

New Day, New Future

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## Introduction

Gender inequality still remains as a global problem today. Women face stigma, exclusion, and an unequal power dynamic with men. “Gender inequality contributes to the spread of HIV” by increasing “infection rates, and [reducing] the ability of women and girls to cope with the epidemic” (UN Women). *New Day*, by Joseph Lee, uses Tom Philips’ *A Humument* technique of recontextualization to explore the narrative of gender inequality and life beyond HIV/AIDS.

## Background

Joseph Lee’s *New Day* uses Tom Philips’ method of rewording and changing the original prose of the document by purposefully showing certain text through the art. Philips describes *A Humument* as “a dispersed narrative with more than one possible order” (Philips, 2017). The original document was chosen from an archive by the medical anthropologist Maria de Bruyn. This document is a poem, titled *Get Married with Our Times*, that tells a story of a young girl freeing herself from gender norms that her parents and society places on her. Altogether, Lee repurposes a poem from De Bruyn’s archive to create an artwork that reflects the methods of Philips in his *A Humument* projects.

## Analysis

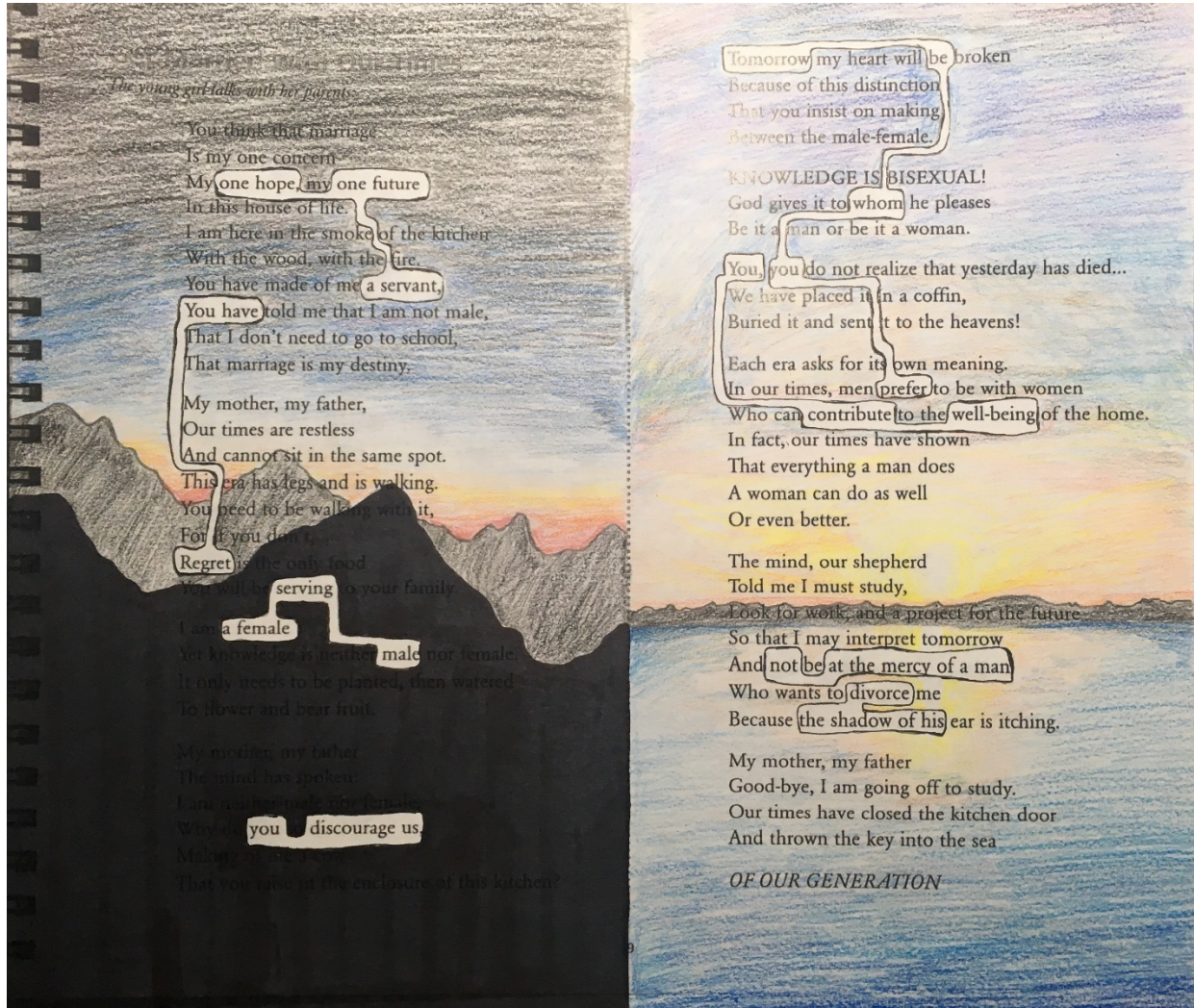
The most noticeable component of *New Day* is the separation of the page into two halves. The left side depicts a mountain with nightfall over it. This is juxtaposed with a sunrise over a body of water, on the other half of the page. Lee used the two opposing images along with a sunset and sunrise to symbolize different narratives in HIV. The sunset symbolizes suffering and hopelessness, while the sunrise suggests the beginning of a new future, thus a chance for happiness and improvement. Additionally, the mountains on the right side take up around half the space, representing HIV as an obstacle that is immovable and hard to overcome. In contrast, the mountains fall into the background on the right side of the page, seeming small and insignificant compared to the size of the ocean and sunrise. The ocean, along with the sunrise, symbolize hope in the stability of a new life, while the diminishment of the mountains symbolize that HIV/AIDS can be overcome and there is life beyond it.

Like Philips’ *A Humument*, certain words are highlighted by bubbles that connect words from different areas of the page to form a sentence or thought. The left side of the page invokes themes of stigma, inequality, and gender power dynamics. Lee uses the pronoun “you” and identifies it as women, while “us” is used to represent men and society. For example, the statement “you have regret” signifies the stigma that women face when dealing with HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, “you discourage us,” at the bottom of the page, represents the shame that women deal with, furthering the theme of gender inequality. Another highlighted quote is “a female

serving male,” which portrays the power dynamics between men and women. In contrast, the right side emphasizes phrases that exemplify women empowerment and life beyond the sickness of HIV. The theme of women empowerment is represented through the phrases “divorce the shadow of his” and “not at the mercy of man.” Lee furthers the metaphor of the sunrise and sunset with the phrases “tomorrow be whom you prefer” and “you contribute to well-being” to represent hope for a new life that is defined by more than a disease.

### **Conclusion**

Along with gender inequality, women that live with HIV “struggle with stigma and exclusion.” Additionally, regardless if women live with HIV, women assume a disproportionate burden of care for others who are dying of AIDS or a sick (UN Women). This results in a reduction of women in education and employment, furthering the presence of gender inequality. Joseph Lee’s *New Day* aims to address the presence of gender roles and inequality through the methods of Tom Philips *A Humument*. *New Day* focuses on the importance of women empowerment and life beyond HIV/AIDS. That women are “not at the mercy of a man.”



*New Life*, By Joseph Lee

## Bibliography

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