

Ellipsis

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Ellipsis



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Editor's Note

Dear readers,

Endings, though inherently woven with sorrow, pave the way for new beginnings. It is my time to bid farewell to *Ellipsis* since my team and I are graduating this semester. This team has been with me since the establishment of the journal and has grown considerably over time. We dedicated countless hours to creating and developing this journal and I hope the next team will take pleasure in this demanding process as much as we did.

Our successors will carry this journal with the same commitment and criteria, eagerly awaiting your usual overwhelming contribution. *Ellipsis* has had the honor of receiving submissions from across the country, with members who enthusiastically participate and read each issue. This journal has been privileged to feature writers whose words are indulged with conspicuous literary sparks and we were fortunate to be the ones who reviewed the manuscripts. Each issue included delightful submissions and we took great pride in publishing them every time.

This issue introduces two fresh categories: Personal Essays and Plays. It begins with Personal Essays, followed by Poems and Short Stories and, at last, Plays and Film Reviews await the enthusiastic readers. This third issue, similar to the previous ones, could not have been possible without the help of certain dedicated individuals.

I would like to thank our respected supervisor, Dr. Farzad Kolahjoei, for his constant help and advice throughout this journey. Additionally, the support of our esteemed faculty members and the hard work of my team must be appreciated. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge all those who contributed to the improvement of this journal, either directly or indirectly.

I wish our successors the best of luck and I will remain a devoted reader of this journal, silently cheering on the writers who compose and fill the omissions of *Ellipsis* with their scholarly and literary productions.

Thank you, indeed.

Narges Nematpour

Managing Director and
Editor-in-Chief

01

Personal
Essays

Inner Journey

Foroogh Hemmati

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The night's getting colder. My eyes sewed to the sky, watching the once shimmering stars fade away. I'm afraid to blink and miss another star after opening my eyes. The frostiness of this unfamiliar weather is burning my nose. I'm a south kid, a sun's child; I'm not used to this iciness. I keep walking in the unfriendly weather of my thoughts. The daylight seems unreachable, the sun a huge lie to fool myself, but I keep walking. I see the closed signs behind the shop windows. I see the closed bakery, and I remember the softness of cakes, the warmness of the shop, and that flickering fire, making miracles and turning the raw dough into a masterpiece of flavors. I want to taste it once more, so I move farther. I see the closed toy shop. I remember the countless times I walked past it and begged for a silly toy. I knew I needed a real friend with a real pounding heart, not a toy, but I would still insist. I keep walking and see my high school. The worst years of my education. I hated that uniform. I hated those fanatic walls, judging my whole existence and commanding me to wear as they like, to think as they want, to ask the way they say, to be as they planned. After each step, I feel heavier. My heart is filled with the unspoken memories. I read the buildings' names. The house of my childhood. Is it still there? Is that broken bicycle still there, leaning on the cracked wall and hoping to be fixed someday? What about my neighbors? Are they happy? Do they remember me?

I look on the other side of the street and see my previous university. I see its high walls, which made me feel like I'm stuck in a prison decorated as a wonderland, full of mysteries and eternal stairs. Those stairs used to take my breath away. I wish the flowers were not planted there. They were the only beautiful elements in that nerve-wracking, sadistic place. I walk past it. The empty alley reminds me of how loveless I truly am. I can't see any other human being there. Where are the people? Are they dead? Are they asleep? Have they forgotten me? The only sound I hear is my own uncertain footsteps and the whistling of the wind. It has to be like this. The city of my mind has to be empty. It always has been

like this. There are not many passersby, but a few loyal citizens live here, like my mother. She's in our house, reading her book or cooking for me. I smile when I see her through the window; my frozen cheeks hurt, but I keep smiling. She deserves to see my smile all the time, even if it's fake. She can't distinguish it from my real smile. She's also stuck in those years when I could sit on her lap without causing her young body any pain. She believes I'm still that little kid with the same innocent heart. I can't lie to myself. I still am that foolish kid, but in an adult body. She's always there to remind me.

I walk again, watching the signs disappear. I'm leaving all my memories behind. I'm getting closer to the beach. I stop there and look. The fogginess of my path terrifies me. What if, what if I forget everything? What if I forget to love? What if I forget my home address? I need to go. I must go. This is called adulthood. I don't want to grow up. I don't want to meet the heartless people. I don't want to step into the black-and-white world. I don't want to be stared at like I've done something wrong. But I must keep walking. I can't look back. The only thing that gives strength to my shaky legs and eases my confused mind is the sea. It is always there, waiting for me. No matter how stormy it gets or how far away I go in life, the sea is always there to embrace me and remind me that I'm not alone.

