

Major work word count: 2922

Candidate number: 37572659

‘The Best of the Worst, The Worst of the Best’

Harry Potter

'Forced to comply to the corrupt ministries that restrict you'

With a harried nudge you are introduced.

Glistening like a mirror ball, we commiserate you.

Learn the rules, be a good child. Once individual, now you're induced.

The product of your parents' mistakes, mere collateral.

Tiny, dispossessed fragility dangling in public view.

Their eyes follow you obsessed with such unnatural.

Your pictures: quickly hung on another crowded wall.

Inside a haunted castle with a picket fence.

Ceremony, at this point: only fantasy would see you through fall.

Only ever pulled out on a momentous night,

Your mother can't enter the castle,

Your father can't see your sight.

Never allowed to show your magic to the real world, not a single photo.

Packed away until the next move.

Your perceptions of muggles and reality are permanently in vertigo.

Your identity carefully packed in a chattel under the staircase.

Silently, it waits for the next retrieval and promise of a place.

A forbidden yearning for home beneath placid, abiding face.

Mother. Father. Memory of family suffocates you in its embrace.

Oliver Twist

'Running and retaliating against the powers you didn't know were suppressing you'

"...a lack of focus during school activities..."

If the indentation was removed and your blueprint redone,

Would you be the teacher's best worker?

Would you be the one to confront?

Those puppets:

the marionettes of the classroom, who nod and smile and move aside
for "the new girl"

are eternal fascination to you.

Pigtails, perfectly parted

Neatly sliced sandwiches and apples and name-brand lunchboxes

As intriguing as sleight-of-hand magic, a fever dream

For your own soul: starved of affection.

And so, you stare

As this foreign theatre takes place.

"...struggles to maintain friendships..."

But the fascination is mutual: for you are an anomaly to them too

A timid creature of unknown origin, a by-product of evolutionary failure

Their stares arise not from curiosity, but from pity

Their speech gilded with apology, though they do not understand what for.

It is hard to be an attraction. A curiosity. An oddity.

For so long you have remained in your exhibit and complied

"...uncooperative, at times..."

It is only natural, then

That when they begin to pry, you grow your own claws.

Their questions, innocuous
Are aimed with bulls-eye precision
They want your flesh. Your truth.
From behind an impenetrable shield of handball and hopscotch

It was only one time.

Your incessant need for control overpowers,
Your abundant kindness we teach you is momentarily lost.
You need that toy.
You need that snack.
You reverberate your demands.
With your wellbeing in conscious remark, we refuse.
Humility, health and habitual wealth, I watch her attempt to persuade you.
But you can't control yourself.

"...incident..."

Unbuckle your seatbelt and smash the tangibles.
Your triumphant roars shall ring out across the house,
Try and make yourself,
heard.
Well, your eyes.
Slam the door.

For once be anything
Be anything but
the "new girl"
the "out of control"
the "poor dear"

Even your outcry, though,
will be met with open pity
Even in rage and retribution mortality eludes you

With beams that cannot hold your strength,
What makes you come to school and tears run dry?
What makes you return home and not comply to the forces that help you?

“...she is uncontained, she keeps on running away....”

Like a prison breaking chain, the open road declares itself open,
arms in wide embrace calling you.
The echoes of your teachers fading into the distance.
Why stop now you have escaped the tempest. Unshackled. Set free.

The streets are alive, a cacophony of voices. They whisper tales of an emancipated youth.
You follow the voices. Running. Longing.

Each footfall a silent plea; a fleeting silhouette too quick for the bigger people.
Your escalating heartbeat flourishes into a quickened beat, a drum of defiance, a rhythm of
misunderstanding.
Like Oliver. Lost.
Lost in the want.
Want to be loved,
Want to be seen,
Want to be with mummy,
Want to have the branded backpacks.

Until you are caught; finally.
Teachers cheer, your classmates stare, parents sigh.
Yet you still yearn for your freedom.
Consumed by burning redness,
you wallow once again with triumphant cries.
Maybe in some masochistic way,
you find it exciting.
They whisk you back home before you can run away again.

