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THE METAPHYSICAL MOSHPITS OF GENESIS OWUSU

NATHANAEL KUSANDA

Out of the darkness emerges a figure donned in a black robe. Sharply accented by the color of blood, his garments mark a prophet scarred by visions of the underworld. A single red line traces his skull, dividing his body with the natural symmetry of a roach. Is he a roach or is he a prophet?

Either way, this is the eternal struggle between Man and God as a one-man show, and as the words “LEAVING THE LIGHT” echo into the darkness, flickering strobe lights signify the elusive yet omnipresent capacities of Genesis Owusu’s antagonist. An addictive, Sisyphean bassline rises and falls relentlessly, but Owusu’s voice propulsively scales each mountain, as propulsive as one could be when channeling the words “better run, there’s a God, and he’s coming for me!”

Genesis Owusu’s STRUGGLER is post-punk Franz Kafka; “post-hip-hop” would be apt as well if hip-hop were not a medium that resists death through perpetual metamorphosis. And while Owusu takes inspiration from Samuel Beckett, he rejects the beleaguered slapstick existentialism of Waiting for Godot in favor of a more magnetic medium. He re-drapes Beckett’s ideas in the sensibilities of a Talking Heads concert, in the frenetic iconoclasm of David Byrne dancing and bellowing.

Because why can’t disillusionment be sexy, why can’t existential dread be fun? To leave the light is to reject the meta-narratives that gave our ancestors meaning, but in Owusu’s effortless capacity to energize the most euphoric bridges in the world, existential dread is made ecstatic. Coated in such sugar, the dire inevitability of leaving meaning can only be hungrily pursued by our bodies, our collective physiology.



The inexplicable undulations of a body moved by pounding music, not unlike the frantic flailing of a roach on its back, eventually melt into the sultry nihilism of See Ya There. A patient groove outlines damnation, a light guitar line swoons the audience into acquiescence to their fate, and as Owusu condemns the audience with the croon, “you’re going to hell,” the audience eagerly responds, “I’ll see you there.” Jumping turns to slow dance, I am hypnotized by his Biblicality, and dissociating for a moment leaves me astounded, as I realize that from one song to the next Owusu has oscillated so effortlessly from David Byrne to D’Angelo.

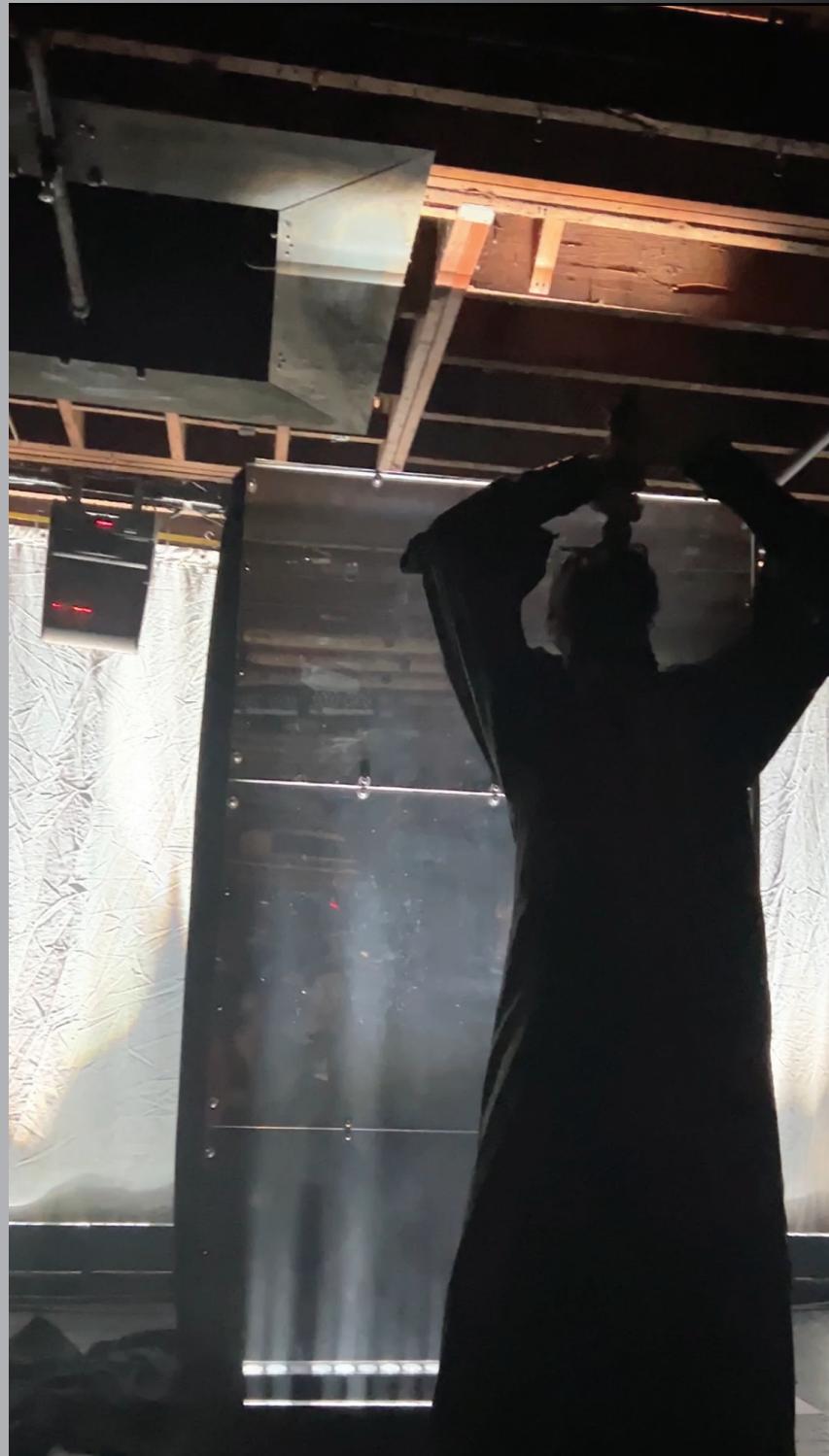
Regardless, one cannot be a nihilistic lover forever. Even after waking up as a cockroach, Gregor Samsa’s first thought is to get to his office job – capitalism has displaced God, becoming an existential pressure in itself, trapping its most exploited inhabitants in its vicious cycle. “Your master is a system!” Owusu chants in The Old Man, “Your master is a suit!”, and the roach must keep roaching. On the same song, I find myself coming back to the line “squash my leg, five more to my name!” The image is a playful exploration of Kafka’s literary vernacular, and it physicalizes the stubborn persistence of the human will. The natural circumstance of six legs, all essential yet individually disposable, commands an intrinsic, stubborn resilience against death. I bellow this line with Owusu like his legs are mine.

