

Identity and the Quest for Meaning: Existentialism in Vuong's Selected Poems

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Abstract

The present research analyzes the existential theme in the poetry of Ocean Vuong, focusing on identity, alienation, and contemporary society's quest for meaning. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, "existence precedes essence." Similarly, Vuong's poems engage with the suffering of existence while questioning the self in an alienated and often unfriendly universe. This study focuses on key poems, including *Aubade with Burning City* from the collection of *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and *Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong*, to understand how he addresses the perennial problems of loss, history, self, and identity in a universe devoid of meaning, or where all meaning must be earned. The research demonstrates that Vuong's work is important, reflecting upon existential issues in the modern world, constrained within the boundaries of an unlimited arsenal where all topics are debated. Thus, it facilitates a deeper understanding of existential questions regarding the contemporary world, especially when paired with Vuong's art. The paper intends to depict Vuong's dimension of existentialism and its significance for readers aiming to carve out their own identity in the world.

1. Introduction

History has witnessed writers and philosophers pursue answers to questions surrounding self-meaning, self-identity, and self-understanding. While philosophy thinks of existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre, the life experience of being in a universe where meaning doesn't exist, is both disturbing and intricate, acknowledging one's duty to exist. Ocean Vuong's poetry can be understood as a pure work of literature investigating existential topics. Considering his Vietnamese nationality and the experience of being an immigrant, he suffered from the trauma of dislocation and his works reveal an intense engagement with identity politics, alienation, and meaning-making in the modern world. To examine the concept of existentialism in the poetry of Ocean Vuong, this paper will especially dwell on how his poems handle self-definition and the human situation in the world today or better in a breadcrumb world (Nguyen 45).

The idea expressed by Sartre: that existence comes before essence is a widely discussed idea. This argument to Sartre means that people do not have an essence or purpose before they come into existence and that essence or purpose is earned, created, or achieved. This idea is consistent with Vuong's poetic investigation of self, selfhood, and the search for self in a society that is sometimes mateless and even unfriendly (Vuong 28). In this case, Vuong veers toward the nature and condition of modern society, and the way he crafts his poetry is mesmerizing. Through his poetry, which is personal yet relatable, Vuong touches on the displacement and fragmentation of existence in contemporary society. How does man find fulfillment in a world devoid of unambiguous answers; one that molds self and self-disposition through trauma and social constructs, is one of the uncomfortable questions that his works put to the audience (Smith 102).

The philosophical themes mentioned above can also be observed in key poems such as ‘Aubade with Burning City’ and ‘Someday I will love Ocean Vuong.’ In “Aubade with Burning City” War, scars, and personal history are the themes Vuong delves into (Vuong 56). In contrast, past events can shape one’s future, as the poem’s construction demonstrates, so can future events. This posits that human experience is a collage and cannot be viewed as a singular entity. In “Someday ill love ocean Vuong;” for example, the poet projects himself in the future where he loves himself, free from the emotions of self-hatred and guilt. But love as such is not a solution nor is it static, it is a constant becoming and self-negotiation, which corresponds with the existentialist theme of a self that is not stagnant. This self is constantly fluctuating and evanescent.

Vuong’s grappling with these existence-centering topics is far from purely academic or philosophical but rather quite visceral as it emerges from his background as a refugee, a gay man, and a family trauma survivor. His work, in the form of verse, allows those who feel unwelcome or out of place, where it appears the world does not care or even attempts to oppress them, to have a voice. To Vuong, finding a purpose goes beyond asking philosophical questions rather is an intimate process that involves history, grief, and a strong urge to belong. In his case, writing, and reflecting, among other things, transforms into an existential practice, a means of grappling with life’s paradoxes and hoping against hope that one still counts (Smith 98).

This article seeks to contribute by claiming that existentialist themes can be traced in Vuong’s poems. The paper focuses on existentialism through a reflective examination of selected works and asserts that Vuong’s commentary is uniquely humanistic for the twenty-first century. As it does so, it expects to broaden the contemporary reception of his works, especially by readers who grapple with issues of alienation, authenticity, and identity within the context of the world undergoing rapid transformations. In that light, the analysis presented here helps illustrate the intersection between contemporary poetry and philosophy like existentialism.

