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the literary journal of
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

2014-2015

Each year, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College students are encouraged to submit their best compositions for our annual writing contest. This journal includes winners of the 2014-2015 contest in the categories of Personal Essay, Critical Essay, Short Story, Structured Verse, Free Verse, and Original Stage Play. Artwork was contributed by the students of Jefferson Davis Campus.

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personal essay



"After Georgia O'Keeffe"

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PARADISE MYTHOLOGY

Alexandra Huninghake

Waking up to crystal blue waters, steaming Kona coffee, and the smell of Hawaiian ham cooking on the grill seemed like a dream every morning. Seeing the surfers gliding on the waves like ice skaters in an Olympic competition, the view of the giant mountains behind them, lush green palm trees and rainbow clusters of hibiscus and plumeria flowers everywhere is something everyone wishes to experience. Looking around at this untouched paradise as the smooth Kona coffee glides down my throat, the thought that nothing in the world could be more beautiful than this island sets me in a moment of Zen. Then the noise of fighter jets overhead, Marines yelling "OORAH," and sirens blasting assaults my ears. Just like that, the Zen is gone...along with the coffee. Most people come to Hawaii to relax, but this is a place of war, and there is no escaping that reality.

Oahu is the heart of Hawaii and called "The Gathering Place" for its diverse population and being one of the biggest tourist attractions. It has countless clear beaches, metropolitan cityscapes, historic architecture, and the best shopping around. Among the tourist attractions and beauty that is apparent all over, the history of Pearl Harbor remains present, evidenced by all the bases that dwell throughout the island today. Visiting Pearl Harbor, instant looking down at the crystal water, gives me instant chills. That water still has oil still polluting it to this day. The thought of soldiers, nurses, and innocent people dying that day brings a wave of sadness that cannot be put into words or ever forgotten. Knowing everything they sacrificed, and that another war is continuing, makes my heart sink.

Hawaii is bursting with beautiful gems, but the island is occupied with soldiers practicing with guns and bombs to prepare for war. History always repeats itself and wars are inevitable; even in fairytales, the endings can be tragic. Sleeping Beauty fell into a deep slumber because she could not resist the lure of the spinning wheel. Medusa's victims never came back from their cold stone statues because her beauty was so irresistible; it's impossible not to gaze. These beautiful women and appealing fairytale stories have in common not only beauty, but horrific histories with terrifying consequences. Magic has a price, and so does war.

Closing my eyes slowly, a deep sigh of relief settles like a blanket over my body while I dive into the emerald water. No more sounds of Marines screaming, "If I die in a combat zone, box me up and ship me home. Put me in a set of dress blues, comb my hair and shine my shoes. Pin my medals upon my chest, tell my mama I done my best. Ma, mama, don't you cry! In the Marine Corps you either do or die."

The sounds of the water fill my head like I'm stuck in a permanent seashell. No sounds of gunfire or colossal planes, just the deep ocean. In this, there is true paradise amidst all the grief and sorrow. Walking back into paradise is a little more difficult knowing the sounds of the ocean cannot remain eternal, though the reality of war will always come flooding back.

UGLY

Hannah Livingston

Whoa, she is so ugly. We hear people say it all the time. We ourselves are guilty of defining someone or something as ugly. Unfortunately, we fallible humans often forget that ugly is so much more than an asymmetrical face.

What some might see as beautiful, others might be repulsed by. You might look at the worn, crumpled drawing I keep folded in my Bible and see only the crude outline of a tree. The rough, unsteady strokes of a pencil are evidence of an unskilled hand. It is not beautiful. In fact, you would immediately call it ugly. However, my five-year-old sister drew that tree. I see beauty in it.

Ugly is perceived. There is beauty in ugly things if you will search long enough for it. When you have a connection with something, the ugly exterior melts away and you can see the hidden loveliness if only you will look.

Look.

Do you see it yet?

Look again.

Ugly is waking up with a zit on your face the morning of senior prom. It is a bad hair day, the day you are "PMS-ing," and the day you are late.

Ugly is feeling too big or too small.

Ugly is what you see in the mirror after you have not slept for three days and are worn to the bone.

Ugly is mean.

It is your grandfather as he spits venomous insults at your grandmother for so many years that she no longer has the strength or confidence to stand up for herself. Ugly is feeling yourself picked apart by a man who feels ugly himself. Now you are even, and that man is no longer intimidated by you.

Ugly is the man who violates your right to say no.

Ugly are the scars your body bears. The stretch marks, the age spots, the wrinkles, and the faded, pinkish-white stripes decorating your wrists. Some of the ugliness was created in moments of priceless beauty, though. Nine months of watching your belly stretch as lines squiggled up your hips was so indescribably worth it. Cutting your wrists because you did not know how to deal with emotional pain was not.

Ugly is the mother who flings curses and death threats at her beaten-down children in the grocery store parking lot.

Ugly is making someone cry. It is spite and hate and jealousy. It is pushing someone down to make yourself feel superior.

Ugly is not a crooked smile or a big nose or small eyes.

It is not wide hips, and it is not a nearly-skeletal frame.

Your father's twisted, stiff, useless hands--yes, even as they lie atop his feeble lap--are not ugly.

James 3:9-10 says of the tongue, "With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."

Ugly is the grotesque, twisted gargoyle that our speech can morph into if we are not vigilant. Keep watch; guard your speech.

Refuse to become ugly.

JOINING THE MILITARY

Nateisha Fairly

When I was a child, my mother and my father were always there when I needed them. I did not have to worry about anything. The first job I had was working at Taco Bell after Katrina in 2005. I thought I was grown, though I was still living with my mother. She had rules to follow, but I hated having to clean and do everything she told me to do. However, I had no way out of this situation, so I had to find a way to escape. Before graduating from high school, I decided I had to have a plan. My options were to either go to Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, where my mother could still have access to me, or to join the Navy, where all she could do was call me. I decided to join the military, even though I knew joining it would be a life-changing decision.

Every time my mother told me I had something to do, I would become furious. I was not disobedient. I did everything she asked of me; however, I always had an attitude. I felt like I had been a slave in my own home, so I had to flee.

I did not take any time searching around to find the right branch of the services to join. At the time, I knew the Navy sent recruits to boot camp fast. I had already taken my Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery test, so all I had to do was see the recruiting officer and receive a departure date. I walked into this office and the officer in uniform behind the desk asked me, "How soon do you want to leave?"

I replied, "As soon as you can get me out, Sir."

In no time the recruiter had me set for a departure date of August 19, 2008. I was excited but shocked at the same time because everything was happening so fast.

Next, the officers walked me and a couple of more people into a room and made us say a creed of some sort to the Navy. Afterward, all I had to do was wait for the departure date to come along.