Referencing Beckett most explicitly, Owusu interpolates a monologue from Godot on the song Balthazar:

“In one day we go dumb, we can die, can be born, we can fly,” a roach imagines, “fall in love, waste aside, be the one, baby all in one day”. It’s a beautiful distillation of the truly limitless capacity for humans to draw their own narratives, to create their own meaning -- “and yet we choose to wait,” to seek a divine meaning that may have never been, “WHY?”

Within the chaos of the human condition is the infectious ecstasy of Tied Up!. “I can wait here for Godot,” he resolves, “or pick my legs up and move.” Owusu invokes the Biblical doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, inviting the audience to “strike a pose” before a salty God. The roach is scampering, running as he always has. But there’s a dance to his step now. And nowhere is this dance more ecstatic than in Stay Blessed: it’s the ecstasy of a roach that has found other roaches, the Sisyphean mythos of his stubborn persistence reaffirmed in each of the many other bodies in a mosh pit.

“If you kill me now, you gon deal with roach number two,” Owusu threatens fearlessly, no longer drawing on his own legs to resist the turmoil of the world. It is fitting, then, that this is the song where the line between a performer and his audience is transgressed. A roach becomes a prophet that splits the sea, bodies part to reveal a path. And as Owusu occupies the throne of a cavity on a dancefloor, bodies collapse in on him in a collective euphoria. “This world doesn’t hinge on morality,” he reveals, “You’re here, I’m here, didn’t earn this mortality.” And what better way to proselytize for the simple euphoria of creating meaning in the wake of God’s death, than the absurd transcendence of a mosh pit?



Owusu’s music is grounded in the human condition: he is the performer, and we are the audience, but that distinction is immaterial in the grand scheme of things. And as his sweat jumps off his skin onto mine, as his shoulders bump against ours, it becomes clear that while he is the one called to be our conduit, he channels our collective experience through its very center. ♦

climate changing

Navin Vanderwert
Image: Zack Fine

I can't remember the last time I went a day without thinking about the climate. Nothing in life really exists in isolation anymore, if being in the 21st century gave it the chance to do so in the first place: "timeless" is a word without meaning when it feels like nothing will last. Anyone you ask will have a different reaction to this idea. Anger, despair, ignorance, denial, trust, heartbreak, cope, or some ever-revolving selection of the above (personally, it's the latter). But it didn't always feel this way, at least for me.

For a while, I wasn't worried. At the time I would've said it was hopeful acceptance, but in hindsight maybe it was denial. There was this belief that someone had it all figured out - they would interfere, take charge and save us all because they simply had to. Who they were—or rather, who I wanted them to be—was and is a mystery. Some vague mental conglomeration of 'the government', 'scientists', 'the people in charge'; a series of words forming "the institution" that I had some complete faith in. What strikes me most about this in hindsight isn't its naivete itself, but the attitude that led me to it. It wasn't trust in the ingenuity of humanity, or the goodness, or the resilience, or any other actual trait we held. It was just a disbelief towards how severe the consequences could actually be: the scope of it all was so far-fetched that it seemed an inevitability that it wouldn't come to pass.

This held for a while, a time in which I bought into the small personal sacrifices being sold as a solution. The idea was that this would be enough to hold us over until some breakthrough came to save us and let us return to "the status quo". At this point, the problem was still framed to me as temporary - the solution would be a brief distraction until everything returned to "normal". The idea that the status quo was the problem hadn't occurred to me yet, nor had the concept that some of our climate-issues were foundational and not executional. The way our lives, cities, and societies were structured wasn't a problem, the only issue was the materials we used to get and stay there: if everything was replaced with a battery we'd be fine.

Gradually, and then all too rapidly, this faith waned. Year after year of reading doom-prophecy headlines and armchair comments sapped this away, eventually culminating in the first days and months of the pandemic. Countless stories of water systems healing, air pollution disappearing, and species returning brought hope to some, but to me - navigating the transitive moment of finishing high school in the middle of a pandemic - it was a crushing shock, sparking a sudden confusion and disillusionment that destroyed what little hope remained. Instantly, the idea that everything about us was the problem took root and I was reeling from a violent overcorrection.

The years of shifting sentiment had built up as though behind a dam, and this new viewpoint shattered it and bombarded me with their full effects. There was defeat and hatred and sadness and helplessness everywhere; in every action and thought I had visions of the fire and brimstone future promised to us by so many headlines. And given the context of the world around me it felt like we deserved it, that it was only right to bear it in full force. The climate crisis began as an absolute evil like the antagonist in a movie, something so comically bad it must fall to the story's heroes. Now that we had been clearly shown what little it would take to reverse it, the sinking realization hit that we could fuck this up easily.

For months on end, all while trapped at home, this grim fear had me in a chokehold. I was apathetic, hopeless, and full of a blind rage that got in the way of everything. I distinctly remember Bo Burnham's *Inside* marking a low point - until then, something deep inside believed that it was just me, that my feelings were entirely baseless and just some twisted reflection of a specific moment in time. But seeing the contents of my psyche laid out in musical sketch made it suddenly real, suddenly common as seemingly the entire internet revealed they were feeling the same.