1.1. Research Questions

How do Ocean Vuong's 'Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong' and 'Aubade with Burning City' explores existentialist themes of identity, alienation, and the search for meaning in a fragmented contemporary world?

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the engagement of Ocean Vuong’s poetry with existentialist themes
2. To examine how Vuong’s portrayal of self-creation aligns with the existentialist idea of “existence precedes essence”

1.3. Significance of the study

This study is significant in its contribution to both literary scholarship and existential philosophy by offering a deeper exploration of Ocean Vuong’s poetry through the lens of existentialism. It enhances the understanding of Vuong’s work, particularly his engagement with themes of identity, alienation, loss, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. By connecting Vuong’s personal history as a refugee and marginalized individual with existentialist thought, this research broadens the scope of existentialism to include diverse, contemporary perspectives. Additionally, it highlights the continued relevance of existential questions in today’s materialistic, globalized society, offering insights that resonate with modern readers grappling with similar struggles for authenticity and self-realization. Ultimately, this study deepens the discourse around existentialism in contemporary poetry, offering a fresh and interdisciplinary perspective on the human condition.

1.4. Delimitation

This study focuses specifically on the theme of existentialism in Ocean Vuong’s poetry, analyzing select poems such as "Aubade with Burning City" and "Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong". The research is delimited to an existentialist framework, primarily drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre’s concept of “existence precedes essence” as a lens for interpretation. The poems are selected

because they exemplify essential features of existentialism. The poem “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong” considers the self and self-acceptance in a world that has no absolute meaning, as well as the burdening facets of identity and memory, all in alignment with Sartre’s assertion that people are what they do. The poem deeply contemplates loss and what it means to be human revealing the temporality that includes past, present, and future. In the same manner, war and love are depicted in “Aubade with Burning City”, where love becomes a form of destruction, a paradox of the human condition. The imagery of fallen petals of milk flowers and the music fading around underscores the existentialist notion that meaning is ever so fleeting, and amidst the chaos, must be formed. The soldier’s argument against gratitude in the poem is yet another example of Sartre’s concept of “bad faith”, where the reality of their treatment is rejected, just as those in festive spirit despite chaos and war. This study is an attempt to focus on existential issues of identity, alienation, and meaning-making in the broken world, though other areas of study such as psychological issues, post-colonialism, queerness, and intergenerational trauma can be studied in Vuong’s work.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The research is based on textual analysis, focusing on a close reading of selected poems, including “Aubade with Burning City” from the poetry collection *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong.” These works are analyzed to identify and interpret existential themes, such as identity, alienation, loss, and the search for meaning. The examination of Ocean Vuong’s poetry focuses on words, themes, and the overarching meaning of the poems. This begins by interpreting the meaning of the poem while isolating key themes like loss, identity, and history. The study is also based on the identification and interpretation of linguistic features; for example, Vuong uses contrasts like war against tenderness or love to evoke emotions. The analysis also looks at some of the other word choices and images, such as “milkflower petals,” which represent lost innocence. It relates the poem to broader philosophical concepts of Vuong’s approach to life’s meaning. The study further analyzes the tone and sounds of the poem. Vuong’s wording makes readers carry the burden of loss and survival. In the end, it ties together the parts revealing how Vuong’s poetry seemingly steps out of the struggles of the people who had to deal with memory, grief, and meaning in the chaos of the world.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist philosophy, particularly the notion of “existence precedes essence,” as the primary theoretical lens. This framework is used to examine how Vuong’s poetry addresses existential questions about selfhood, authenticity, and the human condition in a fragmented, contemporary world. This research uses Vuong’s idea of selfhood and identity in the context of Sartre’s philosophy of freedom and its absurdity. Vuong’s poetry attempts to make sense of a fragmented world. The poetry is seen through Sartre’s ideas around selfhood and absurdity. Vuong’s self, history, and identity are constructed through memories of loss. Sartre also speaks about self-creation and how a person’s identity is influenced by one’s community, suggesting that tenderness and violence are an absurd face of history, meaning a person must create a self in a universe and community that does not provide it.

