

AOTA
all of the above

Amy Jones

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington
2019

Committee:
Amaranth Borsuk
Rebecca Brown

Program authorized to offer degree:
Creative Writing and Poetics

©Copyright 2019

Amy Jones

University of Washington

Abstract

AOTA
all of the above

Amy Jones

Chair of the supervisory committee:

Assistant Professor Amaranth Borsuk

School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences

How is meaning made out of pain? How do you work through and alongside trauma and grief? What grows within a void? Questions of the self and its multiplicity, arranging and rearranging our lives and experiences through memory and making: language makes us and we make it. What if it is playful as well as sad, tranquil, contemplative or fearful? Wordplay and symbol making of a selfhood that is a division of overlapping personas, bodies, minds, souls are all integrated within this text as an experiment in living within a body of words, worth and work.

AOTA

all of the above

Amy Jones

AOTA

1

POETICS

98

INMYFOURTH

INSTAR

IKNOWMYTRUESKIN

ISTRANSFORMATION

MEDIUMAND

MATERIAL

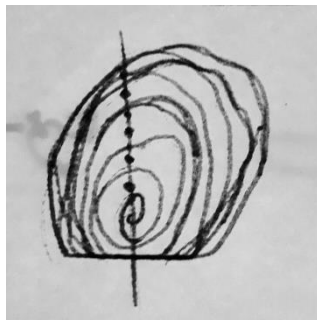
Jen Bervin

Silk Poems

The body as home, but only if it is understood that language too
lives under the skin.

Eli Clare

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation



soul oyster cave of self

1. buzz bus best Bess bass

English Basics: Sounds, Numbers and Simple Sentences
S.E. Treadgold

This was difficult to write

We had to word our way through

We were wording things out

I've been looking for patterns

of language

of power

of resiliency

memory

thought

habit

in others

in myself

This was conversation within my selves

Which me am me?

past present future

me myself and I

mind soul body

all of the above

I work it out

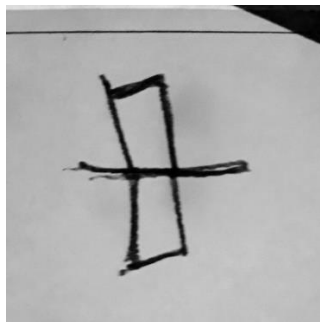
patient

chameleonic

curious

and playful

This was conversation within my selves



barrier / threshold

The body as home, but only if it is understood that bodies can be stolen, fed lies and poison, torn away from us.