I take one step at a time, relying on the warmth of my own childlike heart as I walk in the cold night. I have no light, but I have my shining soul to guide me. I don't stop and just walk further. I can feel the change. The weather is not as freezing as it was; it's getting warmer. I can see the dark shadows of the night waving at me as they leave. I watch them slowly vanish. The white fog stops appearing in front of my face, and my lungs can sense the saltiness of the sea. Is this a dream? I don't know, but it seems so real. I can almost touch it. I gradually feel the soft sand beneath my feet and I feel my heart beating faster in my chest. I'm finally here, where I belong. I see the first flickering lights of dawn. The sun is hurrying to climb the horizon and say good morning to me. I hear the sound of the waves running toward me with open arms, greeting me with their sparkly bubbles. I smile as I walk toward them. I can feel the little movements of crabs and snails in the sand. It seems like they are already awake and having breakfast. I kneel down in front of the coming waves. I touch the sand and feel its familiar, welcoming warmth. There's no clock to yell at me that I'm running out of time.

There's no mirror to yell at me that I'm getting old. It's just me and the sea. I feel free. I am reborn. I have another day and another chance to live on this peerless earth. I look up at the sky. It's so clear and glassy that I can see the cosmos. I see Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn having a feast and dancing around the sun. I feel so tiny compared to them, but I feel I can do anything. Not many people discover their destination in life, but I did. I see it as plenteous as the sea, as clear as the sky, as bright as the sun, as peaceful as the sand, and as colorful as the planets. I feel thankful for having this vision. It's my dearest treasure.

Now it's time to do the most difficult thing in this journey. I have to accept and embrace every single wound on my body and soul. I get up and walk toward the sea. The sand underneath turns moist, and the waves gracefully come to wash away all my fears, all my pain, and sorrow. The ankle-deep water goes higher and higher, till I'm floating in it like there is no gravity. I don't feel the ground anymore, and it's just me and the peaceful sea, hugging my body so tightly but gently at the same time. All I hear is the sound of the waves, and all I see is the vast blue sky above me. Everything is clear, honest, kind, and welcoming. The water washes away my worries and reminds me that all I need to focus on is my inner peace. Everything is going to be fine, and the future is going to be bright. I trust every single word that little fish whispers to my ears. Being surrounded by all these lovely creatures is a blessing. I stare up into the sky and watch the planets, stars, moon, and the sun, smiling at me and telling me about the wonderful life I have ahead of me. I close my eyes for a while and let my other senses feel this moment. The low temperature of the water feels relaxing. The little movement of the fish and waves feels like a lullaby. I am finally found; I am finally at peace, and I know my life is worth living. I know that I can overcome any obstacle in my way, and if I ever feel hopeless, helpless, or lost, I only have to close my eyes and come here. My true home. My own epiphany.

02

Poems

Kisses on Fingertips

Shakila Keyhani

MA student in English Literature at the University of Isfahan

My lips paint promises on your fingertips,
Ones that I've been too bad at keeping
So now I miss you through gritted teeth
And watch you as you run out of believing

I'd fit right into the crooks of your arms
Until doubts creep in through the cracks;
You kiss me back into sanity but then
Leave and reality drops down like an axe

I only trespassed into your patch of Eden,
Made you the Adam to my careless Eve;
Carved out a space in time for you and I;
Poured poetry like distraction, into your cup of grief.

But loved you I did; in silence you were written
You are gone from me now and I write you still:
The tighter I hold on to the pen in my hands,
The more it upends the heart, makes it spill.

Plein de Vie

Donya Sohrabi

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The euphoria of gazing into your eyes
Can't fail to make my heartbeat rise

Two years of our lives woven together,
Every part of me wants this to last forever

Felt lost till you found me,
Captured but never felt more free

Unable to define; what we're feeling is divine
Your canorous voice in my ear: "I told you I'll make all the stars align."

So hold me tight, my love, as the shoreline modifies,
And every other enjoyment disqualifies

Keep me close to you as if we are one;
Nothing else matters as long as I have you, I've won

I love you as a mother loves her child,
Unconditionally, eternally, and blind

"Plein de vie" when I'm around you,
Head to toe golden, no sign of blue

My muse, my reason,
Every hour, every season

I'll keep you warm in my nest,
In the calmest part of my chest

My only one, my lover,
You make every wound of my body recover

In moments of joy, in feelings of pain,
I'll choose you with my heart and my brain

Through the thick and thin, midst of the shadows of the night,
I'll be with you; you're my guiding light

And if there is no tomorrow,
Let this be our story for lovers to borrow

I'm devoted to you with each passing breath;
I love you endlessly; we're not apart, not even by death

For Whom Do We Live?

Negar Zaheri Abdehvand

BA student in English Literature at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Thirty years from now, the leaves fall
The sea wrinkles and the fish is dull
The sky is dim and your light fades
And the dark strands alter into the silver braid

Pillars are crooked, frame in pain
What do we live for, when it's all in vain?
For the love, the beauty or the life of whom?
For whom do we live, if the fate is doom?