Thankfully, I grew tired of this. I made a conscious effort to curate what I saw - not to avoid the facts, but to stop reactively consuming every single damning article and attention-seeking headline. Everything about the actual situation remained the same, but gradually the knot of tension and fear I carried in my heart lessened. At this point, I was the closest to a blank slate I had ever been, at least that I could remember. Concerned, worried, and stressed? Absolutely, but in measured proportion compared to the raw and overwhelming sense of grief and anger that plagued me for months.



With time, I began to take note of the positives as much as I had been the negatives for years before.

Progress was happening, things were changing, and they had been the entire time.

Maybe it wasn't the sudden relief of a world-changing invention, but the steady plod of progress was going on nonetheless.

It was boring and slow, there were no headlines and very few jumps in progress. But it was there if you just took the time to look for it. ♦

6 AM – 12 PM

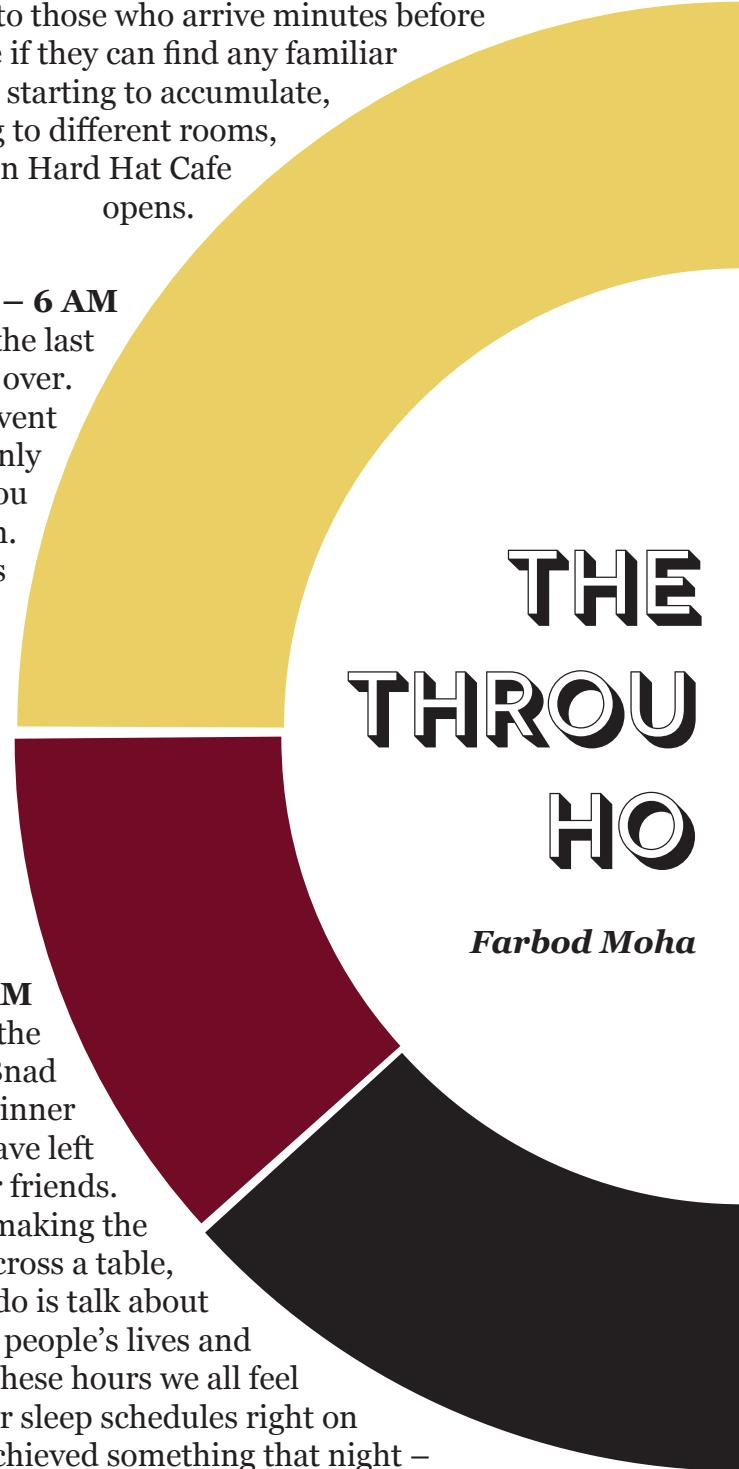
The day is now starting, and the first students are slowly rolling in. In these hours there is a certain spectrum of reasons why students are here. From those who get in early in the morning to go to the ECF, print something before an exam, and study in the pit just for those couple extra hours before their 9:00 AM exam, to those who arrive minutes before their 9:00 AM class popping into the pit to see if they can find any familiar faces. The pit is now waking up. The crowds are starting to accumulate, people finish their classes and start going to different rooms, returning to maybe have a snack right at 11 when Hard Hat Cafe opens.

3 AM – 6 AM

Still, silent, unmoving. Everyone is gone and the last of the last stragglers have made it out. The after-after-after party is over. If you've ever stayed late in the pit so long after whatever event you were attending has concluded that you are now the only person there, you will know what I'm talking about. You look around, you see nothing but traces of what has been. The stores are closed, their fences lock you out. The tables are empty. It's as if the pit is finally able to go to sleep. You might see leftover material laying about, or even a half finished build with a "THESIS PROJECT PLS DON'T TOUCH" sign on it. It is quite a chilling scene, but you don't feel bad because in just a couple hours everything will be up and running like it's supposed to.

