

Life Could Be What It Is Right Now

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington

2022

Committee:

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Creative Writing and Poetics

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Abstract

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Intimacy is at the center of my poetics. My thesis is the journey of my speaker leaning into the intimacy that art and writing provides in order to accept the gift of darkness. Although a lot of the content in my collection has an underlying tone of trauma and darkness, my speaker persists through their writing and through the beauty that their writing forges. My speaker takes the destruction caused from intimacy and turns it into something mystical, something that offers solace.

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Creative Thesis:

Life Could Be What It Is Right Now

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Becoming A Train Whistle

An Abandoned Cardinal Couch

Her, him, and I were all standing in the kitchen, near the counters. A distant drumming played. We baked fudge without a recipe. Cinnamon, marshmallows. We created a facade. The counters and shelves were forest green. The fridge—silver, it always had champagne, eggs, and bacon inside of it. The house was at the bottom of the mountain, beside the lake, surrounded by forest. The kitchen island had books and onions and garlic on it. Wine and pills. Pills for brain diseases, pills for body diseases. A small black book, my journal, sat on the dining room table. The table was to the right of the kitchen, the kitchen island. The table was made of dark wood and had four chairs around it with big red cushions. The table was placed next to the windows and the aux cord and the speaker. Behind the table there was a spotlight. One that changed colors. Blue, purple, white, red. We would turn off every light in the house besides the spotlight. It shined on each of our bodies, making our shadows ginormous on the wall across from the kitchen. The wall in the living room. We moved with our shadows, interacted with them, for hours. Sometimes he would grab my hips while we danced, sometimes he would twirl me and dip me. I was afraid to let him dip me because I thought I was too heavy for him to hold, he was so skinny. There were no days without music.

Outside there was a trail and green things growing. Her and I walked on the trail with Luna, the cat. Luna didn't need a leash, she simply led us to new places. The sun was hot. The heat was uncomfortable mixed with all of the smoking. I was dizzy and weak and felt as if I could fall over at any second. Yet still we stood with Luna, following her and watching her as she explored the trail. We picked flowers. They were purple, white, and yellow. We saw two deer and named them. She said the deer were lovers and that they were both women. She put her arm around me.

Later, while he was downstairs cleaning the dishes, she and I showered together. “I never do this with anyone else” she would say “only with you.” Some nights we would go outside to watch the sunset. We would go down to the shore in dresses and sit on rocks, rocks that hurt our bare feet. The lake made ocean sounds. The sunset: cotton candy. I’m not sure of what we talked about in these moments. Memories we shared. She asked me, “What have you been writing?” I showed her my poem.

8/8/17

A secret

between three

each one

separate

together

you don't tell me

do you tell the other

in collectiveness

you're quiet

trying to hide

the thing that makes me

a train whistle

echoing ripples

torn but sticking

together like honey

I want to cry in front of you

I want that close mess

hold on to this string
these tired wings
able to
but not willing to
fly away

I woke up at 7am, got dressed, brushed my teeth, and washed my face. I left the house and picked up coffee for breakfast. At 4pm I met him outside of the hospital and he walked me to the room she was in. After I sat with her for awhile, he and I left to drive to the house to pick up a few things and smoke. While we smoked we talked. “She broke her flowers, her vase.” he said. There was glass all over the kitchen. We swept. We went back to the hospital, she was dismissed, so we all went out to dinner. She borrowed one of my sweaters because there were cuts, deep cuts, up and down her arm. She pulled me close to her, our eyes almost touched, and said “it’s like, I didn’t even want to kill myself, I just wanted to escape my skin.” Do you know how that feels? She didn’t kill herself. Nevertheless, I lost her. The flowers in the vase, the flowers she destroyed, weren’t for me.

Time Consisted Of

Time consisted of love letters, being stuck under waterfalls, water pressure creating purple bruises, the name Luna, tequila shots at drag shows, sex in public bathrooms, putting needles through ears, putting needles through nipples, tattoos, burning holes through dresses, taking pictures, writing poems. There was a crow that rested on a branch above my bed. He walked with a cane, his beak was bigger than his body, and he wore a top hat and a monocle. He watched me as I dressed in the morning and as I undressed at night. He watched me while I slept. He watched me. I became contained in a house that was surrounded by wines both gory and dusty, by pebbles picked from trails, by green lights, by sea salt scented candles, by avocados, by women learning spells, by lonely instruments, by yellow boxes, by desks, by black tar. I fell asleep next to someone who was temporary and I was placed inside a massacre. There were horses trying to flee the violence, and they were white with gray spots. The horses could not outrun the guns and the machetes. White men beheaded them, shot through their chests. The horse's eyes filled with terror and then were left vacant. Blood gathered in puddles around their hooves.

When I used to enter her room it was always so cold and so black. She would sit on the left side of the bed with two blue pillows placed against the pink headboard decorated with robins. In the drawer next to her lay a razor along with "All The Pretty Horses" by Cormac McCarthy. She would talk about her sprained back, and about how the night before she tried to fight the demons and their voices away with her hair. Her purple comforter and white bed sheets were always stained with blood. The blood stains were either from her thighs, her wrists, or from the boy who fucked her too hard the night before. She drank ice water while the windows were open letting in winter air. The only light in her room was her computer screen. It shined on her sunken face. I

crawled under her covers. I thought about walking on the frozen lake, ice shattering me, falling into deep blue glacier water. I also thought about the bath by the glass windows framing dead gardens. We stayed together in the computer's light.

In the spring we traveled to the desert. Our feet were there standing on that fragile soil. We found a water fountain. My hands trembled while I filled the plastic bottle that had been in our backpack for days. When the bottle was full, I reached the water to my lips and in the corner of my eye I saw her freckled nose, her dry lips, her black painted fingernails, her bony knees.