3. Literature Review

This research paper analyzes how Sartre’s philosophy resonates within present-day secular society. This examination lies in Sartre’s paradigm of human engagement with the world founded on the

principle that existence precedes essence. For Sartre, the traditional perception of man possessing some type of inherent nature or identity is wrong. Man does not possess a pre-existing essence or a purpose in life. Rather, this essence is created by him or her, or even, it is defined through his or her actions and choices. This rather radical perspective is the basis of the purpose-oriented responsibilities, freedoms, and meaning-seeking in a universe that better fits the 'exists all the time' philosophy.

Polarized interpretation has led to further research of Sartre's philosophy through applying it to identity crises, social alienation, bullying, and other ecosystems individuals find themselves in, all of which are prominent in current-day America. These bastions worked in the plural, and this paper outlines the strength of Sartre's principles and their interpretation of the day-to-day practices. The value of this study is in the fact that by exploring these key tenets Sartre's existentialism approaches a different level of philosophy allowing its intersections with numerous delicate social topics. The comparison made between Sartre's ideology and contemporariness is vital since active engagement is needed today and these principles are tenaciously valid and still stand today.

One noteworthy paper, "The Existential Face of Organization: A Literature Review" by Rana Zarian Abbas and Ahmed Raza, focuses on the use of existentialist ideas in a business organization. The authors investigate the humanistic and other existential aspects that are part of life in an organization, using the existentialist theory of Sartre to inquire into the provision of existential problems in business. Four basic elements of existentialism –death, responsibility, alienation, and meaningfulness- are central to their analysis. The paper attempts to show the relation of these issues with the organizational framework and individual perception of the business world. The authors also argue in favor of Sartre's idea that all the organizational members are not only created but rather have to be actively engaged in maintaining such an organization(Abbas and Raza). To put it simply, there is the statement of Sartre as existence precedes essence, that is people are not given for something but are to work to make sense of themselves. In an organizational setting, this is evident in how employees perform their jobs by assuming positions, exercising choice, and feeling alienated and unfocused when their decisions seem unimportant.

Furthermore, Shantanu Siuli's research article, "Existentialism and the Stark Notion of Alienation in Modern Literature," provide a detailed examination of **postmodern literature** through an existentialist lens. Siuli specifically highlights Sartre's concept of **alienation** and his assertion that **freedom** involves the **dislocation of consciousness from its object**. The study examines how existential alienation is portrayed in literature and underscores the notion of loneliness as an intrinsic aspect of materialistic modern minds (Siuli).

Violence, memory, and exquisite detail are concepts that Ocean Vuong conceptually amalgamates into one seamless piece in his poetry collection, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*. In the imagery and prose used, Vuong fragmented his trauma, loss, and identity due to being a Vietnamese Refugee. During a Guardian review with Karen Kellaway on May 9th, 2017, Vuong's writings were praised by Kellaway as she saw sensitivity in *Telemachus* when he touched his father's death (Kellaway). Kellaway continues the review by appreciating Vuong for giving a perspective to trauma that satisfies anger but with a memory of hope too, such as the desire to move past what has happened and cope with it.

Vuong's examination of bisexuality especially in *Because It's Summer* is also a major highlight of the work, as the body is conceived of both in terms of anchorage and freedom. Kellaway also makes an interesting note about Vuong's interplay of urgency and sensitivity, for example, the way he manages to integrate an intimate past with grander cultural or historical episodes, and the fall of Saigon in *Aubade with Burning City*. As much as Liu admits that Vuong's language can often rather be dense, Kellaway praises the emotional impact of the collected chapters and Vuong's bravery in talking about uncomfortable narratives.

Jean-Paul Sartre has been memorably quoted on existence preceding essence, for his views as an existentialist philosopher have found a great deal of currency in social theory, literature, organizational processes, and poetry, but the same does not hold with contemporary poetry. In Shantanu Siuli's alienation in modern literature and Abbas and Raza's analysis of existentialism within organizations, Sartre's highly criticized notions are shown to be applicable. Still, the comprehensively focused scholarship seems absent on the existentialist ideas reviewers like Ocean Vuong adopt that resonate with the contemporary themes of identity and alienation as well as contain an intertwining meaning search in an extremely commodified world. Furthermore, he strips existential ideals of history and trauma to focus on displacement via a queer bicultural identity. This research is aimed at addressing the issues and gaps mentioned above by focusing on the Poetic Philosophy of Ocean Vuong, the crossroads between Existential Philosophy and Poetry. The goal is to deconstruct the 21st-century alienation and identity of the concept of Jean-Paul Sartre in a way that has the potential to be meaningful to Vuong's audience.