“...support for her unique situation...”

Perhaps with the pills they espouse, you would be alleviated.

Living in eternal sunshine, liberated.

But the fear of normality is too terrifying.

You generate names for the pills,

ones with obscurity,

fantasy,

taking the edge off.

You will not let them overcome your resolve.

Solace concerns.

You are a master of leapfrog, but not the playground kind:

between appointments you bounce, face irritatingly calm

As they compete to fix you with flashcards,

They claim they can.

Mend a broken child with expired glue?

But does the glue have the power to control your defiant roars and uncontrollable protests,

We don't know,

I don't know,

but the attempts continue to try and subdue.

Your sunshine is dulled every time you cry super cedes the help of the divine.

I try and intervene, yet I am told the responsibility is not mine.

Running away from school,

one foot after the other,

maybe if it was different you could live in eternal sunshine.

Annie

'Living under oppressive disguises makes you hope for the better'

In golden halls where your dreams reside
Your hope in youthful eyes does gleam.
Yet shadows lurk where both love and cruelty hide,
A fragile heart caught in a jagged and taunting seam.

In this home you are forced to stay,
We drop you off to a smile so seemingly warm.
Yet tender care is matted and tangled in disarray,
of discombobulating institutions that betray the norm.

The sun will come out tomorrow, they say.
But your nights they are long, the days are fraught.
You don't vocalise your truth until they say,
"She shouldn't be doing that", she's caught.

Each phone call I bystand, I mask a string of dread.
How quickly a gentle hand can switch to harsh control.
In that house, your heart is led,
By love that can wound but also console.

Her licence is lost, a moment of liberating peace.
No longer do we indulge her charade.
At last, your whispered harms release,
Finally, no longer can her touch harm or aid.

Yet whispers all around soon conspire,
Her reinstatement sparks a bright display.
With accolades that do not tire,
My compass of morality throttled an award for service marks our dismay.

The community applauds but does justice find its mark?

Or blur the lines of love and harm intertwined?

Can one who heals yet leaves a lasting dent of dark,

Be seen through lenses of a kinder mind?

Seeking affection within a day enshrouded of dimmed sunlight,

Can systems blind themselves to what they hold?

The questions linger, veiled in shaded sight,

Where truths and morals silently withhold.

Cinderella

'Kept away from the ball like a hidden treasure by those you loved most'

When the clock strikes 12; when you blowout those 12 candles
When the glass slipper slides off,
when concealer comes to mask the ambiguous signs of adolescence on your face,
I will think back to the jumping rope I untangled for you.
You whisper playfully, "look what I got from mummy",
under the impression your youth is emancipated.
My heart aches for you.

In the glow of the ball, your giggle is the music that guides you,
your steps synchronised,
a waltz of syncopated heartbeats.
Together, you weave moments into a tapestry of unity
Each thread chants innuendos of love,
each intricate pattern a testament.
You are one in the ephemeral waltz.

You are whisked away and transported in pumpkin carriages,
time escapes from you.
You touch your hand to the window as the glowing hue of her silhouette diminishes.
The bewildering fantasy of the ball continues to fade,
yet your spirit remains untouched.
My heart aches for you.

He parades around door to door,
his confidence arising from his potion of magic 'charm'.
He cluelessly tries to mould the shoe to many a foot,
many a princess.
Yet nothing ever fits, nothing extricates the pain of the potion or the cough of soot.
You sit and wait for his arrival with eager patience,
justifying his increasing absence.

You sign the card garnishing a small heart above the 'I'. Beaming.
You interrogate the commencement of the next ball,
replaced with the dim lights of reality.
We search for more frivolous celebrations,
Measuring your waist for adornment of mesmerising fabrics.
Searching for a string of effervescent pearls that compliment your look of anticipation,
Every necklace you shall have.
Every extravagant hairdo.
Every beautiful ball gown.
Every illustrious carriage.
Subliminal happiness, at the fingertips of your demands.

