

What made you choose this piece for Pulp?

I have been published in Pulp before and wanted to submit something bigger and better. I wrote this short story for my Advanced Fiction Workshop course and it came out as something that challenged me. It was also a story with themes and references I wanted to share with a wider audience than with just those in my class, so it was the piece I decided to submit.

Is there anything in particular that you're proud of about this piece, or that you learned while creating it?

This ended up being the longest short story I've written. The original was slightly longer and I had to cut it down for Pulp. I'm proud of the fact that I have a cohesive story at this length. It is detailed yet consistent and efficient, which I impressed myself with.

Where did your inspiration for this piece come from? What is the piece's "story"?

I wanted to write something that took place in a museum. I went through a few plot ideas before coming up with something that was inspired by research on Filipino artefacts. I found an image of a burial jar called The Manunggul Jar, which's lid features a sculpture of two figures in a boat. The jar and its figures referenced how some Filipino legends featured souls travelling to the next life via boats through seas and rivers. That sparked the beginnings of Mika's story, where she is transported to an ocean-filled afterlife to rescue a lost soul.

What messages/themes do you want viewers to pull from this piece?

I really leaned into the themes relating to fears of darkness, relating to the uncertainty of liminal spaces, the vast ocean, and death. Mika displays fears she associates with the dark and the unknown. Facing those fears and becoming comfortable is a message there. I wanted to mix all that with the themes of connecting to your heritage and culture. Pieces of me always end up in my protagonists and Mika is also half Filipina, so showing those themes became important as well.

"The Burial Jar" is full of references to Filipino culture, such as the inclusion of arnis sticks and the Tagalog language. Can you share why you chose to focus on Filipino culture specifically—is there any personal relevance there?

I'm half Filipina. My mom and some of her family came from The Philippines to Canada. That heritage is a big part of me, but being mixed comes with feeling like you don't truly fit in. I was not taught how to speak Tagalog or Ilocano growing up, which made those feelings more difficult. I had a hard time connecting with other Filipino people I met, and I still do. I can't count the amount of times where I'm with my mom somewhere and she runs into another Filipino person, and they are interested in me cause I'm half white but they try to speak to me and I don't understand. They shut me down and I felt ashamed. Writing about

that aspect of me and integrating aspects of Filipino culture has become a way for me to further connect with that side. It helps to remind me that I should not feel ashamed or that I'm not enough because I'm mixed. It allows me to explore that aspect of myself while endlessly learning about my culture. It is part of what makes me unique and what makes my writing so personal.

Your use of Filipino culture and traditional afterlife concepts is very detailed and shows a deep knowledge and understanding of these topics. Did you need to complete any research to round out their portrayal in this story? If so, what did that research process look like?

Yes, and it consisted of a lot of Googling and reading. That is usually how it goes for me. My Filipino family was hit by the colonial Christianity that came with Spanish colonisation way back, so I was never told of any traditional legends or beliefs. I had to learn that aspect of culture on my own. I love reading about Filipino myths so much.

In "The Burial Jar," your vivid descriptions of the souls Mika encounters are first unsettling and corpse-like until the end of the story, when she grows closer to the girl who called to her from the jar. Is there any metaphorical significance to this change that you'd like to comment on?

It is natural for humans to feel fear of death. Like previously mentioned, one of the big themes of this story is fears like that, for the unknown. Becoming comfortable with something as significant and terrifying as death is a tough thing, but showing steps to become comfortable with it is important to learn. Mika becomes comfortable with an aspect of it by being with the girl.

How long have you been creative?

As long as I can remember. When I was little my mom put me in art and pottery classes for pre-K kids at our local community centre. Ever since then I was into the arts. I continued that with my love for drawing and painting. Into high school, I felt like I was not good enough with fine art. At 15, I started gravitating towards writing and I felt like I finally found something I was good at. I abandoned my sketchbooks and began writing short stories. I dabbled in poetry and read at school events. I took literature electives and got into the theatre directing/scriptwriting class. My friends said I was good at writing and I realised what I was meant to pursue. Now here I am, so close to being done at KPU with a Creative Writing degree. I am currently putting a strong focus on my poetry, but I will always return to my roots of short stories.

What does your creative process or practice usually look like? In what ways has it changed during your artistic journey?

Any idea I get, I have to write it down or it will leave my brain so fast. I have a pocket sized notebook where I dump poetry lines/stanzas and short story ideas. And then when I'm in the mood to fully create something I will sit down and try to get a draft out. I find myself better at writing under pressure sometimes, like for when I have assignments due. But other times I will get a random burst of energy to write and create. For me it really fluctuates, where I go days/weeks/months without writing or I spend so much time on it. I still have a rough relationship with my own creative process, but I'm getting better with working with it for my favour.

What sorts of things inspire you?

The world around me and the experiences I have. The people in my life. The shows/movies I watch. The video games I play. The music I listen to. The adventures I have, real and fictional. How all of that makes me feel. It all makes its way into my work one way or another. I guess I could say that my style of being human is what inspires me.

Have you ever been published before/where can we find your work?

I have been in two Pulp issues before, Summer 2022 and Summer 2023. And I will be in my first poetry anthology to support the Delta Literary Arts Society and their upcoming COMPOSED Festival of Poetry and Writing. Keep an eye out for that!

Do you plan on continuing your creative pursuits into the future? If so, what does the next project look like for you?

Absolutely. It is what I want for a career and I plan to begin building it pretty soon. As for the next project, I am working on my first full length poetry collection. Its themes are similar to some found in "The Burial Jar" so I hope to get it published somewhere. If a publisher accepts it, then that will be a big goal of mine achieved.