3. Analysis

Ocean Vuong's poetry intricately explores existential themes, particularly the interplay of loss, history, self, and identity in a universe devoid of inherent meaning. His works, including "Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong" and "Aubade with Burning City," grapple with the alienation and fragmentation of contemporary life, offering a poignant reflection on the human condition. The speaker grapples with loss within a meaningless void while reconciling with time and memory. Such interactions convey the combination of history, self, and identity. Literature has long been dominated by philosophies similar to that of Jean-Paul Sartre in the devised 'existential' strand of philosophy, where one has to produce reason in an unreasonable world. It is quite thoughtless to believe that in the line, "The end of the road is so far ahead it is already behind us," this 'road' is only an illusion of order created within a great void where purpose is absent. Critic James Wood argues, "Existentialism reflects the human struggle to find coherence in chaos," a concept deeply deep-seated in the poem (Wood).

Loss is movingly illustrated through the parental relationship, this very special bond retaining many memories between the speaker and their father. The line, "Your father is only your father until one of you forgets," encapsulates the fragile temporality of relationships bound by memory (Vuong 67). This echoes Nietzsche's skepticism about memory, which he sees as both a burden and a necessity (Nietzsche 85). Vuong portrays loss as a transformative force, reshaping identity through forgetting and remembrance. This echoes how loss transforms self, the norm in this instance is indeed a nightmare, as denotes a skeptical Friedrich Nietzsche, with a view: that forgetting is a useful mechanism for every brain, but quite useless if one thinks. This theme resonates with familiar everyday life: think of the families whose members suffer from progeria, consider how the family structures change and the identity dissolves with the act of forgetting. Critics like Gillian Rose argue that the "loneliness of collective forgetting" in the process of grief—an emotion portrayed in the line, "Like how the spine won't remember its wings." This imagery reveals a desire for transcendence thwarted by physical boundaries (Rose 113).

History appears symbolically, ever, in the shadow of the mother, which stands for the cultural and personal heritages. The poet says, "The most beautiful part of your body is the part wherever your mother's shadow falls", therefore it suggests that identity is in what is lived through (Vuong 89). However, this shadow is also not entirely something to be happy about; it suggests assistance as well as the certainty of being dominated by previous accomplishments. Simon Critchley states that "history is a burden that we have to drag," and history in this context is something that we must face up or turn away from while constructing ourselves (Critchley). This interplay is also present in the image of the 'red trip wire' which inverts the childhood experience into a snapshot of

tautness and delicacy, just as a portion of history about identity is a small thread. The horizons, as they are called, and which one desires to attain but seems impossible to indicate how the past acts as an anchor while one pushes ahead into the future.

Existentialism admires the will to act and the determination to prevail above all odds. That much is clear from the lines; “Here's today. Jump. I promise it's not a lifeboat.” trust me.’ “Jump” is an imperative that lets readers redefine their existence in a world full of doubt. The negation of ‘lifeboat’ implies hardly any survival activities, one needs to participate actively. This reflects the daily struggles, like people going through career changes or personal crises, finding strength amid chaos. Literary critic Albert Camus describes this kind of resilience as “rebellion,” a refusal to give in to hopelessness, as seen in the man who collects “your leaving”(Camus 119). He becomes a symbol of enduring relationships despite inevitable departures. The body's most beautiful part, described as “where it's headed,” illustrates existentialism's focus on potentiality over fixed identity. The speaker's confrontation with the body and its shadow emphasizes temporality and the necessity of self-discovery. In real-world terms, this reflects the struggles of body image and aging, where identity evolves alongside physicality. Critics like Judith Butler argue that “the body is a performative site,” constantly redefining itself within social and personal contexts (Butler). The poem's imagery of “loneliness...time spent with the world” captures the paradox of existence: isolation fosters a deeper connection with oneself and the universe.