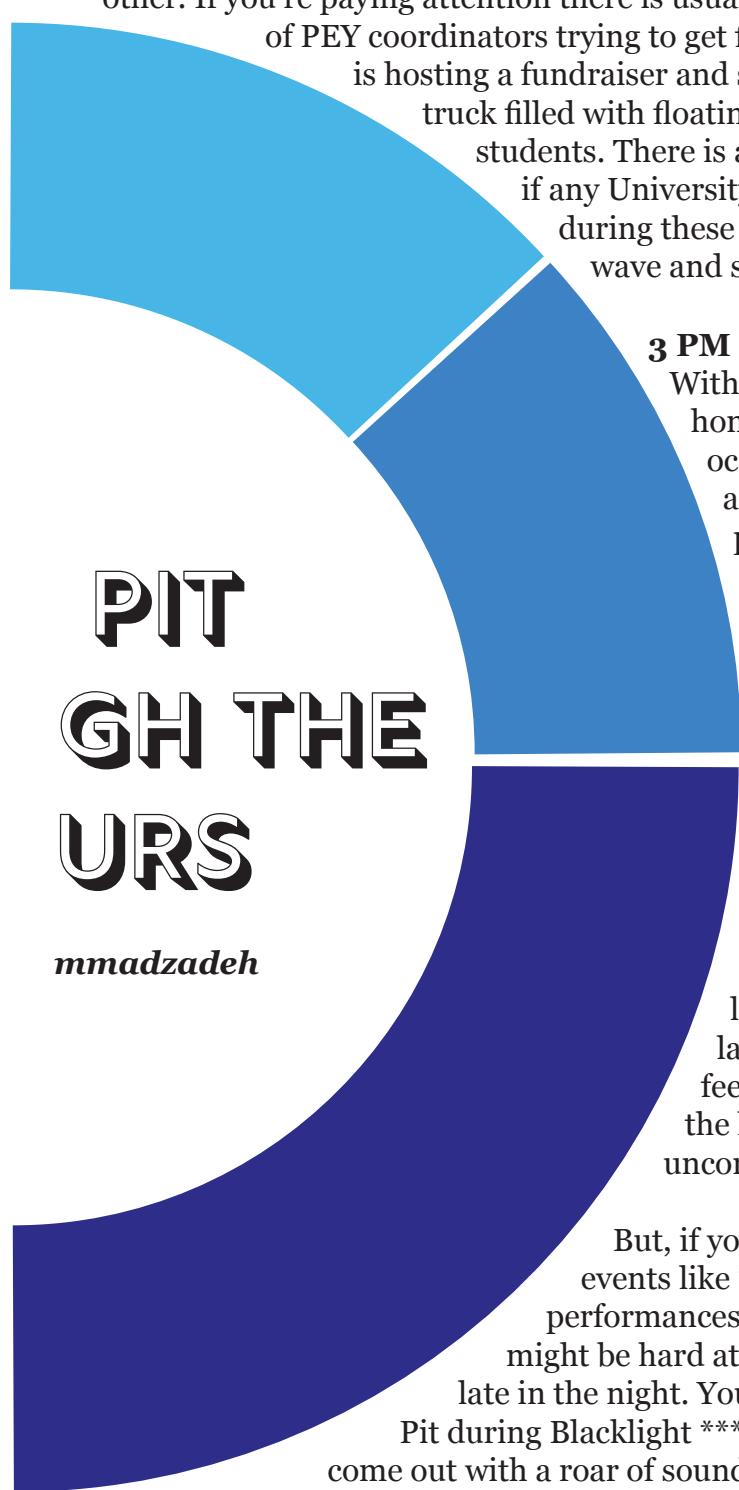
12 AM – 3 AM

Things are winding down, the builds are being deployed, the **** bar is being put away for another week, and the Brad members are returning their instruments after a long dinner dance crashing. The people are tired, and a lot of them have left already. But you're still here, and so are a bunch of your friends. You guys are really tired and just want to relax before making the journey back home. So, you sit down, maybe even lay across a table, and just stare at all the murals. At this point all you can do is talk about anything and everything. You get to learn more about people's lives and even get the chance to tell them about yours. During these hours we all feel closer: maybe it's the shared hardship and ruining of our sleep schedules right on the first week of class, or maybe it's the fact that you all achieved something that night – whether it's a large monumental build or a successful Godiva's Crown show you have all come together and made something happen. Everyone starts to slowly pack up and leave, you are on your own now. You leave to hopefully come back another day and live through it all just one more time.



**THE
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HO**

Farbod Moha



PIT IN THE WEEKS

mmadzadeh

12 PM – 3PM

It's officially lunchtime! The pit can only be described as lively. Groups of students are being let out to gather in the pit, meet up, have lunch, talk, and share what they've been up to with each other. If you're paying attention there is usually something else also going on. Maybe a booth of PEY coordinators trying to get feedback from students, maybe a student group is hosting a fundraiser and selling cookies, and maybe there is a purple food truck filled with floating hard hats selling T-shirts and other merch to students. There is almost never a dull moment. I'd like to think that if any University of Toronto engineering student walks into the pit during these hours they will have at least one person they know wave and say hello.

3 PM – 6 PM

With classes winding down and some students heading home you can now find a different group of people occupying the tables. Usually at this time most people are trying to get some work done, the pit makes a great place for some quick group work on a project or just a solitary place to put your head in a book (or most likely a laptop). By now if there are any evening events going on people would have gathered around to see what's happening, whether it be a build or a movie night.

6 PM – 12 AM

The after-school events are now in full force - things like working on a Remembrance Day build or just some lab report with your partners. The space might start to feel overwhelming and if you're staying late to do work, the lights may feel a bit harsher, chairs may feel a bit more uncomfortable, and the lack of sunlight sets in.

But, if you're not working, or better yet you're enjoying some fun events like *****, B&G builds, or the many different Godiva/Frosh week performances and activities, well then your night has just begun! You might be hard at work cutting materials for a build that won't be done till late in the night. You might be dancing with your friends in the middle of the Pit during Blacklight *****. You might even be in the Brad room, getting ready to come out with a roar of sounds to crash whatever else is going on! Regardless of who, what, and when there is going to be something in the Pit.

