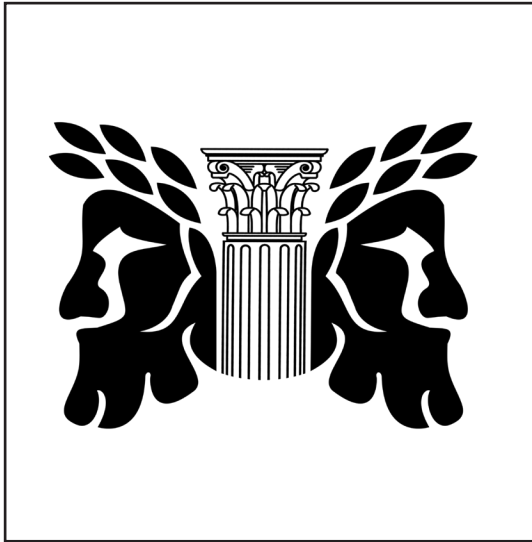


JANUS



**Westminster College
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Poetry

Your Compliments

I mean, what do you mean, you love my accent!

I mean, are you amused that I do not fit
your linguistic stereotypes.

I mean, why are you applauding a fish for swimming.

I mean, what you are applauding is not an overnight miracle.

I mean, there is the fact that I speak five languages. Maybe,
applaud me for that.

I mean, I am not fluent in all five. I -I - I stutter at times.

I mean, I don't have multiple personalities in me - I hope.

But, my tongue struggles at times to navigate around the
conjunctions, syllables, intonation...

I mean, the rules of all these five languages.

I mean, my tongue has to decipher if I am going to
pronounce the word in Swahili,

I mean, my intonation, am i going to use the humbleness of
Zulu,

Or should I sound bold and confident in the American
English way?

I mean, should I drag and rise my words like in Lingala.

I mean, MY my my enunciation, which letters should I leave
out like in French,

I mean, that was a long tangent, let's get back to your
compliments.

I mean I appreciate your compliments.

But, don't congratulate a fish for swimming,
I mean, your compliments don't boost my confidence,
I mean, they just make it obvious that I am an outsider.
I mean, I am not trying to assimilate,
Maybe to a necessary extent.

I mean, your compliments,
They negate the linguistic gymnastics my tongue goes
through.

I mean, your compliments,
They lack understanding.

I mean, I appreciate your compliments,
But keep them to yourself, until you truly understand
what you are congratulating.

Mourning

Your presence has turned into faded memories
The laughs sound very distant.
The faded laughter and memories have pulled me into the
 dark hole,
It gets dimmer but I jump deeper.
As I keep diving deep in the hope that I will find your true
 laughter
Mourning, the abyss I have fallen into.

I engage in conversation with your grave,
I replace the dying flowers on your stone.
Yet, I refuse to acknowledge the most important death.
I have refused to let the (RIP) engraved on your grave have
 any meaning,
As I keep disturbing your gravesite
Mourning, my logic has been lost.

What could I have done to change this fate?
I was supposed to be there with you
I did not take your illness seriously
I should have prayed and fasted more intensely
I should have found the best doctors.
I should have, I should have, I should have
Mourning, I am at war with myself.

The Fairy with Mystical Wings

I want to tell you about a fairy without wings.
She's pretty beyond belief.
You probably wouldn't see her
No matter where you were.

Only a few know her.
As well as I
But beyond the mind's eye
You might see her fly.

She was as much a fairy
As the ones in the books
Though without physical wings
There are a few other things

A caring smile
And ever-changing hair
She danced about to music of the heart
Just having fun and playing her part.

She loves plants
and the sky above
She loves the stars
But she is ours.

It's in her name from birth
However, much she changes it from such.
She's a magician
Just to add that addition.

From casting spells
To talking to animals
You would think she was odd.
But that makes her a part of the squad.

She has the bite of a fairy
and the light feet of one
She's short as can be
That's one thing everyone can see.

