



Bradley Wise

## No Easter, No Thanksgiving, and Certainly Not Christmas

Chloe La Fortune

Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. No Major Holidays. A short story by Shalom Victor. The first time I read this piece I was struck by the emotion and feeling it expresses. I felt for the characters and their struggles. The story touched me, I could relate to it on a very personal level. The story is about mother daughter relationships and all the expectations that go along with that relationship. Children expect their mothers to take care of them and be there for them. Our mother is our provider of life. From there on any form of love, support or guidance is expected but is not always fulfilled. When needs or fulfillment are not met, resentment forms and a relationship can become irreparable.

In the short story, No Major Holidays, by Shalom Victor, Riva, the mother of Elizabeth describes the difficult struggles a mother can face. Time and time again, Elizabeth's expectations of her mother are not fulfilled. Riva is so self absorbed in her own life, her own career, she puts her own needs ahead of her daughters. "I had a job I loved, working for an advertising photographer as his representative... I even got to go to Europe; my first time ever. Elizabeth stayed with a family I did not know" (pg. 2).

When Elizabeth turns nine and visits with her father in New York, she decides that she wants to live with him. This is a major rejection for her mom. However after years of feeling not wanted by her mother it is easy to understand why Elizabeth chooses to reject her mom and push her out of her life. This theme of rejection continues throughout the rest of the story.

Elizabeth grows up and attends medical school, becomes engaged, gets married and has two children. Riva feels that she is excluded from all of these life moments. She is always the last to know of Elizabeth's news and is never included in the planning of such events. After being scarred by her mother during childhood, Elizabeth's only defense and protection is rejection. She has to reject her mother in order to protect herself against any further hurt.

Elizabeth grows up without her mother's help. She only contacts her mom out of obligation, to let her know the bare minimum of her life's happenings. The story climaxes when Riva experiences a black

moment. She calls her daughter asking if she could visit for Christmas. In the ensuing conversation their relationship is completely defined and boundaries are set.

“ ‘So, I was wondering if we could stop by and see the children on Christmas Eve.’

‘It’s not a good time,’ Elizabeth said evenly.

‘And why not?’...

‘What do you feel about me?’ I felt a tear trickling down me cheek, but I kept it in check.

‘You are my mother,’ Elizabeth said in a hushed tone. ‘So, then how come I can’t come?’ I pushed, the wall of water getting higher. ‘I really want to know.’

I heard a sharp sound, like a pair of scissors cutting steadily across paper, but it was just an inhalation. Elizabeth’s, and then I heard the paper rip. Her voice, no longer even, was now raspy and hot. The growl of a mother bear when an intruder comes too close.

‘you can come.’ Then a pause and a full breath released. ‘But no major holidays’ ”(pg.8).

For Riva this is the end of any hope she had of having an intimate relationship with her daughter. This was also Elizabeth’s last resort in protecting herself from further pain and hurt.

The first time I read this it reminded me so much of my best friends life that I had to check the author’s name to see if it was her mother. My best friend, Liz, and her mother, Carolyn’s story is just like Elizabeth’s and Riva’s. Like Riva, Carolyn moved herself and her daughter from New York to California after divorcing their husbands. Liz is often embarrassed by her mother and purposely excludes her from moments in her life. They are worlds apart in their views and their lifestyles. In the story, the author take the reader far into the future of the characters. We can see how a childhood can affect a relationship far into adult hood. Today Liz is only 18 and, for me the story served as an omen of things to come. If relationships are not reconciled and hurt feelings are not addressed then any hope of a positive relationship in the future is not likely.

My own mother feels that she was deeply hurt by her mother

growing up. She feels that her mom was not there for her and didn't support her enough. Today she still blames her mother and feels a great deal of hurt and resentment. This has caused a rift in their relationship.

We can learn from the story, *No Major Holidays*. For me it taught me that relationships are the only things that we really have and they are the foundation of any happy life. We need to cherish them and work on them when they become rusty. Mother's and daughters have a strong bond to each other and both should feel a sense of duty to one another. A mother to provide and teach, a daughter to be respectful, and learn. Wisdom can be passed down from generations if we take the time to heed the lessons of our families.

