

Fractions: Perspective in Place

by Madeleine Adams

Can you hear me?

As far back as I can recall, my opinions have not mattered. I am a female so my father has no need for me to say anything, unless he has asked me a question.

"Children are to be seen and not heard."

Sure, I am not a full adult, but I am 20 going on 21 and have more education than he ever will. I can never fix his perspective, but I can escape as much as possible. I go to few places with him and speak as little as I can. With headphones in and music to drown out the screaming, I have survived through avoidance. The moon checks on my mood, a parent I can never know. The empty sky is too full of possibilities, it frightens me. I stay in my space. Lyrics, my only comfort.

"Stop listening to that garbage."

Movies take me places where I can be the protagonist, instead of a background character.

"You're too young to watch that. No PG-13 until you're 18."

I sing as little as possible in front of people, unless I trust them. My father is tone-deaf, and my stepmother only caters to gain his favor.

"Wow, you really think you sound better than us?
You're just trying to show off a talent you don't have."

After being told for years that you sound terrible and that you shouldn't make noise, you begin to mask any emotion. Why try to connect when you are polar opposites, repelling violently? I tried for too long with nothing in return. Now I have people who listen to what they've heard. They care about what I say. You know nothing of my life. Everything you believe is a lie—one you've told yourselves, one you can no longer try to force me to see. I reject your perspective. I can find my own.

A New York State of Mind

The first time ART ever hit me was in the MoMA. It smacked me light years away.

Far from the antiquity of Southern ideals

Far from the patriarchal constraints shackled on
us from birth

Far from the confused and scared eyes

Of my stepmother and her friend who took me on this senior trip

Vincent Van Gogh warmed my soul

with nature through his eyes

stars swirl above a town solidified, his head in the clouds

Feel my sky and the pain I put into it.

"You know he was crazy, right?"

Sure, it's pretty, but the tortured artist is such a cliché."

A postcard by Yoshitomo Nara

begged me to take his sad eyes home

the green-eyed child looked resolved, calling me a
kindred spirit

See my soul and the weight of reality.

"Why would you waste your money on that?"

At least buy something meaningful or pretty."

Frieda Kahlo's portrait

Showed me my pain,

yelled at me to work for my dreams

Hear my anger and learn to fuel your own.

"She was one of THOSE, a queer.

I don't see why this place would put up stuff by
someone like that."

How could you stay the same after our presence?

How could you hold off on your dreams?

How could you be anything other than what you are?

As I stare at a collage of women giving birth

"Aren't you done yet?"

"I said I was only going to one of these stupid things!
You could at least have picked the MET, not this weird stuff."

I am reminded of reality
I can only be part of me
I cannot be what I dream

"Life is unfair."

I will never be anything but a fraction

Their eyes haunt me,
Bore into the back I turned on them.

I get back on the bus, headphones blasting,
Drowning out complaints and gossip,
Listening to those who have recovered.
The tour tape gives me facts about this city I love.
I get farther and farther from inspiration.
Miles and time stretch,

I can only think of what I could have been,
How I could be different and inspired,
And remember what those paintings said
to me.

The Truest Thing I Know

"All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know."-Hemingway

I desire to be inspired and motivated by the things around me. Whether I look at the night sky and see a poem about existentialism, listen to a new song and hear a story I could paint, or watch my favorite movie and forge a song from it; I crave to carve out a new form. Without personal muses, we can have no inspiration. I love myths, dancing, and photography. But the truest thing I know is storytelling. I love music and art and writing. All of these mediums use abstract ways of getting a lesson across to readers. I cannot put my truth into one sentence. I love and hate too much, and too deeply, to compress. I have been compressing my feelings my entire life. Now, I can try to make my experiences as clear as possible.

Truth is evident. Truth is subjective.

My perspective tells me to love as much as I can, to see the unique and praise it,

the antithesis of my family.

Truth is personalized. Truth is all about perspective.

I have decided to learn for myself what I want things to mean. I have decided to love what I can.

Truth is a lie. Truth is bold.

Sure, I may enjoy the "unconventional": anime, kpop,
French philosophy, women, men-- but it is all
I can do to see my truth.

Truth is hidden. Truths are what we believe we're told.

I do not wish to dwell in hatred and conformity. I don't want to be so full of hate. I don't want to be conventional. While I'm home, I will follow their rules, but my dress, media, attitudes, perspectives are mine and mine alone

in a place removed.

I can recognize the impossibility of my situation. I am forced to be financially dependent. I must wear clothes I hate. I am a babysitter to my siblings. I am the dishwasher. I am the cleaner. I am their Cinderella. I work in the house in exchange for food and shelter. Offered tidbits of imitated emotion. Forced feelings out of a place they were hurt in the past. My memories are hazy, some clear, some as if someone else lived them. I will daydream, look to artists for inspiration, wait for the day I can overcome and move on. The paintings speak to me every day. Reminding me of hope, resilience, and drive.

Vincent

*See how nature inspires you, plants wither and bloom.
Times are hard but surrender to your quest to happiness.*

Yoshitomo

*Hear the help of those who care.
Your reflection is a view of the past.*

Frida

*Feel your emotions and let them bloom.
Passion is not a crime, neither is patience.*