

Stacy Mursten

Retail Hell

Instantly assaulted by sound so large,  
The electronic static vibrations  
Rattling the clothes on hangers  
Hung from metal bars,  
Like that of a prison,  
Burning in eternal flame  
Overbearing,  
Like the tyrannical lighting  
That sees every inch of me,  
Everything I strive to conceal  
Under layers of makeup,  
Like war paint.  
And I remember when  
This activity of overeager consumerism  
Was actually fun.  
Three prepubescent girls rush past me,  
Each wearing different colored crop tops  
Sporting different slogans,  
YOLO,  
Eye Candy,  
Drop Out.  
And these are the words  
That youth identifies with,  
And a red-faced demon,  
With deep-set creases,  
Much too old,  
Who does not appear to be  
*Anyone's* dad,  
Passes them by

Eyeing them wistfully,  
Like a vulture circling carrion.  
I see his illness from afar.  
And no one knows  
What's age appropriate anymore.  
Am I too old  
For the Hello Kitty crop top?  
Is neon too flashy?  
Is everyone fifteen?  
Is that why nothing fits?  
Is this a shirt or a skirt?  
Forever 21.  
I feel older every day.

## Holographic Girl

How can you see the world  
That's constantly flitting past you  
With your blue eyes perpetually cast downward,  
And your face is always illuminated  
By the iridescent glow of technology  
Surrounding your head like a halo?  
And you're so lit up  
But I can't even see you.  
And your eyes, when I see them,  
Aren't dilated but pixilated,  
Completely comprised of  
Moving pictures,  
Ideas,  
People who aren't real,  
And none of them know you,  
Or care,  
Or ever will.  
With your blue eyes perpetually cast downward  
Upon this window to somewhere else,  
Do you ever fear  
That you're missing the point?  
That you're missing out  
On the real world,  
On the people who want to know you  
On human connection?  
Could you please awaken  
And live in this realm of reality?  
There is so much for you  
Here.

## Collapse

I come out here and unravel  
Blowing out my worries  
In wispy strands of smoke  
That waver up into the treetops  
And hover for a moment  
Before disappearing into nothing  
And in my altered state  
Among the birds and mud and grass,  
I imagine things being different --  
That every fiber of the human race  
Became contorted into something  
Else.

I envision the gray and twisted corpses  
Reanimating back to life,  
Like in those scary movies  
Society obsesses over.

And just maybe this preoccupation  
With a concept derived from horror  
Stems from a deep longing  
That perhaps we all share  
But remain unaware  
Of, things and values to change.  
For whether we realize it or not  
The world is truly  
In a state of collapse.  
And just maybe  
We all long for  
Those lost abandoned things that truly matter  
Survival, family, love --  
To take precedent over  
All the mess and filler  
We stuff our lives with,  
Like the products we consume  
That eventually make us sick.  
For when survival is assumed  
We lose sight of what's important.

In my short time away  
Among the birds and mud and grass  
I wish not to return  
But stay among the wild  
And actually know my place,  
Where I'm free and very simple  
And priorities no longer hang  
Askew