

UC Merced

The Vernal Pool

Title

The English Major Aesthetic

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58k2v1zd>

Journal

The Vernal Pool, 3(1)

Author

Atallah, Carissa

Publication Date

2016

DOI

10.5070/V331032299

Copyright Information

Copyright 2016 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

CARISSA ATALLAH
THE ENGLISH MAJOR AESTHETIC



THE VERNAL POOL

ISSUE FIVE, FALL 2016

The English major sips milk tea, but takes her coffee black.

See, it makes her feel poetic.

It itches when she naps in the grass,

But she's a fan of the aesthetic.

The English major convinces herself that she likes reading the classics

A little more than she actually does.

And folds their pages.

Just because.

She likes the way her cursive looks

Scribbled in the corners of her Norton Anthology books.

She hoards words that aren't hers like a Tolkien literary dragon,

Because she is an intellectual explorer,

With no new land to stick her flag in.

The English major paints a portrait of herself

With brushes carved from the bones of a late-great Victorian

And she looks at it daily

Like her name is Dorian.

And she likes Art. Likes Kahlo and Van Gogh,

But she doesn't know where she's damn going.

Still, the rowers keep on rowing.

Sometimes, her brain feels like tofu.

She wants to be someone but she doesn't know who

So she writes to write the right name for herself,

Stacking rhymes so high they're like Harry Potter books on the shelf.
She can even do it freestyle, like Dobby the House Elf.
But oh, she wants prose like the pros
And poems like the Dickinsons and the Poes.
The English major knows she isn't Wordsworth.
But she wonders, what are my words worth?
She used to think maybe, if my life were a little bit harder
And my heart just a little bit sadder,
Then my thoughts would be deeper and my stories would matter.
So she'd hurt herself with each stemming day.
After all, Hemingway did say
That writing is bleeding.
And in the books, depression is always worth reading
But that, she would learn, was a little misleading.
Because she couldn't write, couldn't read, couldn't eat, couldn't sleep,
couldn't breathe.
Trapped in the bell jar, she couldn't leave
Until to be or not to be was no longer the question—
Ham, let's get real. There's no poetry in depression.
Then, the English major binds herself together
Like the spines of her books
Still sipping tea from mason jars just because she likes the way it
looks.