting their colors

Ask them about the joys of flying

Of places I shall never see

Near and far from me

And I shall ask the deer of running just as I ask the fox of cunning

The squirrel of climbing and the mouse of picking battles

You see, I am on an adventure

A journey

Not a quest

And while there will be times I must walk the path

I shall mostly wander from friend to friend

Annual Poetry Contest Winners

Mercedes Hawkes

“How to Eat a Pear”

Start with your mouth open.

Let the saliva dig
into the corners of your lips.

Sink your teeth into the green.

The juices will fall,
don't take time for the mess.

Make sure you are precisely thirteen,

laying in wet grass -

It's better to pretend you are the pear.

Keep the front of your blouse open,

Let the stars pierce bite size holes through your sternum -

gardeners will fill them with seeds,

later.

For the second bite -

plunge your pear,

down your throat.

While your teeth become soft cubed sugar,
expand your windpipes.

Swallow it whole,
lick your hands.

Pat each slender finger
on your swollen tongue;
feel yourself,
then gasp for air.

Call out to your pear.
Begin to scratch your stomach.
Peel back the fleshly flabs,
Feel the wind
whip your raw flesh.

Keep peeling, unraveling.
Shove your sticky arm through the grub.
Search for your pear.
Grab it.

Eat again.

Small bites.

This time.

Melt into.

Your gums.

Sugar.

Created by your mother.

Jack Colby

“Into the Cracks”

An old greenhouse
somewhere lost in the countryside
where the light bends through the cracks and
the air is stained with the smell of dirt
Then when I walk outside
real grass reaches to meet my feet
and the birds fill the silence
better than you could ever imagine
But now when I remove the fold
all I can see is what has yet to be taken
and buildings that look like everyone left in a hurry
Grease, on an old wooden floor
pressed
into the cracks

Max Geckler

“Ballad of An Abandoned Angel”

Hearing of loss

Reminds of a life,

Empty like a night

Where I await

In a car alone,

Just sitting outside my

Home or where I relaxed,

Asking impossible questions,

Answering with sour lies,

It sounds of truth

Screaming in my mind.

A celebration soon arrives,

I lie, covered,

Tucked away from it

All, including you,

Yet my closed eyes

Fantasize nothing more,

A simple rejection

Is better than anticipation.

Wishing to see the

Wound and heal,

But the band aid

Remains, Oh

I yearn for pain

Papa, to see the outside

Watching birds fly

And when they fall

Waiting for a result

But getting none, it's

The closest thing to hell.

I cry

after a tearless funeral.

Morgan Gray

“Duplex”

Pain seems to be the root of it all.

It makes the fear of being left alone seem so small.

The fear of being left alone is such a small thought.

Following the stem from a tragic childhood.

The roots to the stem of a tragic childhood.

Parents yelling, my father leaving and coming back in the night.

My father leaving and coming back in the night, my parents yelling.

My mother worked through the night unaware of father.

Lack of awareness that he comes in late, my mother works through the night.

The sound of the tv or radio to cancel out the yelling.

Just the sound of the tv or radio to cancel out the yelling.

I still hear the voices over the sound but focus on the sound instead.

Focusing on the sound even with the voices over the sound.

Pain seems to be the root of it all.