During a phone interview with the author, she told me that what she writes about is universal. That almost everyone can identify with the characters and their struggles. This is the mark of a talented writer. Shalom's work can serve as a mirror for us to look upon and really see the value in our relationships.

#### **Works Cited:**

"No Major Holidays" Shalom Victor. To be published; Porter Gulch Review 2003

## Following Your Heart: A Sonnet for Love

Erica Scott

Betrayal, scandal, and secrecy are most often displayed when a partner in a romantic relationship is unfaithful. An adulterous partner may bring about the demise of the relationship, but at what cost? Some may find love and comfort they do not have in their current relationship, but others give up a commitment to one's mate in return for instant sexual gratification. In "Sonnet: Plea to a Married Lover," by Jeanne Johnson, the speaker pleads with her lover to follow his heart and remain with her. At the same time, the speaker is unselfishly letting her lover go as she acknowledges his conflict of being committed to his wife even though he may not want to be.

The author, Jeanne Johnson, did not specify gender in "Sonnet" for either the lover or the speaker. I first thought this was done to broaden the audience in which the poem could apply to, but in speaking with the author, herself, I received a different story. The speaker is really the voice of Johnson, talking to her lover at the time; "This was a personal message to [her] lover. There was at the time no intention for a wider audience to read or relate to it." I think because "Sonnet" is giving voice to a person's real trials, makes it easier to feel their emotions and relate to it on some level.

The speaker interprets what she sees in her lover's eyes, and feels in his kisses and touch, as love, "The message from your eyes and lips and touch / Belies the words that say love cannot be"(Lines 1,2). The speaker believes that what she is seeing in the "message" from her lover is love, but they should not or cannot love one another, so the signals of love "belie," or "misrepresent" (The American Heritage Dictionary 78), what really is. The speaker believes that the one whom she desires cannot love or should not love in return.

When first reading "Sonnet" it stood out to me that the speaker seems to be unselfishly giving up her lover, so that he does not break the bond of marriage. In speaking with Johnson, though, she revealed that it was more of a plea for her lover to remain with her. She said also "[she] felt sorry for [her] lover" because he could not, or felt he could not, leave his wife. So, in my opinion the feelings that the speaker portrays through the poem are unselfish, but it is because she is thinking about her lover's dilemma and not her own pain in speaking to him. The author also reveals the unselfish nature of her love because the realization that the lover's spouse needs them too in line 3: "There is another needs your love too much." She does not want to cheat another person out of their marriage and be the cause of the spouse not receiving love. "Bound by the past you cannot stay with me" (Line 4), demonstrates that the speaker is letting her lover go and telling him

that while she may hurt, she understands on some level the quandary that her lover has been placed in.

The speaker also realizes it is foolish to hold onto a lover when he is involved with another. The speaker pleads with her love, with an assurance that she understands what he is going through, but will still hold on to the memory of what they had, as lines 5-10 show:

And if you loved me not, I would not weep  
That we so lately met so soon should part,  
For only fond remembrances would I keep  
With in the shadows of my love touched heart  
But if you love me, as your eyes do speak,  
Then surely shall I grieve when you are gone.

The speaker even reveals that she loves her sexual partner, with her "love touched heart" and she will "grieve" when they part. However, the speaker is not trying to hold onto her lover, talking of when they "are gone," like her love for him does not matter or change the fact that they are going to part.

In lines 11 and 12 the speaker reflects a moment of possible sadness that her lover will not stay to see where their relationship might lead, "For though brief knowings formed a bond yet weak / Our love, in time, would surely make is strong." Making reference to the "bond" that has been formed with her lover, the speaker makes a final plea aimed straight towards his heart to think of what could be. The lover sacrifices what could have been between them. Johnson spoke of the thought that love might have been enough for her lover to stay with her, but it was not because he "was in fact very afraid of loosing his status and reputation, if he left his wife for [her]."