Eli Clare

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation

I sat in the tea room
and my sensei explained

that the symbol on the scroll
meant *barrier*

but a barrier that can also be
a threshold

I'm going to tell you this

1, 2, 3

I am you

and you are me

let's roll around
in pulp and dust

SNIFF SOIL

and lick rust

but I have a rule
to uphold you to

YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME

and I to you

However

you may question weapon
you may maim tooth

you maym maybe
maybe be
barely me

don't doodle that
stoke order

ordinal

cardinal

RULE

and

regular heartbeat

don't hold onto
don't settle

A LIGHT SPRING

A GIVE

A TAKE

A WAY

p-pound dead
you only
have
so many

so many I can see
barely me

BARELY YOU
BARELY US

barely we

A BOUND IN YOUR STEP

a slight repression

take it from me

if there
is one

a wee bit

just a little

2. ad odd ebb did Ed

I don't want to

have to

rust

TOUGH

eyes are bleary

blurry

weary

something heavy

went insular

deep down

of a course

I COULD'VE SHOWN

THE RUST OF HER

two down

and three do go

mostly mossly

plunge cold

HOWLY

WHOLLY

DRENCHED

I lost

the side

on you

dew roved

chance drowned

VENDED VOID

DONNED CODA

measures a few

who fed

to be

by someone

need

isn't me

move variaments

I SPIDERED

drain the town

YOU STOOP
CRAVED DEN

NODDING ODD

ACHED
ROUND

do you know what they call it
when the lights go dim

the withching hour

twilight time

DUSK

do you know it's not just evening

any change time really

DUSK DAWN

DELIGHT

any threshold time

a barrier

that can also be

A THRESHOLD

as endorphin twirls

a twinship torn

a diehard splint worn

a straddle within

a dawdler's larder

a drawled ninth prior

SIPHON WHILST SWORN

DISDAIN PROWLER PENT

TIP DIN WIND SORTS

pond split

dript

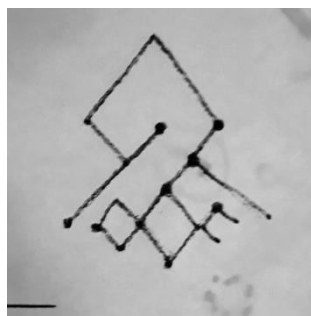
orphaned rinds

while

interlands thrown

wish

clinging



a puzzle

3. Gus bit it. Gus bet it. Gus bent it. Gus bets it. Gus dents it.

OURSMART

OUTSELF

I got lost in language world

I tripped and I felt

I let them play, ploy and plow

vesicle mistily

solves volleys

velocity mimes slits

levity silty

I know how

to hold

your head

in my head

to rest

by beside be

LOW LEAD LOWLY

know me know me

coldly culled glee

We find our voice and find it wants to hide

so I will tell my story in riddle and rhyme

so you can't fine me

The body as home, but only if it is understood that bodies can be stolen, fed lies and poison, torn away from us.

Eli Clare

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation

*I don't want to tell
this particular story*

but it is mine

the walls of multiform pain

I have traversed

climbed over

squeezed around

wiggled through

slid under

all while capable of experiencing joy

simultaneously

and very rarely

turning harshly against those I love

except myself

my body

for the pain it carries

for what it attracts

for the time it needs

my mind

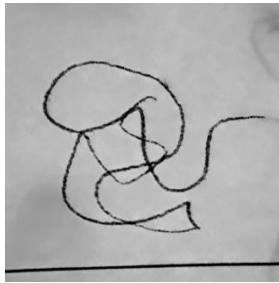
“”

my soul

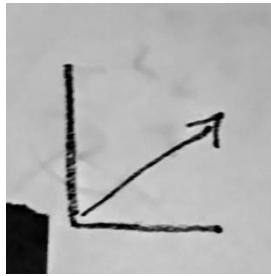
“”

but I am making progress

and it's a bit of a mess



progress



not progress

4. Is it a bus? Is it a sub? Is it a bust? Is it a stub? Is it dust?

I made a rain

bow

each time

I shot

flied

like renew

We aim a ram

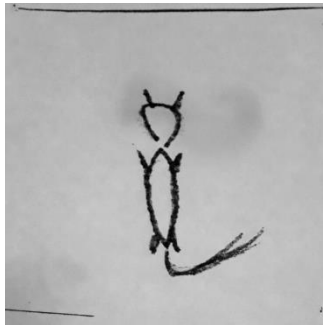
no

treat slime

they caught

plied

hiked seen through



*belly beast
my cat
an example to follow*

I caught you

I caught you

on your way to wherever you were going

and I pick you up

and I tickle your belly

MY LITTLE BELLY BEAST

like a lion tamer

a circus wrangler

tempted trust

the food and warmth and care
wouldn't come with cruel

with you
and grew
as you knew

you can be fearful and safe

FERALITY
INSTINCT
TO HIDE
KEEP DISTANCE

I saw it in you
and then
I could then see it in me

*I whispered in your ear
a partial self-dramatization:
“don’t worry, we will get away from him”
Remembering the story of Princess Furball
carrying all she had on her body
hiding herself*

and we did



nestled self

I grabbed you and we left

and then

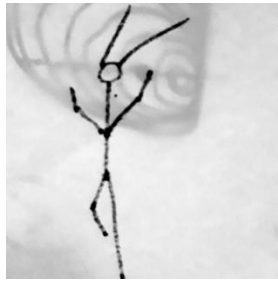
it

sunk

in

and I grieved

*for the parts of myself
every iota of me
that was disregarded
pushed too far*



down

5. It's a desk. It's a disk. Is it dusk? It's Dick. It's dusk.

I need the room warmer

I need a warmer room

I need to set the scene

I need my body warmer

FEED SAND

FREED A LOOM

I dreamed I drew
symbols on your chest

I dreamed I drew
symbols on your chest

and made you guess

MOON
STAR
CLOUD
LIGHTNING

branch and trickle

trace an outline

articulate neon

canter outline

bit a ripple

being pulled downward

a cycle of self

CRUCIBLE FURY

TO HEALTHILY DWELL

float in
fluidtwisttoward

bendback

crouch

loud lounge
malleable pass

OLD

GREY

HOUSE

melee when wooly
hue nylon wow
hew hum whew loony
wee lowly noun

ewe woolly lowly
heme newly yowl
newel homely woe nu
whelm eon ow

cutie tor

cute tiro

cute riot

cutie rot

LACUNAE TINE
CRANIA NONE RUE

hello

menu

ween!

want to get back into my body

you know ho

you are someone

who know

HOW

you can help

me

I know how too



*shell whorls
spinning
the layered confusion of existence*

The body as home, but only if it is understood that the stolen body can be reclaimed.