Before I could taste the water, I reached towards her with the water in my hand. After days of dehydration, I gave her the first sip. Then, she was next to me in the backseat of a car. We were looking at red brake lights when she used the aux to put on a song called "Girl". When the song arrived at the bridge, she hit the air with her fist at the exact time and on the exact beat that the drummer hit the snare. It felt and looked so perfect that I fell in love. All of this made me feel good, but then it made me feel scared that the good I felt was all there is, and that nothing will ever feel that good again. It all made me feel good, but it wasn't enough.

In the winter, we rested upon the snow, watched as the light from the garage made flakes glitter, rise in the air in front of us. We touched the snow at 2am with bare hands. Wishing for beauty inside distant trees. Wishing for the kind of freedom a dog feels while hanging its head outside a window.

I truly believed I was dying when I saw how big breath is, how gray leaves sweat stains. There was a black room, I focused on the ceiling. It wasn't visible but it was clear. It was like being so

deep in water that you don't know which way is up or down. You have to remove weight. The chest drifts upwards and the only sound, the only feeling, is breath.

What does music give if not relief? Imagine if you could make every one of your actions seem small by flying to California. Imagine if you had the luxury to hide in money, or to tuck yourself away and never crave the light of day. You there. Creeping under dollar bills. I can seance with absence. I have walked mountains and I have made a healthy breakfast yet still I find it difficult to sing about the sunset, the way the forest has turned into a ghost. It is still difficult to imagine a pink light out there, somewhere, in the universe.

Understanding exists on a whiskey soaked blanket placed on a pasture next to the river. The wind there makes the scene smell like sweet potatoes and lemon. There is a tree that seems black against the blue sky. The tree slowly became more trees, all of it spreading differently through, black against blue.

There's So Much More But I Only Have A Page My Dear

What would the feeling be if I could talk about all of the poetry, the sentences, the words within all of the books that are like volcanoes. Resting but waiting to erupt on my wooden desk and my dark Moroccan rug. I would have mailed you a new book every week. I would have underlined all of the pretty sentences that in my mind resemble pretty horses galloping across my old pasture in Iowa where there were white bunnies with babies and their homes were holes in the ground. I would be with a sea salt scented candle and a red light dancing with shadows beside foreign languages and Broadway voices in an orchestra hall filled with strings and saxophones and a grand piano that takes up a quarter of the stage. I drink the tea you picked out of the little black box the waitress once brought to us and I squeeze the honey bottle until the circle at the bottom of the glass mug with a moon on it is completely covered. I would show you how I meditate twice a day. How switching my mind on and off has become a process, and how I couldn't fall asleep early in the morning when the sun was already starting the day. I remember wanting tongue only because my mouth wasn't lovely, yet I can see my mouth now and how it causes muscles to boil and I know my hips are provocative and the role of submissiveness. I suck neck and dick. It is surprising to grow. You couldn't mimic my writing even if you tried and singing would only cause me to be out sung and fall into the grand piano shadow while curly haired men played the guitar. The house now has glowing pink lights always sitting below Christmas lights. The books piled in my room frame sunsets and trees and rocks and a seashell from Dingle and a red mug from Aachen. And a memory of political conversations happening in my house. Now I argue at dinners with men who fit into the complicit masculinity role on the toxic masculinity spectrum. I fight back, and even though no one ever listens, I make convincing arguments.

The Green Door

My breath faded into the air surrounding us. The green door frame pushed us closer together. I always had to bite my lower lip. Have you experienced comfort and agony at the same time? I will write about my death. There was frozen water at the beginning of summer, there were dancing swimsuits holding bottles of champagne. The balloons were brought to our mattress. Our claws were painted blue.

The Floating Downwards, The Looking Towards The Surface

Introduction

You are saying this out loud

You are tapping your head

You are touching your fingers

You are brushing your wrist

You are stroking your palm

You are still saying this aloud

You are hugging your chest

You are comfortable land

You are shadows and sun

You are near a clean blue lake

You are within a remote mountain

You are smelling the colors of wildflowers

You are walking in the water

You are throwing pebbles into the lake

You are observing ripples destroy the calm

You are seeing ripples spread through the water's surface

You are witnessing the ripples get smaller

You are amazed when the ripples end

You are looking at sunset

You are viewing the clouds becoming numbers

You are counting the numbers

You are watching stars as they appear

You are stardust

You are the breeze

You are taking a deep breath

You are feeling yourself relaxed

You are so deeply relaxed

You are at peace

You are so at peace

Dead Air

Each night, at midnight, I go to the windowsill in my bedroom to watch a woman smoke a cigarette. I watch her as closely as she watches the sky. I've never spoken with her, and the only image I have of her is a dark shadow outlined with fog. When I watch her, I mostly just watch her, but sometimes there are thoughts. The thoughts are mostly mine but often there are moments when I don't recognize them. These unrecognizable thoughts are often about asteroids. They spiral into an infinity that is dreary and I become mad and accept the distorted images as her ideations. The road we share between us, the stop sign, and the streetlamp are all so low pitched. Thoughts travel through dead air. Her timely ritual led me to mine. I trust that she thinks about an ocean of emptiness, and the cosmos.

Smoke and Febreze

I ate a grapefruit every morning and surrounded myself with companions who loved to hum. My home was used for gatherings and people would laugh from their bellies with their mouths open. Ice cubes and glasses rang, the scent of Japanese whiskey spread. My blue couch felt like an arctic fox and reeked of smoke and Febreze. I collected dictionaries, clay ashtrays, and records with long bass solos. Often, I heard my neighbor coughing, pressed my ear against a grainy wall.

When I Had Eyelashes

A tree outside of the barn near where manure and sawdust is left. It didn't smell there. The tree grows things that are not apples. In the barn there is a swing next to a ladder that leads to cats, barrels of hay, and grain. I once fell from the ladder, the back of my head hit a concrete dusty ground. A soft hill outside of the barn, a pasture where bunnies dig into pits and horses are ridden bareback. At the bottom of the hill there are three lizard graves, two guinea pig graves, and Bantry's. Where a maroon brick was thrown, my foot hurts. Can you smell orange? Slices perfume finger tips. Perfectly torn. To fall asleep in the belly, to carry the weight of an aura. Even though now is not being discussed I must be interested. The clock now gave me an orange contained in a pocket. Tell me to smell it every strike. How would you comfort your younger self?

