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# What's Left of the Soul

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# *What's Left of the Soul*



*Dolores Mohamad*

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Dolores Mohamad

School of Arts & Sciences Academic Symposium 2015-16 Submission

Creative Writing Publication Project

**Project Abstract:**

The purpose of this project was to assemble a collection of poems and create a chapbook. During the class meetings various styles of writing were taught such as: creative non-fiction and flash fiction for stories; villanelle, pantoum, free verse, persona, narrative, lyric, and ekphrastic for poetry. Figurative language was also highly emphasized. The student then gathered his/her best work, fourteen to twenty poems, and put them together with a table of contents, title page and a biography. This finished assignment meets the criteria for submitting the work to chapbook contests.

**Statement of Value:**

This assignment really gives students the chance to be creative and put a collection of work together that they could possibly send out to a contest or a literary magazine publication consider. This publication project also helps a person to think of writing from different perspectives and to use several different forms. It is important to use different writing techniques and tools to produce unique pieces; it will help someone understand more about their writing and ways to improve it. Completing this project has helped me improve my writing; it made me think and strive to reach new heights with my poetry. I have also learned to write and appreciate form poetry (sonnets, pantoums, villanelles, etc.). This publication project has helped me broaden my horizons in poetry and allowed me to push myself to develop pieces on subjects I haven't considered writing before.

### ***About the Author***

Dolores Mohamad is from New Jersey. She attends school at Johnson & Wales University majoring in Food Service Management. She holds an Associate's Degree in Baking & Pastry Arts. Dolores wants to pursue her passion with writing as well as pursue a career in the food industry. She has been previously published in *The Maze*. She loves to write poetry, travel, visit art museums, and discover new coffee shops. Dolores aspires to publish books of poetry and hopes that people will want to read her work. She wants to be a voice in the world of literature. Dolores was awarded First place for the Jackman Memorial Poetry Award at the 75<sup>th</sup> Writer's Conference at Ocean Park.

## ***Ballerina***

I am delicate and fragile,  
a violet water lily balancing  
on the face of a pond.  
Writing with my pointe  
shoes, narrative poetry  
across a wooden floor.  
The music whispers  
lullabies of the moon.  
My body is art, reaching  
for the sky, *arabesque*.  
One's leap of faith,  
poise and perfection,  
*grand jete*. My world  
is constantly spinning,  
dreams I've built  
on a weak foundation.  
*Pirouette*, to hide my  
tears, my hands to cradle  
each other. Accented  
bones, tired elegance.  
Waltzing with my soul,  
*pas de deux*.



Photo credit: Heather Clancy

### ***When My Father Cries***

My father is the strongest man  
I know. A voice of certainty  
and righteousness,  
hands like weathered stone,  
glass eyes of amber  
reflecting the world he sees.  
A tarnished golden heart softly  
beats within his stern chest.  
A figure in my life who  
is invulnerable and unbreakable;  
never letting pain or weakness  
bring him to his knees.  
But when he is tired and worn,  
unable to control life from pulling  
the ground beneath his feet,  
he cries. I can feel his energy  
draining, like someone  
pulled the chord. I hold  
his hand, he hides his face.  
I want to be strong for him,  
but my heart is breaking.  
He lifts his head and looks at me,  
tears running in a stream.  
Using his sleeve to wipe  
the evidence, he pretends  
like nothing ever happened.  
*"There goes my hero,  
watch him as he goes.  
There goes my hero,  
he's ordinary."*

### *Anger tied me up*

in a chair that is tilting  
and constantly shaking.  
Unable to keep my ground,  
there is no balance or control.

My knuckles are white  
from clenched fists.  
My veins are pulsing  
with currents of electricity.  
The energy is enraging,  
I'm bound to break.  
It wants to witness me  
transform into a monster.

The Black Kraken  
in my stomach inches  
its tentacles up my throat,  
forcing me to scream,  
to say unspeakable things.  
The taste of the deep sea,  
filth and blood hits  
the back of my throat.  
It burns. I swallow my tears.  
It is trying to consume me.  
There is no escape.  
The Kraken is too strong,  
it grows in darkness.

Anger knows it has  
the upper hand.  
It laughs and pities me,  
while I slowly untie myself.  
Impressed with how it has  
changed me it lets me go.

I don't want your comfort and  
I don't need your embrace.  
I'll drown in a black sea  
and evolve in a storm of my own.



### ***First Love***

I loved you since the break of dawn.  
Our bodies drawn in spotted sunlight.  
Your embrace is all I've known.

I fell asleep with your hand on my heart.  
In dreams we run through golden fields.  
I've loved you since the break of dawn.

Painted skies can't seem to hold me.  
Distant winds can't change my mind.  
Your embrace is all I've known.

Your side is where I want to be.  
Angels could not pull me away.  
I loved you since the break of dawn.

We could build a castle in the clouds.  
I'll soar around the heavens with you.  
Your embrace is all I've known.