***However much she hates it
You can see her maneuver to reach the things above
A fairy is she
Even without wings, that's something we all agree***

What Was Really Under the Mask

Italic - Issa

*There was a time a boy called you names, I stepped in.
There was a time a boy beat you, I stepped in. (Actually, I
felt lonely growing up)
you walked away and I got my butt whoop*

*There was a time after a soccer game, you blamed me for
the loss
I remember crying after the game. (There were times I didn't
feel like you cared about me)*

*I was depressed in high school
I didn't show it
I would...
I would hide it
Every day
Every night
I would be in the room crying, Why am I like this?
God why did you make me like this?
There were times I felt jealous of your life
Why can't I make friends like Bukuru?
I hated it when you would say things like I'm stupid or I'm
weird
When I did certain things that you weren't really into. I
was interested to know about you
To get to know your friends, and for you to get to know
mine.
Even though I always smiled, I was dealing with some stuff*

O little brother, how sad, selfish and cruel my youthful self
was.

I'm sorry that I turned away from you,
How did you feel when my eyes turned away from you?

No game was lost because of you. You
always amazed me with
What you could do on the field. I
remember a time I asked if I could wear a pair
Of your cleats
I expected a Like Mike supernatural experience,
The only difference is I wanted to play like you,
Is it too late to cry with you?

I'm interested in growing our friendship. *This time*
I feel more comfortable being around you
And talking to you
Nowadays, I praise you among my friends.

The day you moved
I woke up crying when I didn't see your bed in the room
So much brotherly affection was hidden,
covered under the mask we wore.

Is it too late to show you how much you mean to me,
little brother?

Green

A Green can is what I saw in the refugee camp
Eric, Issa, I,
had never seen anything like it.
As we were on our way to chase wild dogs
As we were on our way to light dry grass on fire
As we placed trash bags over our heads messin with the
African bees, stealing their honey,
Our neighbor watched us sippin on Green.
I never understood why She drank so much of it.
Every morning Green was glued to her mouth like one
who had a hard time giving up cigarettes.

One evening I collected her trash and dranked,
I took the last drop of what was left,
It tasted like nothing I had before, It was
Good
I wanted more.

It was a
Luxury to have this *Green* can
No, I'm not speaking for all of Africa, I speak for the
hands that write this and the two youngins,
Eric, Issa, who stole wild dogs' poppies feeding
them grass. It was a
Luxury to watch my neighbor sip on Green
as if they had nothing to worry about
I say Green because I did not know what
Green was until I arrived in Jacksonville, Florida.

This is Sprite, a soda.

Different Color / Same Pain

I smile and wave as I walk around the
neighborhood; I have learned that my skin is a
threat to many, so I try not to stare or point at
dogs, houses.

I smile and wave as I walk into the store
I search for ways to communicate to one that
I'm not here to steal
I smile and wave as I walk around campus
while the white men walks toward me
Is it right for me to feel like I need to prove
to you that I belong?

Most days I naturally fight with my skin,
Trying to prove to the White that
Black is educated too

Should I be feeling this way

Can I be proud to be white?

To be white means that I am proud of my history
and all the negative things that white people
have done to other races,
I don't feel like I can.

I'm very diverse in my relationships, I love
people of color. Though
I feel like at times in order to be accepted by
them I need to denounce myself as a white
person and
I need to say,
Yeah, us white people don't have any culture.
You have culture, therefore let me get around
with you so that I can be cultured
Why do I need to put down my race or my
culture in order to experience and be
appreciated by others?

Should I be feeling this way?

A Scary and Deceitful World

It is outside this window that I fight with Your *Will* and my *Flesh*.

Sometimes, I wish I could hold time as I sit quietly in the sanctuary place

where Your peace overfills me. It makes me want to go tell others about it. However, the *Enemy*,

with his troops outside these windows, waits for me, scaring me with his lies and tempting me with the beauty of this world.

Jeremiah tells me that The Most High knows the plans He has for me. However, my *flesh* sees,

likes, and takes. In other words, I believe that most of what I test outside this window is best for

me. If this were true, I would not be left empty every time I listened to my flesh. I wish I did not

have to fight this war. Good thing I don't fight it alone.

Thank you for Your Holy Spirit.

Hickory: The Rain

If I could take your pain, I would.
I really would.

I'd chase the demons from your heart.
I'd be the sunshine to clear the fog from your mind.

I'd plant seeds in your soul and watch them grow.
They'd be flowers. Violets, like the old rhyme.