Yet these magical nights expire,
the chasm and silence grow,
yet you remain.
I fear you will understand soon.

Signatures are then embedded into chestnut soaked scrolls,
pertaining your fate.
Fate and fortune,
fate and fortuitous love.
Where will you end up?
It is unknown to you.

You are stolen,
whisked away and transported in a rusted cage,
time moving as if wading through molasses.
You touch your hand to the sharp edges of the cage,
as the house recedes diminishingly in the distance.
The memory of the flawless and demure ball is untouchable,
You are untouchable by anyone in this cage.
Unattainable.
Insurmountable.

You remain,
apprehended in a dungeon deep,
where shadows act as dancing figures to rhythmically remind you of your burning lightness.
Familiar memories are shrouded in a haze of doubt.
Who decided this?
Do they know the comforting grasp of your smile?

You wish upon a star that your prince charming will come rescue you from the advancing
walls that taunt you.
You see him mounted on a white stallion; his sword embellished 'dad'.

The hours sprint by with agonizing slowness,
as you try to make sense of this desolate existence.
The echoes of your screams are muffled by stone,
but no one comes.
The prince never comes,
his stallion wounded; his power lessened.
His sword now adorned with the rust of time,
but no battles fought.

My mind is a maelstrom of conflicting emotions,
and a creeping sense of unease that seeps into every shut eye.
The circulating guilt spins in a vortex.
I conjure idealistic dreams for you,
a sanctuary where worries are intricately folded into delicate paper cranes,
and take flight and transcend complacent stress that plagues your young heart.
I yearn to amplify your voice,
but separated by walls I am insufficient to heal your deepening wounds.
Yet I will continue to validate your existence,
allowing the dancing shadows that move for you to narrate your burning lightness to the rest
of the kingdom.
The shadows on my own wall are still,
the dance concluded.

Your unsettling sequence of roars is abrupt,
They respond with equal pours of flowing anger,
Forcing you to consume a potion that shimmers with a disturbed swirl of wicked purple and green.

You do not understand.

You oblige without realising you have no choice.

The slip of the potion demists your defiance and longing to escape the abysmal prison.

As your head hits the pillow defeated by liquids of containment,

Your eyes close and a silence colonises the kingdom.

I wait until the arrival of the morning,

Until your head rises again,

Until the potion wares off,

and your questions arise of the next ball.

My heart aches for you.

Adulthood

'Despite oppressive journeys, I hope to conquer my own feats'

My tender creation, soon to be brought into the world.
You are the blueprint of my revolution,
A pulse of prevailing potency.

I promise,

To be your steadfast ally,
interfering with the winds of instability.
As life carves its relentless path through the walls of our home,
Through the landscape of our days,
Through our many nights. Together.
Exploring the contours of your heart,
Charting unknown crevices that will form your loving demeanour.

I promise,

To digest the narrative of your behaviour,
As for I have felt the desperate ache behind the eyes of being misunderstood.
Rather than stopping you from running; I will remove your desire to.
Rather than curbing your wildly growing wilderness,
I will cultivate the gardens of your desires,
Growing outside the dusty confinements of society's entrapments,
Growing untamed.

I promise,

To advocate fiercely for your consciousness against evil potions,
To ensure your spirit isn't dulled by pills,
for I recall the insidious haze of malevolent and evil pharmaceuticals.
We will stand tall in protest against the small, sterile boxes,
That hold enclosing containments.
I will endorse your emotions,
Where truths exist beyond the clinical terminology,

Where humanity deifies the boundaries of a diagnosis.

I promise,

To help you untangle the webs of pressing legalities you will one day face,

That too often has binded me in silence.

Whether you are plagued with a parking ticket or parole,

I will be your evolving equilibrium,

a figure of stasis in your changing world.

I will mimic the heaviest anchor tarnished with patches of wisdom,

That rests in your harbour amidst your periods of tumult and accusation.

I promise,

To create a nurturing space where trust is a foundation,

Rather than a fleeting gift.