Worms

Artin Azizyan

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My apple, my red, my shiny apple,
So round, so sweet, my bright apple.
The dirt took you away from me,
Worms got there before I could,
Wiggly, squiggly, munching away,
Munch, munch, before my eyes.
They made you stinky, yucky, eww-ball!
“Mr. Cobain, Mr. Cobain,
The worms won’t stop! They’re mean and small!”

Years later, “gone through all”
Feared my Peers, Parents, Gaze,
Called myself Maggot Brain,
The worms had grown up,
Cracked my skull, bones and all.
At first their wriggling was a thrill,
A spark, a “madness” that I felt,
But then it became a decay,
Smelled like teen spirit dying away.
“Mr. Cobain, Mr. Cobain,
They won't leave the apple at all.”

And here I am, in the subway hall,
Kids, grownups, lost and small,
Enter, go out, seek, eat each other,
Eat me, you, and the Earthly mother,
Punch, fight, swear, and maul.
The apple is us, and the worms?
“Mr. Cobain, We are the worms: Me, You, All.”

Photograph

Mahsa Abdizade

BA student in English Literature at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

The picture was taken
A moment in the past
Of all people you loved
You thought it'll last

Forever, I creep
Through all my notion
Every second fades
In light and emotion

A whole night's memory
Crumbles to a sigh
Although it was cheerful
In heat there was a cry

Cake, tea and gossip
We talked and we laughed
Had deep conversations
It wasn't just the dance

The smoke took over
Fading all the fuss
Next morning I'd stumble
Holding onto walls

The party may be over
Right now, it's just a night
Until you felt it somber
You'll never know what's right.

Event Horizon

Ariana Eydi Nasiri

MA student in Visual Effects at Soore International University

It's a fire, burning bright and bold
Caustic like a knight's sword
So does love, once touches your heart
Cures you and tears you apart
Yet, it was pain at the end
And from the start

The embers fade, the flames grow dim
A whisper on the wind
The memory of love and sweet little laughter's
Kept playing within

I hope you find your way back home
There's nothing we could bear
Like this, ever more

Meet me at the event horizon
Where all the stars fade away
So, you'll be mine
And I will find
A dream that lasts
Forever
Seek for my eyes
Beyond a million stars
Break the silence,
Speak my mind,
Find me
In the darkest of the nights.

The Burial of Bounded Dreams

Fatemeh Mousavi Kozani

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Let the heavens weep like a little kid
And trees bow their heads and totter
To the lament of the wild west wind.
O birds, cease to soar, halt your journey, seize this sorrow,
And O sun, delay the dawn of the damned morrow,
For dreams are drawn to dust and dwelt to foster.
Let the murk of night unravel its disguise and veil,
And the gods above wear all black, pensive.
Write it on an epitaph, let ravens caw this tale,
Clocks! paralyze your hands, pause and shatter time,
Make people stay sealed, impale the truth into the ignorant mind,
For an innocent is gone, guilty of the lives never lived.
Dreams, O dreams! Dwindled, dead; found
Buried deep down in the grim ground.

03

Short
Stories

Path to Bethlehem

Mohammad Taghavi

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Scene 1: The March

Rue not the loss of lives

for where we heedless walk

There is death and faith, aplenty.

So blissful hath been our much-adored pilgrim, that the weariness of the flesh and mind, irks none afoot, for endearing rewards holds our lord for us baleful servants. It has been known in abundance that the sort of difficult endeavors when kept in accordance with the divine resolute doth purge the souls of those once unkindled by sin, so pure and afresh, as a thirstful lambkin eagerly held to breast. Such a task, gloriously endowed, and such a pleasure to be of servitude. Our narrow path amidst the mounds of soft sand is most resembled by a thin brook of undone silver, flowing constant in a clayish mold that knows no end. Innumerable helms and brandished swords glimmer under a moon of an utmost radiant form to deliver a cold silver sooth to many eyes fixated on an infinite horizon, eager and unrested to seize sight of the towering walls that David himself masoned.

Be it written in future scripts as caused by an ill-fortunate recur of satanic dominion, feeble politics of Christian nations or their dwindled faith, that the graceless pagans may yet remain in the possession of the holy land, where that first bearer of the cross rightly pained to nullify whatever business the devil and its degenerate delegates tended to establish. A pain, kept afresh and held firm through the subjects of our church, a pain what defines the credo, what kept the rule of the order righteous, and the Christian lord content. Faulty has been the recent resolve of unfit few, that chose not to value our lords' sufferings, and sought conciliatory approach with the infidel breeds of desert, who

through means most ignoble, have multiplied beyond measure. Amassing sufficient dare to desecrate of the cross. Harsh are the reports that these offspring of falsity, by crime our brethren held to slaughter and their sinless lineage enslaved for amusement.

Most patient father hark my words and aid the cause, that by the destitution of the victims, and the day that witnesses their anguish, I am to thee thus bound by an oath, pledged in earnest, that until the ferocity of the faithless is served in just, brook me no leisure.