A few weeks later, on August 19th, I had to be in Gulfport, Mississippi, at my recruiter's office. I woke up that morning ready to go. All I had packed was a pair of contacts with some eye solution. I had been told I would be provided all I needed when I arrived at Great Lakes in Chicago.

On the way to the office, my mother seemed fine; I could not tell if she had been sad or not. Everything was fine until we pulled into parking lot. By the look on her face, I knew then I was not just going off to college. Uncle Sam was going to own me for the next four years.

We got out the car and entered the office. My mother sat down, and we waited for my recruiter to obtain the package which I would need in order to leave. I kept looking back at her to make sure she was fine, though I knew she was not. Her eyes began to gloss over when I walked up to her, hugged her, and told her good-bye. She began to sob. I left with the recruiter. We had to go to New Orleans, where I had to fly out.

On the way to New Orleans, he asked, "Are you ready?"

I confirmed, "No turning back now, huh?"

Later, we arrived at the airport. He open the door, walked me in, and said, "Good luck, Seaman Fairley." Then I was on my flight to Chicago. I cannot remember how long it took to get there, but

after exiting the plane, I did not know where to go. All I had been told was that someone would pick me up. Walking around looking lost, I ran into a few people who looked lost, too. When we determined we were all going to boot camp, we linked up and found the right place. Soldiers in sailor uniforms like I used to see on television approached us. I wanted to turn around. As soon as they saw us, they started yelling, "Line up here, and sit there."

This was real. I could not believe boot camp had started. It was midnight, and they lined us up and made us get on a charter bus. They were still yelling, pretty much for no reason. They told us we could not say a word. We rode for twenty minutes. The bus stopped, and the doors swung open, and more people started yelling, "Get off the bus! Run! Run! Run! Stand in line. Get off the wall!"

We had instructions to follow for everything, or should I say rules. For eight weeks we ran, took tests, learned how to write again, how to work as a team, how to use guns, how to fold clothes, and how to swim. I had to walk almost two miles every day to a building to learn how to swim.

Swimming was the hardest challenge for me. I was so scared. If I did not pass within the next two weeks, I faced not graduating with my class and having to stay in boot camp until I passed. I ended up passing the test the last week before graduation week.

Graduation Day was the day that changed my life. We received the hat that had "Navy" printed in bulky letters across the front. The song "I am Proud to be an American" played in the background while we saluted the ensign. My eyes began to water. I tried to keep from blinking so a tear would not fall. Hearing the music play, all I could think about was the wonderful decision I had made and how proud my family would be, and how wonderful it felt to succeed and serve my country.

critical essay



"After Dali"

Cecilia Groce

AS ABOVE SO BELOW: DANTE ALIGHIERI AND THE PRINCIPLES OF HERMETICISM

Kaitlyn Wilson

Dante Alighieri, the author of *The Divine Comedy*, was a devout Christian and major critic of the corrupted Catholic Church, and his most popular work, *The Inferno*, is heavily influenced by Christian doctrine. Alighieri lived in a time when the social ladder of society was topped by the Catholic Church. The church even subordinated the law, in most cases. Naturally, Dante's masterpiece would be heavily influenced by his faith; however, when read closely, unmistakable pagan influences appear in Dante's *The Inferno*.

Paganism has long been considered a rough template for Christianity. Most Christian holidays are pagan in origin, such as Christmas and Easter. Even the Christian use of the word and image of "God" is borrowed from the ancient Greek god, Zeus. Despite the origins of Christianity and its traditions, pagans were and are still often considered evil unbelievers. Even schools of thought that differed from the Catholic Church were seen to be at best a threat to society, and at worst, tools of Satan.

The pagan belief of "Hermeticism takes its name from the God Hermes Trismegistos or Thrice-Greatest Hermes" (Hermetic Fellowship). Hermeticism predates Christianity, originating in ancient Egypt and Greece, and was at one time banned throughout the Roman Empire once Christianity took hold. The Hermetic belief system revolves around the magic in nature and its "Three Parts of Wisdom," which include alchemy (an early form of chemistry), astrology (linking astronomical phenomena with the human world), and theurgy (rituals that summon one or more gods). Hermeticism can be perceived as both a philosophy and a religious doctrine.

Philosophically, Hermetic teachings hold that the God in Hermetica is both one and apart from the material world: "For it is a ridiculous thing to confess the World to be one, one Sun, one Moon, one Divinity, and yet to have, I know not how many gods" (Trismegistus). From a religious perspective, Hermeticism is an extremely spiritual religion in which adherents strive for an "Omnipresent mind, a purified perception of God, the cosmos, and the self" (Churton).

The origins of Hermeticism can be traced to Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece, and there are obvious Greek influences in Dante's *Inferno*; all the monsters (or wardens as they are portrayed) in Dante's hell are mythological Greek beasts. Interestingly, Dante also puts Cleopatra, an Egyptian queen who would have practiced Hermeticism, into the second circle of hell. This gives evidence that Dante Alighieri did not rely solely on Christian doctrine to shape his depiction of hell. Ancient Greek mythology and Hermeticism were prevalent beliefs still relevant in Medieval European culture. Since Dante Alighieri was a scholar, it is no surprise that these alternate religions play a part in his most famous work.

There are seven principles of Hermeticism, The Principle of Correspondence, and "As above, so below; so below, as above," is the most prominent (The Kybalion). This one that one who wants more of something must *give* more of it. In simple terms, if one wants more love, he or she must give more love. However, Correspondence is a double-edged sword and can have negative repercussions as well. If people radiate a great deal of hate, they will receive a great deal of hate in return. Since Dante was a scholar, and Hermeticism predated Dante, it can be reasonable to assume that Hermetic teachings influenced his writing of the *Inferno*.

Examples of Hermeticism can be found throughout many aspects of the *Inferno*; For example, there is the concept of sins and punishments. Dante was very particular in the punishments for the damned, the location of certain layers, and the depths of

sins. While Dante did not use The Principle of Correspondence as it directly correlates with Hermetic practices, he did in some ways warp it for his convenience. Dante's sense of punishment has even been considered ironic. The sins are further divided into hot and cold sins; hot sins are sins of the flesh, and cold sins are premeditated sins of the mind.

Dante's sense of justice seems to be influenced by Hermetic principles in that the punishments literally and inversely fit the crimes. In the eighth circle of hell, within the ditch of Flatterers, Dante saw "souls in the ditch plunged into excrement that might have well been flushed from our latrines" (Alighieri). Seeing that flatterers are typically "full of shit" and constantly "brown nosing" in order to get what they want, it seems fitting that they would have to trudge through excrement for eternity. Here the Principle of Correspondence is self-evident. Above, the flatterers spent their time trudging through life one complimentary lie at a time in order to get ahead, to get what they wanted. Below, they must trudge through excrement for eternity with no hope of progress.

