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Introduction

Nightmares in pill jars, a life sorted into crates. Plastic breasts in neon light, laughter through that hole in her umbrella... This year's anthology for the Student Network's creative writing courses features work that is surprising and original, but also impressively well-crafted and mature. You'll find prose and poetry from talented, committed young writers who spent several weeks experimenting together with key elements of the creative process. Classes combined writing, reading, discussing and work-shopping with other risks. Students learned 'rebel clown' theatre games in order to access spontaneity and channel the ridiculous. They illustrated collaborative stories to ponder questions of authorship and authenticity, and they braved the daunting act of performing poetry for one another. Many thanks to the Student Network and to all the students who attended for making this year's writing courses so much fun. As well as including work by students who attended the Student Network's creative writing course, this year's anthology also includes work from students who worked with Liz Lochhead, who is currently writer in residence at the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow School of Art. Congratulations to all the contributors for an anthology of exceptionally high quality.

Foreign

The language in that country
Although old newsprint to them (or 'Although black and
white to them')
Is wildly textured with colours, to me.
Their tongues easily caress
Comfortable phrases
I fumble with.
Their tightly woven baskets
Are plump with culture,
And their daily groceries
Are my treasure trove.

Soldier

Heavy green gear
So camouflaged
I disappear.
I am not myself.
I am a black order.
I am a blind saddled horse.
Kicking, neighing, breathing,
Strike the apparent enemy.
Their face, and family
Are camouflaged.

Bread Street Morning

Jackie rubs flowers eating petal
by petal by rubbing red nails chapped
over bruised flap pink mouth
by mouthfull folded
in by forest road junction.

steak pie floral lady looks
at her and eats,
eating and tucking
as the rain starts
 giggling babies
and a pink girl clicks her lighter.

Jackie sways and slowly picks curved petals, rubs and rolls
them pink and bruised between her fingers, cold and
stubby, rubbing and rolling them from the half bare bunch
as she leans by the corner junction. Bread street corner
roars morning traffic, steadily blaring past her one by one as
the pink cupped flowers shed their petals bruised and
rubbed to thin rolls, and one by one are folded through her
cracked raw lips with each new car: Fordpetal Hondapetal
Ladapetal Fiatpetal

Steady eating as she leans her old brown mink, mangy now
with dirty concrete time, perched coat hairless patches on a
flourescant bollard. A sly glance flicks over her shoulder
from under jasmine hair, in piles. The smell of exhaust and
of crushed petal breath. The blare of horns, sigh of a bus.
The shout and scatter of schoolboys, the smell of coffee and
bins, as she leans and slowly picks and eats. It starts to rain
and

a babys happy
hatted smiling laughter
bubbles up from under
plastic slapping rain
coat bugged baby,
her heavy handled
happy mammy laughing
over soaked hairs
downing windy blows
from corner street

Silas Parry

and towing sideways

wheeling buggied baby,
blows and laughs with mammy.

The smell of crushed petal breath exhaust.
The parp of horns, grunt of a bus.
The shout and scatter of schoolboys,
the smell of coffee and bins and rain and

-stop eating the fucking flowers-

he will say, she knows

-stop fucking eating the flowers-

She knows he will say, just like always. Already the warmth
of the words wrapping her neck, already the warm words
pushing her fingers quicker, rubbing the tight pink bruises
harder. She eats between cars now, between blares, hurried.

-stop eating the fucking flowers-

he says, just like always, just like he always will and hugging
her tight, punching her arm.

-what are you like eh?-

he says as
the blare of a bus
and a gust of wind
and

a steak pie eating lady, large in blue floral on the bus stop
bench beside the shop. She eats and licks her fingers, dusts
her knees, chews the last and crumples greasy paper bags in
huge white sausage hands, tucks them in a plastic shopping
bag. A girl pink scrunchy hair wrap stands beside her, flicks
chinking gold hoop earrings, clicks a lighter.

chink chink chink

click click

Silas Parry

The plastic bench buffets beneath the wind and floral lady
looks largely down to slanting rain upon her right arm skin,
then across her frown. the girls hoop chinks up and down
and up and down, her lighter clicks around.

