



Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

WWU Honors College Senior Projects

WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship

Winter 2022

Fragments of a Soul

Angelina Hinojosa

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwu_honors



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hinojosa, Angelina, "Fragments of a Soul" (2022). *WWU Honors College Senior Projects*. 555.
https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwu_honors/555

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in WWU Honors College Senior Projects by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

The Story Where a Fragment Finds a Way to be Whole

Once upon a time, there was a young artist who tried to find the beauty in the discarded.

The artist had been abandoned as a child and was raised in a monastery based around a goddess of artistic practice and expression. There were many types of art taught within the monastery's classroom, but our young artist's passion was for portraiture. They enjoyed capturing the faces of the elderly with all their details, as compared to the faces of the young which were smooth and rather boring.

But their favorite face to try to capture was the face of their beloved goddess. She had not appeared before them, or anyone, in the flesh, but it was common practice to try and portray her beautiful essence in however an artist could imagine it, and for this particular artist that was to imagine what she would look like if she incarnated in a human form, with some liberties taken to reality.

In the last painting the young artist ever did of their goddess, she was portrayed as a kindly, elderly matron woman dressed in regal attire and made of fire, but the fire was painted in all sorts of bright colors that would sooner be found in a spring meadow than in a fireplace.

And as the young artist worked, they wiped their brush on a piece of scratch paper and when they finished they realized in amazement that there was potential in the random strokes of the brush of the paper that would have otherwise been thrown out. The paint strokes were all haphazard and in various colors but the artist could see clearly a nature scene of their own imagination that could be formed from them.

The random streaks would be turned into the sands of a beach, the rough waters of the ocean, and in the messy swirl of the night sky; all in unusual, extraordinary colors. Unnatural, but beautiful.

Once they were finished, the young artist could truly see what the piece was: a gift from their goddess, a reward for their dedication to their own artistic craft and their dedication to their true matron and muse. The painting, while their expression in the sense of the craft, was the goddess' true painting in terms of the real inspiration behind it. The painting belonged to their patron deity and had to be treated as such.

So, carefully, the young artist transported the painting to the monastery's shrine so that it could be properly dedicated to their goddess. The loyal artist laid it before the shrine and knelt down to pray. The artist told their goddess that they were grateful for her gift and would use it to spread her gospel of the value of art. They imagined that they would, rather than auction it for the sake of funds, possibly have the painting displayed to the public or sent on an extended exhibition. The artist asked their goddess what she would like them to do with the painting, expecting a sign to appear in their own art in the coming days.

Instead, to their surprise, their goddess appeared before them directly and told them to burn the painting.

The goddess was not an elderly woman nor was she made of flame but instead appeared as something both not-human and not-natural, indescribable and unpaintable.

The goddess said, *That painting came from you and you alone. And, as I hate you, I hate this painting and wish it destroyed.*

The artist fearfully grabbed the painting back, their instinct being to preserve the art. *Why*, they cried, *Why do you hate me so?*

And the goddess told the young artist the truth.

One upon a time, a long, long time before that day, the goddess had gone through a terrible tragedy.

Now, a god's soul, while stronger than a mortal's, is brittle and can only sustain in very specific environments. When taken far from its narrow comfort zone, it cracks easily. And, in extreme situations, can break into pieces.

In the goddess' distraught state, she had painted a portrait of herself, an ugly painting to get her ugly feelings out.

In the goddess' distraught state, a small portion of her goddess soul broke off.

The goddess had been horrified and disgusted by this piece of herself and had thrown it as far away from her as she could. To her eternal dismay, that piece had incarnated into our young artist and had found its way back to her.

The goddess asked the young artist how they would feel if the worst piece of art that they'd ever made, the worst piece of themselves, that had been made to get out a terrible feeling and then destroyed, that had been made without the intention of being shared, had developed its own consciousness and showed itself off as though it were their best creation, the best piece of themselves.

The young artist was horrified to learn the truth of where they had come from. The young artist was horrified to learn of their patron goddess' true feelings towards them.

They had learned that their mother had discarded them out of pure disgust for who they were.

But then they looked down at their beautiful painting, at their miracle made from a scrap and random strokes of random colors, and they saw that it was still beautiful.

What's in the box?

So, you're sitting there, and you're looking at the box.

And you're thinking, why do I have to deal with this box?

Why not simply look elsewhere.

And so you look elsewhere.

Looking away from the box doesn't make the box go away.