Red Ache

I was watching horses in the pasture caress each other's necks. Chestnut mane blended into black mane while two sets of brown eyes seemed to melt together. The horses made sounds at each other that sounded similar to trumpets or clarinets. I couldn't understand these sounds but something dazzling floated above them. I didn't exist in this moment. I shrunk in size and watched these horses grow. There was a flutter across the palm of my hand which made me notice orange flowers. I picked the flowers and the sun started setting. The horses were still embracing each other by the neck as the sky behind them turned into diverse shades of pink and red. At that moment red was my favorite color, and redness ached. The horses had something I could not find.

Gratitude

When I walked past tall aspens, there was a vibration. Something lilac, or plum. It made me fold forward and rip apart roots. The roots, I remember, smelled like sugar. Below it all was a bone. A bone in the shape of an "F". When I held it, my fingernails were black. It felt like a cactus had pricked me. I dropped the bone quickly, and on impact it combusted into water. (A whole tide!) I had to hold my breath, wait for the rolling to stop. Seconds before I was about to gasp, let water into my lungs, a much smaller tide took my body. It laid me down gently into my own bed. And I gulped the air that I once took for granted.

Bathroom Tile

Our bathroom had yellow tile on the floors, the walls. I saw on television, or perhaps I read somewhere, that the color yellow provokes sounds of happiness. The tile in our bathroom let water patiently dry. The droplets seemed like stars for other planets. We closed ourselves in that yellow room, where steam choked and relieved. The shower was decorated with multi-colored stones. You cleaned your skin, not quite how your cat cleaned theirs, but still you did. I stepped in to wash myself, to watch your magic trick of transforming hair into bubbles. I noticed underwear on the floor and I feared them drowning. You were the first one out of the shower, to be swallowed by fog. You bent to acquire the underwear and I thought “they won’t soak!” I felt a light reflect from my torso. Later, when you were next to me in bed, I couldn’t help but wonder if the bathroom tile made your act seem more affectionate.

Nothing In Common

I've realized that I prefer walking in freshly fallen snow rather than sand by the edge of an ocean.

I've realized that the bathtub's water is similar to the covering warmth a blanket brings. I've realized I don't dance as much as I used to. I've realized I cook more than I used to. I've realized that I don't need a lot of people around to be able to feel meaning.

Simple Like Two Trees

When she was a little girl she would visit me. I live in a forest near her home. To get to me she would have to cross the road, run up a hill, look to the mountain that only collected snow at the tip of the peak, pass the violet and red flowers, and walk straight ahead. When she walked straight ahead she would walk on a dirty, grassy, flowery road that came to an end after 212 steps. After finishing those steps, she would find me. I know these directions because she has described her journey to me before. This little girl came to me often. She came to me when her black cat died, when one of her schoolmates didn't invite her to a birthday party, when she didn't have a valentine. She would lean against me, sometimes she would sing. Her singing is the only music I've heard. Besides the birds. She would also visit me when she was happy. She never told me directly that she was cheerful but I could tell by the way she was bright and by the way she smelled the air. She told me about her dreams. "What do you want to be?" I asked. "I wish I was pretty." she responded. Oh no I thought, and then asked "What do you think is pretty?" She smiled and said "Long hair, big eyes, black eyelashes." I felt myself sink as deep as the roots. "What about trees? What about clouds? Do you find these things pretty?" She looked at me, and then at the sky and while laughing she said "Those things are not real! Only people can be pretty." I groaned and my groan scared her. "What is wrong with you!" she yelled. "You don't think I'm pretty" I shrieked. She started to cry and shake from my howling heartbreak. She ran away because she was frightened of me, frightened of ugly.

The day she left, a deep sea of creatures seemed to have entered me. A question came into my brain that I had never pondered before. I didn't understand what was real, if I was real. A rich amount of full moons passed and I continued to grow and to shed. I thought about the feeling the

little girl gave me when we argued. I had never felt something burn that way before and I couldn't discover if I wanted more of that feeling or if I never wanted to experience that sensation again.

One night, a late night, I heard footsteps. I hadn't heard footsteps in so long. Shortly after hearing the footsteps, I saw a figure. A woman appeared. Her hair was short, curly, messy. Her shape was full. Her eyelashes seemed to be missing. She sat below me and in a low voice she said "I'm sure you don't remember me. After all you're just a tree. But I used to come to you after things would make me weep. Like when my cat died, and when I didn't have a valentine. I swore you used to speak to me. Maybe that was a childhood illusion caused by childhood innocence. Can you speak?" She took a short and sharp breath, her eyes were heavy, her clothes were black like the inside of a wasp's nest. She spoke again. "How pathetic. I swore all of this time my memory was fine. I guess you were a lie. Just like so much I've been told." Seeing this girl not little anymore made me taste dry, made me crave water. I didn't want her to leave again. "What have you been told?" I asked. Her eyes became light and they followed my trunk straight up. "I knew you were real! I remembered all of our conversations!" She exclaimed. In a sturdy voice I said "You don't know what's real. You once told me I wasn't real and after that you left me on this hill, questioning if my reality as a tree is actual." She looked like the tip of a lightning bolt touched the top of her head. "I was a little girl, I didn't know the world. I'm sorry." When she put it as simply as that, I forgave her, as simply as that. I didn't want to watch her vanish under the hill after the 212 steps. I watched the girl as she looked up at the sky. Her voice was soft when she said "People aren't real. Only those that sprout from the ground can see, only those that fly in the sky can be." The girl fell to the ground, she sounded like thunder. She curled up and shivered.