Scene 2: The Siege

Laid are our arrays of much valiant who in favor of our father, laid lives bare, to chests shield in the face of uncountable hordes of a most unfavorable foe. By what measure doth such feat finds reason, that the wards of a creed so pure, face a calamity so grave and unjust. But hark that Faith, if held firm to a will so well refined, will surely mandate to deeds what common sense deems as madful, as individuals indulge in flame. The city of God rests in sight, elevated both grace and stature, and wrought well within impassable towering walls of white, so stout and heft that no man nor devices of his devise can undo, and has left us visitants hesitant about our task. The question forces itself on our minds that how is one to cure the difficulty of a dire stratagem, under a sun so fixated. The warmth of these parts, boils the bare flesh beneath broad iron garment that was meant to support but tends to do the opposite. And alas, the shortage of water, the stillness of a damp clime and the unavailability of cool refuge, wanes the vigor of men and the worth of our resolve. An impassivity born out of impatience has hold of our men, and seems to have sought its sway on our contrite captains.

Where have we wronged? How much is the divine test to be tolerated? How much devotion is wanted to warrant deliverance? By what justice are our crimes measured, that the young takers of the cross are garbed in heaps of arrows or skewed horrendously by the curved blade of the unjust.

Our current state promises no achievement to aim for advancement nor proud end to stand ground. A bargain was struck, that thou shall be blessed with much-assured victory only if thou commit thyself to his will and be not tempted. One barely dares to ponder, has the lord left his part unfulfilled?

Scene 3: The Pondering

Pity the mind of he who of his purpose hath been deprived and gained doubt and riddles in return, a sad state indeed but true in trade which leaves no right for objection. Eager to seek high endorsement, we pounded on the doors of our host with the hope to meet one content benefactor. Seems that scorn has begot our sacred motives and forfeited what little ambition we had of upholding the cross. The siege of Jerusalem bore no fruit so that all may know that the land of the lord is not to be bought, bargained but bequeathed, apparently to some more favored than others, and by reasons that elude reason. How is one to determine how divine favor is wrought and by what measures must it be secured as to hinder shame and avoid infamy. This was the unknowable riddle that led our proud knights to lose helm and hilt only to gain solace in the company of sheep and wander the unclaimed pastures that harbor no man ill will, to gain pleasure in raising a wooden pail of water from the well, instead of the gem laden cross, and wielding an oaken staff in lieu of the stoned steel. Hard we paid the price and late to perceive that dying in vain is but to spill fine blood and spoil good-natured intentions that were to lead us true, and what few that refused to wither, must remain to recall the endured agony.

The end.

To the Hill

Fatemeh Soleimani Zadeh

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“Run! Run! Be quick!” someone yells. “It’s not far. There’s a little distance left. A little more and we’ll be free! Run!”

I've been running for almost an hour and now I'm tired and thirsty. I am also panting. Everyone's panting. But no time, no place to stop! I tried hard watching out for my steps but my skirt got muddy. Such a shame! It is my mother's, a very precious dress she left me for such a day. I've been counting days, months, and years having this chance to wear it. And now that it is time I couldn't take care of it. I wish she would be here. All the mothers in the village looked after me since I was a little girl. They did everything they could to make sure I never felt a lack of a mother in my life. They were very kind to me indeed. But now that the future is unclear, every mother turns to their own children. It's like they don't even know me. It's like they don't even know that I exist.

“Run faster! Climb! Quickly! Quickly!” someone shouts now and then.

The journey becomes more challenging as the fog complicates the uneven path. Ravens are flying and cawing in the cold, cloudy sky.

All of a sudden, a mother, a younger one, begins to lullaby for her little daughter she is carrying on her back. The little girl is scared. She is too young to comprehend what is happening. She must at least have felt something. Other mothers, one after the other, decided to accompany.

They are all singing along, singing our usual childhood rockabye. It seems that it's working. She is a little relieved now. We are all relieved; but not enough to prevent us from running on.

Looking around to find Faranak, I see her nowhere. She was supposed to arrive earlier. Where is she? Is she fine? May she have encountered my father? Oh, my father! How heavy his heart is right now, that his daughter is leaving! I wish I could meet him once again. I would, with no delay, throw myself in his arms, crying, telling him that I was happy having him as my father, telling him now that I

couldn't have experienced my life in any better way. I am leaving with happy memories and with no regret. May it ease his torment!

The sound of horse's feet comes to our ears. Everyone gets frightened. They are now running faster, crying or screaming. Two or more faint, and others struggle for a moment or two to prioritize the well-being of others or to focus on their own safety. At last, it is determined to carry them away. The horse comes closer. The eyes of little girls are full of fear and anxiety. It is like they are about to witness what they have heard of only. Hearts wildly beat in chests. The horse and its rider are almost here. Suddenly, a familiar voice reaches our ears, calling, "Sepita! Sepita Jan!" It's Faranak. Thank God! She's the horse rider. The horse rider is she. And she has managed to catch us.