And maybe, just maybe, they would be enough
to keep the darkness at bay

Even if I had to put that darkness in myself;
invite your demons over for dinner

If they needed a home, I'd give up my heart
as long as it meant you could keep your flowers.

And don't worry about me, love.
My soul is a forest, ancient and deep.

The fog would add a nice touch, don't you think,
To the old, enchanted woods?

And it will take those demons a very long time
to tear down my trees, I believe.

Perhaps they'd give up and decide
to help me water your flowers instead.

I do think we'd make good gardeners,
your old demons and I.

We'd be gentle and loving,
careful and deliberate.

And when the clouds hang overhead, and they will,
we'll thank God for the rain.

Darling, your flowers wouldn't grow
without the storms.

Your Friend

Want to be friends?
I know it's rotten work,
the hours are long
and it doesn't pay much,
but I'll do it.

And I'll rip a hole in my own chest,
worrying about you,
wanting to know what you're feeling
and you'll stay silent,
because I "wouldn't understand."

And there will be a day that
I'm sitting in the hallway
right outside your door
listening to your heavy breathing,
just to make sure you're still there.

And I know you think you're worthless,
Unlovable, hopeless, lost.
I know it hurts.
You think it's your fault.
But that's not true.

I know who you are.
I hear your cry.
I know you think I don't;
that I'm indifferent
but I'll always be here

the rainforest will thirst,
the earth will be still,
and the stars will go dark
before I give up on you.
I'll love you forever.

I'll be your friend.

Katherine Sokol

Scenes from a Breakup

I didn't know I was still going to dream about you, I can feel
your arms around me while I'm in a sleepy haze

I got used to sleeping alone between the breaks in time but
now it's a new type of aching

I love you

I've started writing again and I wish I could send you my
work, you were my favorite editor

Yet You took months to read my poetry, putting other's
needs before mine

I hate you

I've been sick every morning since you left and I don't know
when it will stop

I don't know how to eat anymore, you were the one who
checked in on it and now I don't remember

I don't hate you

We went stargazing and now I can't bear to look at the sky

I have my breakup playlist memorized

I wish I could hate you

I've locked away the photos of us trying to hide the memories from the last three and a half years

I miss you

A small part of me is glad you're surrounded by the remnants of our relationship, bound to the memories of every inch of what used to be our house

I've realized that I'll never be in our home again, even if I do it won't be ours- someday there will be someone new taking up the spaces that I left behind

I miss you

I use your parents suitcase to carry my shit and I feel like I'm bringing our baggage everywhere I go but I can't give it up

Someday I'll be able to decorate my home however I want and my belongings will eventually no longer be haunted by the memories of you

Dream Dilemma

My death is the greatest thing to happen to me. At least... that is what my dreams show me. My tales grew as big as I would have ever wanted. My family sits pretty for the first time ever since they began to receive all the money, they will ever need from the projects I put so much into. The height reached and beyond was the fame and legacy I wished to create. Sadly, it does not happen until I am gone. I do not get to enjoy the success of my creations. Get to have a part in the screen adaptation. I dreamed of that day. Along with going on one of them talk shows because of what I created. That is what I wished to achieve but everyone is in a better place because of me. Doing better without me. This situation poses an interesting ultimatum all thanks to my dreams. Each time I come to a different conclusion but each time I question whether to continue or to let my family thrive. As time rotates from bad to worse. This solution seems highly beneficial for those close to me. Might that what I bring with my absence outweigh the curse that is the guilt and depression I had cast over my closest people. Repetition is how you get better at things. But this decision gets harder with every rep I do.