“Have you heard about soulmates?” she said in a whisper. I replied “No.” Her breath made her shoulders rise and then fall. “Soulmates are people who are meant to be together. Ever since I was a little girl I had a friend who told me I was her soulmate.” She looked at the valley below us. “The only time I felt as if I were a mermaid was when I swam with her. She never made me feel pretty, but she did say she loved me more than anything, and I believed her. I believed her because she stayed in pajamas all day with me, her eyes widened when she saw me, she hugged me. She kissed me. We sang together. She told me she would never do anything to hurt me, yet, she betrayed me. She left me to believe that all humans end up rotting. I don’t want to live in a reality where someone loves you but still cuts you with a blade.” “Would you want to be a tree with me?” I asked her hoping this was a solution that could fix everything. She grabbed her chest and with a gasp said “What’s it like being a tree?” “You won’t feel pain and you’ll watch the days turn.” “Okay.” She said while nodding her chin. I shook my leaves and with a creak she became a seed. As a seed I heard her singing. Quickly she began to grow green, branches, leaves. She even grew a flower on her trunk. It was blue. Once she was full grown and next to me she said, “I never felt beautiful as a human. The colors are so much brighter now. The sky is so much bigger. Without eyes I can see. The land has many rivers, flowers and honeybees.”

Seasons passed and I had grown to love my fellow tree as deeply as a tree could love. I fell in love with her every day when the squirrels and chipmunks would run and climb on us. I fell in love with her in the rain, and after the rain when the grass was gleaming green. I fell in love with her during the storms when the wind was strong enough to make us dance. I fell in love with her every night when we watched the stars. Glimmering, shining, glorious stars. She told me a story.

“When I was human I was with a man and he told me about a meteor shower that was going to happen so we decided to carry blankets to this lookout over the town. When we got to the lookout it was chilly so we wrapped the blankets around us and laid on our backs to count the shooting stars.” I thought about the girl that made her want to become a tree, and then about this man. “Did this man have anything to do with you wanting to become a tree?” “Yes. He didn’t love me endlessly. There was a limit. When I held him I felt him loving her.” “The girl?” “Yes.” I told her, “I never expect anything from you and you make the wind and rain more fun. The blue flower on your trunk is my favorite flower. I think that’s what love is supposed to be. Simple like two trees.” And then years passed as we lived next to each other watching the plants grow, the bugs play, the river flow, the sunrise, the sunset.

The Shade Seen On December Third

I was in December and was green. I had friends in places hidden enough to be cold. Blocked from the sky, a mossy trunk allowed me to rest. How many years has it been? I was wearing my hat and had my hands in my pockets. Cashmere gloves and scarves. The smell of french fries. A train zoomed through meadows and forests built of black. My legs became roots that grew from coffee. I walked on stones. Some stones made me a feather. Other stones created a place of music that worshiped hardness.

Death In Sixty Seconds

Freedom

I still have dreams about you. Last night both of you were there in that small house with the fireplace and I held influence in every limb of my body. There were gobs of kisses, and there was a space between my unconscious mind and my conscious mind where I was convinced that you were next to me in bed. I got out of that place, and when I saw who was actually in the bed I was so relieved that I actually felt free.

How The Home Haunts

A whisper followed me to the bedroom where I watched my grandpa. The dogs ran alongside the black windows while barking. My brother and I sat in my sister's closet with wooden baseball bats. The forest had a personality I could feel from my bathroom. My parents owned clownfish, they boiled. I saw a handprint on the couch outside of my bedroom, I took photos, I doubted. The floor where my vision blurred for the first time, still remains blurry. Look down. None of it will be clear. I never heard the actual gunshot, but I hear gunshots. The hole in the wall is only a reminder.

Mud, Birds, and Horses

I was alone in this grass field that had a little hill that led into a muddy forest that had a river. I swam in the river. When I got out of the water there was this white bird that was the size of me. It had feathers around its neck that poofed up like a lion mane. I had to scare off the bird or else it was going to attack me. The bird and I bounced around in circles and I yelled and put my hands up high trying to scare it away. Eventually it left. Afterwards, I climbed back up the hill and made it back to the grassy field. But, there were angry horses there, and one of them was bucking and aiming its hooves towards me. So I had to run away back into the muddy forest.

Full Of Crazy

In Montana, I was close to home but I couldn't recognize anything. I discovered a pond with a waterfall and a giant cliff covered with moss right above it. The rocks underneath the water were also covered with moss. Around the pond, there were purple flowers that were taller than me. I walked beside them and let my head fall back for a moment. At the pond, there was a man standing on the cliff near the waterfall and a woman next to him. Neither of them could see me because of the tall flowers. He was yelling things at her like "you're crazy", "your head is full of crazy!" All of a sudden he grabbed her by her hair and held her neck with his other hand. The woman screamed "I hate you!" and tried to fight him. He pushed her off of the cliff. For a second I saw it from her perspective... the floating downwards, the looking towards the surface until everything went black. I felt, only for a second, that she didn't feel anything. The man was still on top of the cliff so I climbed it. I wasn't thinking about what I would do once I got to the top or once the man saw me. It was windy when I got to the top, I discovered that the man had a knife. Once he saw me, he sprinted towards me swinging his arms, trying to kill me. He managed to cut across my stomach. Somehow, while fighting him off, I obtained the knife from him, lunged towards him stabbing him in the chest, and pushed him over the edge of the cliff. Afterwards, I cleaned the knife and hid it under a rock. I didn't tell anyone about what happened.

Multiverse Theory

Today at 5:30pm you were a man. Your name shifted to one I do not know in this skin, one I know amongst other clocks. Tunnel vision of kissing cheeks, deers, freckles caressed. A space for worshipping on knees. Initiation involves words afflicting affection. The change was due to the eclipse, the poem about the eclipse discussed during a workshop on a Wednesday. Could a portrait change, could an absent place be recognizable? For, there is a world where I have perfect vision and I have breathed there before. Along with a full belly and bleached hair. Perhaps there is a world where you use a steak knife to open me, or one where you bathe me in rose.

