

I hate crying

By Zeytin Ercan

I hate crying.
The infuriating sensation of
Acid tears
Burning the skin off my red-hot cheeks.
Liquid emotion
oozing out of bloodshot eyes.

I hate how my face melts
And contorts into someone I don't know.
A mess of mucus and
Puffy eyes
And soaked cheeks.

I hate how often I cry.
As if the switch in my brain controlling my tears
Was taken over by weeds and moss.

I hate that sometimes,
the only way I can breathe is when I'm crying
Why does oxygen enter my lungs clearer
Through choked up sobs?

I hate that when I cry,
That eternal jumble of sounds and songs blasting in my mind
Suddenly decides to silence itself
So I can hear my own pathetic cries
To a ghost
Loud and clear.
The silence is deafening.

I hate that all I can remember when I cry
Is my mother
And her arms,
And her smile,
And sometimes, when I try hard enough
I can remember
Her voice
Hushing her baby's cries.

Intention statement:

"I hate crying" is a free verse poem about vulnerability, and the difficulty of allowing yourself to express your emotions free of self-loathing. The speaker in this poem is close to me, as someone who frequently cries, and is insecure about fully expressing themselves. Additionally the speaker in my poem has lost their mother, a choice I made because it related to my own experiences, but also because mothers are a common symbol of comfort and safety in literature, so by mentioning the speaker's mother at the end of the poem, I aimed to create an emotional sense of bittersweet closure for the audience. In the first stanza, I use metaphors such as "acid tears" and "liquid emotion" to emphasize the disgust the speaker feels towards themselves when crying. As the poem goes on, the stanzas detailing the speaker's insecurities about vulnerability become more and more internal and personal. I purposefully structured the stanzas this way to create a build-up to the climactic line, "the silence is deafening" only to be stopped by the final stanza about the speaker's mother, which is arguably the most personal, yet least aggressive part of the poem, showing a sharp change in tone. Ultimately, the pattern of repetition through the phrase "I hate..." at the beginning of each stanza helps solidify the speaker's deep feelings of shame and embarrassment in their own emotions and expression of them. I organized the poem so that the stanzas would gradually become more personal and internal to the speaker, with each stanza representing a different sense/area of insecurity for the speaker when crying. In general terms, the first stanza represents touch, then sight, then time, then breath, then sound, then memories. Through doing this, I hoped to further capture the extent to which the speaker's anger and shame extend. During peer review, my readers enjoyed the thematic choice to create a sense of disgust in the metaphors and overall word-choice, especially in lines like, "Liquid emotion oozing out of bloodshot eyes." and "Why does oxygen enter my lungs clearer through choked up sobs?" but suggested that I switch up my lineation to have every stanza begin with a different "I hate..." line. I mentioned wanting to change the poem's title, but my readers actually really liked the current title, saying that it helped set the scene with the repeated line. I was particularly inspired by Rudy Francisco, specifically his poem, "If I were a Love Poet" in the way he utilizes repetition to create tension and buildup that is released by the end. I wanted to emulate this style in my work because I noticed a similarity in themes between the type of poem I wanted to write and "If I were a Love Poet", as both are in the perspective of a somewhat helpless speaker who is afraid of being vulnerable with their emotions.