For I have endured the tantalising sting of betrayal and harms embrace.

I will hold your truths with silent reverence.

I will remain a blanket of irrevocable comfort during your times of fault,

Even if your wrong doings and faults are obviously transparent.

I promise,

To shield you from neglects compressing and arctic grip,

To nurture your needs when others are drawn and compelled to glance away.

For I know the pressing ache of desperate attention,

a performative burn.

Invisibility in crowded rooms will enshroud you,

but I will be the figure standing by,

where my once mere cries were lost amidst the din of indifference.

I promise,

To love you unconditionally,

most ardently,

most eternally.

I will match each glare of needed affection,

Sparing no junctures between us.

I shall persist,
an indelible shadow against the shifting backdrop of existence,
offering quietude amid your dismay.

I ask myself in introspection,
How can I be sure I will not be a continuation; a pattern, a mosaic.
What will happen if one day I fail you; fail myself.
I carry the burden of my own degradation for my mother,
Was I too hard,
How could someone not struggle in these conditions?
I don't want to be a replica of her,
Of her mistakes,
Of her.

Cyclical exploration endured,
I suppress the pandemonium of my journey,
I turn the prospective into mine own.

I will be different to the indentation of.
I will be above.

My autonomy and sovereignty live in intermittent breaths,
I finally have control now.
She embraces my care how I once embraced those who cared for me,
Many spectators have observed my fruition.
My grace and gratefulness complete a full circle,
I valiantly survived the life I was born into.

I slip on my heels that fit perfectly with effortless comfort like unabashed glass,
Careful not to run too fast.
One foot in front of the other.
I'm late,
The sun is coming out,
shining decadent hues of golden bliss that illuminates my unharmed skin.

Bruises healed.

Scars a faded testament to my overcome trepidation.

Arriving at my class, my teacher greets me with an anticipating grin.

I glance at the radiating 'B'.

Savoir faire.

On the flight home to reach out and grasp the one I love.

It's an addiction.

I shut the door with immediacy in a hurry,

the chamber of secrets is irreversibly unboxed now.

As I step inside,

each step is slow,

a step of reclamation.

This structure built with wooden frames of will,

Sustaining the roof of possibilities and safety for my family.

The walls are painted with warm hues of trust,

Where laughter travels undisturbed,

Bouncing off the walls,

Echoing in the hallway.

In the kitchen I pour a cup of tea,

The steam rising up and hugging the warmth of the air.

The insulation of approval compliments the warmth of the steam,

Creating a room of radiating safety for those who lie within.

I intertwine my fingers with his,

Together we have revolutionised my past,

With fortitude and a harbour from the turbulence of yesterday,

I silently observe him chop vegetables,

his hands working deftly and swift, a harmony of motion—

no one else has ever made her feel

so weightless, so whole,

In such simplicity.

We sit together at the table,
Circulating silence, Hand in hand,
We take a moment to thank those who allowed the presence of the lingering moment.
The supportive systems-built brick by brick,
Keeping the house still standing,
Keeping me still standing.

Carers.

Social workers.

‘Siblings’.

Friends.

Family.

I sit in silent ponderance on the jagged marks of my past,
The trivialities of the system still present in immortality.
Discrepancies ajar, I turned out, ok.

The best of the worst, the worst of the best.
We unveil the intricacies of our essence,
yet the unknown looms within the spectrum of experience.
Uneradicated. Enduring.

Our own *benevolent* constructions,
Flaws and survival coalesce into a fusion of interim resolution,
Until our own evil potions vanish.
Do we dare to test,
The best of the worst or the worst of the best?
But Can I keep these promises?
Do we dare to interrogate?
Or is harmonious family perfection an unachievable slate?

Reflection Statement word count: 1490

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Dark discrepancies and paradoxical paradigms lie within the societal system of foster care. These stories are often inaccessible; unscripted or hushed within communities. To begin the construction of a foster care home, it requires sturdy wooden frames of will, an insulation of training with approval and bricks of supportive systems. However, external audiences are often shielded from the decaying wood, cheap insulation and missing bricks. My pentaptych suite of poetry 'The Best of the Worst, The Worst of the Best' strives to purposefully interrogate the true efficacy of the foster care system and effectively the inherent imprint of 'flawless heroism' of the system on society.

