

RUCKUS

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**Student Literary Magazine
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The works contained within *Ruckus* are the artistic expressions of the individual members of the Literary Arts Program. This collection is not intended to be viewed as a statement about the views of Charts as a whole. Some readings and other content in this magazine may include topics that some readers may find triggering and/or traumatizing. We apologize for any content which may be viewed as offensive.

Anti-Ekphrasis

By Bianca Felix

I've abandoned the colorful obsession,
Swirling lines can't satiate a temperamental mind.
A dark stillness is churning in my stomach,
the vicious threatening to burn my throat
the viscous sinking deep in my lungs.
I've gone blind to the sight of paint yet dried,
chemical fumes indeed heavy on the eyes,
and deaf to the sound of dripping brushes,
the murky water drowns out the eardrums.

What a relief that I failed as a painter...
this art gets buried with me and forgotten,
Nature takes over-
gently snaps brushes and fingers alike,
Consumes all my unfinished efforts-
a freeing insignificance knowing only
the roots and soil will come to see it.

Secretly, a frail bud of hope
wishes someone will excavate my
final stretches of canvas,
covered end to end in thick acrylic,
to trace the lines of late-night labors
and erratic mornings,
frozen in sap.

crow feet -

By Mio Bakopoulos

i will kiss the smile lines creasing your eyes,
so my brain whispers to me,
“i know what that means, i know that sign,”
what you just said was a lie,
to keep me glued to this spot,
kissing the smile lines on your eyes,
knowing you are nothing but a liar,

i will know this,
and continue right here,
willingly allowing this cycle to churn inside me,
burning my gut so that i see an image of you,
with every cramp and ache,
i see you,
sneering down at me,
just to elicit me to lean up,
to meet your temple with a tender kiss,
hoping it will scream to you,

a tender kiss for the crow feet framing your eyes,
imitating the feet you use to flatten me down,
so that i will be nothing,
but a ground up mirror when you are done with me,
and i hope you kiss my dust,
because they are made up of same mirror you used,
to see yourself, and all your greatness,
all your flaws, all your lies,
all in me.

Looming *Warning: Suicidal Thoughts*

By Abegail Pierson

I wander back to times I grieved. If it were all for nothing. If there may have been some other purpose than to regrow my emotions and personality. I wander back to the gravestones of the beloved pets I had left behind to crumble and turn into meaningless sludge.

Had they loved me, or did they feel forced to comply? If not me, did they at least enjoy being with him? Pets always seemed easier to love. Easier to let go.

It's hard to know when exactly this torrent of questions and inquiries began, or if I had always come back to the ideas of the unknown. But of course, it would be silly to think that someone had always walked with uncertainty. It would be silly to always feel the presence of an answer hanging limply above your head. But what if I really had always gone back to questions and answers?

The what if's strangle my brain into tight knots. I don't know if they're supposed to make me feel curious or dumb or even numb.

I rub my fingers over the cool glass in my hand. It was sharp, so very sharp.

My foot shrank back at a touch of my left hand, the pain is so excruciating it burns and squeals to an awful tune. This was where the glass had struck my flesh and my veins released a downpour of ruby red tears.

Little grains of sand encase the wound, and I'm sure they would prove to be infectious in the coming morning.

But for now, the moon looked over me in the darling night sky, filling my thoughts with even rougher questions. How could the moon be so far away? Why was the ocean drawn to it, if not because the Earth was its soulmate? Why couldn't the moon give the Earth a sign? Send it something to hold in the cracks of its skin?

Why must the moon be so taunting?

I put the glass on the sand beside me, and look over the lapping waves coming closer towards the shore. Earlier, I traveled far enough that my toes nearly kissed the white foam. Bioluminescence flanks the sea and sheds over my face with a glow so gorgeous it mocks the parting stars. The cries and tears of the massive waters caress my ears and run down the side of my face, replacing the streaks of water left by my own sadness.

All these questions, while so boring and intrusive, left me with a sort of warm feeling in my chest. They're easily marked as dreadful, but in my own haze, I can view them as almost...

Reassuring.

A cackle escapes my lips, so bittersweet, it grows into a laugh.

All of my previous confusion came back to me now, this time with a voice so high cut and demanding it cut across any reason I had before.

If the world was so bitter, why should I care if it hurts me? If these tears were so selfish, why did I cry? If letting a dog continue to suffer is inhumane, then why did everyone keep other, suffering humans alive? If these words turn into stone, then how many would watch as they crumbled down and merged with the bioluminescence?

My dress sways against the wind, drawing up a flicker of sand. It's made from the finest silk, meant only for style, and never a warm hug. My hair slumps down out of a bun and brushes itself together into a tangled mess.

Perhaps my life was just as useful as the sludge.

The Citadel
By David Fadem

Go on, go on, doubt and dread.
Be turned, twisted, through the rivers;
Meet only warped stone as you descend.
Tumble through the dwarfing vats,
See your distortion thwarted,
See your dismay derailed.
See your movement end between pillars and walls,
Encased in a concrete shell.

Whose dripping hands formed it?
In what ennui did they cobble it?
Who scattered salt on the borders?
With what hubris did they dig,
Trusting in their tunnels and turns,
Trusting they could bottle a flood?