Floral lady largely being eaten
by her greasy papered hands
and seeing Jackie eating petals
in the starting rain as cars
boys wind bin breath
coffee cars
and the greyrain starting,
a happy laughing baby.

Poem

I was going to write a poem for you.
But then I thought that you would think it weak of me;
That I would look desperate and pathetic in your eyes.
So I have not done so.

Glaikit

Scotland waits while you lie dreaming
 Upon the rocks, by the loch
Of your childhood – cold.
England laughs, claiming not to understand *your*
 Perversion of *their* language,
When you are writing in your own
 And stare, glaikit, at the cathode
Wondering why the words
 Look wrong.
Another Burns, Whiter than
That rose –
Your skin.
Hemmed in by open spaces
 Landscape poetry for the Concrete generation

You were not
 Born in a croft by a loch:
You were not
 Born in the tenements of grimy Glasgow.
You do not have red hair,
You do not speak Scots (except when it suits you),
You do not wear a kilt (except on formal occasions),

You are a Poet who is Scottish,
Not a Scottish Poet.

I Didn't Go Outside So Much

Voices on a Wednesday night, calling to him; harsh, nasal, voices in the fog of distance mixing with spilled-diesel, spilled-food smells at his feet. Outside an M&S he sees the centre of his world, all his works. He is drawn closer as existence compresses into those bare plastic breasts under a flickering neon light. His movements now in time with the bursts of darkness, the caustic whine of the broken transformer in his temples – his heart as bare as Sauchiehall St. on this Wednesday night, loudly beating in a slow mockery of that rhythm – he lets his legs fold out from under him, buckling. The world spins and as the pavement leaps up to hit him in the face a rotten peach – dead shrivelled skin – swims by towards the drain on its own escapist adventure.

Outer Hebrides

Peat-bog horizon, midge-infested air,
Warm sheep-breath, cold sea-wind,
Hard drinking and hard praying –
 In the Gaelic Eden-tongue.
Single-track roads pass by
Single-house villages.

An island rift:

 Harris and Lewis,
With backs to each other and faces to the shore.
Hulking crag, desolate peak
Rise southward over sandy firth and cove –
Watching tides
Washing driftwood home.

Lilting waulking songs,
Droning pipes and rat-tat drums
Give way to
Celt-Rock Festivals.

Ferry dock, fishing port,
Old castle grounds and new kit-houses,

Chris Boyd

The metropolis of Stornoway
Keeps close at hand,
For six days, the anchor
Of the Mainland.

Universal Endings

When things all crumble,
With the forces ripping and
Tearing as a foot through wet sand,
The Cosmos contracts
And old men grumble,
As life distracts.

Time devours itself
In the emptiness; fashioning from
The eternal instant the sound, long
Ago heard. Bang.
Glass falling from the shelf
A silent song the universe sang.

Clocks unwinding;
A ritenuto of the music
Of the Spheres. Logic
Corrupted;
And the laws of Physics becoming
Meaningless. Numbers disrupted.

A sigh, too long held,
A breath waiting
To be exhaled, trembling
With the effort of entertaining existence.
Pastfuturepresent...meld
 To form the shortest distance.

On Further Inspection

My Life.
Three bags—
Two cases—
And a Tape Recorder.

Boxed.
Half Empty—
And Leaking.
—Weighting me backwards.

Passing Crianlarich

Luke?
...Luke?
Luke?

Luke, you're only on your second lager of the journey? And me on my fourth!
But you're already sipping slowly through the gap in your front teeth and making that slurp-glurp noise I hate.

You know I hate it!

Luke, are you even listening to me? Can you hear me?

When we first kissed our faces knocked together like bruised peaches.
When we kissed our tongues wrestled to spit the other, alien, out. And we where left gasping and sweating.

He would grasp me in his arms, leaving little red marks, and I would think myself in heaven. A shared isolation, a throbbing pain packed with some moist compress of garden herbs.

Luke...

Briana Breuer

I don't think this is really working out.

Luke?

Why don't you touch me?

Why won't you look at me, Luke?

Is that even your name? You've the look of a Luke about you...

Only on your second tenants though, and me on my fifth...
And you haven't yet glanced in my direction.