Miracle

So cynical,
Why don't you call it a miracle
That you sold your look
Your look of deception
Why don't you write a book
All about misdirection
Buying your false remedies
To make up for our own insecurities
Why did you do this
How did we fall for it
You were an idol
Just look you fooled us all
Everyone up for your ride along
They were in it for the long haul
You were just so perfect
That's where we should have known that it wasn't the real
you
Taking advantage of every reject
Made us not feel so taboo
You're just a degenerate
Now you can relate
An outcast
A reject
You really feel the contrast
Oh, how you're wrecked
Just as a side effect
At least we learned a little self-respect
We are all closer together now

We found someone to get behind
Why don't you take a bow
Your performance was stellar
Just for your peace of mind
While you hide out in your storm cellar
We are together, all rallied
Everyone allied
Just to take you down
What a letdown
In a nutshell
You saved us from the bottom of the wishing well
So cynical,
Might as well call it a miracle

Prose

Closed Eyes

Close your eyes, and what do you see? Do you see color so dark it seems endless, like an abyss of shadowy emptiness? Or do you, like I, see an array of colors where light is twisting and floating around. Almost as if peering into a kaleidoscope or looking at a moving hypnotic photo or even a mandala that is constantly changing. Sometimes, I can make out images without being asleep. Perhaps I occasionally peer through the eyes of another. Where I am watching them live their everyday life, eating cereal, watching television, or even simply descending a winding staircase. Perhaps it's just my imagination running wild in its creative bursts, or I may be seeing through my own eyes from another world.

Occasionally, I see the darkness that either comfortably lulls me into a wondrous sleep or a state of uncomfortable silence, making it harder to drift away from such a reality like this. Am I crazy? Is there something wrong with me seeing such lights in the night, or is it incredibly normal? When you close your eyes, do your other senses take flight? Do you hear better? Do you understand the smells enveloping you? Do you feel the temperatures that your body has nearby?

Can you taste the mint from your toothpaste, the dryness of your teeth, or perhaps the chocolate you ate? Do you feel the floor under your feet, or the chair in which you sit, or perhaps the bed in which you may be lying? Or is it just me?

Those Days

I have a question. How do you see the world? Is it bright and colorful? Are people good? Or is it dark and dull where people endlessly fight one another? To answer my question, I had to look around. While at times, the world appears to have beautiful colors so vibrant you couldn't imagine the sky not being the beautiful baby blue speckled with clouds of white. At times it seems dull and forgotten. Where colors are faded, and endless gray clouds fill the sky it makes the air gloomy and sad. I do not enjoy days like that, as often as not, you hear nothing but negativity. I prefer those colorful days, where everyone is laughing and smiling, sharing the good things. I love hearing the good news like someone getting a new car, a wedding in the making, someone falling in love for the first time, or even getting accepted into something you worked so hard to get. I love those days when people get along, welcoming the idea that we are all different. What about you?

Pirate Girl

An Excerpt from *I'm Problematic*

I have always been obsessed with the idea of being a pirate. Those scurvy swash-bucklers traveling the high seas invited me to their world. I would adorn myself in pirate themed shirts, my favorite being a black cotton tee with SpongeBob front and center in a pirate outfit, complete with the eye-patch. I cherished a treasure chest I found at a garage sale. It was a cheap thing, made of plastic and coated in a fraying wrap that made it resemble wood. The skull had plastic ruby eyes and one of the handles was broken on the side. Despite this, I loved it. It was my personal treasure chest, a pirate's dream trophy. I filled its interior with fake coins, toy jewelry, beads from parades, and rocks that struck my eye I picked up along my adventures. My pirate's map rested in the hidden compartment at the bottom of the chest. With this, I was a pirate who had found bounty.

I was in awe the first time I went on a real pirate ship. I was at a boat show in the city with my parents and sister. When we got close to the booth and I saw what it had in store, I begged my parents to go on the ship and get a "real pirate t-shirt" from the booth. It was definitely an attraction themed for children much younger than nine-year-old me, but that didn't faze me as I greeted the pirate at the wooden plank. I pretended like I didn't know the back half of the stern was missing or that in was in the middle of a metal building and not on the ocean. I was living my dreams on this half-built wooden structure, with its fake flags that were stood straight-out, motionless, but fossilized by plastic to look wind-blown. I pretended to steer my crew towards fair maidens and kingdoms for capture at the stagnant ship's

ship's wheel. I called down to my kid sister to "swab the deck" and "man the cannons." Here, I was a pirate at last.

This fascination could have begun when I was five, I wanted a pirate themed party where my friends and I could all go dig up buried treasure. I wanted to wear a captain's hat with a feather and fight with swords. My friends, who were made up entirely of boys either my age or a little older, loved these ideas. I was so excited to live my young dream as well as please my friends that when my mom asked me if it seemed like the party was a "boy theme," I didn't understand the difference. To me, I was just like my friends. I liked to dig up treasure and get dirty on adventures. To me, I was a pirate.

