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What's Left of the Soul

Dolores Mohamad

Johnson & Wales University - Providence, dsm998@wildcats.jwu.edu

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What’s Left of the Soul

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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 75th 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.
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;
ever letting pain or weakness
bring him to his knees.
But when he is tired and worn,
able 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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
**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.