The world can crumble at our feet.  
Our hearts will bring us to our knees.  
I loved you since the break of dawn.  
Your embrace is all I've known.



Photo Credit: Dolores Mohamad

*I love you, piece by piece*

There was broken glass  
left in the middle of the street.  
It was so beautiful, shattered  
in sunlight. The fragments  
glistened, a kaleidoscope  
displayed on pavement.  
It was avoided, promised  
to be abandoned.  
I tried to piece the crystals  
back together. My hands  
were cut in the process,  
deep wounds I could not bandage.  
Some things can't be fixed.  
Some things can't be saved.  
But I continued to stand in  
front of this fragile broken thing.  
Taking the impact of any car  
that might have come.  
Trying to protect it from  
becoming anymore scattered.  
I wanted to prevent  
It from losing whatever  
it had left of its disheveled self.  
I wanted to love you, so you  
could be whole again.

## ***Without You***

I've been waiting  
for a hurricane, last  
goodbye. A storm  
of massive destruction.

I feel it in the winds.  
The sky changes its tone  
and color, opening up a  
gateway for downpours.

The clouds are rolling,  
black smoke swallowing  
everything in its path.  
My arms are wide open.

I thought I was ready.

The withering winds hit,  
leaving me breathless.  
The ocean is grabbing  
at my feet.

The eyewall strikes me  
with lightning, a vortex  
pulling me away.  
I don't want to let go.

I can already taste  
the heartbreak, blood,  
tears. Torn apart between  
home and your arms.

You can keep  
all that is left,  
hold onto my love  
like promises.

When I'm gone,  
will you remember  
the calm before  
the storm?



Photo credit: Dolores Mohamad

## *Growing up*

Fireflies flickering in the nightfall,  
summer's fairies that fail to sleep.  
I used to chase them, under dim

street lights. Trying to capture their  
emerald sparks in my hands.  
Holding onto them, I could feel

their wings flutter. I would open  
my hand and watch them fly away,  
flashing their green traffic lights.

Beauty is easy to find when you're  
young and looking up. Childhood  
was bittersweet, a bud that never

wanted to blossom. Life so easily  
teaches you the art of loving  
and letting things go.

### *The Sun Cries at Night*

For all eternity I wait,  
burning in the center  
of asteroids and supernovas.  
I'm surrounded by planets  
that are destined for disaster.  
I long to see the wonders  
of the milky way and to  
be embraced by the fairest  
of them all, darkness's only  
luminous light, that a million  
stars fail to outshine.  
I want to kiss the surface  
of scars and mend them,  
but gravity is not on my side.  
Only a solar eclipse can  
bring us face to face.  
It is only seconds, maybe  
a minute, before a shooting  
star can even crash, he disappears.  
My tears burn into desolate  
flames, soon to be ashes of  
the galaxy. I fell in love with  
something I couldn't touch.

*Daylight never seemed to  
hurt so much.*

## ***Wild Child***

I used to run my hands  
through blackberry bushes,  
leaving magenta stains  
on my palms.

I often ponder  
in solitude, when did  
I stop being a child?  
When did I lose my  
innocence and so easily  
misplace my happiness?  
My heart was once  
untouched with sorrows,  
until I grew up and  
became vulnerable  
to the world around me.  
I could trace my fingers  
over my face and fail  
to know the times I've  
cried. My hands have been  
covered in dirt and cuts,  
they are calloused.

Don't leave the porch  
light on, don't wait up for me,  
I no longer need a bedtime story  
to help me fall asleep.



Photo credit: Debora Kim

### ***Bad Habits***

You're never home  
anymore. Staying  
in a shackled house  
that is falling to pieces.  
One room, I can see you  
pacing back and forth.  
Hands shaking while  
you smoke cigarette  
after cigarette.  
Xanax sits on top  
of your dresser,  
the bottle of belvedere  
is empty on the floor.  
I can see your veins  
like snakes, through  
your thin skin.  
Your mind is shot,  
filled with craters.  
Your body is tired,  
constantly relapsing.  
It's sad to see that you  
will never change.

## *Manhattan*

Tall buildings, glistening  
glass towers that shadows  
the alley ways. Taxis running  
around the blocks,  
yellow darts that never stop.  
The sound of horns, screaming  
at the world to move.  
There is no time for red lights  
or slow motion. Underground  
subway, track by track to  
Canal Street. Cold metal bars  
that have held hands  
with too many strangers.  
Artists linger on the streets,  
lost talent. Cigarette smoke,  
like thick smog, pulls on my  
clothes through infinite crowds.  
Blurred conversations of  
foreign languages.  
He holds my hand to form  
a bridge against 1,000 people,  
a tidal wave. Scattered lights  
in a city that never sleeps.