The most alluring part of the body is said to be its face and this not only places emphasis on the performative nature of identity, described as “where it's headed,” but demonstrates existentialism's focus on potentiality over fixed identity. The confrontation with the body and its shadow evokes ephemerality and the necessity of self-discovery.

In practical terms, this corresponds to the concerns of self and age which are always fluid and develop together. Several theorists, such as Judith Butler, contend that performance is inscribed into the body as an ever-changing canvas, shifting along social and personal spectrums. The poem's metaphor of ‘loneliness.....time spent with the world’ paints the connection a little deeper not only the self but the essence of existence which is love, “for love and loving” is isolation and yet a oneness with the universe.

Existentialist absurdity, the conflict between humanity's search for meaning and the universe's indifference—resonates in “the gunfire is only the sound of people trying to live a little longer & failing.”. This stark acknowledgment of mortality demands action rather than despair. For instance, consider communities rebuilding after natural disasters; they strive for survival, despite knowing the fragility of their efforts. Critics like Susan Sontag note that art, much like survival, is a “continuous act of defiance,” mirrored in the recurring imagery of “the faint torch between his legs,” symbolizing perseverance and self-discovery. That absurdity regarding the existence of meaning which people strive for and the disregard of the universe, reflects well in the lines ‘the gunfire is only the sound of people trying to live a little longer & failing’ (Vuong 102). This realistic view of death is the type of reality that requires one to act rather than succumb to it, a belief held by many. For example, after natural calamities, communities for instance unite together, and work together for the sake of survival, despite realizing how there is a web of vulnerabilities intertwined with their movement and efforts. Critics like Susan Sontag notes that art, much like survival, is a “continuous act of defiance,” reflected in the countless imagery of “the faint torch between his legs,” representing perseverance and self-discovery (Sontag 132).

The phrase “your dead friends passing through you like wind through a wind chime” suggests that memory is “beautiful.” However, it also hints at the existential problem that the past is both burdensome and essential (Vuong 110).

Analogies between memorial practices and grief are constructed constantly in every day-to-day let out. The concept of 'being towards death' introduced by philosopher Martin Heidegger conveys that death makes life more valuable. The picture of "a desk with the gimp leg" symbolizes that too: it is hope and faith victory, for all that is imperfect still has some use and meaning(Heidegger 211).

The final stages of the poem *Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong* stating "you will wake – & mistake these walls for skin" explains the life-cycle that the speaker goes through *Rune*. In this case, walls that serve as both protection and imprisonment become skin instead which is an outwardly visceral barrier, and this change means that one comes to terms with the coexistence of opposites in life: life has its both — steadfast and fluid, connected but lonely aspects. Rollo May once commented that "true living inevitably produces meaning" which is the most appropriate focal point of the poem. The speaker's acceptance of loss, history, self, of identity is the acceptance of existence, so there is a brief yet bittersweet reconciliation with the absurd (May 78).

The opening lines of "Aubade with Burning City"—"Milkflower petals on the streets / like parts of a girl's dress"—evoke the loss of innocence and identity. The milk flower petals symbolize purity, yet their scattering on war-torn streets mirrors the disintegration of personal and cultural coherence. Sartre's notion that identity is constructed through experience resonates here, as the poem portrays war as a force that dismantles both individual and collective identities. The milk flower petals are, on the one hand, statements of purity and fragility, and on the other hand, are left to waste in the middle of the war. Vuong uses this as a metaphor for identity that used to be whole and is now torn to bits and pieces in history. According to Sartre's account of existence, it is not something set and in stone at birth, rather it is created through experiences and choices made in life. The allusion to a girl's dress that is torn into shreds indicates the degree to which social identities and memories can be dismantled by war. The dress as a symbol of a female identity is no more than an identity shattered into pieces in a conflict zone. We can also see how towards the end of the poem, the line about, "a palm sized photograph of his father while soaking" is evocative of erasure - the erasure of history and memory. And the father's image- who was once a thickening agent of identity is now submerged and soaked in Coca-Cola. This represents the destruction of family and historical identity in the face of war. This loss of personal history reflects Sartre's idea that identity is not something given at birth but something that must be created through one's actions. When history is erased or disrupted, as depicted in the poem, the characters are left to navigate a world without clear roots or a fixed essence.