"Where have you been, Faranak?" I tell her with a lump in my throat. "Have you seen them? Are they coming after us?"

"They will be here soon!" she replies while her eyes are filled with despair. "They'll seize us soon, Sepita!"

For a few moments, Faranak and I are gazing into each other's eyes, expressing nothing.

"Are they alive? Safe and healthy?" I ask hesitatingly with a low voice that only I myself can hear. It seems that she already knows what question is in my head. Her chin starts to shake. Biting her lower lip, she tries not to cry. I already have my answer. Even so, I am waiting for confirmation.

"Your father is captured and" she murmurs.

"Captured?" I repeat. And after bearing such heartbreaking news, I lose my temper. "And...? And ...? For God's sake, Faranak! Where is the groom?"

She hardly puts herself together and answers, looking directly into my eyes: "The groom! Your groom! And my dear brother! Zadan is killed!" And begins to sob while she is holding my shoulders.

This is a moment of such grief that the world must cease all actions and attend to our mourning. I'm a bride without her groom. I'm a widow without her wedding. Ah, I met him last night, though I didn't know that it was the last time. We were making castles in the air. We had no idea about this futureless tomorrow. So, we said goodbye in the hope of another greeting. So, we said goodbye in the hope of a tomorrow as our beginning, not our ending. So, we said goodbye in the hope of a tomorrow when our

hands would be in each other's, when we're looking at each other's faces, smiling. We said goodbye. I look at the crowd continuing their way like they don't have anything behind. Faranak is still crying. "Calm down, Faranak!" I say to her while I am wiping the tears on my cheeks. "Stand firm! we are about to get there. Ride the horse! Take the children with you! Gallop to the hill. We'll meet near the cliff." She is standing before me, staring. "Go, girl!" I roar. "There's no time to waste." She's walking toward the horse, wiping her face with her sleeve. Before mounting the horse, she looks back to see my face one more time. She handles to ride three little girls and an infant. Mothers barely separate from their children in such situations but this is what should be done.

I am far behind the crowd. I must keep up with their steps. The path isn't an easy or smooth one, full of rocks and thorns. I wonder if it was always like this. I have never noticed it before. People from the village were used to passing this way a lot to get to the Tree of Life. That's where we have many precious memories. Faranak, Zadan, and I... our fathers, their fathers, and also their grandfathers. We come and go; while this tree stands still. The Tree of Life has always been watching us. We used to climb it, hang a rope from its branches and take a swing, shelter under it, sit in its spread shadow, and watch the amazing scenery of sunrise and sunset. Oh, God! How many of them have I observed so far? So many that I will not be able to count. And I never imagined that it would end this soon! The wind, getting through the branches and heavy from numerous green and alive leaves, often blew in the reed and played the music of peace. I have never dared to look down the cliff before. It always gave me dizziness. Hence, I used to listen to the sound of the river down there. It seemed far, deep, and turbulent. There it is! The magnificent tree! I see its trunk, branches, and leaves. The tree and I are both deep-rooted in this soil, in this land; with a single difference: it stays here as always while I'm gone.

It's almost noon. I feel an earthquake. It must be them approaching. A hundred or maybe a thousand wild men are riding furiously, seeking fear and hatred in the eyes of their kinds, from youth to elderly, from men to women, from weak to potent. They are approaching!

Mongols are approaching!

Before they get to the bottom of the hill, we manage to come together at the tree. Silence dominates

our thoughts, preventing us from any action. Nobody speaks. Nobody cries. Nobody lullabies anymore. No sound is heard from any creature in the sky or any living thing on the earth. Only two sounds fill our ears: one, the sound of an army away from manhood chasing our last belonging, our reverence, to satisfy their evil souls. And the other sound, by the way, is the sound of the river, full of rocks with rapid waves. Even the wind sees no appropriateness in the time for a piece of pleasant music. Still, nobody speaks.

Mongols are approaching. Someone must depart first. That would help others to move. Nobody does anything. They are embracing each other tightly. Someone must depart first.

I move forward. Everyone is watching. I take off my shoes and hide them in the trunk of the tree. Looking back to the crowd, they are waiting, waiting to see what I want to do. I put an end to their anticipation and run, run to the cliff and jump.

Behind That Door

Atousa Samadifar

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Could the smile stay forever on her face, the family's troubles would be resolved sooner. The secret, she felt, lay behind that locked door—the one across from her room that had been there for as long as she could remember. She would often stare at it suddenly, breaking from her role plays with her dolls in their playhouse, and would fall, undoubtedly, as her mother looked at her, through another world or other possible lives. Twelve o'clock was the perfect hour for further inspections. It was a time when she could act without intruders or the watchful eyes of adults, the most suitable hour to dodge all the warnings, the dos and don'ts. This was the sweet interval, when Papa had gone out and Mama was yet to return from work.