The speaker's last lament, is a last appeal for her lover to follow his heart, "Yet no claim can I make beyond this plea; / Go not my love, for less than love, from me" (Lines 13, 14). These lines implore the lover not to leave if he loves the speaker, which would prevent their relationship from growing deeper. It is as if she knows their parting is inevitable. The speaker does not ask for assurance of how deep the feelings are between them, so that when they do part she might be saved from the pain of loosing one with whom she shares reciprocal love. The fact that the lover's feelings for the speaker are not brought into light in the poem dramatizes the plight of the speaker. This made me wonder if the speaker's feelings of love are mutual, but either way it is equally tragic; two who love one another but are unable to remain together, or a lover who's feelings of love are not returned.

Johnson displays an admirable use of language in the poem. The words are far from dull, and instead are descriptive and colorful. For example, she uses the word "weep" instead of just "cry", as well as using the more poetic word "belies" instead of "misrepresent."

The poem is composed in the traditional Shakespearean son-

net form. I think Johnson's poem should be seen a great example of more modern use of this form. This lyric form consists of fourteen lines following a rhythm known as iambic pentameter, which is alternation of stress and non-stress on the syllables of each line (Abrams 290). The lines rhyme in following the pattern of ababcdcdefeg. The last lines form a heroic couplet, with each line being ten syllables that rhyme. Together these last lines close the poem well, summarizing the poem with the speaker's last plea.

"Sonnet: Plea to a Married Lover," is a poem that radiates emotion. The wonderful use of poetic language adds to the emotion and beauty of the poem's subject. Every line is testament to the turmoil of the speaker, as well as a demonstration of her wish for her lover to follow his heart.

### Works Cited

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Johnson, Jeanne. "Sonnet: Plea to a Married Lover." PGR submissions packet, 2003.

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## See Mom? Video Games *Are* Life!

Eric Wallace

Life is like a game of Tetris. It's not an idea most people would agree with, but after reading, S. Christopher Johnson's poem, "Things you Learn from Playing Tetris," I was convinced. The piece presents Tetris as a metaphor for life; the ways in which you learn to arrange the blocks that are thrown at you in Tetris are symbolic of the ways you learn to deal with the situations that life throws at you. "You learn to build your blocks into a solid façade / From the foundation up, though you must leave gaps / Against your will."(1-3) Many people think that video games are a brain-rotting waste of time; however, this piece shows—quite effectively—that anything, even a video game, can be philosophy in disguise, and that metaphors for life can be found just about anywhere you care to look.

The author begins by describing the seven Tetris blocks. The descriptions make the blocks sound almost human; for example, "Second and third the tall twins with bent backs, / Malcontent unless allowed to lay down and rest / Or lean against the wall in weariness"(4-6). This anthropomorphization adds a human element to the game, making it easier to relate to, and making the Tetris-life metaphor a bit more palatable. Furthermore, it adds to the metaphor itself; human-like blocks that you have to find places for begin to sound more like the people and situations that one has to deal with and adapt to in reality. Like Tetris, sometimes life gives you people who fit perfectly into the situation you're in, and sometimes you get people who bring the whole thing down; your job is to try to make connections between the disparate blocks and build them into a sturdy foundation.

In life, as in Tetris, chess, or any other game, learning to play is easy, but learning to play well takes time and practice; the more experience you have, the easier it becomes to simply take things as they come and to keep your life, or your stack of Tetris blocks, from falling down around your ears. Life and Tetris consist of patterns; as you grow older, or as you play more and more Tetris, you begin to recognize these patterns and you are able to respond to them more and more quickly and effectively. The more effectively you recognize and respond to these patterns, the longer you are generally able to stave off your inevitable loss; it should be noted, however, that no amount of skill or wisdom can save you if you keep getting all the wrong blocks.

The Tetris-life analogy is really quite impressive in its depth. The last stanza could even be seen to touch on quantum physics.

You learn that this art involves simple units,  
Like the pitches of a musical scale, whose

Ultimate nature is mysterious and ephemeral  
They vanish upon completion of their goal.(25-28)

This quote is reminiscent of the “elementary particles” in quantum physics (i.e. neutrinos, muons, etc.), which sometimes only exist for fractions of a second before they are destroyed or merged with others of their kind. These “particles” are very difficult to observe, and they are completely different from any other known phenomenon in physics; in short, they are about as “mysterious and ephemeral” as it gets. This verse also brings up music, which again brings us back to the pattern idea; music is nothing but patterns repeated with some variations, and the more you practice dealing with the basic patterns and their variations, the better musician you will be.