Along with the Principle of Correspondence, there is also the Principle of Polarity, which states:

Everything is Dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites; like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature, but different in degree; extremes meet; all truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may be reconciled. (*The Kybalion*)

The Principle of Polarity coincides with the geography of Heaven and Hell. When readers look at a map drawn by Alighieri, they see that Heaven and Hell are opposites geographically and structurally, closely resembling the shape of an hour glass. In Hell, one starts at the top and makes a journey to the bottom, while in Heaven, one starts at the bottom and works his or her way to the

top. Heaven and Hell also represent two polarized sentiments, that of love and hate, good and evil. If a person has led a good life according to God, his or her soul will ascend into Heaven in order to reap eternal rewards. However, for one who has lived an evil life the soul will be cast into Hell for eternal punishment.

Another example of Hermetic ideas in *The Inferno* is the concept of lucid dreaming, or astral projection, in which one projects his or her soul out into the universe in order to travel to faraway places, or even to travel between worlds. In the first lines of *The Inferno*, Dante states, "I woke to find myself in a dark wood . . . How I entered there I cannot truly say. . ." (Alighieri). According to Hermeticism, it is indeed possible to lose control of oneself during astral projection, and it can even happen without intent; lucid dreaming of this type is often called "lucid nightmares." So, Alighieri "waking" in a dark forest could have been an allusion to the Hermetic art of astral projection.

Judging by the evidence of Hermeticism in *The Inferno*, it is safe to say that Dante was fully aware of Hermeticism and that Hermetic allusions were not accidental. Joseph Kameen argues that the punishments in Dante's *The Inferno* do not necessarily revolve around how the corresponding sins were viewed by society, but rather by how severely they offended God. Kameen goes further to argue that Dante is not trying to "consciously re-write biblical justice . . . but to explain hell." Dante uses Hermetic principles to explain the concept of Hell in a way that even those who have not had the luxury of studying the Bible can comprehend. By using elements of Hermeticism, which was popular in Europe at the time, he is able to relate the abstract idea of Hell to his audience.

Ultimately, one must acknowledge the pagan influence of Hermetics on *The Inferno*. The Hermetic threads that can be found woven all throughout the text are undeniably apparent once the reader looks past the more straightforward influence of Catholicism, which Dante revered so dearly. The use of Hermetic

allusions in Dante's *Inferno* was no accident. Dante's work portrays the concept of Hell to both pagans and Christians in a way that they could easily understand.

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MOTHER- DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS IN *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*

Destinee Dock

The relationship a daughter shares with her mother can vary depending on cultures and generations. In Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, the relationships that Waverly Jong and June Woo have with their mothers distinctively differ from those of American daughters. At the beginning of the story, the relationships between the mothers and their daughters are definitely unbalanced. By the end of the novel, a surprisingly well-grounded relationship occurs between the pairs.

According to Michelle Gaffner Wood, "the lack of a cultural bond concomitant with geography informs the tension of the mother-daughter relationships in the United States and creates a so-called generation gap that the China-born mothers neither anticipate nor understand" (2). The battle between American culture and Chinese culture specifically sets apart mothers from their daughters. In their daughters' eyes, the Chinese culture is strange, and their imaginations seem to be overtaking their idea of it. The daughters are unknowingly bound by American culture as soon as they arrive. Despite cultural and generational differences, the mothers begin to feel frustrated at their daughters for not accepting them. The stories that the mothers share all alter the mindset of their daughters. Every story differs from the next; consequently, by the end of the novel, the daughters are not the same as when it began.

Waverly Jong and her mother Lindo Jung have a peculiar type of relationship. There are many obvious similarities between Waverly and Lindo. They both have the ability to conceal or hide their thoughts and strategize. This is first apparent when Waverly applies this technique to her chess games when she is a child. After

growing up, Waverly starts to use these same strategies on her mother. Lindo Jong is portrayed as "the traditionalist" in the story. Despite her traditional mindset, she is also individualistic and wants her children to be the same way. As a young girl, Lindo was married to a man she did not know. To avoid bringing dishonor to her parents' name, Lindo was obedient, despite the poor treatment she received from her husband and his family. She ultimately used her worthy intellect to devise a story which allowed her to leave the marriage honorably.

When Lindo finally escapes to America, she hurriedly finds a husband and has three children. She does this quickly to ensure her American citizenship. As she raises her children, she wants them to have the best of both the old world and the new. When Waverly becomes a chess prodigy, Lindo is pleased because she wants Waverly to become the best person she can be. Eventually, Lindo's high expectations lead to Waverly's resentment toward her mother. Despite Waverly's resentment, she yearns for her mother's approval. Waverly cares what her mother thinks about her and her life decisions. For example, Waverly wants desperately for her mother to approve of Rich, Waverly's white boyfriend. She warns Rich that her mother does not think anyone is good enough for her. When Waverly shows her mother the mink coat Rich gave her, she states, "My mother knows how to hit a nerve. And the pain I feel is worse than any other kind of misery. Because what she does always comes as a shock, exactly like an electric jolt, that grounds itself permanently in my memory. I still remember the first time I felt it" (Tan 170).

As Waverly sits through dinner with Rich and her parents, she becomes agitated as she envisions her mother's developing hatred of Rich. She later realizes that her mother is actually quite fond of Rich. Waverly's own doubts get in the way of security. Waverly's idea of being an American is much stronger than that of being Chinese, but she does not try to completely forget her heritage.

Jing-mei (June) Woo and her mother Suyuan Woo's relationship is different than Waverly and Lindo's. Unlike Waverly, June begins to embrace her heritage much sooner. June's progress and passion with the Chinese culture has much to do with her mother's past. She cannot completely understand her mother "because of the difference between them," but her mother's stories "signify June's progression" and growth (Adams 11). In the story, Suyuan signifies the silent woman who overcomes her tribulations to carve a role for herself in society.

As a teenager, Suyuan married an army officer and became pregnant with twin girls. While Suyuan's husband was in combat, the Japanese invaded China, forcing Suyuan to escape her hometown with her newborn babies. The walk is traumatic on Suyuan, both physically and mentally. After realizing she is near death, she made the decision to leave the twins on the side of the road in hopes of finding food and shelter. Unfortunately, she did not travel until she fell unconscious. Sometime after, she is found, rescued, and nurtured back to health. Suyuan never got to reunite with her daughter after these events.

Years later, Suyuan travels to America, where she remarries and gives birth to June. Suyuan tries to raise June to be a successful Chinese American woman. June has a difficult time fulfilling her mother's vision. Suyuan tries to instill her Chinese beliefs in her daughter, but the cultural and generational breach once again set it. "In broken English the mother tries to teach her daughter by using her knowledge of old Chinese proverbs and chants. Frustration breaks out on both sides, and the scene ends with shouting and ultimatums" (Ghymm 22). June believes that her mother's relentless criticism signifies a lack of love and affection, but in reality, Suyuan's sternness and high expectations are simply her way of showing faith and trust in her daughter. When June learns more about her mother's past after Suyuan passes away, she then realizes why her mother wanted so badly for her to successful

and embrace her true self. June no longer began to experience the cultural gap between China and America. When she travels to China to meet her twin sisters, she ultimately merges the cultural and generational differences.