Growing Through a PEY Abroad

Tudor Sigmund

When you first join UofT Engineering, you ask yourself: “What in the hell is this PEY program and why don’t they just call it a co-op like Waterloo does?” To be honest, I don’t know either, but it may have something to do with how long it is.

Traditional internships, co-ops, or whatever you want to call them are usually in the 3-4 month range. Those programs are designed to offer you a short burst of what working at a company is like. They know exactly what they want you working on, how much time you have to get it done, and by the end of it, if you’re deserving of a return offer (if the industry is doing well at that time). On a completely separate train of thought, dealing with relocating and moving away for a 3-4 month period isn’t that bad. You don’t need to bring more with you than clothes to last you a week or two (laundry machines do exist, please wash your clothes, no wearing underwear forwards, backwards, in and out), and finding housing usually ends up being a Facebook Marketplace search for a sublet from another student who’s in a similar situation as you. However, with a full year internship abroad, all that kind of goes out the door.

When moving to a new city, country, or even continent for a full year your train of thought is kind of different. You know

you have to deal with finding a more permanent solution for housing in the first place, as you don’t want to be moving around every few months if you don’t have to. With that comes learning how the real estate market works in a completely different place. When’s the right time to rent an apartment? What’s the average market value of an apartment? All things you don’t really know but have to figure out.

Don’t get me started on setting up utilities and getting renters insurance. While it’s not something very complex, it doesn’t help that you’ll probably end up doing it during exam season, so the stress of exams PLUS the stress of getting everything ready for when you arrive is something that can make things quite challenging. Once all is settled and you’ve finally written your last exam (and ordered about 500+ different things on Amazon because you don’t want your future home to be empty) you’re finally ready to depart.

The worst part is always leaving, especially the first time. Your whole family comes to the airport with you to say goodbye (I understand this is probably a common experience for most students, but as a commuter student I haven’t been apart from my family for this long since... ever). Once you depart you feel a sliver of sadness knowing you’ve truly left everything behind, your friends, your family, your doggo who loves you more than anyone ever will.

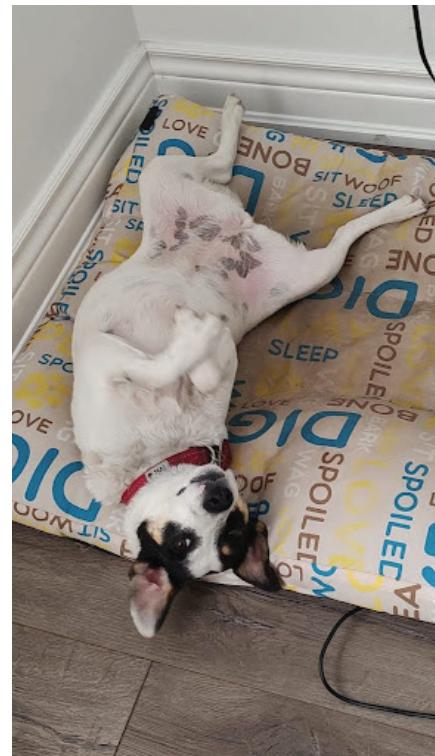
But you’re somehow hopeful and looking forward to the new adventure that this life will take you on. You feel as if you could not be taken down by anything and, that soon enough, you’ll conquer the world. However, that’s exactly when it all starts going south.

Don’t get me wrong, things weren’t that bad, but when you move to a new place things kind of feel way worse than they actually are.

Something about being alone and not having anyone you can turn to for help does not help. Anyways, VISA issues, an ER visit, a bike flat, and WiFi setup problems (I know, this one is truly the worst) are all things I encountered when I moved. While they all felt like one slap in the face after another when I thought things were going well, they did help me learn how to manage my emotions through hard times. You learn how to manage the challenges and you find strength in each hill you manage to get over. While life may have been kicking my ass, surely work was at least going well. Right? Right???

Wrong.

Don't get me wrong. I love my team. They're all great people and they do fantastic work. However, for about the first two weeks I didn't meet with my manager. That's okay, there's quite a lot of onboarding material so that kept me busy. I found myself reading from textbooks at one point so that my team could keep me busy. Soon after, the work started to slowly increase. More deadlines and more projects meant that work was finally sneaking its way down to me and I was getting the PEY experience I wanted.



Dog tax! - Juno



"When you form such a strong bond with the community around you that you consider them family, it's okay to miss them when they're gone."

Image by Carl Ancheta

Now, if you told me in second year when we first started learning about Spice simulators that I would learn how to read and write spice, I would have laughed in your face, but I guess the transient simulation that is life had other plans for me. Now I sit here, run simulations, look at their results, make changes to schematics for better performance and write Cannon articles (this is a one off, I promise I don't procrastinate at work). While I definitely admit I've learned so much from work, I think I've learned more from life outside of work.

Alright, here's the juicy bit folks. Anywhere you go, find communities you can form bonds with. Whether it be religious, extra curricular activities or whatever it is, find people YOU connect to.

For me that meant 4 things.

1

Finding a Romanian church and through that finding Romanians. This for me probably made the transition the easiest for me. It introduced me to a group of people who understood what it was like to move to a new area. Not only that, I was able to find comfort in the similar mass that I would attend with my parents back home that made it feel like home to me. I'm not saying that you need religion for this to happen. You can easily find groups of people from your community in other ways, this was just the easiest way for me to do it.

Finding a place to do physical exercise. For my whole life I've used sports to physically tire myself out (I have a "can't sit still" problem) but to also mentally reset myself. It's crazy to me how after a long tedious day, finding myself in a bad mood, how helpful sports can be. Now, my sport of choice was Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ). While I recommend BJJ to everyone, to at least try out, I understand that it's not for everyone. Regardless, the people that it introduced me to allowed me to better understand the atmosphere of where

I currently live. Not only that, it allowed me to make connections and find people my age that I got along really well with. I've also learned quite a lot about the art of extreme cuddling which I can't say has been super helpful day-to-day.