Me, with the chug-chug chug-chug of the train my only company.

Waking Up, I Find Myself Alone.

And I remember our two strong miniature hands grasped together. Clammy, with sharp granules of sand grating between the folds and fingers. As we skidded into the surf. Stumbled and inhaled great gasping breaths of brine. Our interlocking points forced to detangle as we thrust our palms into the sand to come back up to our feet. And I remember how her mom used to sleep on the couch all day long and we would creep creep around her like a dragon, and it even smelled a little sulphurous. I didn't like to breathe too deeply. I don't remember her name or how I met her. But I remember that her hair was as black and shimmering as the sand which perpetually suffused it. And that it was as long and tangled as my mine. The two would get knotted together as we slept and, sitting up, there was a great painful wrenching.

Briana Breuer

Holding On.

Once upon a time, my fingers had been smooth, subtle, and almost dumpy. Ten receptive, marshmallow fingers which had strayed each night, warm, blood pumping through them, across my environment. Wandered through my bed, my body, the world. It was a gooey and it was a messy affair. Gooey and messy and so – infuriatingly alive. And my eyelashes beat, constant and elusive, like humming birds. Meeting each other honey soaked over eyes bright with newness. Not static, or caked with insomnia. Images. I keep them neatly sorted, labelled, stacked. My life in crates and boxes. The effort is draining. I hold on. Clenching tighter and tighter. Until my knuckles burst. Bloom, opening their pale petals upwards as new beaks clamour forward. Sucking me dry and desiccated. Bursting my life open like white fruit. Gooey and messy.

Spider

Leaking and twisting,
Champagne stretching,
Dust stuck on to trowelled-on mascara
With eyelashes shut

Enigmatic meringues shine like polished leaves
In a hollow face, she is reflecting, blinding,
 Every moment jerking gracefully
As she extends her tinselled tentacles.
Laying empty eggs,
She sparkles.

Stare

You are pure and still,
Fixing me in your white light.
Flicking my eyelids back,
I see your image at the base of my spine, sliding down my
back,
Exhilarating torture.
I won't ask you – But I know your game,
I won't tell you,
You with your sniper's eyes of silver,
One rule – No Hands Wanted.

This Night Has Opened My Eyes And I Will Never Sleep Again

Revolving eyelashes,
Eternal monotony of up and down...
 Open and shut.
Oatty thoughts, honey and molasses,
 Now the delicious taste of fresh vomit,
Tipping my eyes apart,
Melting the delicate skin,
Insomnia.

Harriet Whitehead

Keeping The Spaghetti Between Our Lips

We keep sucking,
Keeping the spaghetti between our lips,
Ignoring the dried-in stains,
The invisible, permanent yolk...
 Fluorescent love-bites,
The goodbye greeting of our magnetic bodies,
Rubbing the grazes together until our pain joins us,
The spaghetti thread,
Sinews.

Maybe

I've planted fifty trees for you,
Maybe one day you'll get lost in the forest,
Underneath the cotton sky –
You will steal what you never could own.

I took your scarf when you weren't looking,
Scratched out your heart when you weren't feeling,
Underneath the cotton sky, thick with syrupy clouds,
My head upside-down in the distance.

Today is the day you have sworn
 You are re-born,
But mine still twinges two years on.
I hate this disease – please shoot me when the signs appear,
 When the bruises clear,
When my head turns right way round,
When I forget your name,
Please keep it unreal.

Maybe one day we will go back,
I will smell you on my skin,
 Seal you in my scratches,
Carving our names in the rough back,
Underneath the cotton sky,
We will lie.

Harriet Whitehead

Sparkle

The people around her are too busy too notice. They carry the stones around in their long jacket pockets. Leaves occasionally brushing their hurried ankles. Her right arm stretched out like an aeroplane, at full reach, feels like it might yank out of the socket. In her left arm she clutches a bunch of flowers. If the choice had to be made between her two arms, if one had to be sacrificed, that choice would be easy.

Heart fluttering
The sound of rushing footsteps
I've lost my sparkle...