But the efficacy of this piece is not limited to its content; even the layout suggests the message. In Tetris, as in life you don’t always have the time or the opportunity to arrange things exactly how you would like them; accordingly, the poem is not made to look pretty. The lines have no meter or rhyme, and they vary significantly in length. Many line breaks fall mid-sentence, and many sentences end midline, suggesting that maybe the composition was haphazard. In fact, it seems to resemble a Tetris game, with the words not necessarily neatly laid out, but shoved wherever they would fit. If you look a bit closer, however, it begins to bear even more resemblance to a Tetris game; if you look at it sideways, the left margin forms a foundation with the words built up from it, different lengths for each line, like a conglomeration of Tetris blocks. Furthermore, the mid-line punctuation marks seem to resemble the seams between blocks in a Tetris structure. The poem is divided into four stanzas, just as all the Tetris blocks are made of four small squares; what’s more, each stanza is shorter than the last because, as you learn from playing Tetris, “there is less time at the end than there was at the start.”(20)

And if the content and the layout weren’t enough to make you like this poem, the writing is engaging and evocative, drawing the reader in and holding them for the duration. The descriptions of the blocks in lines like, “And last the two tiny twisted blocks, / Harbingers of chaos, curled into themselves, / They twirl across the screen as they sink”(8-10) plant the image of the blocks in your head, and solidify the metaphor in the reader’s mind.

Overall, the form combines beautifully with the content of the poem, to create a powerful description of life. There is definitely much more to the metaphor than could be said in a four-stanza poem, but that is effective too; it leaves the reader thinking about the poem, thinking of more and more ways in which life is like a game of Tetris. This, in turn, will hopefully get the reader to thinking about life itself, and where best to place the blocks they have.

Personally, I found this to be a well-planned, well-written, entertaining poem. It draws the reader in by making them laugh at the thought of explaining life through Tetris, and then going on to do just that. I suspect that "Things You Learn From Playing Tetris," will be particularly popular with my generation; Tetris was released for Nintendo when I was about six and, since most of my generation grew up around video games, I would be hard-pressed to find someone my age who has not played the game. However, I think that anyone, of any age, who is familiar with the game of Tetris, will get a good laugh out of, and probably be convinced by this poem.

## Memories of Mom

Jeffery J. Phillips

As I sat in class and listened to the poem “Why Mom?” being read, I was overcome with emotion and soon I felt my eyes welling up with tears of sadness. “Why Mom?” is a poem about a teenage girl struggling with the fading memories of her mother who died from cancer, and is living her life with a huge void, as she states in the sixth stanza. “ I find myself existing in different places of the world, / a dead person in a live body, / sometimes feeling sometimes numbing, / how it is to be a motherless daughter and a teenage girl, / both of us who lost their mom far too young” (Eugenios). This brought back painful memories in my own life, as I lost both my mother and father to cancer; I understand firsthand the emotions of working through the grieving process.

The author starts the poem off in the first and second stanza with a series of questions to herself, trying to convince herself that the pain and reality of losing her mother is not real.

How many times will I see you,  
and convince myself it just cannot be?  
When will I stop crying each time I look into the  
mirror,  
while green eyes that died stare back at me?  
Why are you gone,  
where did you go,  
why am I alone?

.... How long can she cry?  
How many tears can my pillow absorb?.... (Eugenios)

After watching her mother suffer through cancer and eventually succumb to the disease, the author still has a hard time accepting that that part of her life is real. Even though she knows her mother is dead, the author is still reminded of the pain every time she sees herself in the mirror, as she states in stanza one, line three and four, “When will I stop crying each time I look into the mirror, / while green eyes that died stare back at me?” (Eugenios). As I thought about those two lines I wondered if the author bore a strong resemblance to her mother and she sees a mirror image of her mother looking back at her? Or does looking in that mirror allow the author to let her mind wander and remind her of her mother? I can relate to that thought because it has been two years since my mom died and every once in awhile I’ll be

looking in the mirror and my mind will begin to wander and will be overcome with sadness and think to myself “I can’t believe that mom is really gone”