The Hidden Room

There was a hidden room that a woman with her hair put back into a braid showed me. As she unlocked the door she emphasized that the room was a secret, that my grandma had wanted it to be kept unknown until I was much older. She then told me that she had sympathy for my current placement in life. We entered and there was something familiar about the room. I had seen aspects of it somewhere, somewhere else, maybe in a dream. The hidden room had dark walls that hung moose heads and turquoise jewels. There were marble sculptures, golden lamps, wooden frames holding herds of horses. There was a closet full of glamorous and unique gowns. I was drawn to so many of the gowns yet the gown I was unsure of was the one the woman insisted that I wear. The gown had many layers that were midnight black and pale pink, and it came with a set of fake teeth that I had to put inside my mouth and attach to my own teeth. It was very uncomfortable. Once I finished putting on all of the layers that made up the gown it was beautiful. I wanted to take pictures in it.

Adding Numbers

She saw me drive tenderness away, that is why she tolerates so much. At the wedding, there was no one to talk shit with. I thought about numbers and the pieces left behind. She's not as strong as I imagine and I am not as strong as she imagines. Watch the photographer capture the climax. I suppose today I saw an aura and witnessed the rain leaving and returning over and over again. While clouds were amber, Bayley was in the car talking about the faces of shadows. I guess in order to be truly inspired you must sit through the numbness and confusion. But, the message will always be like adding numbers together. She's not as strong as I imagine and I am not as strong as she imagines. The distance was photographed.

Teeth

I dreamt that I was stumbling on the sidewalk by the Northern Railroad, with my teeth falling out. I tried to call you for a ride home because I was too drunk to see straight. I expected that you would drop everything you were doing to come and get me, but, you surprised me when you told me you were busy. And couldn't come. Alone, overwhelmed, and in pain, I decided to take out my last tooth with my own hands. Before it fell out on its own. I needed some form of control. I tasted iron and spit onto the concrete. You were my only way home.

The Tower

During the chaos and the deaths, a group of humans had eyes that turned completely white and they began to scare those with blue, green, and brown eyes. I ran to get away from collapsing buildings, broken roads, and the fires arising. I ran until I was lightheaded. I ran until I felt like I could fall onto the ground. I ran until I saw a tower. The tower had brown stones and it seemed to stretch beyond the gray clouds. I felt like the tower was the only place I could escape from the people with all white eyes but I couldn't find the entrance. Panicked, I stumbled trying to gather my breath. My heavy breathing put my ribs out of place and made my mid back ache. The people with all white eyes were close to me, I could hear them cackling. Due to fear, my feet refused to move and without consent my body collapsed but magically kept falling through the ground until I was underground. The underground was lit with candles and covered in sawdust. There was a wooden staircase that creaked as I followed it upwards. The staircase went to the top of the tower. The air was stuffy at the top of the tower, and dusty. The air hurt to breathe. The room at the top of the tower was small and the lighting was dim. There was a wooden desk and a bed that took up most of the space. A man was sitting on the bed. I sat with him. We rested upon a yellow blanket draped over the bed. He began to tell me about the days he waited, and I told him how much the air bothered me. He had a sketchbook in his hand and opened it to show me. He told me everything he wrote and drew was about my story. He pointed to a page that had a drawing of me with vibrant red hair and he laughed. I felt half uncomfortable and half honored. I felt safe in the tower. I felt like no danger could ever find me. The man had been there for years, drawing what he missed and what he loved and somehow he knew that I would understand the world he craved and held dearly. He showed me everything he remembered and everything he imagined and then he let me see the ongoingness of the tower. It had so many hallways and rooms and all

of them glowed with candle lighting. I decided I felt safe enough to stay there, until the horrors beyond the tower's walls vanished.

Heartbeats

The bullets hit me in multiple places. One was in my right bicep. Another one was in my right upper abdomen, close to my heart. The other, in my left shoulder. Oddly, the three new holes in my body didn't cause me any pain. I looked downwards to make sure I had actually been shot. I had been. I'm not sure by who, but I have an idea. There was someone wearing a mask. They ran away quickly. I wasn't sure if I was going to die, or if I was already dead. There was throbbing but still no pain. Heartbeats. I was only slightly bleeding.

Loose Change

I fell off of the building just to see what it would feel like. Somehow I knew it wouldn't hurt. I felt the air glide past me, making its melody. I felt the jealousy too. The apartment at the very top of the building in the middle of the city looked like it could break in half. The balcony had jars of loose change, and no railings. I didn't feel safe there. A man who loved other men played the piano and had a beer belly that made me feel better about my own. He was kind to me and his blonde hair was long and his makeup was gold.

Gender Roles

You can die in less than sixty seconds. You can talk to a friend that lives on the other side of the world, in a different time. Your pussy can add aroma to a whole room. Amy talked about unholy wars while family friends looked with disapproval when gender roles were reversed. If only they tried to understand. My sweater tore along with my joggers. I need to return the jeans. It is hard finding something that fits the body.

Infinite Meanings

The only other color in the all white room was red. The red was across the door. It appeared only because the white paint was drying, peeling, and falling off. It looked like a form of abstract art. As the night moved, the things it became changed. Once it was a cat. Around 3am it was a man. And right before the sun came up it was a heart. But not the cute hearts that people draw in their notebooks. A real heart. Gross, odd, striking. The red made me uncomfortable, uneasy. Anxious. I couldn't tell if I would have slept better in an all white room without the red. Or, if the blankness would have also made me feel delusional. Made me start seeing things that weren't there. God. The only sound was moaning and drumming. I tried talking to God. I felt like a poser when I did. But I had no one else to talk to. I'm not sure if She listened but something inside me feels like She did. Life is fragile, there are infinite meanings.