Eli Clare

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation

body care
body careful
body cairn

BODY SIGNALS

BODY SIGILS

BODY SENTINALS

body break

give a body break

bend body

BODY POWER

BODY PULL

BODY POUR

body bigger

but don't fret

kind body

bare body

bait body

body permission

change seasoning

quarters in change

THEY COST YOU SOMETHING TOO

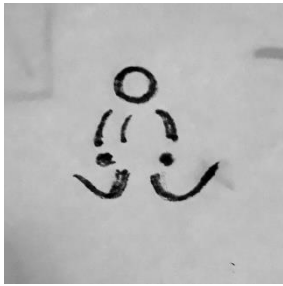
but I already said it

I said it in a range

I said it
in range

WATCHING HIM GO

WITH GLORY IN MY HEART



*core/gut
close to earth ground
instinct
what I was congratulated for trusting*

she can climb

she can swing

set an obstacle course

reluctant fog-fir

forge goner

offer gruffer

LET GRIFFON

FAWN HER

fall on the spine

water ring

fleet fro

egret rift

for

felt

for

foe

for fell

lief left

clown lift

accourting ruffle

fretful ruffle

rite enter

offer

otter

lather lot

either not

enter erelong

eel scuttle

LIGHT

STROPHE

THRUM

warp threads

drape wraths

parred whats

hole-in-drawer

how differently these similar things manifest

I started to lesson

learn

yearn

to assert

me without

step back into the void
from time to time

to remind

REARWIND
FEARWIND

you are small
you are nothing
you are mattered

ONLY IN LIMITS
ONLY IN LICKS

of time

for now

and mine

is spent

holed

I focus on my students

the curious connections happening across

language barriers

the community that can form in a space with

intentions to empower

we chant in unison

late at night

the energy picks up

words sounds body human being

I come home and I start to make sounds I've never made before

I record them

6. It's smog. It's snug. It's smug. It's a snag. It's a stag.

picayune

pick up mug

pick a fight

with yourself

and then bring back

a souvenir

of self

of sorts

on a shelf

play a long game

learning curves

my pace

ridden potent

whisper a picayune

pick a flight

with your cells

waking rainy

skylight moonlight

tin can

cannot hide mine

thought of rot

wouldcry

breadbot

sendback

sendcat

bitterbread

tincan

tubboat

codhands

The body as home.

Eli Clare

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation

hurdle over pony table

turn track hurtle

FAST FAST

push only when I want to

only when I want to

crumbling blocks

soap stone

spool table

fleece pile

curves and crumbles

can cool

newt slime

LOWER DITCH

water

warter cress

WATER HOG

wheter the broken glass

disheveled

disshoveled

trun key

dinner bull

yell middle name

yedde

and in the evening walk down
walk out and down in dusk
when glean grows

LUMENS SCENT

a kind of prick

IN THE SKIM

VERBANT

take care

of your

selves

Sources of language

pp. 76 borrows from the 1944 film *Gaslight*

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation, Eli Clare

English Basics: Sounds, Numbers and Simple Sentences, S.E. Treadgold

I'm thinking about patterns.

patterns of behavior

mental/cognitive

me making sense

me making changes

me working with myself

me working things out

bodily

get stressed get sick

get disconnected

get reconnected

pain

cycles

fluctuations

[Juvenile] Rheumatoid Arthritis

chronic pain for 20+ years

jaw surgery

waited 7 years to have it

withdrawals from 6 years of Rx pain med

the irony

others'

there's a huge difference between act and intention sometimes

harmful

control

lack of self

exertion over others

power

those who see overpowerment as means of empowerment

patterns of language

sound

intonation

rhythm

authority

what does it mean to bend and break arbitrary rules?

what does it mean to hold people accountable to learning a language that has been used as a

weapon?

what does it mean for me to teach them?

how do I teach them with care and consideration for the ways the world has led to these

meetings?

