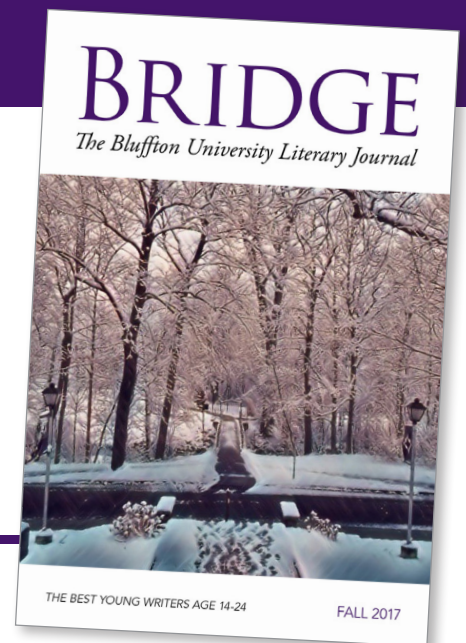


BRIDGE

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WRITER'S BLOCK

Juliana Castillo

I sit at the desk and look at the paper and my mind is full — but my hands lie still, fingers loosely curled. I occasionally try to pull ideas out of an ear, cajoling them with a song — but the ideas and I have differing musical tastes, and neither of us is willing to compromise. Plucking them out doesn't work either. My ideas are moths, and sometimes, when they refuse to come out into the daylight, I get angry and shred their wings in attempts to extricate them from my mind.

Sometimes I am bereft of ideas, as though my head is an almost-empty jar like the one I found the other day in the basement — it contained the carcass of a spider I caught a year ago. I was going to release it and save its life. I try to think up an eternal truth about a dead spider, but nothing comes to mind.

All the great eternal truths have already been written about. Love, hate, need, loss... All so overdone and cliché. People say they're cliché, anyway. I suppose my thoughts are cliché — and my life, too.

Verisimilitude — everything must be realistic; but my life is not realistic if realism is the absence of love and hate and need and loss...

Dot dot dot. I sometimes have the insurmountable urge to end all my sentences with dot dot dot. It's the only way to imitate speech — our words never end with one pixelated dot, one sharp completion. Our lives don't end that way either; we seldom cease, leaving no trace. We leave our bodies behind, and splinters of our opinions and sentiments embedded in the thoughts of those who surrounded us when we had not yet completed our sentence. We all get one sentence, I guess — this is why you pay attention in English class when your teacher talks about enjambment.

I watched a snail reproducing yesterday. I'm not sure precisely how it happened, but one little black splotch formed from a larger black splotch. There was no fanfare, no celebration — barely an acknowledgement that for one creature, the world had commenced. This is the way I like to go about writing: put black splotches on paper, then wait and watch them interbreed and multiply. Exponential growth — remember the rabbit couple that reproduced, the hundreds of Fibonacci-sequence babies?

I sit at the desk with the paper facing me like an empty palm, extended to take my hand and lead me away into the regions where it is dim enough for the moths to come out and affix themselves to the paper. They will drown themselves in the ether and flutter down to the page, using their last thought to position themselves correctly in a black splotch of ink. They sacrifice themselves for my art — and so I must be careful not to waste words on the trivial — cliché things like life and death.



JULIANA CASTILLO is a 14-year-old emerging writer who resides in Wilmington, Del. She finds inspiration for her writing in the convergence of words, people, and metaphors.