I Came With No Movement At All

Offerings

I mistook the falling leaves for rain as I rose to start another day. It's nobody's fault that all of the days blend together. Maybe the clouds. Someone said that the sun will always rise. I was surprised when I was able to get out of bed earlier and easier when I imagined the sun as a yellow piece of chocolate candy. When I realized that I, too, am a sun. I have offerings.

Spending Time

I spent time with myself while looking at sticks and antlers jumbled together, lying on a metallic material. I saw the skeleton of a woman named Lucy. I saw rat fetuses preserved in glass jars and I heard people say “ew” and “connecting”. There were pale pink crystals dangling from chains, a jar filled with snake skin but the skin looked like honey combs. Could skin be just as sweet? I spent time with myself when I talked to a woman in maroon lipstick. Her voice was deep and her eyes were wide and we talked about the color green. I felt most connected with myself in the basement full of bones and I felt the most uncomfortable speaking to a tall man about texture and size. I spent time with myself as I hunted for food. I saw someone with black hair cooking and the smell surrounded me pleasantly. I turned my nose away to refuse the food. I wanted to continue to be entertained by the hunt.

Green House

My partner and I went plant shopping today. I bought a pothos and they didn't buy anything.

Afterwards, on our walk with the dog in the park, my partner talked about owning a restaurant.

“See, we would brew beer in our basement. And our yard would have a garden full of tomatoes, carrots, mint, rosemary, and peppers.” Then, they changed the subject to school. “I could study botany or business or even become a pilot. Did you know it costs \$65,000 to become a pilot?”

“That's a lot.” I said. But they quickly replied with, “No, it's not a lot.” So I agreed, “I guess it's not that much, considering what it's for.” While we were at the park, someone got engaged. Their friends gathered to drink champagne, cheer, take photos of the happy couple kissing in front of roses. I thought... I never want to get married. Later, when we were home, my partner took the pothos out of its pot. Then they put all of its soil in the kitchen sink. They said, “Look at how big this root is! Look at how small this root is! They are competing with each other.” My partner walked out to our patio and grabbed more pots, separated the pothos by root size. So now, we have three different potho plants, instead of one. And our home is that much more green.

Light Pollution

While I drove West to get to a certain beach, a car in front of me released exhaust and honked its horn at someone changing lanes. When I arrived close to the beach, I put a piece of mint gum on the right side of my cheek, and parked under a tree. The tree had a plastic bag stuck on its branch. The branch was too high for me to reach, it creaked like an old wooden door. As I walked towards the shore I felt an urge to swim. The ocean echoed the songs of birds and reflected the low sun. The waves moved with a purpose, were forceful, crashed like a hi hat on a drum. I knew it wouldn't be safe to do what I wanted. At the shore, I removed my boots, rolled my jeans, stood on a slimy stone and let the Pacific numb my feet. Almost like our paths were meant to cross, a piece of trash slowly rode a tide over to me. I bent to pick it up. The trash smelled like salt and was sticky between my fingers. I stepped off of the slimy stone, felt the sand stick to my feet, and put my socks and boots back on. I walked with the trash in my hand until I saw a recycling bin. The bin smelled like old burnt coffee. As the sun set and the moon rose, I noticed the stars above me. They didn't look like the ones I used to count in my parent's driveway. They are smaller, less distinct, less brilliant. What if there is nothing magnificent? I should practice gratitude.

Freshly Painted Nails

Do you think about the books that don't get read, or the books that could change your life but you don't know where they are? Do you think about the book that holds the other books and tries not to collapse from the weight of words creating stories? I have this pile of books by my bed in hopes that one night, when I can't sleep, instead of smoking weed and masturbating, I'll turn over onto my right side and reach down and grab the first one my fingers feel. Then, read it until I finish it. I am always drawn to the first and the last page. It's the in between, the middle, that turns me off. On Monday, my friend asked me what I masturbate to and I replied: "to memories of when my nails were freshly painted." She thought I would mention his or her name. No. They can't arouse me the same way a memory of myself can.

The Obscure

Before I had ever fallen in love, before the medicine, and before I had ever been heartbroken, I loved to dance. After falling in love, after the medicine, and after feeling heartbreak, I can no longer find the rhythm in music and I can no longer move without hating myself. This is due to my ex making me dance in front of a mirror. That mirror made me realize my hips are not in tune with my chest and that my arms don't reach out as far as I once thought they did. I was on Instagram the other day and saw a woman dancing while 6 months pregnant. She wrote in her video caption how she can't wait to show her daughter how she was dancing in the womb. I miss the freedom. Now, I am attached to strings. The creator didn't choose to control me. I was willing to be controlled. At night I would sit in front of windows. There were trees out there I just couldn't see them. A pink light shined on my face. Noses became sharp, eyebrows became thick, teeth became crooked. My head shook side to side.

Tequila Sunrise

The plan was set for the day. Tequila sunrises, a loud speaker, and fully enjoying all of the glory that is the sunshine. I was walking to the corner store to pick up orange juice. The day was beautiful. Flowers were blooming, birds were singing, butterflies and bees were in the air. I was wearing a short and bright red romper. While walking I noticed a man in a green vintage car. The man whistled at me from his car, and revved his engine multiple times. I laughed because I was used to this, and knew that a quick smile and continuing to move would make the man content and go on his way. When I got to the corner store, they were out of orange juice, so I grabbed mango juice instead. On the way back a tuxedo cat followed me. The cat had a collar so I checked it and found out the cat's name was Lamont. I thanked the cat for walking me home and decided I didn't want to waste anymore sunshine so I poured the tequila straight into the mango juice, stripped down to my bra and underwear in my front yard, and connected my phone to the speaker to shuffle my newest playlist. I felt the grass poking the back of my neck as I lay on the earth, looking at all the different shapes a cloud can take.