I often encounter this glorified misconception when discussing my family's involvement being foster carers for over 6 years. People often voice, "Foster carers are amazing, you *all* are doing something incredible"¹. Despite the unwavering and immeasurable commitment of many valuable carers, often the statistical and behavioural discrepancies plague my conscious mind in those moments. As a biological daughter to foster parents constantly immersed in the environment of foster care, my authorial perspective is often of lack in the field of creative literature and abuse awareness, therefore deeming my piece as a notable, emerging voice to the expansive creative field and enhances realistic societal representations. Therefore, utilising the creative medium of poetry and exposing the true tangible efficacy of the foster care system has since demanded my interest and inspired the conceptual gravitas of my major work.

My intended audience pertains a wide societal reach, whilst simultaneously aiming to influence the impression of younger, emerging generation that are the future of the foster care field. Therefore, I envision my work in various literary journals that are credible platforms which emphasise honesty and clear cadence, such as 'BOMB magazine'² and 'The

¹ Foyle, J. (2014, May 20). The research shows that 73% of foster carers share the same "pioneer" values set. Pioneers have a strong sense of right and wrong, are concerned about the environment and the society in which they live and have a strong desire to make a difference.

² BOMB literary magazine. (2024). BOMB Magazine | Homepage

Incandescent Review’³ that provide insightful material for readership whilst being easily accessible digitally, non for profit and able to reach wide audiences.

My major work has been formulated on the grounds of extensive independent research, that has allowed me to stylistically mimic and diverge from the poetic appraisal of various other authors, whilst growing my own authorial personality. My investigation into the linguistic architecture of Carol Anne Duffy in ‘Anne Hathaway’ served as an exemplar representation of poetic agency as well as form and language composition that functioned as a profound insight to my major work composition. Throughout the piece her use of perplexing domestic imagery is consistent and proves to be a successful mechanism in creating an effective, and visceral setting, “the bed a page”⁴, “best bed”. This influenced me to create subverted domestic imagery to render the familiar setting to be unconsciously unstable and mimetically emulate the experience of a temporary foster home, “haunted castle with a picket fence”⁵. My observation of Duffy’s adherence to effectively ‘conventional’ and ‘organic’ rhyme to perpetuate intimacy to the audience, informed my divergence from conventions and occasional lack of enjambment, “every illustrious carriage.”⁶ to pursue a converse audience response⁷ that evokes discomfort and conscious retrospection in line with the fickleness of my concept. Her intentional cultivation of various metaphors within the form inspired my authorial employment of metaphor, elicited by her “my lover’s words were shooting stars” and perpetuating my lines such as “tiny, broken fragility hanging in public view”.⁸

My integration of epigraphs within each poem⁹ was composed thoughtfully from Duffy’s use of the epigraph technique, “item I gyve unto my wife my second-best bed” which then referred me to considering the alignment of Shakespearian context of the Renaissance and rising humanism. His distinction of “intellectual freedom”¹⁰ effectively “exposed individuals to ideas” and encouraged my societal commentary within my epigraphs and poetic bodies.

³ The incandescent review. (2024). The Incandescent Rev.

⁴ Scottish Poetry Library. (1999). Anne Hathaway by Carol Ann Duffy.

⁵ Major work page 2

⁶ Major work page 10

⁷ (2022, Acta Psychologica Volume 224) “mimetic simulations of prosodic cues, such as meter, rhythm, and rhyme, yield particular emotional states.”