By the end of the story, June and Waverly overcome faults and differences they shared with their mothers. Lindo uses her clever mind to raise a very successful and independent daughter. Regardless of Waverly's dependence on her mother's approval, she finally understands and sees her mother. Finally and unknowingly, Suyuan's previous life has significantly contributed to June's growth and independence.

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WAR PIGS

Robert Silvernail

"War Pigs" is a 1970 song written and performed by the rock group Black Sabbath. It was written during a time of great discord and social upheaval in the United States. It was also a time of massive anti-war movements, not only in the U.S., but throughout the western world. The song uses analogy to support the contention that war and its leaders are evil and immoral. The music accompanying the lyrics is both dark and foreboding. "War Pigs" is an effective use of both sound and words to create a mental image of the horrors and repugnant nature of war as well as the leaders who direct it.

The song has six stanzas and begins with the comparison of generals to witches and sorcerers:

"Generals gathered in their masses
Just like witches at black masses
Evil minds that plot destruction
Sorcerers of death's construction"

This is clearly meant to give the audience a visual representation of evil and those who have the power to unleash it. The term "witch" is probably an anachronism because a witch was usually considered female, and although in today's world there are female Generals, there were not back then. Regardless, the diction does detract from the impression that group of people is gathered to invoke supernatural spirits, or the devil, to aid them in their skullduggery. The use of the word "sorcerers" implies one who instigates a process which they are then unable to control. In too many cases, that is just what happens in war.

The second stanza expresses contempt for those who corrupt the minds of the young who do the fighting and dying:

"In the fields the bodies burning

As the war machine keeps turning
Death and hatred to mankind
Poisoning their brainwashed minds”

The war machine does not actually turn like making a left or right turn in a car. The lyrics show that the war continues unabated regardless of the deaths already inflicted. This stanza uses Pathos appeals to human values for cessation of this “Death and hatred to mankind” as well as to show anger at the conditioning and brainwashing used to produce remorseless killers.

The third stanza questions who is actually to blame for these events and why they are cowards.

“Politicians hide themselves away
They only started the war
Why should they go out to fight?
They leave that role to the poor”

Logos is clearly evident in the description of the politicians who start the wars. They are never involved in the fighting of those wars: “Politicians hide themselves away.” The word “hide” does not actually mean that the politicians are really physically hiding, its use shows that they insulate themselves from the dangers of the war they initiated. The same goes for the word “role.” It is not the “role” of the poor to fight; it is meant to show that those who are rich or well connected to those in power are more able to avoid induction into the military.

The fourth stanza speaks of those whose abuse of power will not go unpunished.

“Time will tell on their power minds
Making war just for fun
Treating people just like pawns in chess
Wait till their judgment day comes”

The use of the word “fun” is particularly insightful. By the normal definition of the word, it seems an odd choice, but is it? Those who have enormous powers sometimes become intoxicated

with their ability to wield those powers, especially those who are sociopathic or deranged. It is in this context that the word “now” seems appropriate. The choice of the word “pawns,” with the analogy to the game of chess, is unfortunately exactly how wars are conducted. Good, bad or indifferent, combat training is designed as a strategic and tactical contest of movements and counter-movements for advantage on the battlefield. Military members fight as they are trained, and they are trained to obey orders. The “judgment day” reference is shows powerlessness in stopping the onslaught from those who have dominance over the weak. It is an appeal to the gods to punish the transgressors because people are powerless to do so for themselves

The fifth stanza indicates there has been an answer to their prayers.

“Now in darkness world stops turning
Ashes where the bodies burning
No more war pigs at the power
Hand of god has struck the hour”

“Now in darkness world stops turning” is an observation of the destructive nature of war. The physical earth itself is not going to stop revolving because of the nature of man. Its meaning is that human progress, and even the essence of humanity and civilization itself, can retrograde and even be stopped by war. This a cautionary statement harkening back to the “Dark Ages” of human history when the light of reason and rationality had not yet been elucidated by men of peace and science.

The last stanza shows that there is justice, though perhaps not in this world:

“Day of Judgment, God is calling
On their knees, the war pigs crawling
Begging mercy for their sins
Satan laughing spreads his wings
Oh lord yeah!”

The “Day of Judgment, God is calling” refers to the superstitious belief of some of the world’s religions that there is a judgment day after death when humans are either punished by some supernatural deity with torment or rewarded with pleasure for the things they have done in life. The lyrics “Satan laughing spreads his wings” refers to the belief that if their god determines that one has been unworthy, one is then cast into the arms of Satan and lives forever in torment for former deeds. Satan, being the other supernatural being, is believed to exist by the practitioners of some religions and is considered the epitome of evil. Appeals to Ethos are evident in the “Day of Judgment” when those responsible will be given their just punishments for the pain and suffering they have inflicted.

Black Sabbath not only crafted a song with a timely theme, they also managed to put into words and music a song with great appeal, popularity, and longevity. *Guitar World* ranks “War Pigs” as “the greatest heavy metal song ever.” The album “Paranoid,” which features the song, rose to number 1 on the charts in the United Kingdom and number 12 in the United States (“Paranoid Album Sales”). Even today the song still plays on the radio, 44 years after its debut. Nothing speaks of effectiveness like success and staying power!

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illumination

short story

illumination



“Ying Yang”

Anthony Badon

THE ART OF GETTING BY

Mary Kinsey

My name is Marley Penelope Young.

Today, I am nearly nineteen years old.

I collect beautiful moments and old books. Like them, I am worn.
Like them, I love the company of strong coffee and rain.

Not like them, I am a shattered and lost soul.

When I deferred college for an indefinite amount of time in my eighteenth year, everyone decided I was depressed. Especially my mother.

"You can't just not do anything with your life," Mom said.

My older sister, Hazel, was poised on the kitchen counter across the room. She laughed, but Mom didn't notice.

"It's just for a little while," I replied.

Mom examined the ceiling. She looked tired. "Do you need to talk about it? I'm here, if you need to talk."

I sighed. "I'm fine. I just need some time to figure it out."

"Figure what out?" Mom's eyes were wide and worried.

"Exactly." I smiled and opened the front door before she could protest. I gave Hazel a look, and she leaped off the counter and followed me outside.

"You can't run from yourself forever, Marley," Hazel said.

"Are you coming?" I asked her, my hand on the car door.

She looked around, squinted her eyes in the sunlight and said, "I think I'll just walk for a bit."

I shrugged and watched her walk down the street, toward the park where we used to play as kids, her blonde hair blending with the sunlight. She was made of that summer sun and the wild Friday nights that followed.