Despite it,
You are down the storm drain, out of sight—
Into a temple beyond prying eyes
Cocooned, cradled, chained,
In stillness beneath, I am sure.
Pour it down the drain, empty every vessel.

I can't drown here, no despair could hope
To reach through the pipes or rust the shining metal.

Outside, the gale is upon me still.
From below, there is doubt and dread pooling.
It flows from each orifice of the road,
Out of the grates, from each fault and each drain.
I must not gaze upon it.

I must worship the walls,
Each piece of sloping stonework,
Each slant of the chamber, submerged.

I worship the magnitude,
How it encases and encompasses,
Tempering the sinning squall.

Untitled

By Katelyn Fretz

In Mother Nature's fields,
by her simple touch-
life bends at the purity of her spirit.

But on the mornings her hands shrivel algid frostbite,
life can still be born in all its prosperity.
Atop the sorrowing willows aged branches,
or leaping from petals of sweet azaleas-
the haze of sunrise morning dew can manipulate fragile ice.

What once was pearled sap,
puts forth “surreal” frozen flowers.
But don’t let such trickery confuse you!
Like portraits of joyful families,
and forgotten ‘i love yous,’
they’re not real. Just miraculous allusions.
Like braids tied in her loving daughters hair,
and the gentle
chrysanthemums
that weave in between.
No essence of sweet fragrance stains the air,
for none ever lingered.
Just folds and forms,
deceiving, decaying beauty-
rotting petals-
boiled down to “scientific phenomenon.”

Love is a beautiful thing,
but also always needing maintenance,

like her flowers glazed in warmth preserving sap.

And without it-

all that lives and dies breathes nothing

but cold sweat lies.

The only remains left in her thawing wonderland are-
crystalized microscopic cracks along her family's house.

But what kind of loving home lacks tiny footprints in the snow?

"Better to have flowers wilting from window sills."

For in her mind,

revival is a delicacy.

And I know not,

for that is a lie.

Winters Delight

Untitled
By Zoe Lachter

August snuck up on us
We were colder than any of us realized and
you were all I knew anymore
That one day it hit ninety-nine degrees
the sun kissed all our collar bones
and the backs of our necks and
by that night it was cold all over again
with only our sunburns to remember anything else
Our feet were forgetful and our footprints
carried the weight of all our steps

Up and over

ופרחים טגולים שלא זכרנו

Remember the day I finally beat you at cards?
You used to win everything
Now you only win most of the time
“Take that, I reign supreme”
“Just this one time though”

A fluke!

A fluke!

A fluke!

I always felt like my taste in music was
what yours had been a few months ago
Your palms though
were just the right size to catch all my tears
mostly on her birthday and the day my uncle died
“Remember when I borrowed your sweater?”
“You kept it for a month.”
“But I washed it with that detergent you like.”
And you did, I suppose

Your tee shirts smelled like summer
and the starchy fabric felt familiar on my fingertips
like a piano piece I've played too many times

The afternoon we went to the creek
it hadn't rained for days
and the water was so low I could count all my toes
through the ripples that used to be foamy white rapids
I always loved how the water could dress up as the clouds like that
Dragonflies zipped across kneecaps
with pearls for heads and gemstones for wings

לֹא מַמְנִין חֶבְרֵי נַפְשׁ - I don't believe in soulmates

סָלִיחָה - Sorry

because you knew
that was not the answer I wanted
I watched our feet kick up sand
to unearth bottle caps beneath it that I did not leave there and
I haven't been back to the river since
because it is not mine anymore

I didn't eat on the plane home, obviously
Do you remember that I get nauseous in airports?
Do you remember what we talked about
that night with the yellow moon?

Me neither

Because time is tricky
in the way it lets you lose your own battles
And somewhere over New Jersey I wanted to go back
and dig up all those bottles caps and plant them in the garden
between the radishes and the peppers
just to reassure myself that flowers could not bloom from them

Farwell, Captain

By E.K. Engler

Gary got off far better than most. He had some mild rope burn, and probably would have a black eye tomorrow, but he was alive and he was definitely the only captain in history to walk away from a mutiny. And he was for sure the only one to ever be dropped off on shore by his ex crew.

Gary stood on the edge of the dock, suitcase in hand, and coat thrown over his arm. The air was pleasantly stuffy, the kind of warm that you could tell was going to turn into a sweltering hot day. There was no wind, and the sails of the Kymopelia lay limp against the mast.

“Got everything?” Jinx made her way down the gangplank towards him. Gary just nodded.

“You ok?” she looks up at him. He nodded again,

“Well considering you all let me live, I’m very much ok.”

“I hope you understand why we’re doing this,” Jinx crossed her arms. She didn’t seem angry, rather looked at him as if she were a parent scolding a naughty child. It made Gary feel all the worse. She tended to do that to him a lot.

“Well yes and no,” Gary sighed.

“We don’t hate you, we would have killed you if we did.”

“That’s a comfort...” Gary snorted.

“I’m serious, Gary. You earned yourself enough respect that a good portion of the crew actually only wanted to demote you, not fully kick you off.”

“Then why did you mutiny?”

“Because you’re past your time. I think you’ve known for a while now you’re slowing down. You’ve made enough mistakes, and before you mess something up really badly and get us all killed, we figured someone else should take charge.”