As I grew older, I started to notice differences between my friends and I. We grew to have different friends, different interests, dress differently, and even use different facilities. We still loved pirates, and I too was still a scurvy dog, but I had braids while my crew had fades. I had to wear dresses to church while they wore suits. They played football at recess, and I played house. I wanted to pretend to be a mom and they wanted to be a monster in a city. I learned it was the difference between boys and girls. Some days, I found myself wishing to be like my friends - a boy.

I would sit and wonder why I wanted to be a boy, as I was taught, I was just what my Father wanted me to be - a girl. I couldn't accept this though. See, I didn't want to be a boy because I didn't feel like a girl, I wanted to be a boy because penis is power. As I grew older, I still thought I was a pirate. I would go around telling everyone that I could do anything a boy could do. I was stopped in my tracks of this when, at the age of ten, I told my babysitter this and she responded, "Girls can't pee standing up." I tried to argue with her but realized very quickly she had a point. Girls couldn't do everything a boy could, even if they believed with everything in them that they were a pirate. I couldn't do everything because I didn't have a penis. After this, I learned

very quickly my male friends who I had grown up with thinking us as equals, were indeed not. They had so much freedom when it came to just the simplest of tasks. They were expected to get muddy, have fights, and get into trouble. When I, as a girl, did that, it was unbecoming, and I was punished. I didn't feel like I should be punished, though. To me I was still an equal, even if those around me told me differently. My Father had crafted me wrongly. I did not feel power in my body. I hated that I was limited because I didn't have a penis.

I remember scowling at the representatives that would come in to talk to us about girl scouts. A pudgy woman would come in, dressed in uniform complete with the sash and hat, and talk about all the "fun" things that came with being a member of the troop. Learning "important" skills like baking cookies, riding horses, braiding hair, crafting, sewing, selling, was all promised. I would gag at this. Though I was a girl, I was still a pirate, and pirates don't sell snickerdoodles. Then a man would walk in, built like a pirate. He was strong in his arms and a beer gut was pronounced over his khaki shorts. He was a marvel of a character, and I would hang on to every word he spoke. He would bellow about mudding in ATVs, exploring caves, carving with knives, learning to tie ropes, rock climbing, camping, but would end with "where boys become men." I was so captivated with the excitement the troop leader was promising, so when he asked for any questions, I forgot who I was and flung up my hand, shouting, "Can I join?"

I was met with laughter, even from the troop leader. "Only for boys, sweetie. But you can join the Brownies."

Fuck those Brownies, I am a pirate, and fuck that troop leader for not recognizing it. I want a penis. If I had a penis, like my friends, like the boy scouts, like that troop leader, I would have been accepted with open arms. They would see me as the pirate I am, bruised with battle scars from the monkey bars and caked dirt under my nails from

burying my treasure. I could show them my treasure chest, and all the amazing things inside. I would be respected if I had a penis. I would finally be a completed pirate. As a last resort I would pray to my Father, plead him to give me a penis. I would beg to be a pirate as I saw it. Alas, it was all for naught, as I woke every morning to being a girl.

After this, I believed men always had the exciting and adventurous jobs that I couldn't have. I was a girl. My Father made me so, therefore, despite my best wishes, it was meant to be. This didn't stop me from fawning over the men that had racecars and monster trucks, as I dressed in a racing suit at every "career day" my school had. I would still go in the woods, where I could escape my Father's pressing wishes, and pretending I was hunting and fishing, just like my friends, us hiding in deer blinds dressed in camo. Men grew up to be mechanics, police, bodybuilders, chemists, brewers, and athletes. I told my parents I wanted to be a mechanic and I was told to get a real degree at a university. Girls could do these things, but she would have to prove her worth in a male-dominated industry. She would lack respect and her pay would suffer, was what I was taught. Girls were to study in college, not build a racecar. They were to sit inside and bake cookies, not split wood for the fire. Girls were to paint art, not use power tools to hang it up after. That was a man's job. That was a job for a penis. That was a job for a pirate. Well, I renounce I am a daughter, despite my Father's molding. I demand that I am a pirate at last.