Sometimes, I was jealous.

* * *

When the leaves began to turn, I invited Hazel to my favorite bookstore.

"It smells like nostalgia," Hazel said, her eyes taking in the quirky tables and shelves overflowing with books.

"That's why I love it," I replied, walking up the creaky stairs. Hazel followed, snatching books here and there. For weeks, we read the classics and drank black coffee, the only true anti-depressants. It was usually just me, Hazel, and the Hemingway-striver who owned the place.

That is, until he showed up.

He usually leaned against one of the windows, engrossed in a bestseller, twirling a pen through his fingers. Occasionally, he whistled.

"What a delight it would be to meet my husband in a bookstore instead of a bar," Hazel sighed, staring at him. "Don't you think so?"

I smiled and tried to focus on the paperback in my hands while she disappeared behind a shelf of mysteries.

Later, my book became so fantastically infuriating that I threw it across the room with a huff. It landed at his feet.

He looked up. "That bad?"

I felt my cheeks go scarlet. "That good, actually."

"Then why throw it at me?"

"I wasn't aiming for you. You just happened to be there."

He had this effortless way about him. "Sounds like my kind of book. Can I borrow it when you're done throwing it at strangers?"

I opened my mouth to reply, but when nothing came out, he burst into

laughter and extended his hand toward me. His name was Dexter Buchanan.

We had an interesting relationship, Dexter and me. It wasn't a love story, just so you know. But we weren't just friends, either. For days, we read each other's favorite books and laughed about the offbeat store owner. Dexter was the kind of person with untamed hair and untamed opinions.

He was the warm and crisp new breath of Autumn.

I was the frigid comet threatening to catch fire and disintegrate.

He helped gather my broken pieces and glue them back together.

But the more time I spent with Dexter, the less I saw of Hazel. I expected she was off being wild and free. Like the wind, she could never be tied down.

"I'd like to meet this Hazel," Dexter said one afternoon.

"You'd like her," I mumbled.

I could feel him staring at me. "Is something wrong?"

I didn't reply. Outside the window, dressed in the same jeans and sweater she always wore, was Hazel. She waved.

I hurried out into the chilly air where she met me at the door.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"Right, sorry. I know I've been sketchy," she replied. "But Dexter seems great. I haven't heard you laugh in a long time."

"So you've been keeping tabs on me?"

"I passed by a few times. Look, Marley, I have to go. I mean, it's time for me to go," she said, her eyes urgent.

"Why?" I asked. "I really need my sister right now."

"Actually, you don't. Not anymore. Not like you used to. You're stronger now." She went from urgent to excited. "That's the art of getting by. The more we do it, the stronger we become. Pain is a gift, if you want it to be. It hurts and sometimes it leaves scars. But you know what?"

I swallowed. "What?"

She smiled as though she were satisfied with the work she had done, as though her job was complete. "It also wakes us up."

She didn't say goodbye. She just turned and walked away, down the sidewalk and around the corner.

Hazel, like summer and the wind. Fleeting and free.

Back inside, Dexter was staring at me again. "What was all that about?"

"Nothing," I said, smiling. "I just saw somebody I used to know."

* * *

But the truth is, there is no Hazel.

At least, not anymore.

Hazel Young died in a car accident on a humid July night the summer I was seventeen and she was eighteen.

I won't go into the details of the accident because all you need to know is this: Hazel was like summer; everyone loved her while she was here and missed her when she was gone. And when we buried her heart in the dirt, pieces of my own went with her.

True, I have suffered from depression.

True, I miss my sister, so I sometimes see her.

Is that crazy? Am I crazy?

I don't think so. I think I'm just alive.

Young,

and broken

but alive.

My name is Marley Penelope Young.

Today, I am nearly nineteen years old.

I am worn, like the old books I love.

I am shattered, but I am putting myself back together.

I am lost, but I am awake.

STOPGAP SHELTER

Christopher Blackwell

Jeff and I decided to explore the town. Jeff had a short stature and scruffy, dirty blonde hair. He had a big grin full of braces that he wore when he was up to no good. He was my best friend. As we strolled along the street in the hot, sticky Mississippi weather, we happened upon an abandoned building and decided to check it out. We peeked through the windows. So much dust had accumulated on the panes we could only make out dark shapes. The front door was dead bolted. We walked around the cracked and worn building to try the back door; the back door was locked as well but not dead bolted. I decided to use my Wal-Mart gift card to break in. I slid the shiny blue card into the slit of the bleak grey door. The peeling and chipping paint of the door contrasted with the brightly colored card, looking under the paint revealed termite-riddled wood. I lifted up my card and pulled the door until it gave way.

The door groaned aside, and the back room of the building lay before us. A ray of light was coming through the only window. The bright prism of light stood at an angle in the middle of the room. Dust was brought into it, falling into existence through like small snow. As we entered, our eyes adjusted to the light, laying out the scene. Everything had a thin layer of grey dust on it. The floor was covered with cracked green and white checkered tiles. A pile of various pieces of wood from a bench or chair sat in the corner. The walls had torn wallpaper drooping and sagging, leaving ripples that gave me the feeling everything was melting. Scattered about the room were boxes filled with papers. We went through a few boxes only to roll our eyes at the boring pieces of records of some energy company which we assumed once occupied this building many years ago.

The other rooms were empty except for a few more boxes filled with the same stale papers. There was a bathroom in the front but no water. We found a running faucet outside, which we later used to supply water so we could use the toilet. We swept the floor, brought in some chairs, and stacked the boxes in a raised square. We laid a wooden plank on top of the boxes to make a table. Jeff found an attic in the back, it was barren except for some metal pipes and wires. Jeff turned one of the pipes into a smoking pipe. With a little tin foil he had a working pipe but it hit too hard for me. I liked to smoke pot the old fashioned way, as a joint. There is something so authentic about a joint. It is a more personal experience, sprinkling the tiny pieces of bud into the paper and hearing it crackle from rolling it, making a crisp, clean sound. Lighting it produces a strong aroma and perfect line of smoke in the still air. A creeping black wave comes over the contrastingly white paper as I put it to my lips and inhale. Exhaling the hit, the smoke is clean, with no wooden or metallic flavor. The paper just enhances the taste of herb.

A series of weeks passed by with a new feeling of empowerment. Jeff and I did not just find some place. We found ourselves. To the outside world, it was just some run down building, but to us it was a place of freedom. There were no boundaries, no judging eyes of teachers or parents. We could do whatever we wanted, and nobody could stop us. Through the weeks, only a privileged few were allowed to know of the building's existence, and they needed permission to come. We were the masters of that place. We had complete control and we felt liberated. Every day was a day of limitation. School, homework, chores, curfew, the adults would yell, "No cursing! No smoking! Straighten up! Do your work! Stop talking!" They wanted us to pick up our rock and get in line with all the other ants. Once we were in that building, we were no longer slaves. Every day the System would bring us down; so every

evening we would bring ourselves back up, in this place we had made our own.