Blue Frames

Theo's store down the street was having a sale so I went to see if I could find a frame. While walking down the street a lady with a baby in a stroller smiled at me, a leaf fell into my hair, birds sang, and someone was reading "The Little Prince" while waiting for the bus. At the store, I found a perfect sized frame painted in a color that reminded me of Greece. As I checked out, the cashier complimented my jacket. On my walk home, the sun hit my cheeks, my boots stepped in some slush, I smiled at an older man carrying a suitcase, and I caught a whiff of cigarette smoke. I've only smoked two cigarettes. The first one was after I woke up naked in the back of a car during a blizzard. The second one, was when I wanted to crash down a hill, and roll and roll, until some tree stopped all of the motion. Time makes things a little bit better.

Flowers In A Box

All of a sudden, I'm taking a shot before going to get more laundry detergent. Then, I'm looking at my unmade bed and the bag of candy next to it while I realize that I've been avoiding my therapist because being miserable is hot. I can't stand up when I drink. I dress differently when I drink. I don't know who I am anymore. Someone who smells like coconut oil. Someone who steals lamps. Someone who can't sleep without a fan on. Someone who never cleans their fan so they always taste dust. Someone who doesn't drink enough water. Someone who puts dead flowers in a box. Someone who once believed their body was a vessel. Someone who was born in March. Someone who keeps three locks on their door, a knife under their bed.

Borrowed Books

When I let you borrow my book it felt like you took a piece of me. I was scared that if you folded the pages or spilled water on the cover that you would also be folding and spilling me. I told you to look at a photo of the author because she's beautiful. You replied that you already know she's beautiful because of the shit she's gone through. After about a week of you having my book, I drove to your parent's house to get it back. I was wearing a gray sweatshirt and blue sweatpants. You were wearing a white shirt that was tucked into a long yellow skirt. Your beauty made me feel embarrassed. I quickly grabbed the book from you, noticed that a page in the middle was slightly torn, and drove away. I wish I would've asked you: Do you agree with Melissa? That the ideas and pains we acquire are beings? I watched the rain fall, droplets turned purple. Clouds opened and made sounds similar to bells. The rain fell harder. Tenderness, like thunder, entered through my fingers.

Limb Lake

Alongside the train track we drove miles, hours. We visited a place with flowers and a dirt path. I viewed the passage as small, harmless. I grew tired on this dirt, and the muck suggested that it was going to go on forever. Noticing and longing for peak elevations our breathing became misplaced. Fastened to this path, you pulled out a cigarette pack from your pocket, I flicked a lighter, and the wind blew. Strands of my hair flew inside flames, became flames. I watched as the red erupted and remained calm. Because you remained calm. The fire went out. You laughed. I laughed. Rocks swelled in size until we appeared on top of a boulder drooping over Limb Lake. Without thinking, we held hands. Plunged. The rush was warmer than the air, the water balmy. The water dried on our skin.

Three Types Of Men

I forgot that the city smells like piss. Water bottles on the side of the street filled with a gold liquid. I ask the person I'm with if they think it's filled with beer or piss. They say beer and I say piss because of an art project I saw last year where Cindy Baker photographed all of the bottles filled with piss left behind on the side of highways by truckers. Where is it okay to cross? The city is building more buildings to bring in more money. The smell of wood shavings reminds me of being small. When I was small I was ten and I was in a grocery store when my mom told me that there are only three types of men. Ass men, leg men, and boob men. My boobs had already started developing at ten, and I had been made fun of for being fat since I was four, so I decided then and there I'm only good for my tits. And then the nerve of my 6th grade teacher sending me home for wearing a v-neck shirt that any other girl without big tits could have worn without getting in trouble.

With My Body

The way we used to. Before we knew how to hate we thought we had been defeated.

I know you never expected to be weak, your biggest laughs come from the succulents you named, the dogs you walked with. You can't be afraid of being seen. Let me learn how to move with you again. Let me learn how to take care of you again. Let me learn how to have fun with you again. Let me learn how to love you again.

Passionfruit and Dark Chocolate

Let me romanticize the stains on the bed sheets. Blue fur like fuzz stained with our scent.

Passionfruit and a type of rich chocolate that can never make you sick. I spent the whole day coming. I spent the whole day coming but I didn't think about what you would want me to. I can rejoice in washing myself by the sink, always, afterwards. I spend all of this time trying to impress people meanwhile the hot couple everyone is jealous of aren't even fucking. Meanwhile, he begged me to squirt for him so I tried and tried but the only time it worked was when I thought about her ass. And then I thought about the color we painted our nails on that summer day in California, the sour white wine.

Coming

I came with no movement at all.

I came to the thought of an ass in silk pants.

I came at 6pm, 7pm, 8:30pm.

I came before drinking a beer.

I came to a verse about abandonment issues.

I came thinking about fucking someone I don't want to fuck.

I came again to the smell of blood.

I came in a warm and bubbly body of water.

I came while thinking about ways to kill myself.

I came remembering the sour white wine.

I came at the thought of swimming in a salt water pool.

I came with my hands wrapped around a throat.

I came imagining sharpened knives.

I came thinking about your boyfriend.

I came planning a trip to Kenya.

I came remembering when I was late to a dentist appointment.

I came and saw us out on the lake.

I came while waiting for the rain to stop.

I came then ate sourdough.

I came and it didn't feel good.