The sky spits quietly
That hole in the umbrella,
A glimpse of laughter

There it was again, that familiar smell. Spiced peaches and chocolate sauce. The lovely sticky feeling round your mouth. The tugs of a grown-up arm like a jolt, an alarm. The forest of faces grumpy and stern around me. I spy a perfect puddle on my right. This is it.

ASBO God

It was April, and Reverend McTavish was having terrible trouble with his junior, Reverend Molloy, who kept depicting God in a tracksuit.

"Why isn't it suitable?" Molloy had sulked when McTavish caught him making the poster.

"It's just not!" McTavish shouted. "For Christ's sake, why can't you try and keep a little bit of dignity about the whole thing?" In that day's particular absurdity, Molloy had designed a poster advertising the upcoming church fun-day which depicted God kitted out head to foot in Adidas, complete with a gold pendant spelling GOD and a six pack of Tennant's Special Brew.

"I just think," Molloy began, "That you're just being a bit uptight. I think we should be changing things. Appealing to the kids. Making God speak their language, like, you know, he's one of them."

"He's not one of them," McTavish shrieked. "That's the whole bloody point!"

Perhaps McTavish was a traditionalist, but that was how you kept things on the straight and narrow. Throughout all the regional parishes, his boasted the lowest rate of atheism, which he regarded as an occupational hazard for teenagers, like drugs and homosexuality. The trick, he found, was to focus on logic.

"Look, the world exists and it didn't just come from nowhere so God must exist, mustn't he?" he told cross-legged seas of five-year-olds.

"Where did God come from then?" a boy at the back once asked.

McTavish glared at the freckle-faced heretic for a full minute with a venom born of panic.

That was a bad week. After this, there was another outbreak of blasphemy in the church youth group. "Now kids," McTavish had been saying, "It's time to go home now, and I hope you'll all remember to say your prayers tonight and thank God for the day".

"Actually, Reverend," one boy piped up jauntily, "I don't think I believe in God anymore."

"That's a very pessimistic view, Tony," McTavish replied gravely. "I feel very sorry for you."

"I don't think it is," Tony said brightly. "I actually hope there isn't a God because well, look at this place! If there is, he must be a right shite. George Bush's best pal. Millions of people starving. You don't want the kind of sadistic arsehole capable of making this world being omnipotent. Oh no."

It was the only time Reverend McTavish ever chased someone out of the church and he never regretted it

You and I

A gazing smile
revealing your secret
when you move across
and I remain where I am.
In this room
all these mirrors
and all these lights
dancing
in these beautiful eyes.
One looking at me
open
the other one somewhere else
closed.
Sadly
they will never meet.
Darkness surrounds us
but you sparkle
in a dance
looking beautiful
when you fly.
When I walk
I feel your arms around me
which I so long have missed.
All your lies
became true
because I trust them.
We exchange
pain
this constant noise.
On the other hand
light
and energy.
Which sometimes I can't see
when I can't hear
because everything's so loud
and even the screaming seems faint
when you're being absorbed in yourself.
In an embrace I am cold
but you embrace
me
and I melt.
Something is written in the sky
I smile.
Some things never change.

Jennifer Fielding

Every Day I Wake Up

Every day I wake up with a different face. That wasn't always like that. I liked looking at myself in the mirror. I tried out different poses. I liked experimenting with different looks. Maybe you could argue I was even self-centred. Lots of my friends say it was more important who you really were on the inside. Which abilities you had and which actions you took in life. But how do other people know what's on the inside, they can't look inside of me, can they? And I thought the inside of me was quite boring. But now every morning I wake up with a different face. I don't know who I am anymore, I don't know who I'm going to be tomorrow. Every morning I get up and walk to the mirror and look at myself. I stare at myself and don't even know if I am myself or who I am. Other people don't even seem to notice. They recognize me and call my name and pretend it's all normal. I walked to the café with my different face and was asked whether I wanted the usual. But I'm not the usual how can I get the usual? And everything still seems the same and unchanged and this is so odd. It makes me think about it, whether maybe your looks are irrelevant? Or what makes people recognize me as the same person; what makes you to a person? Every morning I wake up with a different face. I turn round to my boyfriend and he kisses me and says "good morning, darling". I have stopped thinking of my face as a face. Maybe it is something like a mood. A different one every day. Or a trait of character, another one to be revealed day by day. I let myself be surprised every day.