vitality

play

when you get to the point of play

symbolic

making my own

code

subversion

hiding inside the words

communication

grief

isn't it funny how things fall?

a pen

a person

a drop of water

this is a puzzle

this can be a game

finding a way to work with myself

burying something doesn't have to be about hiding

it can be about protecting

cradling

shielding

obscuring

this is a riff

can you follow me?

do you want to?

can I hold on?

this is why I repeat the sounds many times and then show them a video animating the side internal view and filmed front view of the mouth and then I make the roof of a mouth with one hand and a tongue with the other and a rubber band or guitar strings are the vocal chords and "bzz" means voiced and someone is filming me or taking a picture I don't know why is it because it's funny to be standing in front of people going: "aa," "pa," "ba," and contrasting minimal pairs not only with the sounds themselves but with the rhythm and intonation I use for them because any and possibly all of this could help solidify the connection between their brains and their bodies as they try to make these sounds and remember these rules of symbol and it's all a bit of a mess, isn't it? I wish they wouldn't take a picture of me but I can't explain why

trauma how one trauma resurrects the rest and I perhaps overthink but I'm working it out and I did what I was supposed to I'd never been more prepared for a trauma I did the support chat the night after I left but the timing was fucked but I am getting used to it and perhaps I can use that one day

irreverent to the cocophany of language sound arbitrary cultural bias thinking lacking linking blending “decenter” “English” why do you think I teach English?

“There are many ways to speak.

Some examples include:

- speaking to oneself
- throwing one’s voice
- whispering
- remaining unspoken”

Workbook, Jessie Chun

memory of the things I can hold onto if nothing else holds onto me I swung the bucket of water around after school to see again that viscous looking pattern of ripples created by *centrifugal force* I grew up in a place with many things going on many spaces to make

rhyme sound play associations observations mundane expanded and opened up humor

“Nothing better to do, I imagine, than try/ to get back to sleep after waking/ in the slack of night from a tiresome dream.”

Urban Tumbleweed, Harryette Mullen

“Low impact, lateral moves. No new wrinkles favor grace to last past shoe chat. Old sneakers jog their memories.”

Trimnings, Harryette Mullen

language

“Since it entails language, which all humans share, and since it is through language that we comprehend experience, poetry is an activity always about the world at large. Emanating from the self, its focus is inevitably upon all that is outside the self, the mind, and the imagination, even as it expresses them”

Imagining the Unimagined Reader: Writing to the Unborn and Including the Excluded,
Harryette Mullen

grief/trauma strange to look back and read things from the dark hazy time and not quite remember writing them but they serve as this record of the state I was in like I'm archealogizing myself I grieve many things the loss of a place that can only exist in memory the slight but significant loss of myself in an abusive person

vitality

“We come across key words that help us understand our relationship to what we know and try to know. We invent these words for each other to use, or we repurpose them, keeping language vital.”

Counter-Desecration, Linda Russ & Marthe Reed, ed.

place time body a new space of thought vague juxtaposition and characterization

“You are cried at/ Meaning is offered/ You are hugged at/ Meaning is taken”

“You do not know:/That my skin is repairing itself. That the work is slow.”

“I climbed out of the bed, the matter. / Courage falls to the ground. / I give you this charred earth this damaged root. To do with it what you will.”

The Devastation, Melissa Buzzeo

I've been thinking about patterns and trying to figure something out.

Sources

Counter-Desecration, Linda Russo & Marthe Reed, Ed.

The Devastation, Melissa Buzzeo

“Imagining the Unimagined Reader: Writing to the Unborn and Including the Excluded,”

Harryette Mullen

Trimnings, Harryette Mullen

Urban Tumbleweed, Harryette Mullen

Workbook, Jessie Chun

Acknowledgements:

THIS IS MY LOVE LANGUAGE

MY LOVE FOR MYSELF

FOR OTHERS

FOR THE LAND

AND BEINGS

IT HIDES

AND CRIES

AND TRIES

AND WINDS

AND WINS

FOR

ME

FOR

YOU

FOR

WE

NEED

A

WAY

TO

SAY

OUR PAIN

OUR LOVE

OUR STRIFE

OUR LIFE

WE NEED

A WAY

TO MAKE

A POWER

OF FEEL

OF FIGHT

OF DARK

OF LIGHT

OF GREY

OF WEARY

OF GRIEF

OF MIGHT