“And that someone else is you?”

“Don’t give me that look!” she crossed her arms, “Gary, I’m trying to say goodbye, I don’t want to argue. They voted me in like we voted you.”

“Why didn’t anyone ask my opinion on this all?”

“Because it’s a mutiny! And you wouldn’t have stepped down even if we asked you to. I know you and your godforsaken ego.” Gary wrinkled up his nose. After being his first mate for the past decade, Jinx knew him way better than he liked to admit. He certainly was getting old, and far past his peak, but age had nothing to do with it. It’s kind of funny how it all started to deteriorate. You would have thought staying sober would have improved his thinking, and it did, but it also meant he had a clearer mind to ponder all the things he was trying to forget. Then the depression came, and then the sudden relapses, and then the crippling paranoia that made him steer the ship as far from civilization as possible. He knew his crew was getting tired of him and getting bored of just sitting. They wanted their old captain back, even if he was wasted all the

time, he was fearless and that's why his crew chose him to lead them. Gary hated himself for not being able to be that same person again. He didn't really want to be that person again anyways.

"Well, thanks for not killing me I guess," he sighed. Jinx rubbed the bridge of her nose,

"Yeah, I still wouldn't recommend coming back though. There were some people who were still in favor of slitting your throat."

"Brady?"

"Yeah, Brady and Rush."

"Well, she got a good punch in. If it'll make her feel better, tell her it's definitely going to leave a mark," Gary gave a soft chuckle and Jinx managed a smile.

"I will, I will."

"Hey, you're not gonna leave without this are you?" The both of them turned around to see the imposing figure of Davin Gore thudding down the gangplank, gently cradling a fluffy gray cat.

"Well, I thought you all would miss him, you know? Figured the boat is all he knows..." Gary's protests died as Davin shoved Barnacle into his arms.

"You were gonna leave without your baby?" Jinx shook her head at him.

"That's what I thought. What a terrible father," Davin said, obviously sarcastic, but his permanent scowl made it seem a whole lot more menacing. Even with all the years Gary had known him, he still found it hard to tell when he was trying to be friendly or bluntly insulting you.

"Oh can it you two," Gary smiled and gave his cat a kiss on the head. Barnacle just looked blankly at him,

"I have to say I'm a bit surprised to see you, Gore."

"Yeah, me too," Jinx frowned at him. Davin shrugged.

"Come to say goodbye?" Gary raised a thick eyebrow.

"More like to say good riddance," he grunted and crossed his arms.

Gary remembered when he first met Davin. He'd been terrified of him, at least a foot taller, covered in scars, loaded with weapons, and scowling down at him like he was the smallest little insect. The two of them had a peculiar relationship. A mix of fear, loathing, and a deep sense of respect. Davin had never tried to kill him, so that certainly had to mean something.

"Well good riddance to you too. Don't crash the ship into any cliffs. I know it'll be hard without my wisdom and guidance," Gary smirked. Davin rolled his eyes,

"Yeah whatever. Don't get arrested or anything. I'll be disappointed if someone else gets to you before I do."

"I'll keep that in mind," Gary snorted, scratching Barnacle's ears.

"You boys finished?" Jinx looks between the two of them, "We've got a schedule to keep."

"I suppose so," Davin grunted, "Write to me or something, will you? Would hate for you to just disappear on me." A smile crossed Gary's face, his first genuine one in a long time,

"Right, sure."

“I mean it.”

“I know you do.”

“Alright, that’s enough, Gore, back at the wheel,” Jinx shook her head with a smile.

“Aye, cap’n,” Davin gave Gary one last look before heading back up onto the ship.

“Right, *captain*,” Gary smiled, “Captain Jinx. Yeah, that suits you.”

“I’m still getting used to it.” There was a beat. A long awkward beat.

“Well I suppose this is it then,” Gary sighed.

“Yeah, guess so,” Jinx nodded. She stood stiff in place for a moment before surging forward and pulling Gary into a quick gentle hug.

“Jinx I-”

“If you ever need anything at all, you’ve got the crew of the Kymopelia on your side.”

“Thank you. For everything.”

“Take care, Captain Gary Grim.” He tried hard to look to see, but Gary was positive she wasn’t crying. As much as that would have been a pleasant surprise, he knew that wasn’t Jinx. But her soft smile said far more than any sobbing ever would.

“Take care, Captain Harva Jinx.” She gave him a salute, turned, and marched up on board.

Gary sat at the docks until he couldn’t hear the bustle of the Kymopelia any longer. She was still visible on the horizon, but it was long enough for him to gather some sense of direction.

“How do you feel about the mountains, buddy?” he said down to the now sleeping Barnacle.

“Yeah, not my cup of tea either. Maybe we’ll go home, if it’s still even there.” He stood up and tossed his bag over his shoulder. Just an old sailor and his cat.

For some it might have turned out to be some new grand adventure, for Gary, it’d turn out like any other mediocre tale. He’d live out the rest of his days not rich, but not poor. Not lonely, but not happy. But in this moment he imagined for a little how things might have ended if he was someone else and right away decided that all that excitement didn’t suit him any more. Mediocrity was all right if it meant he could finally find peace.