***Shoes: 1886***

I am rugged and worn;  
faded black, scuffed,  
old soles, shredded laces.  
My color was masked  
by dust, marked by bones  
and bullet shells, coal ashes  
embedded in the pediment.  
These laces have been knotted  
and pulled by calloused hands  
with fragile fingers. I've walked  
through fields of lavender  
and streets of turmoil.  
I've stood in an assembly line,  
where time is lost between  
conveyer belts and smog.  
Balanced on railroad tracks,  
hoping to leap onto the next  
boxcar that comes.  
Running and standing still  
I feel the rain, taste the mud,  
victory and regret.  
Abandoned at my worst,  
falling apart in this dismal  
Paris market. Everyone walks  
by "*I wouldn't want to walk  
in those shoes.*"  
But truth be told,  
you couldn't.



Painting by: Vincent Van Gogh

Source: <http://harpers.org/blog/2009/10/philosophers-rumble-over-van-goghs-shoes/>

*Beethoven Played a Song for Me*

I heard the Moonlight Sonata —  
when I died.

Within a deep sleep and falling —  
dissonance touched every black  
and white key — there was no light.

The piano continued to sing, andante —  
Words left unsaid, tell my mother I love her.

Sweet lullaby, holding me —  
there is no need to fight —  
the chords are soft and soothing.

I was between clouds, Earth, and flames —  
falling still— the piano was fading.

The melody was lost in silence —  
my soul was dreaming by the moon and  
my body was sinking to the bottom  
of a forgotten lake.

### *Giving up*

Tsunami waves crashing,  
drowning me a million times.  
I refuse to resist the under tow,

drifting further away from  
shore. I keep my head under  
the tumultuous tides.

The ocean carries me,  
salting my wounds,  
making it harder to breathe.

I can't find the will to swim,  
my limbs are numb and  
heavy like anchors.

My mind is sinking  
to the bottom of the ocean  
floor, forgetting all I've known.

The depths can't resurrect me,  
my world has collapsed,  
abandoned ancient ruins.

I've lost the battle,  
the light is gone.  
Natural disaster.

## *Insomnia*

The sandman hasn't come to  
see me in weeks.  
He must be busy in Europe  
or maybe taking a coffee break  
in South America, while I am twisting  
and turning past midnight into dawn.  
In daylight, my eyelids  
are metal shutters, impossible  
to keep open. Dragging my  
fatigued limbs, as my incompetent  
mind is strung along behind it.  
Reality and imagination, has  
intertwined. Hallucinations of  
strangers in familiar places;  
driving, barely holding  
the wheel, as the  
white dashes disappear  
into the asphalt.  
Words are being spoken,  
but I don't seem to comprehend.  
"Can you say that again?"  
A fog clouds my consciousness,  
a lack of memory and clarity.  
I lie in bed and pull the covers  
over my head, hiding from  
my responsibilities.  
Hoping that sleep confesses  
its lost love for me, letting  
me stay in its unpromising  
arms for the rest of the night.



Photo credit: Dolores Mohamad

## ***Il Mare***

*Blue beyond depths you fail to see.  
My world is endless.*

Through the surges of storm,  
lost in the wreckage, I wait  
for you to carry me home.

Predator of the deep,  
hiding beneath your waves.  
A hint of blood is all it takes.

I'm the mirror to your beauty,  
the reflection of watercolors in  
your eyes.

I pull the tides, create wandering  
waters, and leave only a shred of light  
on the surface of your hidden abyss.

*I'm a mystery that will never be solved.  
The element left, when everything else is gone.*

## *The Fire*

I burn everything I touch.  
Danger appeals to me,  
I want to feel your last breath.  
My smoke is poisonous,  
an infallible infection.  
I'll pull you from your sleep,  
tugging on puppet strings,  
this is not a dream.  
Run away from my destruction,  
cold feet on an ember mosaic.  
The world is rising up in flames,  
as I stare, mesmerized by my  
work of art, charcoal silhouettes  
and shadows. I'm comfortably  
numb to the disaster I've unfolded.  
I feel souls in the earth, cries  
from the Underworld fill my head.  
I'm fading at the edge of darkness,  
smoldering where I stand.  
My wrath is starting to demise.  
Remember me, scars I left behind,  
the world I left for dead. I've become  
nothing more, ashes to dust  
carried away in arms  
of the broken wind.



Photo credit: Dolores Mohamad

### *Last Dance*

We don't dance like we used to.  
Our footsteps out of place and time.  
Neither of us have the strength to lead.

We are coming undone, untying the knot.  
Our hands have fallen to our sides.  
We don't dance like we used to.

Music starts to die, incomplete melodies.  
We turn our backs to hide our faces.  
Neither of us have the strength to lead.

The trust was lost between rhythms  
and the will to express ourselves.  
We don't dance like we used to.

I have nothing left to say.  
You refuse to look into my eyes.  
Neither of us have the strength to lead.

Love used to run through our blood.  
Our bones ached to be apart.  
We don't dance like we used to.  
Neither of us have the strength to lead.