In stanza three the author continues to ask herself questions, but now they are questions of fading memories and living her life without the support and advice of her mother; they are questions that no person wants to ask! “How can I live this life when a part of myself died, / and remains locked with you in fading memories? / How can I navigate through the life you gave me / without your guiding hand?” (Eugenios). To lose a parent at any age is hard, but losing a parent when you have not yet reached adulthood can be devastating. The author expresses concern in the third stanza, lines three and four, “How can I navigate through the life you gave me / without your guiding hand?” (Eugenios). Imagine the fear of a child losing her mother’s hand in a crowded store; that hand represents security and stability. The wisdom and advice that a mother can impart to her child as she transitions into adulthood is invaluable and the author is clearly concerned about not having the “guiding hand” of her mother.

The fourth stanza continues to build on fading memories; but now those memories are of the author’s mother in her last days in the hospital, witnessing the cancer consume her body and mind.

When memories of you return,  
will they overwhelm those of your emaciated body in  
the hospital bed?  
Do I want them to? Do I want to forget?  
Can I ever forget those memories engraved into my  
heart,  
etchings that witness the cancer slowly murdering your  
body,  
your mind? (Eugenios)

The author brings up some very good points. The word and phrasing that she uses—most notably in stanza four line two and five, “will they overwhelm those of your emaciated body in the hospital bed? / Etchings that witness the cancer slowly murdering your body”—created some very vivid and painful pictures in my mind (Eugenios). Witnessing a loved one dying is a terrible experience to go through no matter how old you are. Seeing a loved one suffering through the physical and emotional pain day in and day out can be extremely overwhelming. The highs and lows that come with each new day can sometimes make you feel as if you’re on a roller coaster. One day life is going well and the next day things can totally change. All the while you hope that your loved one will be cured, but still know the chances of being cured are slim; this is very stressful.

Although death is a painful subject to read, talk, or even think about—especially the death of a parent—it can be beneficial. The reason I liked this poem is that the author pours out the heartfelt emotions that have to do with her mother’s sickness and death, and I could relate to every question she had and every point she made. This in turn caused me to think and talk about my mother and her struggle with cancer and eventual death. The fourth stanza continued to come back to my mind and had a profound effect on the way I have thought about my own mother’s death. As I thought about those fading memories of my mom, it seems the memories that stand out the most are of her in those last days in the hospital. Even now, after nearly two years, a day does not go by that I don’t think about my mom and wonder if 38 years of great memories will win over those haunting memories of seeing her body wither away in her last days in the hospital. After thinking and talking about “Why mom?” with my wife, I came to the realization that I don’t need to let those last couple of months’ of my mom’s life spoil 38 years of great memories. I also need to reflect and talk about those great memories. My children were 1, 5 and 8 when their grandmother died, and I want to be able to share those happy times with them so they can remember her in a positive way. **You cannot change the past, you must learn to live with it and overcome the obstacles that life brings!**

#### Work Cited

Eugenios, Jillian. “Why Mom”, Porter Gulch Review 2003  
Santa Cruz, California. 2003

## Crazy Horse Resists Steve Zoerner

In Crazy horse speaks in English to Black Buffalo Woman's daughter on September 3 1877. Crazy horse vividly describes the destruction of his naturalistic culture by the advance of the white man and their technology. The poem is divided into three stanzas that start similarly. Crazy Horse begins with the question "What of this is mine?" Secondly "What of this is ours?" third "What of this is gone?" And lastly "What of this is yours" (Thorn 165). In general Crazy Horse is questioning what is his, and his peoples', if the white man is overtaking it so easily.

In the first stanza Crazy horse uses symbolism to describe his own experiences with nature. He also gives a slight indication of how the white man begins to corrupt the land. He describes nature "as drops of water swirling where the rosebud and yellow stone meet, as these curly auburn locks upon your precious head"(Thorn 165). I found that particular statement very interesting. He said rosebud and yellow stone swirling together, if one was to swirl those two colors together it would make an auburn color, like the color of a buffalo's head. This symbolized all of the earth's creation in harmony untouched by the white man.