He gave Barnacle another kiss and headed off into the city in front of him, waiting for the day he’d hear the rumors of a new pirate captain on the rise. And he’d just smile and nod, glad to be a chapter in her story.

Dissociated
By Brooke Hadian

I'll often find myself looking down at my hands
Memorizing every wrinkle, every crack
See the way my fingers move, slowly curling into my palm
I flip my hand over, my fingers straighten

Suddenly, time begins to slow
I study the lines in my palm, watching closely
The longer I watch, the more the lines deform
They melt and wobble, they become blurry and hard to see

A slit forms in the tip of my pointer finger, cirrus clouds emerging through the skin
The clouds hover in the air around me, more coming out with every passing moment
Flowers begin to bloom from the creases of my hands, their petals reaching up into the air
The area grows cloudier, yet I don't take my sight off of my hand

Without a second thought, I crack my pointer finger
The flowers hurriedly retract back into my skin
The clouds quickly evaporate into nothing
And with that, the mirrors in my skull finally reflect the real world

Now, where was I?

Your Daily Dose of a Myocardial Infarction
By Mars Leonard

When I am especially distressed,
I have this habit of humming to myself.
The tune is always something in a spiral,
Never anything to begin with,
Yet infinitely looping.
When my harsh panic shows up
unsolicited,
Knocking breaths from my chest when I'm not even home,
I hum the sum of nothing.
It comforts like a mother;
And the action is now nearly instinctive.
Frequently,
While I hum just loud enough to drown out
My shuddering heart,
I wonder what would happen if I let the tune go on
Forever
And
Ever.
And
Ever.

I am not unfamiliar with the sound

Of a rushing heartbeat.
Convulsing, contracting,
Pushing, and pumping,
Ba-bump, ba-bump, ba-bump.

Like the skeleton of a song,

It sings:

Stay Alive, Stay awake,
Stay beating,
Work, work,
Work;
... Work.

The heart will perform itself to death,
eventually.

It's nauseating, if I'm honest,
because it is constant.
it urges my lungs to collapse
beneath the weight of
A heavy mind.

It's nearly embarrassing,
mostly shameful.
My own atlas can't handle its earth.

Either way,
despite the humility,
When the orchestra crescendos
And the chambers pulse at a tempo
My body can't keep up with,
I will gently hush it to rest.

I might lose track of time and space in the process,
But internally I will always
Care for the little thing;
Weak from singing.
Weak from life.
A pity, really.
In the end,
It will perform itself
to death,
eventually.

And Again, We Shall Fall

(Inspired by “The Waste Land” by T.S. Eliot)

By Bryanna Tavarez

After our suffering

After the dismemberment our brothers

After the downfall of the republic

Our fathers and their fathers wrestled and brawled

In rain or snow

Though now they are gone

It remains better to be free from it all

Than to be alive with only suffering

On our land there is only cold

We have rivers; with no water

There are trees; with no leaves

We have bushes, animals, and all; with no food

Without essentials what will we be

And no essentials will cause us to flee

Most of us have not seen the light of day

But only the dark of night

Though the dark of night is the light of day

It is hard to see everyday

And every night

There is only evil here

Evil people, evil creatures, evil trees,

evil land;

evil evil evil...

Because we have no water,

no leaves, no food and no essentials;

How may we survive?

Because we have no light, no day,
no good, and only evil;
How will we gain satisfaction?
No consideration to the rabbit
who lost his hole
Or to the sky
who is always crying
Only consideration
for our people;
but if our brothers suffer for the world,
and the world suffers for our brothers..
what shall we do?

Who is to blame?
Humanity has destroyed itself yet we
seem to not know how
How are we so unaware
of what we have done to ourselves?
Do we feel accomplished?

Skeleton in the Closet

By Angelina Whitaker

A dry pile of crumb and bones

Lays in front of a broken mirror

Scattered pieces of who I once was

Have been reduced to dust

They rise in the wind

And fall in the shadows

Carrying my everything

While being reduced to nothing

There's no outer shell

To protect my organs

'Cause they're all long gone,

Stolen out from under me

I can feel the gravity

It's the only thing holding down

What remains of my soul

Otherwise, I'd be stardust by now

I would never succeed in convincing you,

But I'd be floating nonetheless

Go ahead, pretend I'm not here

If I don't have a history, then I might as well disappear

Just another skeleton in the closet

Is what I am

It doesn't have to be forever, though

Not within the confines of my mind

How could I possibly go on

Without opening my disintegrated eyes

To an epiphany as bright

As the stardust that I've always been

Orbits in Butterflies
By Alyson Van Dusen

Butterflies

Behind my eyes

Flutter in infinite

Ellipses-

Starry nights

Lying on

A trampoline

Feeling my breath

Move me faintly;

The ups and downs

As I watch the sky

A wire or two

To block my view

But I can still see

Where I am in the universe

Understand what it means

To travel a full 365 days

Around the sun

And come back around

To the same spot

But different

Point of view

I've changed since

The last time

I flew

Trampolines are gone

Memories can only be remembered

By the tune of a song

Played on those forgetful days

Where sitting out there

Was all I'd do

With butterflies

To greet me

In the gardens

In the morning breezy sway

Then night would fall

And they went away

And I wonder

How I would've been

Would've grown

If they

Stayed

Opal May
By Z Stark

Out of view, there is a small yellow house. You can see smoke rising from the chimney, which takes up almost the entire back wall of the house. A little boy and his father live here. Jeffery and Caius. They packed up their home in the nearby village after Caius' mother died. Jeffery brought one suitcase, carried Caius on his back, and built the house from scratch. It took two and a half days. Jeffery wouldn't let his son help, he said "a little boy shouldn't have to work."

