

FSH REVIEW 2022 4 and 4a

Comments to Editor:

This is an excellent poem. It tackles a difficult subject matter - racial/social injustice - from a "big mind game" perspective. The unexpectedness of this approach was really pleasurable. It is very well-written overall and confident in what it has to say and how it says it. I found it touching and surprisingly moving as well with its message of being part of the One, of the infinite. I thought it ran out of steam just slightly in the final stanza, but this is easily remedied. I definitely support publication.

Comments to Author:

I really liked this poem because it took me in an unexpected direction. When I read the first stanza (which I loved), I anticipated a "political" poem in the best sense of the word. I've read and appreciated many poems that rail against the injustices and inequities surrounding us. But I was startled into additional attention by a poem that moved from the political to the celestial in a reframing that was creative and healing. The images of connection with the "dust" of the universe, while not unique, are nevertheless beautiful. The link with ancestors and descendants is a powerful one. The concluding line conveys a sense of awe at one remove that is very pleasing. The poem in its entirety says think big, think bigger, think infinite - and this is where you will find the strength to keep breathing and claim those breaths.

I have two small suggestions. One is to remove the exclamation mark after miracle. I have always been guided by the belief that the content of the work should exclaim itself, especially in poetry. So please consider this suggestion.

My second concern had to do with the line "This does not negate." In comparison to the rest of the poem, I found this rather weak and didactic in tone (it sounds more like something we'd read in an academic article). Also, the double negative is a somewhat unappealing construction. Your point is a good one - infinity is all very well, but we still contend with daily strife and struggle - but figure out how to say this more forcefully. Maybe try framing it in the positive rather than the negative: "You are still part of/the daily struggle and grind" or some such.

I recommend accept without any further changes. The author has chosen to mostly rewrite an already excellent poem. The result is very different but very strong, even an improvement over the original. The author has a vibrant, honest voice that needs to be heard.

Comments to Author:

You've written two very different (for the most part) poems, and I liked them both - a lot. The original version is more abstract; nevertheless, I thought it contained beautiful imagery, a wonderful surprise twist, and a moving and hopeful ending. The revised version (responding to reviewer critiques) is more concrete, more personal, perhaps angrier (and justifiably so - there's a lot to push back against in "the hallowed profession"), also with some beautiful images, and an absolutely compelling final stanza. I missed the allusion to breath and breathing in the first version (a fitting nod to George Floyd and BLM) but you can squeeze everything into one poem. You stand squarely in the center of the second version, calling out the racism and injustice that have powered medicine for far too long (and society in general), but also claiming your power, your right to be where you are and to continue - to fight for justice and just to be who you are.

There is much passion, strength, and still hope in this version as well. You are a terrific writer - just keep writing!