

Omnimortal

You are only human,
and often you despise the necessity
of that third word. As though
your stuttering heartbeat and clumsy, fumbling fingers
could not set the city alight. As though
a creature descended from nebulae
a being capable of art, a soul built to feel
could be anything other than extraordinary. As though
there was any meaning in immortal life anyway,
You fragile, fragile human.

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Poet's Exegesis

The use of the phrase “only human” is quite ubiquitous, as is its accompany connotation of being merely human. We see it employed in many different fields—from popular culture, to philosophy, to science. This poem explores humanity as something of an evolutionary miracle, and human nature as something powerful and extraordinary (rather than as an inherent flaw we have to overcome). To an extent, the poem is also a reflection of personal agnostic and existentialist beliefs: if we cannot know with certainty of things existing outside of our own humanity (e.g. reincarnation, heaven/hell), then we can only be guaranteed this lifetime to seek fulfilment and make meaning out of our lives. This piece seeks to evoke in readers the conscious knowing that each of us is vulnerable and perishable, but that is also a part of what gives human life its value.

Biography

Ng Hai Ning is a first-year junior college student who enjoys reading and writing, largely for leisure. She views literature as a way to connect with the human condition and to global affairs, both of which she is curious about.