For those two days, Caius laid in the sand and watched the sun go down and back up, again and again. While his father built, he imagined little sand people and animals running around him. Right in front of their little home, was a great big castle on an island. The island was very tall, and extended almost like a hand, holding the castle way high up. Caius dreamed of living there. Being a king. That's what he thought was up there, a royal family. He couldn't imagine any other reason someone would have so much money.

Caius wondered if they were running from something other than the grief of losing his mother. A few steps away from their house, Caius built a shabby gravestone and wrote her name in the Sand. "Ma," it read. At that moment Caius realized he had never learned his mothers' name. He rushed to his father.

"Pa! Pa!" He slid in the sand to stop short in front of his dad, accidentally spraying him with some sand.

Spitting it out, he said, "Yes, son?"

"What was Ma's name?"

Jeffery's expression turned to guilt. He swallowed hard and looked up at Caius.

“Her name was Opal. Opal May. She was the most magnificent, beautiful woman to ever walk this Earth.” His eyes welled up with tears.

Caius said nothing, just smiled, and laid in the sand to look up at the sky, imagining his mom was an angel, sitting on a cloud. Later that night, he returned to the gravestone he built for his mom. He erased ‘Ma’ and collected some wet sand to write out, “Opal May. Magnificent. Beautiful. Ma.”

Graveyard

By Regine Henry

Flowers popping up amongst the graves,
Vines winding around the small mausoleums,
Thousand of fireflies lit up against the billions of stars,
The sweet smell of honeysuckle filling the muggy air,

It's a release of what aches.

A solid return to the swan song of childhood,
It's running, jumping, dancing, among the graves,
Falling, scraping, yelling out
Ensnaring dandelion seeds and releasing them as my captives
Tumbling down the hill, sinking into the dirt

It's something I'm desperate for.

Head as clear as the night sky,
Resolve as sound as the headstones I walk pass
With the guiltlessness, the freedom of being,
I stand untethered.

gifted
By Bayleigh Goff

I, Pandora, am nobody's creation.

Simply a weapon
in pretty paper
tied with silken ribbons.

Opening his box, no one asked
how stupid I felt before jumping
to call me destructive.

But gods, they created me
For this
They avoided accountability
By disguising their duty,
gifting me
with relentless curiosity.
Releasing all of their evils
through me.

Gods created the box
with their own hands,
then,
created my hands;
to finger the force
they became ashamed to acknowledge.

*If you christen me to be a weapon,
You cannot wince at the shot.*

Here I am
By Sienna Gallus

Pinching out a flame to impress you—
And to swim
in your voice

and to never sleep in this bed again

; I am the sum of every skin
you've shed.

so my body will lay, the crux of a woman,
the surgeon that sewed you up, bloody.
I am a fever.
sweat me out.

Untitled
By Sam Veluz

All I've known is science,
my parents transfixed by it's song
research, hypothesize and analyze
ascertain more from anything you find
tangible, intangible, unveil the unknown,
we truth seekers become hypnotized
by miscellaneous possibilities

I follow a trail,
unfinished experiments
scattered far and wide across the globe
the lane of crumbs I stick to were
abandoned from researchers who've disappeared
only reminiscents being names, beginnings to questions
with limitless solutions

occasionally people see our dedication that of a saunter,
in actuality our work transpiring a meticulous climb
which becomes a futile attempt to ascend
that unbounded sierra, to find the destination
of the lingering path discarded

I strive to touch the summit,

saunter past numerous as I
embrace the title of the first woman
granted the Nobel Prize, then push farther
caressing another aureate medallion
the first, man or woman,
to achieve it twice

I claim expertise in
physics and chemistry
I fall upon an immersion in uranium and thorium,
their unique energy released in waves
unseen ripples in the air cradling me

discovering something new,
my child, I name you Radium
although you are invisible to our eyes,
I know will always be with you

My devotion to you unparalleled,
what are you like?
I hand you things
how will you play?
we are closer now little fledgling
we spend plentiful time together and yet,
i would love to know you further

I forgot that we were so different

As I lingered in your presence,

you slowly drained my life

I eventually end to be one with those

who are merely notes to be lost in time,

scrawled text on a previously blank slate

now I am only data, ones used as

someone's next experiment

I'm sprawled out lifeless, and frigid

you have encapsulated me,

my work, my lab, my entire existence

plagued in your name

I am forever a piece of you

Your manipulation has made my own kind

unable to touch me again

my research enclosed,

a lead lined box

A treasure chest of collections

records, accounts and memos

inside journals dedicated to you

I remain forever haunted by my child

Untitled

By Theo Veluz

Who knew the world had color
By Persea Rogers

Who knew the world had color?

I only ever knew it as gray,

She always saw the luminous leaves

I only saw the washed up ones that were always slightly decayed.

Who knew the world had color?