Lessons from Heartbreak

I asked all the strong women in my life about how to get through bad breakups and this is what they said

Advice

- Cut your hair
- Don't cut your hair
- Whatever you do don't dye your hair
- Get a tattoo or piercing
- Meditate
- Journal
- Drink until you don't feel
- Smoke too much weed
- Listen to your body
- Cut off all contact
- Don't forget to eat
- Again, don't dye your hair
- Gorge yourself on shitty fast food
- Scream sing Taylor Swift and Phoebe Bridgers while you cry and speed down the highway with your best friend
- Whatever you do Take. Your. Meds
- Don't watch or read the news
- Be patient with yourself
- Take baths at varying temperatures, it'll help ground you
- Become comfortable with a new type of alone
- Most importantly: Let yourself feel

I was dumped. There was no warning, no change in communication; just a phone call that started with the short sentence, “I’m calling it quits, Beb.” (He had the audacity to use a nickname he’d lovingly called me all throughout our relationship.) It felt like premeditated murder and in a sense it was; it happened at exactly 2:00 AM, not a minute earlier or later, it was as though he had been waiting around the corner, a knife in his hand ready to destroy the life we had been built together over the last few years. We talked for an hour, it was mostly me yelling the word ‘Fuck’ and the sentence ‘I don’t know what to do’ over and over again hoping I wasn’t disrupting my roommate who was sleeping soundly on the other side of the apartment.

I cried the entire time. I called my parents right after and I cried. I slept maybe two hours, somehow dragged myself to my 9 am, and then spent the rest of the day hiding in my room unable to eat or sleep, just sobbing and watching *Gossip Girl*.

His mother said ‘he’s a good person, please don’t make him feel guilty.’ I wanted to scream into the phone ‘he broke my heart, I can make him feel however the fuck I want.’ But instead, I sat in silence as I felt my face get red with sadness and anger.

For some reason when people find out you’ve been broken up with, all they want to do is tell you how and when they were dumped, “my girlfriend left me in December, she cheated on me,” a tipsy freshman told me less than 24 hours after I’d been dumped (he’d been trying to flirt with me all night and thought this would somehow help?). It didn’t. “You’ll LOVE being single, after my partner left me I felt so much better.” My friend told me with tears in her eyes, I didn’t fully believe her. When people tell you about their breakups it seems like you’re expected to care and feel bad when in reality,

compassion fatigue sets in and you can barely muster up the words “I’m sorry, that must have sucked.” Even if it’s deadpan.

As I’ve navigated the newfound feelings and freedom that comes with being single I’ve been looking up ‘how to get over heartbreak’ ‘when will he start sleeping with other people’ ‘how long does it take for men to get over relationships’ ‘what are the physical side effects of breakups’ and ‘when will things get better.’ Almost all of them have contradicting answers that were either sterile statistics or blogs filled with *how I got through my breakup in six easy steps!* toxic positivity bullshit.

Instead I tried to reach out (I did my best to have a girls night in but it ended with me having to help my very intoxicated friend home from the bar; while I hate being anything beyond tipsy I still feel like I should have been the one who was horribly intoxicated; it’s selfish but it was less than 24 hours out and I was stuck herding cats.)

After making sure everyone was safe in bed I couldn’t sleep and instead stayed up late staring at the ceiling; going back through every moment of our relationship trying to find the cracks I might have missed blinded by rose-colored glasses, allowing them to ruin our foundation.

The first night we were talking he told me that he didn’t want to be the one that hurt me and I wish I had listened.

Masthead

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We would also like to thank the students we were able to publish this semester as well as all those who submitted for trusting us with their work. The submissions we receive are read anonymously by our full team before a discussion and vote. If you weren't in our pages this year, we hope you will submit in the future, and if you'd like to join the student editorial team you can take English 220 to put together the journal and learn about the wider world of publishing.

Janus is the campus literary magazine for Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Published annually in the spring semester by a team of student editors, *Janus* features the creative work of students on our campus in poetry, prose, and occasional visual art.

For our submission guidelines and access to our archives, please visit us at the website below.

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