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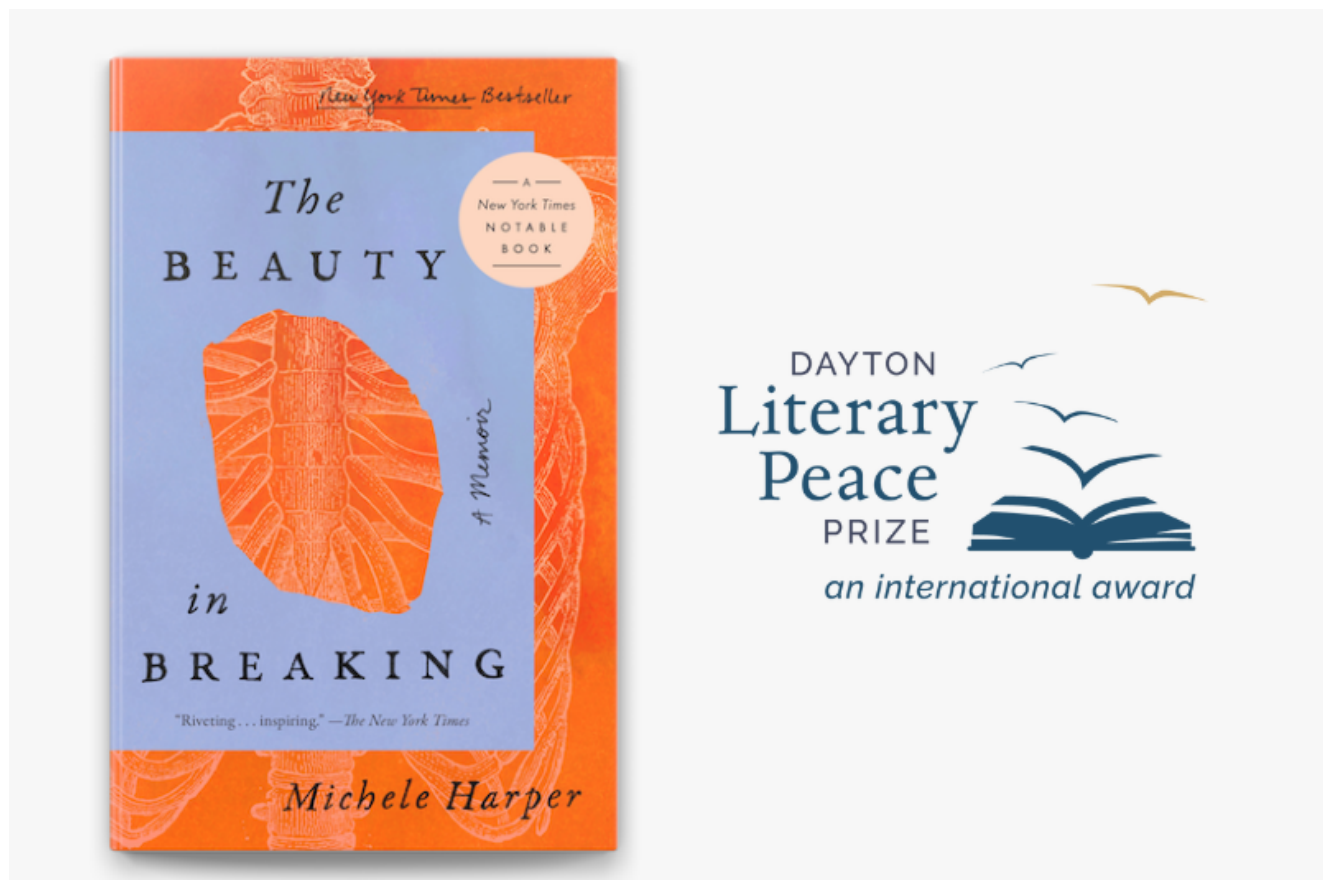
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Broken Selves : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Wednesday November 9, 2022

Broken Selves

By Camila Sánchez-González

Have you ever broken a bone? If you have, then you probably have thought that you are considered to be physically broken. But what about all those individuals, including myself, who have never broken a bone? Does that mean that we have never been broken?

It is an interesting question to assess — what it is to be truly broken and whether we tie negativity within that brokenness. The interesting thing about bones and fractures is that most of them heal, and one is able to function afterward — sometimes better and stronger than before.

In *The Beauty in Breaking* by Michele Harper, the author defies this question. She states how we are all in fact broken, one way or another. To further explain, the idea behind her experience as an African American female emergency physician is that each of us has been

broken at one point in our lives. Whether that brokenness be physical, mental or spiritual, we are all struggling with our own invisible fractures that we make only selected people aware of. The importance now is to learn whether we have healed from these fractures.

Reading this book, I had originally thought it was a novel, but to my surprise, it was a memoir. In this memoir, the reader can witness her experience as an African American woman growing up in a wealthy but abusive household and how that shaped her purpose to help heal and serve others.

As you read each chapter, you get insight into the stories that shaped Harper as an individual and as a physician in the 21st century. Her experiences and her view on brokenness stem from what she has encountered from patients who have taught her how one individual can be broken in many different ways but still find healing. Of course, there will always be individuals who will never change, who will refuse to heal, but at least there's space for those who are willing to endure the hardships, endure the pain and emerge stronger than when they arrived.

This book was considered for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize because of the author's outcome by the end of the memoir. As you start the read, you notice how there is a lot of conflict and self-turmoil toward self-healing and self-discovery. Despite all these issues, the author takes accountability and leads her life toward finding a balance that leads to a peaceful and reassuring conclusion.

Toward the end of the book, she states:

Brokenness can be a remarkable gift. If we allow it, it can expand our space to transform, this potential space is slight, humble, and unassuming. It may seem counterintuitive to claim the benefits of having been broken, but it is precisely when cracks appear in the bedrock of what we thought we knew that the gravity of what has fallen away becomes evident. (Page 278)

Working with a patient with alcohol use disorder, she writes of the progression of healing through phases from insufferable to sweet:

The next phase will be bitter and prolonged; even unpalatable to the point of insufferable when you're back at home. ... It's the other parts, the mental, emotional, and spiritual parts that you have to do. Not only do you have to begin this healing while you're here, but you now have to accomplish it without the old crutch of the alcohol. (Page 251)

From this book, I am now eager to read more from BIPOC authors as well as topics that pertain to healing, human evolution, social justice and romance.

Explore Further

- [Borrow *The Beauty in Breaking* from Roesch Library's Dayton Literary Peace Prize Collection.](#)
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- Read about the [Dayton Literary Peace Prize](#) and [another blog](#) by Camila Sanchez-González about the program.

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— *Camila Sánchez-González is the 2022-23 OhioLINK Luminaries intern in the University Libraries.*