Or how the grass is green,

I only saw the muddy brown

And the clumped washed up pieces that laid on the streets.

She would always tell me the sun was like a warm hug, So beautiful and sweet,

Who knew that thing had beauty?

I only ever felt the hate from its beams.

Was the world always this gentle?

The bees just lied on her hand,

Their beautiful sunlit hint of yellow glowed

As they scattered golden honey over the land.

Did you know that people can laugh?

Oh the sweet sound of It too,

Like a song to my soul

Almost as peaceful as the ocean's blue.

And the way children giggle

I was sure all they did was cry,

But when she made the child laugh

I was sure it was all a lie.

When did this world have color?

My eyes always saw a pale sky-gray,

She saw a sky that had such beauty

I guess I only saw it on a stormy day.

Who knew the world had a gift

A gift my eyes refused to believe,

Because life has never had beauty,

Gray is the only thing I see.

Thoughts of a Queer Lover

By Basil Nussbaum

I.

Palm brush; gentle like butterfly wings
Soft kisses of dandelion fuzz
One hand calloused and rough
Worn like the bark of a tree; strong
The reversed palm has the talons of a bird
Nails long and sharp; delicate
They intertwine
Fitted together in a bout of intimacy
A basket filled to the brim
With love
Swinging freely, side by side

II.

Your eyes hold visions of moss
Of evergreen trees
Bright reflections of the natural world
Your hair is a tumbling waterfall of soft spirals
I crave to drown my hands within it
To feel the silk spilling between my fingers
The air is filled with the scent of you
Of roses and cedar
I breath in; peace settling deep within my bones
You speak of tales from near and far
Words of rough sand
And a voice that floats like leaves in the breeze
My body tingles all over
Joy filling up the cracks and crevices of my very being
Rising to the surface in bubbling laughter
I am so enchanted by you
My beautiful Venus
Life only feels worth living
When you are with me
Oh how you distract me so

III.

Maybe I am sick
Taken by consumption

My body, sticky and warm
Lethargy has made my vessel its home
Lying dormant in my veins
But still I twitch with restlessness
Coughs burst forth from my chest
They bring up nothing
Not the floating butterflies,
Beating their wings
Within my stomach in a frantic haze
Chaos took my mind as clay
Molding and sculpting my earthenware thoughts
But still I remain calm;
Tranquil
Withdrawn from the lack of time;
Spent with soft caresses
And Blushing glances
Sleep eludes me
Like a trying to catch smoke,
I can not rest with you constantly filling my mind
I think I might die
What have you done to me

IV.

Together we sit
Basking in stolen time
Hot green tea resting in our laps
Hands clasped in promise
The singing of birds and crickets
Voices of rattling leaves
Whisper in the world around us
There is nothing more peaceful than this
And nobody more beautiful than you
To be torn from your side
Would be like being torn from life itself
As my eyes graze your face
I realize that no words can describe how I feel
No poem to express the emotion in my heart
I'm walking through a room
One with no floor
And I am tumbling down and down

With no hope of stopping
It is here next to the winding stream
Among the dew speckled grass
Where the edge of my thigh meets yours
Where our breath mingles
Laughter mixing with the creaking of branches
And sounds of bugs and of the earth around us
It is here
Where we belong
Where I would gladly lay beside you
Until all that is left of us are
Confessions of timeless love
Carried through the whispers of the trees and wind
And of old, intertwined bones

V.

How could a love so pure
Ever be seen as sinful?
And if it is
If when the time comes
To take my last breath;
Chest falling and remaining at ease
I would gladly meet you in damnation
I would turn of my back of the gates of purity
And on promised peace
To endure seas of fire
Just so I could simply hold you in my arms
I would not suffer
Even in the pits of hell,
It would be heaven by your side

Uprooted
By Parker Frank

Maybe it's another home people talk about

Not this hollow, lonely feeling as my feet ache for pavement

Settling down sounds like a curse, a snare around my ankles waiting for the inevitable hunter

To stop moving is to forgive

No roots grow from my fibulas through my soles to keep me in one place.

The ache of walking too long greets me like an old friend, familiar and painful

stolen clothes, hotel shampoo and crooked herbal cigarettes keep me company under the summer sun

Read the map and the road signs like scripture of old, wash the red dust from your hair in the rain. It is a baptism.

To stop moving is to submit

I am not bound to four walls that surround me, or unfinished business

But I am a ghost all the same, haunting under the streetlamps of the city you used to love

My eyebags hold the baggage my arms will not, my shoulders feel the weight of it all

Like atlas, I carry my world, but instead of a globe its a Jansport backpack stolen from my brother

Clear rivers and dying grass act as a carpet, open skies that lighting shatters are my roof

The rolled down windows of an old truck, hands moving with the breeze embrace me on my way to nowhere

There is a promise in the weight of the world on my shoulders, there is a promise in the plastic soles of my boots, there is a promise in the words of a golden haired boy

“To stop moving is to die”

How to Write About Autism

(Inspired by “How to Write About Africa” by Binyavanga Wainaina)

By Anonymous

Make sure you lean into stereotypes. Every person with autism is the exact same way.

They are carbon copies of each other and you can spot an autistic character a mile away if they are written right.