2

3

MEETING THE OTHER INTERNS!!! When moving somewhere, the other interns are going through the exact same thing. This is a group of people that you can easily turn to and makes the PEY experience much more enjoyable. Take the time to learn about them and spend time with them. Soon enough, you'll find people that aren't just your coworkers but are your friends you can go and do crazy adventurous last minute activities with.

Going to live sports. You know how everyone in Toronto says that we're so lucky to have professional sports teams from almost all big North American sports leagues? Well to be honest with you, Toronto sports are kind of overrated. Atmosphere is mid compared to what I've seen. IF THE SHARKS, THE WORST TEAM IN THE LEAGUE, HAVE A LOUDER FAN BASE THAN THE LEAFS DO THEN YOU KNOW SOMETHING MUST BE WRONG.

4

Anyways, going to live sports taught me that maybe Toronto isn't really all that (having grown up there my whole life, I knew I wanted to leave, but I needed to be convinced).

One last thing. While new communities are important, don't forget about your old ones. Understand that it's okay to miss your old communities. Whether it be your friends, family or your favorite student-run bar. It's all

part of the process and learning to allow myself to feel sad was very beneficial in my enjoyment of life.

Going abroad for PEY isn't for everyone, but if you have even a bit of interest, I highly recommend it.

What you learn from experiences such as these is knowledge you couldn't get from anywhere else. Plus the dad/mom/parent lore is insane, truly one way to impress the future generations to come. ♦

METAMORPHOSIS OF THE UNDEAD

Rauha Ahmed

Humanity has been telling stories forever, and the threads of these stories are often woven with a common motif: the unyielding determination to survive against insurmountable odds. Across cultures and epochs, we have crafted narratives of apocalyptic events, envisioning cataclysms that herald the end of the world, and within these tales lies the profound essence of our innate desire to endure, to defy extinction, and to etch stories of resilience in the face of annihilation.

In particular, stories of the Zombie Apocalypse serve as a laboratory for observing human emotion and experience. Its excess opens up a multitude of responses that don't get explored in the course of our everyday lives, although these same choices lurk underneath the surface of all of our lives. These stories make us question what it means to be truly human, often blending the lines between man and monster as both creatures struggle for the most innate characteristic of any living (or unliving) thing: survival.

The absence of conventional societal structures unravels the true extent of human depravity and the moral boundaries individuals are willing to transgress for the sake of survival. It ponders the question, who are humans really, when removed

from society?

The breakdown of social norms exposes the moral ambiguity of survival, where characters grapple with ethical dilemmas, blurring the lines between right and wrong. In a bleak world where survival necessitates morally questionable actions, the audience is challenged to confront uncomfortable truths about the human condition. The absence of law and order also leads to desperate measures, prompting individuals to discard moral inhibitions in the name of self-preservation. In this way, these stories depict a broader societal metamorphosis as the infection spreads. The collapse of civilization and the breakdown of social structures reflect a metamorphosis of the collective, illustrating how entire societies can change in the face of catastrophe.

Some narratives delve into power struggles, revealing how individuals vie for control in a lawless world. Conflicts within survivor groups are portrayed as volatile and deadly, often a bigger threat than the zombies even, which once again begs the question: When everything has gone to hell, who are the real devils, the undead or the living?

The carnage wrought by the zombies can be attributed to

whatever virus that has infected them, rendering them no more than mindless animals, but what can possibly excuse the acts of violence committed by the human beings, who make the choice to hurt, maim, and kill, causing more damage than the supposed greatest threat to humanity?

Nonetheless, these stories also reinforce our sense of empathy. At their core, they are about human beings, scared and confused, trying to protect themselves and their loved ones against creatures that already might include some of said loved ones. They are about how people who are sick, disabled, or elderly need the most help, set in a universe where every cruelty of the world is magnified so that not only will an act of callousness likely get someone killed, but their ravenous corpse might just make you pay for it. They're about recognizing our common humanity, when there is nothing else left, transgressing all social boundaries.

Most of all, they are about that enduring impulse that propels us to seek survival against the backdrop of imminent doom. ♦