The Butterfly Solution

The problem, Lucy told me, was the bananas were too fresh and the climate too humid. Lucy had been having horrible dreams where the people she met during the day, came back at night: the dirty boy picking at her pockets, the toothless woman selling soup, the tea drinking men staring, the waiter smiling. They all hung from meat hooks, dripping. Lucy woke me the middle of the nights at just the moment when the whole town finally went silent except for the crickets and she's ask if she was a racist and I'd say no, of course not. It's those damn malaria pills you're taking that make you have funny dreams. Lucy told me her dreams and I illustrated them on already visited tourist site brochures. I put the bad dreams in little glass jars and placed them on the windowsill. We named and labelled each jar and then I said there, now you're safe. We could barely see out the window of our satellite dream laboratory.

At the entrance of Chamseaux market steaming food, sweat, colourful fruit and dusty shafts of orange light smacked into the modern town. An old man in a Pink Floyd t-shirt stopped, grabbing Lucy by the elbow. He offered a hairy root covered in clumps of dirt. His eyes went wide and the dried white spit around his lips cracked: "Eat, Eat, make you feel much better Madame!" His hands went up in the air and Lucy started to shake and she stumbled a bit. I thought the shaman, priest or whatever he was, had- you know -affected her. Like she had been touched, spiritually, by this local. But no, Lucy later said, "The fucker lost one of his teeth right here (she opened her fist) in the palm of my hand." She showed it to me: a piece of red brown flesh clung to the tooth's edge. I took it from her and put it in an empty medicine jar. I wrote INDIGENOUS TOOTH over the prescription label and put it on the windowsill. The room went dark and Lucy slept

Goats

The winding road,
made by drovers of cattle and sheep,
always keeps secret, that which is
around the next corner.

Thick spongy hedges hem you in,
leaving only brief gaps
to see the beauty of fields of corn
or the damp spread of brassicas.

Old-mans' beards and
grandmothers' pincushions
cling to the tops of hairy brambles,
missed until I stopped to collect
the sweet delight of fat blackberries.

Once these roads were jammed full
of cows in need of milking
or geese going to be gagged at the market,
back when I was a boy.

2

When I was a boy,
the goats escaped from the Top Field -
the gate was left open, it turned out,
by a grockel from the city.-

They went on the rampage,
eating ivy and the paint off cars
it took half the village to catch them all,
shouting and hitting pans like an old colonial tiger hunt.

Pick Me Up Tomorrow

Home-raised, I'm crouched in a corner;
with my sick green limbs I'm waiting, so very
calmly for a crumb of that toast from the warder.

She smells gloriously of pickles, lordy
knows I'm hungry too – for shoes
to kick stones with – that's why
I think they keep me barefoot.
But they don't know I can mould the
reflecting walls, with the tips of
my fingers I can push blankness
into shapes –
I can crush the air
quickly in my palms
to hear it scream as it escapes.

Thought she spotted me at it once,
ah, that's all you're getting from me.
But... I do worry
about the sappy
crimson fairies up my nose,
and the mermaids down the plug-holes.

I wish they'd pickle me – my eyes
perfect like silverskin onions in a jar,
so I could watch from the chippy counter.

She said she'd still fancy me
even if I were to imitate a frog,
and slip quietly off the lily-pad.

Now(well you've seen my back)
I've warts like those gherkins,
and I've lost my crunch.

And although your fingers burn,
Dear Ms. Warder,
If you do love me
treat me to more than a change of water;

like you promised me before;
pick me up tomorrow
from this clinical pond floor.* * * * *

At The Age Of Fifteen...

Drinking then was like an art form,
the endless attempts at getting in;
me and my young colleagues
blagging it at Russian vodka bars,
run by Geordie businessmen.
Security guards with coils of
black wire in their ears,
chasing us from fire-escapes
opened by our older friends,
as we watched lasses we know
from school
get into cars.

Falling down, falling out
falling down, getting off.
I punched a mate for nicking
a tiny joint.

