Mystery Bruise Essay, Research Paper

Life, Death, and Continuous Change

(Three themes prevalent in Terry Wolverton?s Mystery Bruise)

What is this that takes the immoral, the wicked, and the weak? What is this that takes the righteous and the strong. We have referred to it as our end, departure, extinction, impending doom, eternal rest, last sleep, and most certainly our final summons -at least, as far as known life is concerned-. The Bible has named it, "the latter end". Shakespeare has called it "the journey?s end" and "a knell that summons thee to heaven or hell". The dark side, as Pink Floyd relates to it, is a prevailing aspect of our lives. No matter how one refers to death, three things are certain: First, it is inevitable. Second, it will happen to everyone. Third, it needs life to occur and yet is in opposition to it. Because of death holding it?s shadow to the divine spark of life, it is obvious that whenever a person talks of death they invariably talk of life. True to this statement are Terry Wolverton?s poems in Mystery Bruise. Her poems embrace aspects of life as she sees it and almost all of these "dancing insights" mention death. In addition to death running hand and hand with life is the concept of continuous change. Wolverton mentions change and human?s inability to accept it.

I believe that living beings are weary of change because like death it requires entrance into a land of uncertainty. The poem "We Resist Evolution" approaches this ideology of change. Wolverton opens the poem by stating that every living thing resists evolution. She writes about the cell that refuses to split, "the shapeless blind-eyed swimmers who did not long to crawl or breathe", and her metamorphosis in a woman-like body. The changes/evolutions depicted in this poem all deal with death and life as well. It?s obvious that she mentions living things and their metamorphosis? but maybe not so obvious is the inherent fact that with every metamorphosis a death occurs-that is the death of the old to make the new.

Midway through the piece Terry Wolverton addresses the reluctance of the dinosaur to it?s demise. She also mentions our denial of death and the ironic acceptance of our life in it?s clammy hands, saying that "Even at the moment of death we back away, tread air against the light that beckons, clutch at our particular plot of dust". It?s almost as if when humans reach the brink of impending doom that we yearn to seize life. Only then do full heartedly wish to be immortal. To see life as we know it; indefinitely. The problem is that we can?t escape death and most certainly our current reality can?t. When she says "….the atmosphere is choked with warnings, the planet?s clock is speeding up, each moment brings another breakdown, linkage ruptures, species disappear." Wolverton implies that humans truly are masters of destruction. It is evident in our plaguing of Earth and the lines in the closing verse of the poem….."It all seems so pleasant now, as it slips through are wasting fingers."

In the poem, "Ants", the ideology of humans being destructive forces reoccurs in contrast to the simplicity of the ants who?s primary drive is to merely search for food and survival. They do this at risk of human intervenience (like the anarchic hand that wields the chemical soaked sponge). Another human characteristic she touches upon is human superiority/self involvement when she states that the ants were "no more real than dirt". Making reference to the trait of humans being destructive implies a certain death of sorts. We see this in Terry?s last line, "….which is why their species will survive long after our is toast deals directly with our demise.

"Even while dying the plum tree bears fruit" is a powerful line from "The Plum Tree". It suggests the previous notion of life being so intertwined with death, but proposes that as life fades into darkness a lasting light can soon ignite. Even though the plum tree has a diseased trunk and possibly accepts it?s death it brings forth life that we in turn eventually pluck from it?s dying limbs. The fact that we do so demonstrates once again the aspect of human destruction and the urge of death, whether it be intentional or not. Later Terry Wolverton compares the plight of the plum tree to her dying friend, Gil Cuadros, who in his diseased days of dying urged his weakening body to bring forth literary work born from his condition.

The poem of Terry?s that I especially like is "Yahrzeit", another death sonnet. This sonnet is dedicated in memory of the deceased, Flora Silton. Alike the poem for Gil where lines of the living and the dying/death were blurred, this sonnet too deals with a similar obscurity of distinct worlds. In "The Plum Tree" it was shown that spurts of excessive life can arise from a frail, dying spirit while in "Yahrzeit" the blurring of the living world and the world of death is demonstrated in the following lines: "You fill the apartment , shine through it?s yellow walls; there?s no room you do not occupy, yet, searching, we cannot find you, except in dreams." The other obscurity is when Terry tells of her visitations to Flora in the dream world. Set within the parameters of life is the world in which sleep gains you access to the dimensions of the subconscious reality. This is the world between worlds where it certainly is possible to achieve that child-like imagination people hide and distort as they change into adulthood.

Although all of Wolverton?s poems deal with continuous change I feel that the poem, Vampire embraces it very creatively. The actual word: "change" is used several times throughout the piece. In, "Vampire" she manages to establish her ex-lesbian lover who apparently broke her heart as the fictional caricature of a vampire. By doing so she is able to more effectively express the actions and overall situation involved in the piece. The lover/vampire loses interest in Terry as shown with the lines "desire vanishing like the hem of black cape at the first hint of morning." Even though it is obvious that the lover no longer has interest in her, Terry attempts to keep her in her life, she states, "I opened my white throat and begged her suck." She tried to entice the vampire (lover) that apparently did not want her (the offering). In desperation to cling to love Terry mentions "I thought she would stay if I let her change me." Terry is naive in this theory because I?d like to believe that no one can respect, better yet love, someone so vulnerable , accessible, and willing to alter themselves. This is even more true when you consider the motive, timing and reciprocation to her attempt to change. In the end of the poem Terry changes slightly but doesn?t achieve what she wanted to accomplish by the change. Instead she is left half dead ( her heart broken with a piece of herself wisped away and a cold, dark part left in it?s place) as the vampire (a creature of lure and deception) soars away "leaving her earthbound, drained, cringing at the sun?s kiss."

All of Wolverton?s poems deal with many issues. One of which I find interesting is the fact that her poems exhibit a certain amount of chaos or rather uncontrollable issues and situations. In, "We Resist Evolution," evolution plays an uncontrollable factor, for evolution is just another factor of life, that alike death, no one can seem to ignore or avoid. She tells of human being?s reluctance to see and care for the world until they have one eye beholding the "light that beckons". Perhaps, we currently do not have the right societal pulls to take control of Earth?s fragile condition; to, as a whole, nurse it. Perhaps, we only have control over our insatiable need to be destructive and unknowing in many of our destructive acts (like the daily massacre of ants). Interesting enough, the only poem of the ones I have addressed that dealt with change being slightly willed upon, was "Vampire" the poem that left Terry Wolverton with a broken heart.

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