But it is easy to make yourself forget that it's there.

What is in the box that makes it so difficult to look at, let alone open? That makes it so compelling to just ignore?

Doesn't matter. You're not looking at it anymore so it doesn't exist. In your mind, at least. And that's what's important. Preserving your mind.

Now, if what's inside the box is dangerous, and clearly you can't move away from it or else you'd have done that instead of merely looking away, then isn't ignoring it dangerous?

Well, no. For starters, who says that you can mitigate the danger by confronting it head-on. Perhaps that is *more* dangerous. It's certainly more painful, or else you'd be doing it.

And secondly, who says that the box is *certainly* dangerous?

This is all theoretical, since you don't know what's inside the box, because you're not dealing with it.

You're looking away.

And you're going to keep looking away.

Now, admittedly, you can't move from this spot without dealing with the box. So by not dealing with it you are resigning yourself to a life sitting in place, purposefully looking away from a box and refusing to think about it.

And that's not ideal.

But you know what else isn't ideal? This entire situation.

Who's idea was it to put you here anyway?

This is their fault. How dare they give you a box to deal with. How could they expect you to deal with things that are painful and possibly dangerous and much much easier to just ignore.

It's not fair!

But it also doesn't matter. Because you're not thinking about that either.

You are sitting still and you are looking away from the box and you are not thinking about the box or where you are or how you got here. You are thinking about anything else. And this is easy for you. It is easier to ignore the box. They think that eventually you'll have to deal with it and they're wrong.

You can ignore the box forever!

And you will.

That's what you're doing right now.

Isn't that better? Isn't that easier? Isn't that preferable to doing anything else?

Sure, if you could move away from this box then there are other things you could be doing.

But nothing outweighs not having to deal with the box.

Where Stories Go to Die

Imagine a wall made of bricks. Imagine a page filled with words. Build yourself a box.

Once upon a time, there was something else. You don't know what. Your family doesn't know what. But sometime, before there was this, there was something else. And your longing for 'it', whatever it is. But you can't articulate it to yourself. You can't explain it to your family. So it's not really longing is it? It's more of a dissatisfaction with the present. More of an eternal lack of satisfaction with the now. More of a 'being really miserable and useless'. Because you're not built for now. You're built for something else, that maybe doesn't even exist anymore, maybe it's already long gone. Regardless, you can't have it. It's gone, and you're still here. And you, supposedly, have to deal with that. But nobody has to deal with anything. Anybody can just sit down and give up, right? It's that what you've done, just stopped trying? And you're starting to realize that while you should have died, wanted to have died, expected to have died, you're still here, not really doing anything, but not doing nothing either. You're here. You're here. You're alive. And you're in this box, which is this block of text, this page filled with words. And maybe you'd rather not be in this box, but who really knows how to escape a page? You can write a story where a character does, but that's all in your authorial intent. No 'character' leaves the pages behind, they're just leaving for a bigger box. And now that's got you thinking, who built this box you're in? Who wrote you into this story and trapped you here? And you'd like to think it's some omniscient narrator. You'd like to think everything's outside of your control. You didn't choose to be built this way. You didn't choose to be better suited for something else. But you're starting to suspect that you built the box, that you put yourself inside of it, that you made it difficult to leave on purpose. You're not a character, you're a person. And while the limitations on characters may look appealing, no matter how you wish it, that's just not what you are. Nobody's writing a story here but you. Nobody's making choices here but you. You built this box, this maze, this life you're living. Maybe not your body, maybe not your family, but it's not your body making choices for you, not your family that wants you trapped. The box looked attractive. The box looked *fake*. And fakeness is what you want. It's life that scares you. It's what's *real* that hurts you. The box isn't better, but it's easier. The rules of stories aren't better, but they're known to you. And that's really what you want- a world under your control, where you build everything, where you set everything in motion, where you can control the direction things take. And since you can't have that in the real world with all those other pesky real people, you decided to lock yourself in a place where you're the only one that's real. It's ingenious. It's stupid. And frankly, it can go on forever. You can do this forever. You shouldn't. You shouldn't want to. It's not what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to go out and live and die like everything else. But because you're much more afraid of life than death then this is the preferable way of existence. And nobody can get you out of this but you. You've got to take the first step. You've got to close the book. You've got to step outside and get moving. You have to choose to live. I promise it's better than this.

You are not a character. This is not a story. This is not all fiction. You are not a character.