He then uses strong language to symbolize the white man and the destruction they will bring to his pure life style. "when the demon sickness overtakes a lone pine"(Thorn 165). I really liked that part, it gave me a clear picture of what crazy horse was trying to express. The "lone pine" symbolizes everything about his naturalistic way of life. A lone pine is vulnerable; it has no protection by fellow trees. As was the indigenous population, it was no match to the power of the "demon" and its diseases, weapons, beliefs, and machines.

The second stanza is similar to the first. It is another contrast of his people's way of life to the white man's technology. Focusing on how his people are in unison with nature, and how their lives revolved around the earth's components. "Then the trees were our mothers and the hills. The stars told us stories at night"(Thorn 165). Then the White man "A thing spoken of but rarely seen" became more apparent. They were "nursed by the wheels of groaning wagons, the dark oils of his machines"(Thorn 165). The Way he used the words "nursed" and "wheels" is symbolizing movement and growth. The white man was taking over, growing, and nursing themselves with their technology.

It was interesting to me in the way he ended this section similar to the first one. It was a comparison to the natural to the unnatural. This time he used "greed for land or gold or sport a hunger greater than a hundred vultures". A hundred vultures is something viewed as powerful by his people. Yet it is no match to the ever-growing force of the white man.

In the third stanza he describes his resistance to the white man. He compares his own actions to other creatures of the earth and how they would instinctively protect their own territory. "And I saw, as little hawk saw his own place, how I must live to help our people fight these invaders" (Thorn 165). This represents how in tune with nature he and his people are. Defending their territory like a Hawk. "Whose hands choked every wild creature with chains, with cages, with that new school for you" (Thorn 165). I saw images of invaders sucking the life out of everything pure in the world. Giving them a new school trying to modernize their lives. As for his question that starts the last stanza "What of this is gone?" May be interpreted as; did the white demon take everything from us or we still have our ways because it is in our hearts?. I think an appropriate answer would be; you still have your passion to save what is yours and not conforming to the "new school". Your way of life is in your heart and not any machine that the white man could make could take that from you.

"What of this is yours?" (Thorn 166). By asking that question he is sarcastically giving you the answer. Nothing is yours and how dare you take this from us, you do "not Dance for the sun, not make love like warriors" (Thorn 166). He feels superior even though destruction is inevitable. "The language of our people, its unchained galloping words, is like the plains in summer suddenly taken over by a ghost hide of snow" (Thorn 166). The poem has a sad but inspirational ending. Even though the "ghost hide of snow" has smothered his lands and people, he is still proud of his culture. Hence the reason why Indians still practice their traditional ways today.

I really liked this piece for two reasons; one the way he made such a strong contrast of the natural to the modern ways of the white man. The symbolism he used was very visual I felt I could see what he was saying. Secondly, the theme is a very serious issue in the history of our country. The expansion of the white man and their "manifest destiny" destroyed many Indian cultures and wasted anything that was in the way. I feel guilty when I think of the history of what our government has done to native Americans. The indigenous people of America have the lands they do because the government gave it to them. How can that be justified if it was the Indians land in the first place?

## Moment of Impact

Sonya Gonzalez

Abortion is not another form of birth control. Too many young adults are turning to this inhumane operation as a way to fix their prior irresponsibility. When I had first read *To Michele*, documenting the selfish thoughts and wishes, the irresponsibility of yet another teenager discovering their soon-to-be parental obligations. The lines “Oh God. // Oh no. // End this. // Kill it.” (Lines 15-18) struck me as selfish, ignorant, and reckless. I was disturbed at the brutal honesty of the author, plainly laying out before everyone how much he despised the idea of becoming a father after he was the one who did not take the necessary actions to prevent a situation like this in the first place. I could not believe that someone could be so heartless or self-absorbed.

In theater, I am taught to find the possibility of love in everything on stage in order to produce a satisfying scene. I am even taught to find love even in the characters I hate the most, and with all honesty, I was feeling no compassion towards the author of *To Michele* during my initial reading. So, why not try to find the possibility of love in this poem which seemed to me to be so absolutely devoid of such a thing.