So, the appointed morning began rather cheerfully for she was finally going to uncover one of the great mysteries that rested in her mind. After all, the tiny keyhole wasn't enough to satisfy her curious eyes; she knew the room beyond was much bigger than what she could glimpse through that small viewpoint. Her plans were carefully designed that even the lock was no obstacle. She had prepared herself well for this occasion, with plenty of practice and fidgeting at the door, so much so that she was almost certain it would open for her tomorrow at twelve o'clock.

Was there, then, anything else she should have kept track of, she thought. The assignments were the main issue—the ones Papa or Mama gave her to keep her busy and amused until one of them came back. She knew that these tasks weren't as simple as just keeping her engaged and away from boredom; they meant more than that. Their habit of distracting her with something else never felt rational to her, but she fulfilled their demands. So, while wondering about the reason behind this unnatural shift in focus, she never confronted or asked the purpose behind it; something kept her away from this, a whisper perhaps from an unknown source in her ears that came out of the eyes of people around her, warning that she wasn't supposed to question further. But with each attempt to pull

her mind away from a subject, she became more persistent about the former. She did as she was asked and completed each task: tidying up the cushions on the sofa, cleaning her room, and placing her dolls neatly on the shelves—something they thought safe enough to hold a six-year-old's attention completely to itself.

That day, she had all her assignments sorted. It was only a matter of time before she could reach her discovery. Mysteries kept her awake at night; if this one was solved, she thought, she'd soon have to look for a new one. But such enigmas weren't easy to find. She had to stay alert, attentive to her surroundings. She couldn't dwell on the stillness and quietness that she noticed others seemed to accept so passively. Her small, homebound figure was made of curious cells; nothing could pass safely before her without being questioned about its origin and purpose.

It wasn't uncommon to see guests startled when confronted by her questions. Some felt embarrassed when she demanded answers they couldn't find within themselves or did not know how to reach. What a queer creature, they would say to her parents, only to put on a polite smile and move on to another topic. Perhaps they didn't possess that gift of introspection she had. Until her childish questions, they were all intent on ignoring the past and immersing themselves in their little made-up worlds. And there she sat beside Mama, like a soul with a sacred duty to pull others from the illusions they had created. Her unbounded mind was unable to grasp the reason for their uncomfortable faces and those awkward shifts of arms and legs, as if their muscles wanted to move against their will and respond to her. They simply shunned her, eager to feel safe, lingering on her words with sympathetic smiles that had no answers behind them. At these times, she wondered if her world was so different from theirs, and if they had not once been children themselves—or perhaps they had forgotten what they'd been, what they had felt and understood in their past. I don't think that there's such a difference between us, she said to her unresponsive plastic audience, sitting in a circle of lined dolls, then standing up fast to brush her hair and reassure herself of being visible in the mirror. They must be pretending not to remember that they can remember it all; I doubt if the passage of time could make me remember less of this moment, she assured herself of the fact.

The pack of keys jingled in her hand as she skipped to the door. She was almost certain that one of the

keys would work perfectly—if placed halfway in and paired with a thin wire inserted from the side—to unlock it. And she was right. There was a quick click as the lock opened. She took a breath and grabbed the knob, slowly and stealthily pressing it down while standing on her tiptoes. Her breaths came in a playful rhythm that filled her with excitement to step inside. Finally, there she was, standing in the doorway, her view expanding from the tiny keyhole to a larger scene.

The room was nearly empty: an old wooden crib and a shelf holding only two dolls. Light scarcely passed through the thick blinds, but she could make out that the walls were painted a pale blue, as were the bedsheets. The air in the room smelled stale, as though the windows hadn't been opened in a long time, everything stood stagnant and still. Even the dolls seemed stuck in the breath of years long gone. The ticking of the clock over the hallway echoed louder, pushing a veil over the rising thoughts in her mind. Now, facing the solved problem, she understood everything so well and remained silent. All her questions, all the mysteries, and her passion for the lost worlds behind the doors evaporated, dissolving into the soft, innocent sea of the cold walls. A heavy feeling pressed on her fragile shoulders: her present could not merge with the room's past, and their times could not align. But it didn't matter anymore, at least from now on; the adults aren't to blame for forgetting their past, she thought. and I'd better wait for Mama, she said, closing the door as if it had never been opened that day at twelve o'clock.

Is There a Storm on the Way?

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I can smell the fresh mud and hear the nervous screams of helpless birds. It's so loud I can barely hear her footsteps, although here in our neighborhood she always walks slowly and tries not to wake anyone, just like a shy kid in the schoolyard's corner. But, still, I can always tell from the very first drops that it's raining.

It doesn't need an armed eye to see the growth of yesterday's fragile buds.

But I can't say the same about the people here. They are drowning in the joyful air of new things: new season, new year, new clothes, new plans, new ambitions, and new possibilities.

