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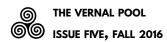
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Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

CARISSA ATALLAH THE ENGLISH MAJOR AESTHETIC



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.