After reading the line following the aforementioned quote, I realized I was not reading a poem simply about a selfish boyfriend. After confession of being devoid of any desire to father his girlfriend’s child, Taurke states “I screamed to myself” (line 19) all of what he had said before. After coming upon the discovery that he had not said all of those terrible things to his girlfriend, I reread the poem and found that Taurke meant something totally different than what I had first conceived. While reading the poem for the third time, I found the meaning of a short stanza set in the middle of the poem, “if it was my choice / I would / Do the right thing” (lines 12-14). The stanza infers that he would, if faced with the responsibility of deciding whether or not to follow through with an unexpected pregnancy, he would go ahead and abort the unborn child. However, the first line of the stanza, “if it was my choice” (line 12), shows that he believes that abortion is not a subject he has responsibility to decide.

Because of this short stanza, I believe that the author did not tell his girlfriend to abort the baby simply because he was overwhelmed with the moment and hastily decided that he wanted nothing to do with the child. Moreover, I believe that the author was putting up a harsh front in attempt to conceal the fear and uneasiness he had at the thought of becoming a father at such a young age. I was beginning to find the love.

I no longer saw a dispassionate, detached man who wanted nothing to do with his unborn child. I felt I had begun to unravel the

front the author had initially put up, and was discovering a scared, uncomfortable human being. Upon discovery of this new human being, I also found that Taurke included images of comfort juxtaposed with images of uneasiness. The poem opens with the lines, "I was lying in bed / the day you called me" (lines 1-2), which create the image of a boy comforted by familiar surroundings, still innocent and unaware of the impending news. Following these lines of comfort are images of trepidation and distress, "my mattress couldn't soften / the oncoming collision of my / Youthful Idealism / With that day's / Cold Reality" (lines 4-8). Taurke incorporates the word "collision" into this stanza to evoke mental images of automobile accidents, which are neither comforting nor expected, in order to relate his reaction to the sudden news that his girlfriend is pregnant with his child. "Youthful Idealism" (line 6), and "Cold Reality" (line 8), are capitalized in order to underline their importance as well as to personify the terms a bit more for the reader, creating a more encapsulating sense of the harsh transition from living an ideal teenage life to being forced to face the truths of the world.

Now that I had found the love for the author in this poem, I wanted to know more about him, I wanted insight into why he reacted the way he did. Fortunately for me, the author introduces descriptions of his own personality in the second stanza with such adverbs as "confidently" (line 10), and "self-righteously" (line 10). Here Taurke confesses that before the news from his girlfriend he had been unaware of the feelings and issues of others around him. He also describes himself as being arrogant, "I had always told my friends / . . . With arrogance" (lines 9 and 11). Through the authors' description of himself I found a man who had not come into adulthood and who was definitely not prepared to become a father. However, in the last two stanzas Taurke transcends from a self-righteous boy into a steady man, "Oh God. // Oh no. // End this. // Kill it. // I screamed to myself the instant you said 'I'm pregnant'" (lines 15-20).

The last two stanzas that had originally turned me off to the entire poem now gave me insight into the sacrifice Taurke makes in order to keep his emotions to himself instead of sharing them with his girlfriend and destroying any hope she might have had to keep the baby. I only hope that others reading *To Michele* will discover the love in the poem I searched for and found.

## Better Off “Since You’ve Gone”

Maureen Quinn

Anna Lomberg’s poem “Since You’ve Gone” is a well written and interesting take on the aftermath of an end to a relationship. The narrator writes of her newfound freedom, choosing words and a structure that conveys a tone that is relieving and carefree. The stanzas are separated not by spaces, but by placing the word “I” as the single word on a line, giving emphasis and importance to that word. She uses words and phrases that seem to lift the burden of whatever had been weighing her down in the past, with no conditions or hesitations; her happiness is honest and complete. I was drawn to this poem because of its uplifting tone, and the trueness it brings to a situation I have known the relief of. I felt I could relate to the narrator’s sense of freedom and inspiration, after the ending of a heavy relationship.