Everybody Deserves to Embody Themselves Truly

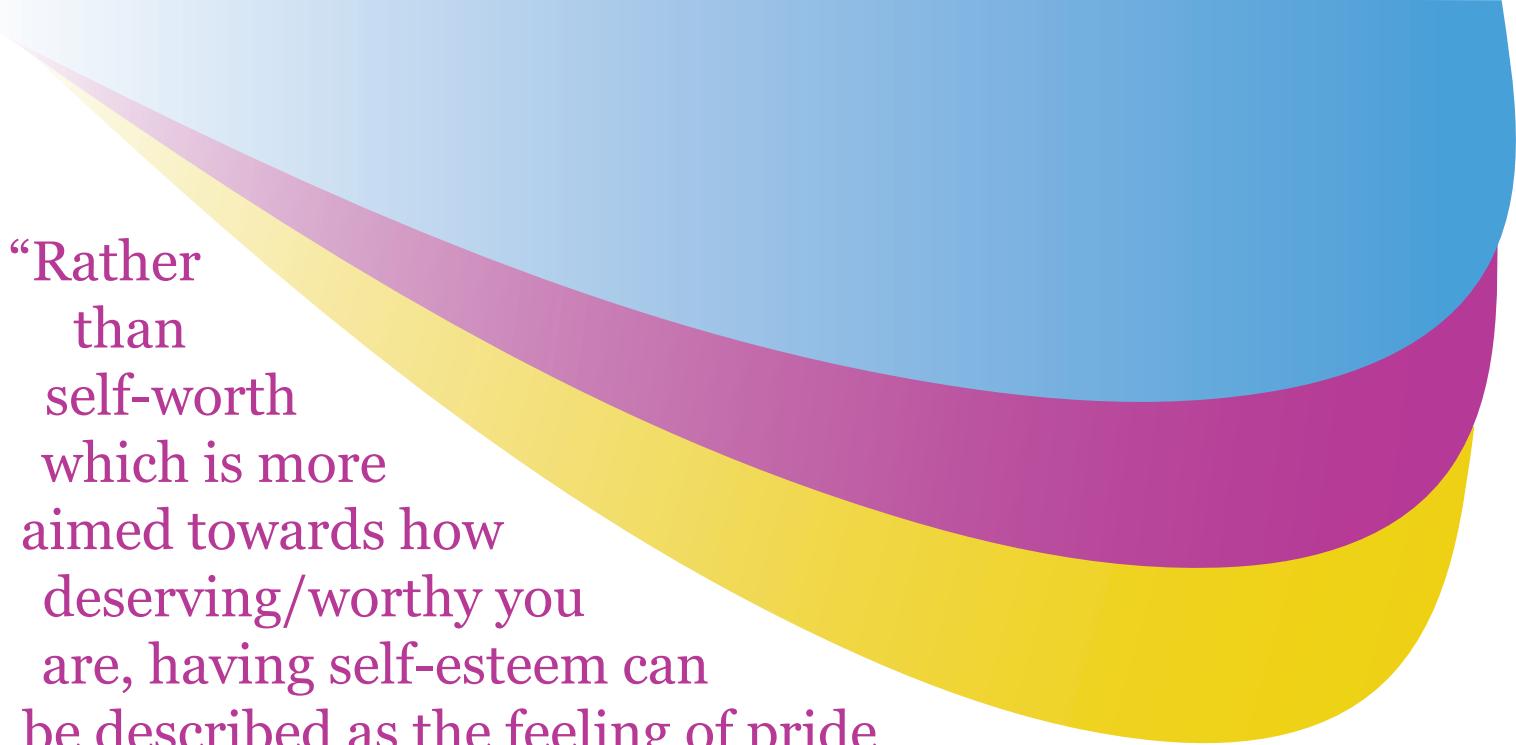
Johnny McRae

While the concept of “being yourself” is not new, it seems to be at its height of promotion in modern culture. And as important as the notion is, the journey is relatively unmapped and unexplained for those raring. The steps to identity are not universally understood, reasonably so, considering they are not constant across all persons. Spaces where people feel comfortable embarking on the said journey are critical, and sources of support are growing in regularity. Nonetheless, self-identity, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-actualization are guided by complex directions with hardly stationary destinations.

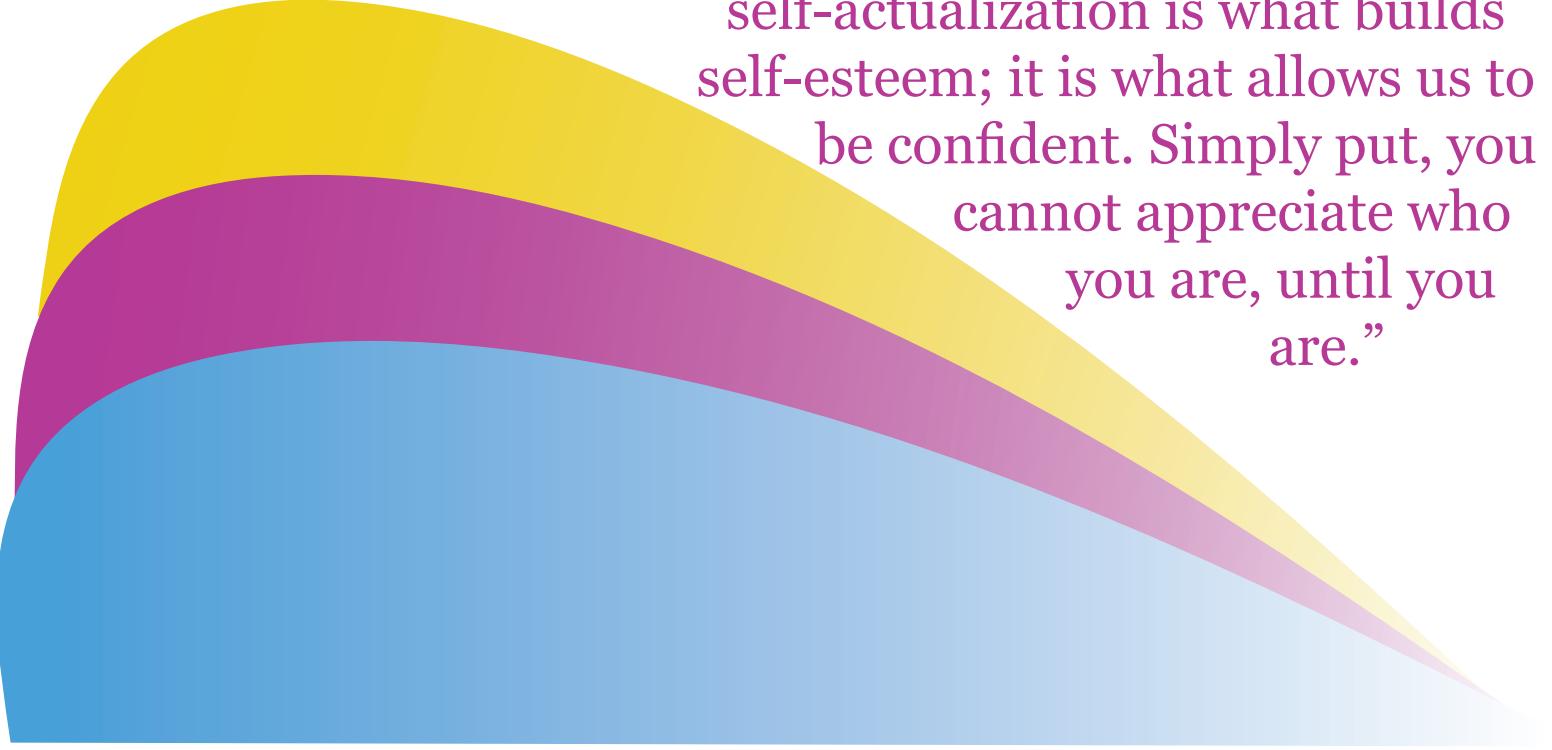
The concepts around self-identity can overlap and take on varying meanings depending on context. For consistency, it will be important to outline three of them now. Firstly, self-esteem. Self-esteem can be explained to be the appreciation and value that someone appoints their own qualities and characteristics. Rather than self-worth which is more aimed towards how deserving/worthy you are, having self-esteem can be described as the feeling of pride regarding your own qualities. Self-confidence is similar, although it is closer to evaluating our own capabilities. The feeling of self-confidence is closely related to the feeling

of being in control of your own life. Lastly, self-actualization is expressed as the point where self-esteem, self-confidence and self-identity meet. Self-actualization is the fulfillment of one’s capabilities, and with regards to identity, it is generalized to be when someone is unapologetically themselves.