⁸ Major work page 2

⁹ See beginning of each section of poetry for epigraphs

¹⁰ (2021, Saylor org foundation) ‘Renaissance Humanism and Shakespeare’

My pentaptych poetic structure has large diversity within poetic form, following both my thorough investigation of poetic form¹¹ and the “unperceived evasion of monotony¹²” of ‘vers libre’ T.S Eliot poetry within English Advanced. Further to this, I intentionally cultivated my choice of poetic form attributed to the contextual aspect of the foster care system it aimed to poetically discuss. Section 1, ‘Harry Potter’ is written in the form of a villanelle, in deliberate accordance with the rigid structure of legalities and policies that often fail foster children.¹³, further serving as an allusion to the overlooked turmoil that is a commonality within foster displacement. Section 2, ‘Oliver Twist’ is written in the form of free verse, and in resonance to Eliot pursues an anarchic and disorderly concept, aligning with the chaotic behaviour of foster care children and unveils the unconsidered, “incessant need for control”¹⁴ behind their ‘naughty’ and ‘uncivil’ behaviour. Section 3, ‘Annie’ strives to serve as the climax of the suite, written in a subversion of the sonnet form and conveys the unfortunate duplicitous nature of some foster carers.¹⁵ Previous investigations of conventional romanticism within the sonnet form derived my post-modern adaption of the form by introducing larger societal concepts for thought provocation towards the audience. Section 4, ‘Cinderella’ functions in parity to ‘Oliver Twist’, and through poetic vocation discusses the prevalent disjunction of control and communication within the management of foster care, also written in the free verse form to convey complexities such as overmedication¹⁶. The temporal shift and transfer of narrative voice to the previous constructed child persona in section 5 of the poem, ‘Adulthood’ purposefully emulates the positive possibilities of the foster care system yet reinforces common statistics within the mediocrity of the narrative arc. Written in the epic form to elucidate a ‘hero’s journey’ the protagonist serves as a damning indictment to promises and progress made by individuals who leave the system yet leaves on an ambiguous note questioning the endurance of this progress and promises to epitomise the interrogation of the efficacy of the system upon the audience.

¹¹(1987, ‘The handbook of poetic forms’ Edited by Ron Padgett, by Teachers and Editors collaborative New York)

¹² (1917, T.S Eliot Prize)

¹³ (March 2024, Sydney Herald) “There is also the failure to be able to adhere to the 2017 legislation to ensure that children do not spend longer than two years as a ward of the state, as a result of the systemic issues. Statistics show that about half the children are staying in the system for more than five years.”

¹⁴Major work page 4

¹⁵ (2023, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) “In 2021–22, about 1,200 children in Australia were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care.”

¹⁶ (2022, G. Loysman) “Foster care children take psychiatric medications at a rate 4 times higher than the rate for all children. It appears that at times these prescriptions are given more to keep the children complacent rather than to heal any problems.”

My major work has undergone a process of continuous alteration, instructed largely by informative concepts and features within texts in complementary English Advanced and Extension One courses. Within my study of the 'Literary Worlds' module of the English Extension 1 course, I gained a deep comprehension in the significance of settings and intertextuality that was further cemented by our study of Eric Hayot's theory of 'amplitude' and 'character systems' to "apprehend the diegetic space"¹⁷. Ultimately, my intertextuality of literary orphans assigned to the first four sections of the suite constructs this notion as well as leading to my investigation of their emotional appeal.¹⁸ In extension, throughout my study of the 'Textual Conversations' module of English Advanced, I heightened my ability to employ syntactical structure, accounting for my loose adoption of Freytag's dramatic pyramid structure across the suite.

Although the dark discrepancies of the foster care system are exposed throughout my suite, the paradoxical benefits lie within the titular significance, 'The Best of the Worst, The Worst of the Best', accommodating the complexity and dichotomy of the system. Although regrettable situations occur, I hope that my suite allows foster children to find a true home within literature that embraces their emotional resonance.

¹⁷ (2012, M. Tamen) Oxford University Press

¹⁸ (2013, Lund University) "The protagonists in these stories are often children who grow up outside of the nuclear family without affinity with and confidence in adults. The way in which the protagonists are portrayed creates a feeling of sympathy and admiration with the vulnerable children, which arguably many people find intriguing and relatable."

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