Make sure the autistic character is bullied or belittled in some way. This should come at the beginning so as to establish the autistic person as the victim. Have the bully pick on a repetitive habit or special interest; maybe the fact that they don’t understand social cues.

Remember, you are their hero for writing this, so let them feel seen. After all, they never are.

Don’t let the character act normal— especially if they are a teenager. A teenager with autism is as developed as a normal five year old. Keep in mind that teens with autism are ostracized by their peers and are very lonely, separate-from-society type people. Your audience will be extremely confused if you allow the autistic character to act like a normal person. Be adamant on not letting the autistic character fly under the radar or seem at all typical. In fact they are different in every way from the general public and there also must be clear alienation.

They barely have any friends, don’t understand social cues, NEVER take part in romantic relationships, don’t hang out with people or go out ever, and can never be the life of the party. And if they are out with people (this is a rare occasion) they are watching with admirable eagle eyes the extroverted “cool kid”. If they somehow stumble into the center of attention, they either do not understand why or do not realize it is happening.

They cannot be complex characters. This is the rule of thumb for creating a true-to-life person on the spectrum. Their sole character trait is their disability.

You can't forget to include a character to act as their helper and guide throughout life.

This is typically the only friend the character has and without them the autistic character would be lost. It is this best friend that helps them learn about life, what normal people are like, and helps them understand the world. A sort of parental figure to an ignorant child.

Autistic people often don't get humor. Jokes are foreign and only made by accident when they are in fact trying to be serious.

They all talk in a very dry, intellectual, monotone way. No slang, no figurative language, and absolutely no emotional inflections in their voice. Autistic people cannot feel emotion. In fact, they are void of it. Use that to your advantage.

Always end your story with them finally feeling accepted. This shows a wonderful journey from victim to victor. They have worked their whole lives for this moment; longed for the acceptance you have so graciously given. Maybe even end with a journal entry about how they cannot believe they've finally made it; how they wish they had the tools to describe this feeling. It's the only goal an autistic person has— aside from winning a Nobel Prize for some sort of vastly complicated scientific achievement— so let them really take it in.

Untitled

By Birdi Diehl

wishing on dandelion seeds
and seeking answers in their long forgotten petals
floating flying with broken wings
dying on bricks
growing through cracks
and vanishing under the sole of clogs
docs
birkenstocks

piercing through and into murky waters
swimming down currents that stream away from my consciousness
delivering lilies and lily pads to watery foe
frogs hiccup a reply to a gravestone written in water
pushed sand marking its place before high tide

gone forever after
but water never forgets

it's memory inked in blood
spilled in the body
for fangs and fins to find
tracking the scent of red on lime
lust
lies
finding similar daggers in a mouth not it's own
lips spread to smile
flashes of film and a single black eye
666 minutes my love not much longer i promise
pinned hair and sprayed pleasantries of perfume
dear i'm not well we should stay home
999 reasons why i shouldn't have married you
a door closes it's mind's eye
shutters slam
window drapes draw swords on a bloody battlefield of black linen and flor-de-lis'
sewing marbles to be later lost on dolls
giving them no crinkled map but one ripped and teared
the final destination unreadable

unreachable
dying scraps of silk in purpose
but only one stitch of a cloth is true
an apple sits on a table
spreading itself thin
brie on crackers and
dear i'll pass on the honey please no sugar or milk in my tea
innocently puffing smoke into eyes and
over eyelashes formed of fuzzy thoughts and forget me nots

the red stoplight barren on screen
rush
until the target is reached
skin grapples
eyes meet across distances
two steps apart but miles to trek across sinful village-ways
full of the smells and smoke of dew drops and the dropping of leaves
walking stick to no avail
slippy walking paths and sliding down snowy adventure routes
cracking lips on dry air and the wind carrying vices
there's been a drought of the heart
bent but will not break from an inkless pen
a cry dying on my wilted lips of desire
yet i've never known better
i never will

for water never forgets
and you always douse me with it
still thirsty for that poisonous perpetrator
parched but no parcel of water
even with my wishful thinking of you

- a burning flame, consuming itself

Untitled

By Jamison Butz

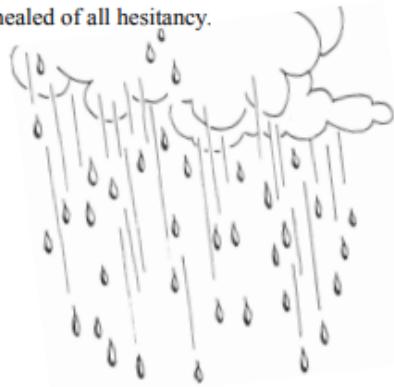
Rotting is all that will save me. The feelings of uncertainty will never unfreeze and the parasitic misery festering inside my stomach will never be vomited out. I wish for the grass to absorb my body whole, disintegrating me, and to be rebuilt, healed of all hesitancy.