But if only those new things could guarantee any plan or any changes to happen.

They are busy cleaning old dust that can ensure bad old habits can be erased as easily. They are fulfilling the traditions so cautiously that their ancestors are definitely smiling and nodding with pride. But if only I could say the same thing about their future.

Who needs change when we can cling to the past? Why bother risking anything if we are not the ones benefiting? Let's be that quiet kid with those light footsteps in the schoolyard's corner trying not to wake a soul, just pass through the crowd, after all, that's the safe plan.

There is a bedtime story that all the kids here have heard before. It is about a deserted town, with no buds or blossoms, no hopes or dreams, about a time when a storm happened, so loud and so glorious that drew everyone in itself, changed the changeable, and devoured the others. After that, the buds on the branches never stopped blooming.

But if only it were that easy to believe a myth.

04

Plays

The Pig and the Bird

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Pig: I think I died.

Bird: When?

Pig: (*Frowning*) I'm not sure.

Bird: Did it hurt?

Pig: Dying?

Bird: (*Exasperated*) thinking.

Pig: Oh...It always hurts to think I suppose.

Bird: How come that I can see you?

Pig: What?

Bird: (*Shouting*) You are dead!

Pig: (*Blinking slowly*) I didn't say I'm dead,

I said I died. There is a difference.

Bird: In what way?

Pig: Well, I died but I didn't remain dead.

Bird: What is dead stays dead.

Pig: (*Throwing his hands up*) That's nonsense! We die and become alive every day. I died but then I looked and I was alive. It happens to everyone.

Bird: Why?

Pig: Perhaps being alive every day is boring and sometimes scary so we die every once in a while in order to regain the courage and patience of facing life.

Bird: (*Smirking*) I do not die. Maybe it's because I'm not afraid.

Pig: (*Closing his eyes and sighing*) I'm afraid you are more afraid than anyone else.

The bird: And why is that?

Pig: You are trapped.

Bird: In what?

Pig: In life.

Bird: (*Nervously*) But...but I don't die!

Pig: And it's worse.

Bird: Worse how?

Pig: You are just alive. Too scared to live. Too scared to die.

Bird: I don't think I understand you.

Pig: That's because you don't think.

Bird: Thinking hurts.

Pig: So does death. But when you die you learn to live.

Bird: But it hurts.

Pig: (*Nodding his head*) Yes, it does.

(*Silence*)

Bird: I think I died.

Pig: When?

Bird: I'm not sure.

Pig: Did it hurt?

Bird: Dying?

Pig: (*Exasperated*) Thinking.

Bird: (*Closing his eyes*) Thinking always hurts I suppose.

Pig: (*Excitedly*) Now you live!

Bird: (*Softly*) Now I live.

05

Film

Reviews

The Truman Show: Exploring Deceptive Effect of Environment on One's Authentic Identity

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Identity is shaped by environment, personal experiences, and memories. Also, it is important to have a place to call home with a sense of belonging. While exploring new territories can contribute to self-discovery, a deep connection to a specific place can serve as an anchor to one's authentic self (Hannah). *The Truman Show* delves into the narrative of Truman Burbank, who endeavors to unearth the truth and gain his genuine individuality amidst the fabrication woven around him. This cinematic piece acts as a painful testament to the fact that the ulterior motives of individuals and groups have the potential to distort our perception of ourselves and the world at large. This essay will investigate distinct aspects of the movie to prove this point.

The film adeptly depicts the impact of our surroundings as dialogues during an interview in which Christof, the creator of *Seahaven* and *The Truman Show*, is questioned about why Truman has never come close to uncovering the true nature of his world. Christof's statement, "We accept the reality of the world with which we're presented," underscores a form of control that neglects human interests and tendencies.

The setting is located on Seahaven containing elements to image this society. It is an artificial island that comprises two parts: the word sea represents Truman's fear of water and drowning, and the word haven signifies a place of safety. This nomenclature carries an ironic undertone, as a safe place is typically associated with comfort rather than fear (Poyaoan). In addition, an interviewed actor playing in Seahaven emphasizes the authenticity of the environment in the second minute of the movie, stating, "It's so true. It's so real. Nothing's here fake. Nothing you see on this show is fake. Just really controlled." However, excessive control separates a community from realism; and, the pervasive surveillance through five thousand cameras creates a dystopia. Even the weather is

manipulated by Christof. Additionally, Truman's family, friends, and acquaintances are all actors playing specific roles, subtly promoting various products during their conversations. The plot also highlights the power of media, as Truman's preferred TV show attempts to discourage him from seeking adventure.