Sometimes we would skip school and spend the whole day immersing ourselves in independence. One morning, another friend named Mike wanted to join us on a day away from our oppressive school system. Mike was a tall, skinny boy with bad skin and greasy black hair. He wore glasses and got picked on at school. Jeff and I shared Mike's hatred of school, and Mike seemed to always have something intelligent to say about everything. Mike only brought a gram of pot with him that morning when we all met there. We decided to smoke it first thing in the morning out of Jeff's pipe. After an hour of joking around, Jeff went into the corner where his sleeping bag was and drifted off to sleep. The bright red bag stood out in the room as it slowly rose and fell with Jeff's breathing. Mike and I put on some music and the speakers blared out Iggy and the Stooges as we talked about lead singer Iggy Pop. The conversation drifted into politics, we discussed the pros and cons of communism and authoritarian government.

After some more time passed, we decided to play cards on the splintery table Jeff and I made. Jeff woke up during the card game, and we all played together for a while. A couple seniors I had invited came by, and Jeff was mad I did that without discussing it with him first. The seniors brought out two joints of high quality marijuana though, so he decided to put on a smile. All senses heightened, all senses dulled. The seniors left us in the stodgy building to get progressively more bored. The conversation turned silent and our thoughts went inward, each of us staring into space. I snapped out of it a few minutes later and grabbed a good book. I left my friends in their euphoric daze to go read.

I went into one of the front rooms where the sunlight was falling into a corner, opened up my thick book and started taking everything in. I was just about to finish a chapter when I heard a noise outside. I got to my feet and started towards the door. The

door was kicked in before I could get to it however. Two men with pistols in their hands stormed into the room screaming at me. The uniforms informed me they were police. Eyes wide, one of them pointed his gun in my face. A vein protruded from his bright red forehead and spit flew in the air as he screamed for me to get on the ground. I collapsed to the ground in fear and he dug his knee into my back. Then he began pulling my arms down like he was trying to tear them off. As he handcuffed me, I could hear many other men yelling at my friends in the other room. I was pulled up to my feet and brought into the back room where we were made fun of and handcuffed together in a chain. The police station was almost a mile away, but they decided it would be hilarious if we walked there for the whole town to see.

We had nine smiling and laughing cops surrounding us as we walked down the street to the police station. It was hot out and sweat began to bead on my head. I was in the middle with my left hand cuffed to Jeff's as he led us with his hands behind his back. Mike was behind me, hands out in front cuffed to my right hand. I had to walk in a twisted manner. As we walked, I became drenched in sweat from the sun and breathed hard. The cops all made fun by calling me weak, out of shape, and a girl. When we finally made it to the police station, the cool air was relieving but that was the only relief I would get. We each got interrogated privately from a line of progressively more moronic cops. "The school says you skipped school today, is that true? Did you skip school?" asked a pudgy red haired cop. "I'm so glad you are willing to ask me that." I replied, "I'm sure my answer will make such a difference. Of course I didn't skip school! I would never be absent to the wondrous public education provided for me. The administration is obviously going through some organizational difficulties, perhaps you should check again." Each time I answered a cop interrogating me, he would get unprofessionally upset at my sarcastic remarks and go on some idiotic rant and threaten me with something.

After the police were done screaming at us kids for a few hours, they decided to take us to jail. It was a small juvenile jail an hour away in the middle of nowhere, and we were the only ones there. There were only five cells, and they were each connected to the day room which had two tables welded to the floor. Everything was metal with bright white paint on it. The floor, the walls, the ceiling, the day room tables, the beds, the sink, and the toilet were all white metal. The only things that had color were the orange jumpsuits we all wore. I tried not to look at the jumpsuits because the orange was so bright it hurt. The air was cold just like the metal world we lived in. If I did not have my friends I could have gone insane. Being trapped in a completely white world of hard metal was torturous. We were on our way back the next day though and so ended the torture of that place. The ride back was surreal from the overload of colors. I could not look out the window because it gave me a headache.

Once we were back at the police station, our parents picked us up. We were given our court date and ankle bracelets were put on us. We were on complete house arrest and the bracelets had GPS systems in them. We were told leaving the house would mean our arrest. My grandmother was furious but silent. Her lips pushed together to form a thin line, and her knuckles turned white as she drove us home. When we got home, she told me to go to my room and not come out until she called me. I could use the bathroom and that was it. When I got to my room, I was in absolute shock, it was completely barren except for my bed and dresser. My grandparents had taken everything away, my TV, PlayStation, posters, record player and speakers, books, desk, and chairs.

I cried. I wept. Everything we had put into that place meant nothing now. We could never go back to the building, and so our freedom was gone. A court date in the near future would mean even more punishment. We were slaves now. Hate and despair washed over me as I wept and beat the floor with my fists. Then

there were many voices in my head, some screaming "Dumbass! Did you think you could just get away with living like that forever?! How could you not see this coming?!" and some whispering, "Your life is over. There is no fixing this or going back. Things will never be the same. You will never be happy again."

I told myself not to care, that everything would be okay, and crawled into bed. It was so comfortable; the soft mattress was not upset with me; it did not judge me; it was not furious or yelling or white or metal. Everything had just been a dream, I told myself. Tomorrow I will get to meet Jeff at the place, and we will listen to music and smoke and play cards. I squeezed my eyes together until I could see it, and I cried myself to sleep.

FLIRTATIONS AND COFFEE

Samantha Ulit-Yuhudah

It's that time when night blurs into day. The run-down diner you work in is completely empty. The floor is swept, chairs put up, and the glowing OPEN sign has been switched off. You are about ready to hand your apron up when you hear the tell-tale 'ding' announcing a customer.

"I'm sorry, but we're closed ma'am," you say as politely as you can at this hour.

The woman ignores you and surveys her surroundings with a half-smile. The winter chill follows her, making itself at home in the diner. The small breeze sets her dark hair and dress aflutter. Gold bangles clink at her ankles and wrists as she sashays up to the counter and hops up onto a bar stool in front of you.

The thing that sticks out most in your mind is that though the woman is barefoot and lightly dressed, she's not shivering at all.

"I *do* apologize," she says in a voice that sounds like molasses, "but I am simply *dying* for a cup of coffee." For no apparent reason, she laughs softly to herself, as if she's heard a joke only she is privy to.

Sighing, rest your hands on your hips and give her your best grin. "Well, for a pretty lady like yourself, I suppose there's no harm!"

As you turn to put on a new pot of coffee, the woman begins to hum what sounds like a funeral dirge. Her voice is slow and sweet, and it makes you drift off. Everything is pleasantly hazy. It's only when the coffee machine lets out a shrill beep do you return to your senses.

