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2018 Claudia Ann Seaman Award Runner Up for Creative Nonfiction

## Blue Earth

*blue birth.*

air conditioning: it snaps against the skin to dry the amniotic fluid, crust the newborn's face. already, in the womb, the baby understood: the dark, the light. so even now: the loss of safe, the newness of the pain. the face is scrunched, and palms and fingers, heels, and toes are blue; and baby's father tells the doctor, laughing, *it's so ugly, put it back*, but doctor doesn't laugh. the mother sucking ice and baby sucking breath; the baby fights for bits of its elusive oxygen for days beyond the birth. *but this is normal*, doctor says.

*blue blight.*

baby turns from blue to yellow. father gifts the jaundiced baby to the sun. impatient for the sky to rinse away the sick, the baby cries. the yellow skin around the eyes is crinkled with the loss of *safe*. so father shushes. baby *wai-ai-ails*. so father laughs and says to mother: *baby doesn't like the sky. afraid to fall into the blue and never come back down.*

*blue earth.*

crayons for the child: to color blue, the sky; to color water gray. correction from the father (pointing finger, tapping paper): *water should be blue, since it reflects the color of the sky*. although the child never saw the blue in water – ponds outside are muddied, gray – the child chafes the crayon on the paper. blue is blue and gray is blue and yellow, blue. So what else blue? so everything, the child concludes. and people, too; that is the loss. with *safe* a blurry smear amidst amalgamated colors, child asks: can people fall into themselves and never surface?

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*blue body.*

the sound of blue encasing bones: a yipping puppy running to a street. so child chases yipping puppy. yipping puppy stops in street and *yip-yip-yips* at sky. event: a car. so child freezes: circumnavigates the skull, discovers how the cranium confines, the neurons' everlasting existential crises at their only job: to register the fear and pain, and finds in every corner of the skull – the blue – the blue – the blue – event: a car is screeching. car is swerving. child chases puppy from the road while yelling, tripping, falling – landing on both hands to slick the grass between the asphalt and a ditch – rolling over to be greeted by the blank face of the sky. and such a sacrifice: to offer up a child to the realization that the blue neglects to mourn the deaths of children that it births. the car meanders on, and dog will yip until it learns the art of giving up.

*blue dream.*

an event: the blue-born child closes eyes and dreams of drowning in a sky of blue. so child forgets to sleep. so child forgets to eat. so child forgets to not feel pain. so child forgets to be a child. but child remembers this: the blue, the loss of *safe*. so child tells the doctor: all my thoughts are ugly, put them back, but doctor doesn't laugh. *this isn't normal*, doctor says.

*blue death.*

but this is normal: sensations of dissociation in the child's bones; *but this is normal*: child looking for the thing that holds the body to itself, already knowing blue has pocketed the body's alveoli, shrouded them for death; *but this is normal*: child asking when each joint will finally reject its corresponding bones; *but this is normal*: tiny puppy made for yipping at the sky; *but this is normal*: sting of air against an open wound, and skin keeps searching for the oxygen the child lost at birth; *but this is normal*: child mouthing senseless mantras in an effort to forget about the airless color creeping back into the palms and fingers, heels and toes; *but this is normal*: to forget the child used to breathe before the body felt the blue between its bones.

*blue blood.*

so child asks: who was the first to color water blue? so crayons for the child, to color water gray – or green – or red – or gold – or clear – yes. why not clear – ? it snaps against the skin: the death of *safe* and death of *normal*; then, the birth of possibility. the child's need to rail against the sky. the body's revolution: thrusting red through arteries and giving life to child's lungs.

*blue breath.*

so even now: the dark, the light.

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*I have a soft spot for complex-wisdom rants like these. The chromatic theme seeps through every word, painting it all with sparing brushstrokes: a careless father, a child drowning in their own mind. The parallels between beginning and end are brilliant, begging, demanding what normal means.*

**Max Hunt** is a member of the 2018 class of Northpoint Christian School in Southaven, Mississippi. He is currently a freshman at the University of Mississippi, where he may or may not double major in History and English. He doesn't know. Maybe he'll become a bubble artist, because those are cool.