

Announcing the Results of the 2022

## William George Prize for Poetry

Named for English teacher Bill George, whose poems continue to move the SLUH community with their wit, their honesty, and their generous good will, this prize is given annually to recognize excellence in student poetry at Saint Louis University High School.



First prize: \$100 and a subscription to *Poetry* magazine.

Second prize: \$50 and a subscription to *Poetry* magazine.

This year fifty-seven poems submitted by thirty-seven students were judged anonymously by Aaron Coleman, the author of *Threat Come Close* and *St. Trigger*.

First prize: “Grandma’s Wok” by Cal Kreuter

Second prize: “Spring Showers” by Stephen Niklawski

Honorable Mention: “They/Them” by Cody Cox

Honorable Mention: “The Graves” by Benedict Heithaus

Honorable Mention: “The Vagabond” by Carson Leahy

Honorable Mention: “Nature” by James McAuliffe

Honorable Mention: “Blue Haze” by Nathan Pini

Honorable Mention: “Imperfection Found Me Out” by Jude Reed

Honorable Mention: “Tomorrow” by Nathan Rich

## Grandma's Wok

Spinning, jumping, flying.  
The wild flame roars beneath.  
Generations of rich years,  
once stowed away  
in a basement, come alive.

Noodles, silk-like  
in their steady,  
yet unpredictable movement,  
flow smoothly around the sides.  
Hot oil bubbles.

Curiosity draws me closer.  
“Move back,”  
Grandma warns.  
But I want to see it.

Onion, sausage, egg, carrot.  
All separate.  
Smoky, sweet, crunchy, bitter,  
all unconnected.  
The wok connects them.  
And it smells amazing.

—Cal Kreuter

## Spring Showers

Rain brings new vibrance  
To the forest and old fields  
With gloom comes new light

—Stephen Niklawski

## They/Them

Interesting how I can't ever be one or another  
My own self  
I can only be the in-between  
A placeholder if you will  
Allowing you to dehumanize me  
My soul's existence owes you an explanation  
My being somehow requires androgyny  
My body is placed under scrutiny  
But I am the one who is perverted  
Wrong.  
I am more than a singular or plural  
I am more than a pronoun  
I am more than the sum of my parts  
But you will never know that  
You see me, and yet you do not  
You refuse to accept me  
Or treat me equally  
Although complaining  
About what makes you uncomfortable  
Is your specialty  
But although you claim not to know me  
Your lips always carry my name on them  
Despite all your contradictions  
You could never hope to breach my confidence  
Because of a simple reason  
My gain comes whether you win or lose  
Because I have a desire to prevail  
My gaudy and glossy exterior  
Is harder than diamond  
Forged in intense pressure  
In greater heat  
In more time  
Than you will ever comprehend  
But I am the outsider  
For that I am sad  
And also grateful  
Even if my identity could boil down to a word  
You could never contain it  
Try and fail  
I dare you.

—Cody Cox

## The Graves

Death

Hardship

Trying to get a grip,

Covered in grief my life is torn apart

From the death of my love

To the murder of my mom,

Sucked into shame

With temptations of the Devil,

How do i move on

From the graves of my loved ones.

—Benedict Heithaus

## The Vagabond

An arena built on blood and brawn  
Patrons that of kings and pawns  
And behold among the swine and spawn  
It is he, the vagabond  
To maim and claim the grand reward  
All shame and fame can be restored  
Yet who can aim for victors chord  
But only the vagabond  
A grisly end to struggle and strife  
The fatal blow from a poisoned knife  
A tragic fall at the end of one's life  
Even vermin mourn the vagabond

—Carson Leahy

## Nature

The wind blows against the trees  
The sound is calming  
Hearing the rain hit the leaves  
The soothing rainstorm putting you to sleep  
Nature is beautiful  
The natural things in the world are the most beautiful

—James McAuliffe

## Blue Haze

Cliff side rock crumbles, teetering over the edge.  
Steep drop awaits me,  
If I were to leap.

But for now, I sit.  
I watch, valley  
below me:  
Flowing river,  
Fields of corn and wheat.  
Steam billows out of a power station, maybe ten miles off, Though I can't see it well,  
Blue haze and all.

The crows announce the kill,  
Just as the birds announced the dawn.  
Though most ignorant souls go unbothered.

One step could kill,  
Death in great sun rays.  
One for the vultures,  
Who circle above.  
Waiting for falling rock to become falling hope, And I am hidden,  
And I become hidden,  
Blue haze and all.

The sun flares up,  
Sparks of something grander.  
Birds pass above,  
Calling out to each other.  
The cliff lends a birds eye view  
To whoever is brave enough,  
Or stupid enough,  
To walk out.  
My mother warned against it.

There's a feeling,



I can't catch in words alone.  
When I look to the west,  
And I can see,  
Beyond rivers green,  
What's left to become of me.  
Sun to come,  
And finish the fall.  
And we last die,  
Blue haze and all.

—Nathan Pini

## Imperfection Found Me Out

Quietly disguised as loud  
I blow hard my way through a crowd  
Mimicking those who are louder than me  
Under the table where they couldn't see

Stupidly disguised as smart  
Wearing a mask with its eyes drawn apart  
Talking away and then talking some more  
Tracing with my eyes the way to the door

I was hiding from the monster  
In the backseat of my car  
As it dug through my mailbox  
To find my new bell jar  
I was holding down the fort alright  
And I kept my breathing down

I can tell you I tried  
I tried despite my doubt  
But when I blinked too hard that day  
Imperfection found me out

—Jude Reed

## Tomorrow

Tomorrow, things will be different than they are today.  
That much I know.

I can feel it in the market's frenzy  
and hear it in the dog's howling  
and see it in the new robes that adorn the people.

Tomorrow, I may not see you.

Tomorrow, I may reach over and feel only your shadow,  
reflected across miles of jagged cliffs  
and grasshopper fields  
and time-bending rivers.

I would still reach for you, though.

Because here and now,  
I find comfort in your arms  
as we listen to the fire crackle  
and watch it grab lazily up at the sky  
and smell its ash like the remnants of battle.

Here is good. And so are you.

—Nathan Rich