The woman exhales happily when you set the mug down in front of her. She acts like you've made her the happiest person in the world. Really, it's only a second-rate cup of joe, nothing special!

The warm look she gives you over the rim says otherwise.

"So," you say, pouring yourself a cup as well. "What's a lady like you doing in parts like these at a time like this? You can't just say it's for the coffee."

"Your company?" She hums playfully, tucking a lock of blue-black hair behind an ear.

"You flatter me," you respond in the same tone.

"Well, if you really want to know!" She props her chin on her hand and tilts her head. "I am on a little business trip, just passing through town. There is someone here I need to pick up."

"And who might that be? I know these parts pretty well, I might be able to help!"

She laughs, not unkindly, at your over eager offer. "No, but thank you. I am quite aware of where they will be when I swing by." Gesturing to her now empty cup, she asks, "How much do I owe you for that?"

"Oh..." You shrug. "Just your name, maybe your number?"

She peeks at you from beneath her lashes, her lips curling into a grin. "Next time we meet, I will definitely pay in full."

Before you can say anything to that, she's gone, leaving only an empty mug and cold air in her wake.

You sigh.

This time when you close up, you're uninterrupted. More than a

little pleased by how your shift has gone, you shuffle out to your beat-up blue car. The warmth in your chest staves off the winter breeze, and your racing thoughts rejuvenate you somewhat. It's only when you are halfway home, on the backwoods road, fatigue catches up with you.

You sing, blast the radio, pinch yourself. It helps a little, but what you really want is to just curl up under your covers with your cat.

Ah, you're *so* tired...

With a groan, you wake slowly, reluctantly. There is a terrible crick in your neck. As you sit up, the world spins and – does it seem a bit grey? Hazily, you look to your left and observe a blue car wrapped around a tree with faint interest. You sit up and rock to your feet and begin to stumble towards the oddly familiar car. The woman in the driver's seat... You *know* her!

"Hello again," says a molasses voice at your shoulder.

"I wish you had at least given me a little warning," you say testily. "Now what's going to happen to my cat?!"

"You have a cat? I am quite fond of them," is all the woman says. She smiles prettily at you. This close to her, you can make out the faint outline of a skull beneath her skin.

"I don't suppose you'd let myself and Julius hang around you for a while," you say in your most suave voice.

Her laughter is the tolling of church bells. She takes you by the arm and leans against your side – she feels like winter.

"Well, for a pretty lady like yourself, I suppose there is no harm."

stage play



“Still Life”

Hannah Livingston

DANCE OF INJUSTICE

Alexandria Hunninghake

Characters

ELIZABETH CRAWFORD: Sister of Victoria, 15

VICTORIA CRAWFORD: Sister of Elizabeth, 17

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON: Duke of Yorkshire England, mid-twenties

Setting

Grand ballroom inside Christopher Jackson’s Castle in Yorkshire, England in the 1800s.

Mr. Jackson’s ballroom in York was filled with the most beautiful bachelorettes, exquisite wines and food, and the best orchestra anyone could find for miles. He was dressed in his best military officer uniform with all his metals shinning from across the ballroom. Mr. Jackson’s eyes were set on a mysterious Cinderella that night and knew this was the one...if he could ever find whose locket it belonged too.

ELIZABETH: MY LOCKET! *(Nervously patting herself down and looking all around the ballroom)*

VICTORIA: Oh Lizzy, don’t be so dramatic! I’m sure it’s around here somewhere. Your eyes should be on that handsome Duke, not your silly locket.

ELIZABETH: Victoria! How dare you! You know that locket has been passed down in our family for years. *(Stops. Looks her sister in the eyes seriously.)* Besides, it is my lucky charm, without it *(Sigh.)* how am I ever going to win the Duke’s heart?

VICTORIA: You’re right, because I will win his heart first! *(She skips away. Stops. Then pretends to walk down a wedding isle.)*

ELIZABETH: VICTO- *(Before she could finish the fate changing disaster happened before her eyes. Holding in her urge to burst into laughter.)*

(While Victoria danced with the devilish handsome man she bumped into, Elizabeth continued to search the ballroom for her locket.)

ELIZABETH: *(Mumbling to herself)* Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. When did I last have it...think Elizabeth, think... *(Deep in thought, not noticing she's wondering right into the Duke's quarters)*

ELIZABETH: I KNOW! *(Turning around. Running back towards the front entrance. Runs right into Christopher Jackson of York)*

ELIZABETH: OH MY! I'm terribly sorry. *(Bowing)*

CHRISTOPHER: It's quite alright my lady. What is your name?

ELIZABETH: Elizabeth Crawford of Edlington.

CHRISTOPHER: Christopher Jackson, Duke of Yorkshire. It is a pleasure to meet such a beautiful women in my quarters.

ELIZABETH: *(Turning red from embarrassment)* The pleasure is all mine. I'm afraid I lost something and got caught up in finding it. Your ball is very lovely. I'm sorry again for-

(Christopher places his right hand up as his left hand reaches into his jacket pocket to reveal a polished gold locket.)

CHRISTOPHER: This by chance?

ELIZABETH: I THOUGHT IT WAS GONE FOREVER!! *(Suddenly realizing who she was in the presence of, bowing)* Thank you so much, but how did you know?

CHRISTOPHER: I watched you walking down from the carriage into the ball. I watch everyone, but you *(Pause.)* Your radiant smile and beauty captured my eyes and paralyzed my heart. Then I noticed you left something behind. I have been searching for you this entire time.

Before Elizabeth could spill her undying love for the Duke, Victoria came bursting in. She was spying the entire time and could not let her dreams of marrying a Duke fade away.

VICTORIA: My dear sister Elizabeth, there you are! I have been looking everywhere for you! *(Bowing in front of Mr. Jackson)*

VICTORIA: Excuse me Mr. Jackson, I must steal my sister away, it is a matter of emergency.

CHRISTOPHER: *(Stares at Elizabeth the entire time)* It is quite alright Lady Victoria. Miss Elizabeth and I will continue our conversation later.

(Elizabeth has enough time to bow before her sister basically dragged her away to the ballroom floor.)

ELIZABETH: What is your problem, Victoria!? I found my locket! Christopher Jackson had it....Duke of Yorkshire! *(Grinning from ear to ear)*

ELIZABETH: He wants to marry me!

VICTORIA: ENOUGH LIZZY!

ELIZABETH: YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS! You're still an old maid and a Duke wants to marry me!

VICTORIA: He is planned to marry me. While -

ELIZABETH: YOU'RE LYING!

VICTORIA: Listen to me, Elizabeth. While you were looking for your precious locket, momma and poppa introduced me to his father. They made an arrangement and because you were nowhere to be found, I was chosen to wed the Duke of Yorkshire, Christopher Jackson. I'm so very sorry.