Even after my heart slows
and I mend into the earth,
veins becoming roots watered
by my benumbed blood,
those in my head
don't stop talking, arguing
How could I have done it better?
What are mountains but
piles of fleeing footsteps
and the atmosphere but a jar
of collected screams
Everything is crumbling
and suddenly-
the crows are pecking at my feet
and a dirt nimbus forms atop my head



It begins to drizzle as I fall asleep,
melting away my skin
The swarming of bugs like voices
amidst the petrichor stench
They talk to me. They tell all.
The pelting of cold rain
like your warm and endearing kisses,
my cheeks numb over,
I had forgotten what it was like

Do what you wish with my bones
grind them to dust, bury them
Just remember who is inside the tree
that will grow from my remains,
and return to me to sing
your sweet songs as I protect you
from the acid rain
until the day I collapse,
decaying into the ground once more
and we grow into one.



For the Stars That Burn Bright
By Amaiya Kavachery

Filtering the obsolete amiability hidden in the mist
Accusing the arrogant beast
With a slice of childish disentrist for the bitter dish
Setting the vail aflame

Influenced by choleric tones
Coarse vines of entrapment
No sweeter than the sap of a honeycomb
No better than the harsh winds of justice

Desperate mockery to lift the heavy layer
Apologetic to the touch, yet never felt better
Concerned and apprehensive, in spite, lost in wonder
A poignant nudge of everlasting devastation

Resigning the label of a companion
For your unforthcoming, self-effacing heart's center
Seduction with sympathy
For vivacity could never play a part
You'd whisper in hopes to ignite the flame

I tend to speculate your intentions
For the stars that burn bright
Are concealed by the miserable fog
Up till now, I endeavor to be a cut above
If you can forgive my regression
I seek another chance with you

A ‘Linguist’ Meets Lucifer at the Market

By Amani Jones

I appear

Over a step to the left where my shoe sole falls off its bones

Melting skin from the carcass

like a chicken

Cooked, all scattered on the counter with my nickel penny dimes

asking me to glue it back together

Something spills from my mouth and we speak now,

Sophisticated broken tongue, cracked and splitting, lost

Lapping up my words, dog-like and the common tongue hits,

settling on sorry because I don't know how to tell him

I'm a bastard child

Devoured, with a cold toe as it graces the bare floor of his establishment

we sweat, together

Him and I

and the devil sinks his teeth in

He says something, fallen angel, I scream, and the sweat-man is stuck under fluorescent green

lights

Something falls from the ceiling all brown and aqueous

there's a sunflower seed between my teeth

The baseball game has ended, that's the only place I eat those

I've seen that city already, there was music and we fell to the pavement

Someone was swaying

My arms flailed and highbeams hit my eyes don't ask me what happened

I blame the chicken.

Death of a Bug

By Liam McDonald

Upon this night
I have witnessed by some mere act of misfortune
The lost life of a simple creature
That was killed by my own sink.
This small creature,
Which I do not even know the name of
Was curled up and dead
Within the kitchen sink.

I would like to think
That perhaps this killing was one of accident
That there is not in fact
A cold blooded killer in this household.
However, given the circumstances,
I must lead to believe
That my most deepest of worries
Must have come true.

For when one is confronted by such a choice
To kill that creature, or let it live.
Spare it by letting it escape to the outdoors
Or mercilessly drown it within the sink.
What choice does one usually make?
To end the life of such a pathetic bug
That on its own
Can not even make it out of the sink.
Or do they choose to spare it
Letting it live another day
Dying to a different hand.

Good Mourning

By Trinity Jefferson

The weekend is over and Monday has come again; I wish it hadn't. The sun rose early in face of the porch doors and I was saddened by it. "Again," it whispered to the inner crust of my eyelids and I winced. The moon will leave and the sun will come again and I will have to do today again until I refuse. Until I decide to shut the door and leave only the light of the tv screen to beam. But the sunlight woke my bones and told me to continue. My night clothes never left my skin that morning and tiredness crept through my veins. I didn't feel guilty about not being able to do today. Since I preserved through so many todays, this day would make no difference if I didn't. The couch was dented from my sleep's weight, and still I do not know how long I will stay. Maybe tomorrow will be another today behind me, even if there is no reverse from this long lasting turmoil of my yesterdays. I fear there is no going back. I pray into my morning's bagel a hope for today because my mind can't comprehend tomorrow. My father easily breathes phrases about forgiveness and reconciliation and mistakes and family. All the words I cannot do today. All words I broke and silenced myself into yesterdays, into last month, into last year. My soul is weary, and yet in the midst of coffee stained chins, dough crumbled fingertips, and saturated stained cheeks, my grandmother laughs. I'm not sure if it's because she's in pain or trying to make me forget less about the pain. She subtles a joke about yesterday and I laugh with her.

Alexithymia

Myah Planten

I am sinking within Alexithymia,

Falling through bioluminescence.

I could feel the splash,

The sudden bite,

The cold, worming its way

Between my skin.

There are no shackles

Around my wrists. No

Rope around my ankles.

I am but a stringless Marinette—

Tethered to the depths,

To the darkness,

To the deepest trench.

There's air in my chest,

But it constricts, like a snake;

My lungs tied in a knot.

There's salt in my ears,
In my eyes, in my blood.

It burns in this soundless
Observatory of saxe.

I reach-Up.

My arm, My fingers stretch
Toward The Glow.
And there's something.

A Name. A word.
A description. An emotion.
There's something, and I
Reach.

Up.

And yet I'm still sinking—
Within Alexithymia,
Falling through
Bioluminescence.

THE
LEHIGH VALLEY
CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL
FOR THE **ARTS**