There are many signs in the personality of both the protagonist and the antagonist for mentioning. The name "Truman," which conveys the meanings "loyal one" and "True man," aptly encapsulates his steadfast dedication to his unwavering quest for truth. Recognized by the audiences as "a kind boy, maybe too kind," his sincerity resonates in a world of deception. Derived from bur, denoting dwelling place, and bank, connoting hillside, the surname "Burbank" effectively symbolizes Seahaven's deceitful backdrop as Truman's confinement. The combination of his first and last name underlines the struggle between his self-identity and social identity. Ultimately, Truman's individuality triumphs over the existence imposed on him by his surroundings. On the other hand, the name Christof bears a similarity to religious figures Christ or God. This association highlights Christof as the architect of a seemingly perfect yet unreal world for Truman. Nevertheless, the character's noticeable absence of Christ-like or divine attributes accentuates the idea that individuals, except Christ or God, should not assume the authority to manipulate the destinies of others (Poyaoan).

The plot of *The Truman Show* presents that Truman has long carried aspirations of a journey of exploration. Unfortunately, various spurious obstacles have persistently impeded his ambitions. These obstacles include the passing of his father, his mother's illness, and the responsibilities of his marital and financial obligations. Despite these challenges, Fiji emerges as a destination symbolizing his remained desire for adventure and a quest to reunite with his first love, Lauren Garland. Lauren is the only actor who expresses the truth. Her honesty becomes evident upon revealing her actual name as Sylvia. Unfortunately, Christof views Lauren as a threat and expels her from the show due to her potential to unravel the web of deceit around Truman. Subsequently, Truman enters into marriage with Meryl. Yet he remains unable to erase the memory of Sylvia. He engages in a daily ritual of purchasing fashion magazines and cutting out images to recreate a resemblance of Sylvia. This serves

as a testament that Christof's control within this orchestrated environment comes to one limit: Truman's emotions and thoughts. Ultimately, while Christof seeks to convince Truman that no one understands him better than himself, Truman retorts, "You never had a camera in my head."

Early in the film, we observe that in a meticulously controlled artificial society, unexpected disruptions can still occur. The first sign of disorder appears early in the film when Sirius camera 9 falls. Symbolically named after the most radiant celestial body in the sky, Sirius represents Truman's established world starting to crumble, possibly foreshadowing the cessation of the show (Poyaoan). Furthermore, Truman's long-dead father suddenly reappears. Anomalies arise with the rain, radio, and vehicles, as well. Moreover, a stranger addresses Truman by name, intensifying his growing doubt about the people and circumstances around him. As a reaction to his uncertainties, Truman starts to act unexpectedly, defying anticipations and leading to further disturbances in his environment, such as malfunctioning elevators and disruptions in traffic. This suspicion gradually becomes the driving force behind his travel to realize the actuality around him.

All these disorders lead Truman to resolve his primary struggle and uncover the truth over the 29 formative years of his lifetime. When he finally endeavors to liberate himself from his fictitious life, Christof places barriers in Truman's path such as a severe storm, prioritizing the success of the TV show over Truman's well-being to maintain him within the fake realm he has constructed. Regardless of this, Truman pursues his freedom from this simulated identity. Truman's most valuable possession is himself; he demonstrates remarkable courage in confronting his apprehensions, embracing the unknown, and stepping into a future where he can narrate a story of his independence, even at the peril of his life.

In spite of all the challenges, Truman's persistent determination exceeds that of Christof. After navigating the treacherous stormy sea, he faces a staircase to the world out of the studio. Truman ultimately achieves his goal and bids adieu to his former defined existence. His journey parallels that of ascending to heaven as he abandons the paradise constructed for him and turns away from a utopia. One can interpret this as a mirror of the biblical tale of Adam and Eve departing the

Garden of Eden after rebelling against the will of God (Poyaoan). In this final moment, Seahaven's god makes his last attempt to convince the star of the show not to leave. The conversation between Christof and Truman before Truman exits the studio reflects the connection between creation and its god. Because Truman addresses the sky while Christof gazes down at a monitor. In response to Christof's futile attempts, Truman articulates his initial scripted lines, "In case I don't see ya –good afternoon, good evening, and good night." This poignant moment epitomizes a profound act of self-liberation and empowerment, symbolizing Truman's assertion of control over his own narrative and his declaration of independence from the artificial world. This scene recollects Truman at the outset of the movie, illustrating the distance he has traversed in his pursuit of freedom and self-discovery. It heartbreakingly captures the bittersweet essence of his departure from the familiar yet artificial world that had been his home for an extended duration. Upon Truman's escape from Seahaven Island, the show comes to an end. This indicates that a world can only endure in the presence of authenticity; otherwise, it is destined to dissipate.

In summary, the central theme explored in *The Truman Show* pertains to the profound influence of our surroundings on our perception of self. Truman Burbank exemplifies the importance of actively resisting the impact of the environment to protect his sovereignty and individualism. Therefore, in a society where forces such as governments, media, and advertising intend to establish control over us, it is crucial to conscientiously reflect on our decisions to thwart any attempts at manipulation. Preserving our self-identity may require significant ventures, yet the effort to maintain our true selves is invaluable.

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