(The orchestra seems to have become so loud nothing else can be heard. Her sister's lies fade into the background. All Elizabeth can hear is the saddest violin music playing. She turns and walks away slowly to the front entrance all over again. In doing so, Christopher runs and tries grabbing her arm.)

ELIZABETH: Congratulations. I have nothing more to say.

(She walks out the door and steps into her carriage, making sure her locket is safe from the outside world. She picks it up, glances at the picture of her and her sister, and then throws it out of the carriage. Mr. Jackson knew it would be the last time he saw her and just the way it was as he noticed her. He walks to the locket after she is gone and tucks it safely back into his jacket pocket.)

VICTORIA: *(Bowing)* Mr. Jackson, have you seen my sister, Elizabeth?

CHRISTOPHER: I'm afraid she is gone forever. Excuse me.

(Christopher walks back inside to announce that from that moment on that balls are banned in Yorkshire and no one except anyone named Elizabeth Crawford should disturb him every again.)

VICTORIA: *(Mumbling to herself)* Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Whatever have I done?

END OF PLAY

free verse poetry



“Cheeseburgers”

Jordan Pino

I WILL GO BACK TO THAT NIGHT

Mary Kinsey

I'd like to go back to that reckless night
when we were drunk on summer and spun wildly into the stars
while the world below us raged on, silent and smothering,
and that sparkling city in the distance was telling us we were a
home-run-crowd-goes-wild kind of love.

Not until we thought of the tomorrows to come did we finally
sleep.

When the sun came up, reality followed, and we looked back
at our footprints on the ground, one after the other, tracing the
lines

of the stories and paintings we drew with laughter and screams,
and we heard the *ha ha ha* between the trees,

which we thought was the sound of our
daydream turning into a nightmare but was only the
wind playing tricks on us – could the magic really be gone? –
damn!

the nightmare won. Lying on the roof,
shaking each other so the dreams we shared
would come tumbling out onto the dead leaves,
like the faded souls we were, jaded and lost.

Heaven can't help us now, not really, because we're
the reckless youth screaming *ha ha ha*
at the world around us, swaying and scrambling

and smothering, this way and that.
So then I will go back to that reckless night
when we felt scared, strong, improbable, and alive,
if only to feel the way we did
when we set fires to our youth to stay warm,
and dreamed of the city in the distance,
which called to us, pulled us away
and dared us to be restless.

REFLECTION

Eric Millisor

I'm coming home.
Though my heart has grown cold.
Walls filled with regretful pain.
Pictures warped from all the rain.
The smell of coffee mixed with rage.

I'm coming home.
Despite the pain.
To free my soul from the rusted chains.
Forget the hurt and wipe the tears.

I'm coming home.
To say my peace.
To take my freedom.
And will grant you, your release.

Home.
The sun so bright.
The leaves emerald green.
Tulips litter the fields.
Purples, blues, reds, and yellows with a hint of green.

I place this rose on the earth above.

May you rest in peace.

-Mom

GENERATIONAL DISCONNECT

Courtney Kirkham

Glowing screens illuminate the darkness
While deilluminating the heavens,
And pale flesh seeks the nourishment of the sun,
But finds nothing in the cool light of the monitors before it.
While artificial light allows for later work hours
Circadian rhythms are disrupted and disturbed,
So even when the lights are off, the body
Can't...
Quite...
Sleep.

Our bodies are confused and the artificial daylight never ends,
So we over-medicate and caffeinate
Pills to sleep and drugs to wake
Tearing our bodies apart
To praise our new god-
Technologic Progress.

The destruction doesn't stop there.
We burn and beat our home,
Pouring poison down its throat
And stripping it of all it has,
Even it's own body.
We skim the headlines of the tragedy,
How time is running out,
Ignoring the blaring sirens -
To watch another cat video.
While taking part in a silent, communal suicide.

The world at our fingertips,
A wealth of knowledge far greater
Than any library Alexandria could seek,
We become so desensitized and numb
Taking photos for likes and comments
Of people starving before our eyes -

For popularity points.

Flooded with reminders of injustice
We tune out,
Dull to the barrage of suffering,
We walk past opportunities to help.
Staring at our palms.
Effectively committing murder.

In a world so interconnected
We seek out connection
Replacing conversation and interaction
With texts and tones
And beeps of phones
Calls from the divine
Demanding immediate reply.
It's taboo to talk,
To have an in depth conversation.
Words and letters are counted,
And every sentiment's sincerity is questioned
When you don't know if it comes from heart to heart
Or web to web.
Personal relationships are broadcast and criticized
Until there's no more room to lead our own lives
When it's all a public performance
We search to find something to call our own
But our hands and hearts are empty
When they're only filled with a phone.
A global community so interconnected in its disconnection,
One's left to wonder-
What is the warmth of touch,
In a world filled with touch screens and touch phones?
Is there any comfort in technology's caress
Of metal and glass?

structured verse poetry



"After Michaelangelo"

Hannah Livingston

LA SYMPHONIE DE LA LUNE

Ashley Smith

The darkness fills the night,
I stand in the eerie, soft light of the moon.
As the other animals wait for dawn's first light,
I lay down in night's claustrophobic cocoon.
The cold, sharp wind blows,
Leaves rustle, and make the wind sing.
The moon glows, causing the shadows to put on puppet shows,
Gold and red leaves dance and chase, wishing it was spring.
Black bats and barn owls swoop and play between the trees.
Bright white stars paint a picture across the hard, black,
canvas of sky,

Its shimmering beauty brings me to my knees.
Earth is sleeping, don't wake it, we are not meant to spy.
Mysterious, brooding, elegant night,
Oh is it not just a beautiful site.

NEW YEAR

Victoria Stringer

Each Year a body replaces a seventh of its cells.

In seven years this body will be new and well.

This build will be rid of every unwanted touch.

The relief is almost too much.

In seven years my mind will be entirely different and all
I can hope is that I'll grow out of having more feelings than my
soul can handle.

Seven years, I may be dead.

In the ground, at least the worms are fed.

Maybe in seven years I'll live with the moon.

So here's to seven years from now. May it come soon.

SIMPLY DROWNING

Eric Millisor

I take a sip.

Knowing the outcome.

Even though.

I'm better without one.

A blur occurs.

Pieces are missing.

Alone I wake.

Broken and filthy.

The smells so strong.

I take a shower.

I bump the empties.

On the counter.

I go to work.

It's all a lie.

I watch the clock.

It's finally five.

The bar I go.

I go by Joe.

I'm the guy.

That no one knows.

I ask for a drink.
She hands me two.
Alone I sit.
And watch the news.

I stumble home.
I hardly remember.
I call my ex.
Then write a letter.

No answer again.
The agony proceeds.
Alone I remain.
Broken indeed.

The liquid flows.
All through my veins.
Another drink.
I begin to blank.

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