According to Sartre's existentialism, where meaning is absent in life, people are expected to form meaning in their lives by acting. In the poem *Aubade with Burning City*, Vuong finds the interplay between brutality and affection useful in explaining this concept to the audience. For instance, the text says, "May your days be merry and bright," at the height of horror and destruction surrounding a particular period (Vuong 30). In the same manner, the singer does not shy away from disclosing the stark reality that "a military truck is speeding down the crossroad" and "children are screaming inside" (Vuong 31). To further support the inconsistency, the text does away with an entirely different message stating, that holidays have always been about, there could be unexpected violence in returning someone's else owner, and there has never been violence... even in the national holidays. Perhaps heavily battered sources in many ways question and invalidate the traditional epistemology. The figures presented in the poem rather like Sartre's existential figures are lavishing around, searching for any sense. In Sartre's framework, the act of choosing to live authentically in an absurd world is what creates meaning. The intimate moment between the man and the woman, where he feeds champagne to her and says, "Open, he says. / She opens," reflects this existential choice (Vuong 33).

Tracing the fragments of the self are the effects of war, and Vuong's poem shows the direct consequences of it on the individual and national being. The soldier's act of spitting out a cigarette while "footsteps pour into the square like stones raining down" is a sense of chaos and disintegration. History shattered into pieces, those stones raining down signify a history that's loss of any coherent and stable identity ascribed to the people in the poem. History, which is everything that fills their lives, isn't a single line of events but rather jagged pieces — like the shards of a dress spread on the floor. Satre's philosophy, that life has no puzzle pieces, no ready-made, externally imposed meaning which people will then discover, finds support in such disunity (Satre).

In the context of this full disintegration of identity, the most striking is a description of the nun who, "consumed in fire, / moves toward her god without saying a word" (Vuong 35). In the context of this full disintegration of identity, most striking is a description of the nun who, "consumed in fire, / moves toward her god without saying a word." The image captures the engagement of a transcendent struggle amidst chaos and violence well. The otherworldly slim figure with domineer characteristics portrays a decades-old sect craze seeking the divine but comes futile as it takes pity in defense of low purpose, which crashes and burns at the very feet of the nuns' unflinching savant. The poem finishes by stating, "The lights go out" which implies that there is no hope left nor any meaning in those words (Vuong 34). This instance encapsulates the drama in Sartre who viewed such as a final confrontation with the absurdism in existence. In the absence of the meaning of Christianity or any other concepts brought by society, people are left with such a void. The lights going off depict a metaphor where meaning goes off and people are lost in darkness striving to find sense. The bells, the soft sound of the Christmas bells, and the characters wishing to hear the memory get drowned by the horrific violence and destruction in the setting. The contrast between this along with being able to love someone in peace and happiness is exaggerated along with the sad fact that there is a war going on. This somewhat points out that the 'existentialist' nature's meaning is pointless as seeking meaning can in both cases sadly be impossible when the cosmos is apathetic. Vuong's "Aubade with Burning City" deeply describes the essence of what it feels like to stand against an indifferent world. The past and the present of man seem to be an absurdity and are void-like states of affairs.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Ocean Vuong's poetry masterfully intertwines existentialist themes with contemporary struggles of identity and alienation. Through vivid imagery and poignant reflections, he confronts the absurdity of existence, urging readers to find meaning amid chaos. His works challenge us to embrace the fragility of memory, the weight of history, and the resilience of the human spirit. A closer analysis of his work may also allow his readers to explore themes that cause great discomfort, causing even more to tremble at the indifference of the universe to man's endeavors. He looks at love, memory, and self-awareness through a different lens as he softens their notion, and the language he articulates feels intentional. In a world filled with chaos and absurdities, there remains an interesting theme being created to cope with the void. Vuong's poetry refrains from just portraying pain and isolation, rather, it transmutes them into a linguistically memorialized fight for survival. In this instance, language itself serves as perseverance. His art displaces standard frameworks of identity and belonging, creating a new one using personal memory alongside intergenerational trauma. Contesting the universe's apathy, Vuong's poetry beautifully and meaningfully enacts the necessity of human connection, making it very clear that beauty still endures even through loss.

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