Shifting to a slightly more rigorous path of thought, the introduction of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Abraham Maslow was a 20th-century psychologist in America, and his infamous Hierarchy of Needs outlines the priority in which people pursue goals. The pyramid begins with physiological,



“Rather than self-worth which is more aimed towards how deserving/worthy you are, having self-esteem can be described as the feeling of pride regarding your own qualities.”



“It is a process, and the pursuit of self-actualization is what builds self-esteem; it is what allows us to be confident. Simply put, you cannot appreciate who you are, until you are.”

safety, and social needs. The pyramid's tiers must be accomplished sequentially; for example, before someone seeks out their social needs like love and belonging, they must first achieve physiological needs like food and shelter. The two final tiers of the pyramid are self-esteem and self-actualization. Therefore, according to Maslow, a person must first achieve self-esteem before they achieve self-actualization. This makes sense because if self-esteem is understanding and valuing your characteristics and self-actualization is broadcasting those characteristics without shame, then it is inescapable that you must appreciate yourself before you proudly emit your identity in its entirety.

These principles may seem obvious or intuitive, but they hardly work out that way in practice. Repression of our

true self is one of the most common injustices. If something is popular, we feel pressured to claim it; if something is less popular, it is vital that we denounce it. Unfortunately, the experience of hiding interests and qualities is hardly unique, and to quickly reference the hierarchy once more, this follows the achievement of belonging (social needs) preceding self-esteem. Yet, even with all of the explanation and rhetoric, a starting point seems unclear. So, where do we begin?

The common misunderstanding of self-actualization is that you think you know it when you see it. All the time, you see people with utterly bizarre interests or characteristics that they seem to be parading without a care in the world, and what is always the deduction made? “That person must be so confident.” We assume they are exhibiting self-

actualization and have mastered self-esteem and self-confidence; however, self-actualization is not a moment. It is a process, and the pursuit of self-actualization is what builds self-esteem; it is what allows us to be confident. Simply put, you cannot appreciate who you are, until you are.

The steps. How does this help to give people a starting point? As difficult as it is, you must accept that you don't know how people will respond and yet still portray yourself honestly. You may not think others will agree that something you like is cool, but the only way you'll find the people who do is if you show them. Accept that your qualities may not be the most popular, but they are you, and the privilege of exhibiting your own identity far exceeds the fragile reward of external validation. Remember, everything is weird until it's cool. ♦

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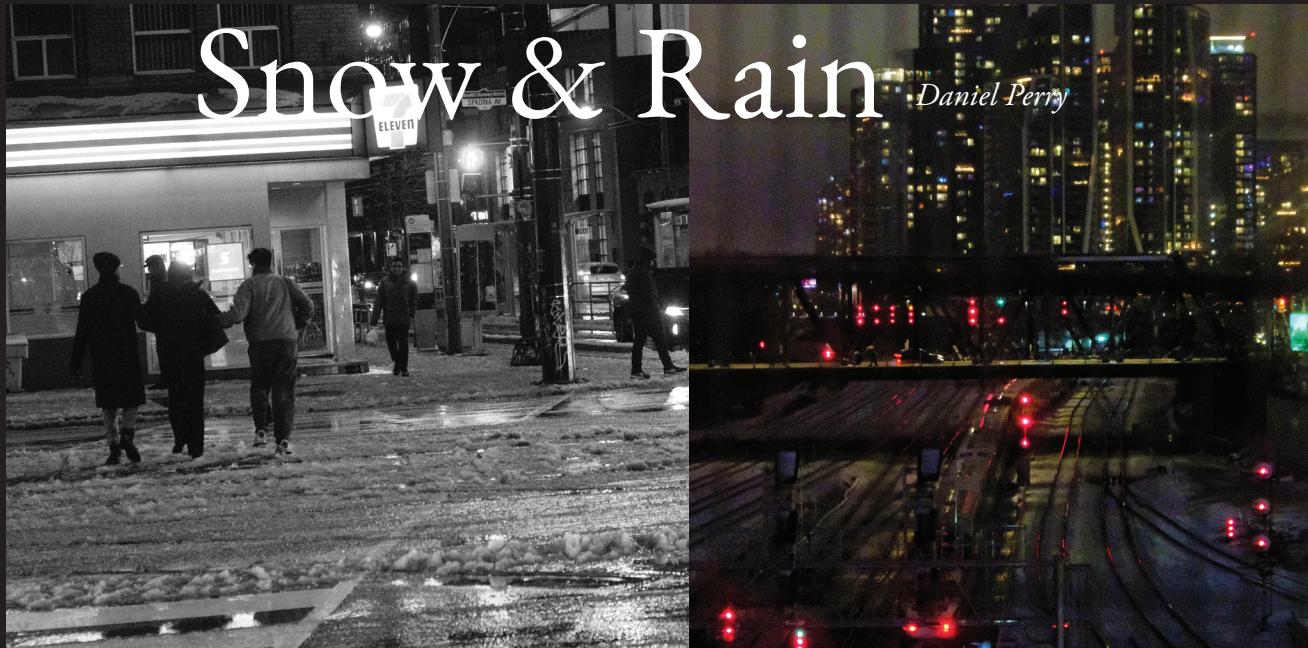
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