The poem starts with the word “I” alone on the first line. Immediately the author has asserted the importance of this word, and further emphasizes its importance as she continues to isolate the word from others, giving almost every mention of it its own line, so it can boldly stand alone. This poem is about the self, about the narrator living independently for herself, being under no obligations to anyone but herself, and being able to experience pleasure and happiness and inspiration for herself alone. “I” is probably the most important word in the poem as it embodies what seems to be the point that the rest of the words are trying to get at. It seems only appropriate that as “I,” the self, serves as the foundation for the ideas of the poem, and the foundation for the narrator’s newfound freedom and love of life, that it should also, structurally serve as the foundation for the poem. Seeing this one letter word repeated so many times, standing so boldly alone, throughout the course of the poem makes the reader immediately notice it and not forget about it as the piece continues.

In part, the author conveys her feeling of being carefree through using the word “not,” by describing the things she is not doing now that “you’ve gone.” When describing the way she chooses her clothing, she says that she is “not trying to impress,” (Lomberg 35) “not seducing you.” She’s not putting effort into this activity for someone else. The next stanza is centered around the line “not worrying.” She can go out and drink, and not worry, and in the morning, not worry “about what i did/who/I/winked at.” She is not tied down, not obligated to anyone anymore. These lines let the reader know what the narrator is not missing out on without “you,” what she is glad to be rid of.

Of course, if the entire poem were fixated upon what the narrator is *not* doing, then we might get the impression that in some ways, she is still consumed by the old relationship, or the old lover.

So it helps to further hit her point home by concentrating more on what she *is* doing without “you.” She is fantasizing “. . . about love/ with other women/ with other men,” and she has the freedom to be “happy” about it. These few lines in particular are interesting in the way they convey the true freedom she now has. She is not limited to one specific person, nor is she even limited to one gender, and she has no guilt for fantasizing, for thinking of others; not only is she happy, but she’s free to be happy, she’s allowed it.

The last stanza is perhaps the most important, and the boldest part of the poem. Here, the author completes the thought of the poem by taking the descriptions of specific events previously mentioned, and shows how they affect her life, how they “inspire” her. She writes: “Since you’ve gone/ my life has been/ poetry.” She is making an ultimate statement about her life as a whole, how it is good and beautiful art now that she is on her own. This is a bold statement, and an absolute one at that. The narrator gives no indication that there is anything holding her back, no fond memory or left over longing of a lost lover that would make her sway from this statement, or this feeling of freedom.

The last stanza is also very interesting and inspired in the way that the ideas she conveys mirror the kind things one normally associates with the start of a new love, of a happy and fulfilling relationship. Now, by herself, she stays up till dawn, as new lovers might stay up till dawn together. The last sentence has a ripe sexual imagery, personifying her life, and poetry as sexual act that is joyful and loving: “on its knees/ tongues of life/ licking the world/ breathing soft breaths/ of love.” Her new freedom is orgasmic in the pleasure it brings her. And once again, she shows no remorse for losing a lover; she has not lost love, she has now regained it on her own.

It is hard to find cause for skepticism of the narrator’s words. While it may come off that she is bragging about her freedom in an attempt to convince herself she is happier than she is, the words she chooses convey a sincerity that rings true for me. In all reality, the narrator probably is experiencing some feelings of loss, some sadness for what was, it would seem inhuman not to. However, her tone is cleansed, reborn, focused in a different direction; her happiness outweighs her sadness, and that is the important thing. The words she chooses border on bravado but instead have an honesty that is simple and true. She writes of winking at others, not making love to them, or even talking to them. And again, she writes of fantasies, not of actually acting upon them. Yes, the last stanza does have somewhat of a shocking boldness, but it is one I personally can relate to. After the darkness of a sour relationship is broken, the new outlook can be inspiring in the ultimate and joyful way the author describes.

This poem is absolute in the point it is asserting. She is happy now, and free, and that's it. There is no "I'm happier now that you've gone...but I still miss you." She puts out her feeling, and says nothing to make us take it at more than (or less than) face value. It is honest and complete; she is truly is happier and she knows it, with no doubt.



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