I still have a photo of another friend,
and in it his eyes are half-closed,
and he's leaning on nothing,
only one without a "trademark photo pose"
- he's gay now, but wasn't then –
sometimes I remember
I'd fancied his girlfriend,
from the age of ten.

That group of us, with nervous red cheeks,
who were away on
triple vodka,
aftershock,
triple vodka
aftershock.

We were chased away from club queues,
and aggressively borrowed cigarettes, then
on the way home vomited
on McDonalds' windows
at 2am.

I remember, one night,
we passed a building site;
they were re-styling the motorway junction
by the school that a year later I'd attend –

Then in the morning my head was screaming
and so was my mother,

Tom Coles

but my sister was laughing at it all.
There was, undeniably
in the small back garden,
12 foot of a "no stopping" sign
leant against the wall.

Childish

Little Red Hood -
Little Red Hood -
I've knocked I've
knocked I've.
knocked once,
now let me in
you teasing bitch

My Goldilocks, dear,
Goldilocks dear,
you owe me,
you owe me, you
owe me a lot
and I'm taking..
nothing to fear.

Dearest Snow White....
Snow White...
Don't, Don't
Fight, Don't
Don't Fight.
It'll Just...
Don't.
Make it..
Don't.
Worse.

Silas Parry

Hi my name is Silas. My piece of work is called Bread Street Morning. My favourite animal is a Toucan, my favourite colour is red and my favourite food is buttery toast. Thanks

Chris Boyd

I started writing seriously, though certainly not always serious pieces, for my Advanced Higher folio and haven't been able to stop since, some of my greatest influences being Stoppard's plays, Kafka's prose and Cohen's singing-songwriting. I've considered myself a poet and playwright since I started writing, only recently expanding into flash-fiction with the help of this year's workshops. I'm currently studying Law and both my music (playing in and composing for orchestras through to jazz- and rock-bands) and my writing provides a welcome and bohemian counterbalance to the stress and materialism of degree-work.

Briana Breuer

I am Briana. Born in December on Oahu, Hawaii. The first in a long succession of different homes. With Juliet, Eric, Matt and Lizzy. My family, the most important people in my life. I've been in Glasgow for two years. A city I love and which loves me (often leaving me gifts of window ledge curry and chips containers).

These are the first expressions I have written in years. And I want my words to be read and heard. Received with a recognising stir of the stomach, like the smell of your mother or old favourite jumper.

Kirsty Mitchell

Kirsty Mitchell is a fourth year student in philosophy and history who unwisely took time out from studying for her finals to write this piece. Her current dislikes include philosophy of art, philosophy of action, the philosophy of Hume, the history of gender, the history of the family, and the history of crime and punishment.

Harriet Whitehead

I love collecting words and phrases like photographers gather images - anything that strikes a chord with me, for known or unknown reasons. Most of my poetry portrays a snapshot of time, a moment in a relationship, a feeling, memory, or insight, but I also love exploring the power of language and images in themselves. I have only recently started writing again (thanks to this course), and I am looking forward to taking my notebook, along with my re-discovered pleasure in writing, on my future travels.

Jessica Grosman

Jessica Grosman is originally from Montreal, Canada; though in the last four years she has been geographically confused and is rarely ever in Montreal. She will return to Montreal this June and hopefully get a dog. This piece was inspired by all the people on the road who she really did not like and made her angry. They often made her feel no one should go beyond their front garden.

Robbie Guillory

Robbie Guillory is a first year Scottish literature student at Glasgow University, but comes from the back-end of nowhere on the north Norfolk coast, where for nineteen years he hoarded books and heard tales of Glasgow which sounded a hundred years away. Being shocked by city life, his mind seems trapped in that rural backwater, perhaps a form of defence to the sudden speeding up of life. This is his first published work, a toe in the water.

Tom Coles

Thomas Coles grew up in Sandyford, which is a district of central Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He counts himself a Geordie whenever he isn't in the North East. As of Spring 2006 he is living in Glasgow, and as well as writing often finds himself as a photographer, painter and English Literature student. He mostly writes about his experiences, and what he finds interesting, beautiful or important.

Credits

Workshops

Kristina Weaver, Ewan Gault and Christin Lee.

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