Life On The Moon

My partner and I went out to a bar a couple of blocks away from our apartment to play pool. When he and I arrived at the bar we were pleasantly surprised that there was a jazz band playing music. There was a bassist, a drummer, a saxophonist, a flutist, a pianist. Someone in the audience said “there aren’t many good bassists around anymore.” My partner and I walked over to the pool table and there was a group of people to the left of it huddled together. As I started racking, the energy felt off. I felt a pull. I heard whispers. As we played our game, one of the girls in the group kept commenting “I told ya she’d miss” every time I missed a ball. This pissed my partner off so we asked the group if they wanted to play with us. They did, but not the girl who kept making comments about me. We played multiple rounds of pool with this group of people and the girl kept dissing my shots, yet she never played a game. The jazz band kept playing. I noticed the drummer looking over at me and smiling, he was chubby and bald. A woman went on stage with a unique, quiet voice. She was short and had black hair. My partner and I lost all of the games. As we left the bar and walked home we talked about how irritating that girl was and how I felt awkward and insecure because of her rude comments. We stopped in our apartment quickly to grab our dog, Rafiki, and take him on a walk before bed. As we walked outside of our apartment building, we turned right and walked up a hill, and then we turned left. A woman was sitting on a concrete step all alone, she jumped up in excitement when she saw us. This woman had long dreadlocked hair, a slim figure, and baggy clothes. She was beautiful. She was eating something, she had ketchup and mayo in little plastic packets out next to her and a cardboard to go box. She also had a phone. She asked us if we wanted to hear music and my instinct was to keep walking but to my surprise my partner stopped to ask her what kind of music she had. She then asked us if this reality was normal to us. My immediate thought went to time

travel, I thought she was mystical. I replied that this reality is our normal reality. She looked surprised and said “it’s so dark here, the energy is so heavy. You know that there are people on the moon, right? Beautiful people! They are all so beautiful... but they need our energy. The earth is dying because we humans continue to steal from it. We need to protect and honor our own energy and stop taking.” I was intrigued, so I asked her how we can protect our energy. “You know I’m still trying to figure that out but one good way is to sit on the grass or walk around barefoot. You know you’re a Goddess. Oh and it seems your partner is a God. People don’t understand blood sacrifices. Women used to bleed their menstrual blood onto the ground and that was the blood offering. We don’t live as one with the Earth anymore so the Gods want more but not from violence. We use violence as the offering now when it’s supposed to come from nature, our own bodies.” She pointed to a man and a woman walking past us on the opposite side of the street and said “That man thinks he’s a God and she is being used. My husband trapped me and intentionally tried to take my Goddess energy away from me. I’m trying to get away from him. That son of a bitch. Some people take other’s energy unwillingly, they don’t know that they’re doing it. But my husband... he knows what he’s doing. That bastard knows he’s stealing from me. It is so hard to regain your power as a woman.” She looked at my partner and said “You need to honor the mothers.” She pointed at me, “She is a mother, she has a portal within her, every woman is a mother, the Earth is a mother. When a baby is born the baby immediately starts taking energy from their mother, they are taught to do so, they are taught to continue taking from their mother. We never learn how to build and preserve our own energy. The baby grows up and continues taking energy from women, because we are all mothers. The women are drained. Nobody has been taught another way.” My partner and I stayed and listened to her talk for awhile but eventually it was time to go home. I told her “Rafiki is ready for bed, it

was nice talking to you.” Her face dropped as she said “Rafiki?! That’s my spirit guide! That means you’re Rafiki too! He is you and you are him!” We all smiled at each other and then as we started walking away she said “please tell your people to protect their energy, please tell them to sit on the grass, please spread this message to your people.” When we returned home my partner said under his breath, “poor soul.” Is it crazy that I believe her?

A Clean Brain

Northern

Sitting on a snowbank

a shooting star fell when I was alone

Without a soulmate I felt okay

I needed to feel like I could be

outside of this body

The sky magnetically

pulling me

to heaven by itself

A nirvana I accepted

was only a mountain named Northern

For once in a while I find a cliff over water

a sunset cold

forgetting a blanket because I am too busy filling

looking towards wildflowers and wheat

Why didn't you touch me

Why did you touch me

What is a chemical for pain

New Years Eve

a leg wrapped around a waist

an apology in the woods

What It Is

I don't regret anymore

the night we floated

under wet

above cold

the trees lead to stars

I want to sleep beneath

life could be

what it is right now

A Clean Brain

I dreamt we forgave each other.

We drove in the white Subaru

with the windows open and

our hair long, curly, down.

The land around us was green and fresh and

it smelled good.

I dreamt of a clean brain

resting on my dresser.

Someone at home left it for me.

I struggled to find space for it

with my clutter of rocks and bowls.

So I held the brain in my hands and

it was not heavy.

Poetics Statement:

This Is Because Of A Ring

In “When The Sick Rule The World” Dodie Bellamy writes that there are “wobbly lines of energy bleeding from objects” and she emphasizes that it’s not the object that comes alive in us, but it is us who live in the objects. Recently, I’ve been dealing with the passing of my grandpa. As I wrote a eulogy for him I focused on the sensory details that made him. To me, describing my grandpa using words like pumpkin pie and Malbec seemed more effective and accurate than describing how smart he was.

In a writing prompt by Janice Lee she asks, “How do you see yourself and how do you want to be seen? And, how are neither of these really you?” We tend to describe ourselves using words such as “kind” or “funny”, or we describe ourselves based on how we look when what we really are are our senses, the objects that bring those senses to life, and the things we experience intimacy through such as music or nature. To quote Pink Floyd, “all you touch and all you see is all your life will ever be.”

To attend my grandpa’s funeral I traveled to Iowa, a place I hadn’t been in for thirteen years, and I stayed at my grandparent’s house, a place I used to visit every weekend for dinner. I recognized my grandparent’s wooden clock on the wall in the living room, an hourglass in my grandpa’s office, a metal book weight in the shape of a warrior also in my grandpa’s office, tiny glass sculptures of young girls holding puppies in my grandparent’s bedroom, the ongoing wall of mirrors in the bathroom, the doorknob with an old man with a long beard on it.

When I presented my piece “An Abandoned Cardinal Couch” to my cohort, Amaranth Borsuk commented that “it’s a form of devotion or love to pay such close attention to your surroundings, the closeness of attention to the space is about the closeness to the people”. Although the relationship I had with the people in “An Abandoned Cardinal Couch” and the relationship I had with my grandpa are extremely different, in both cases I remembered the

intimate relationship with the person better by remembering and looking at the objects that were connected to that person.

While writing my thesis I kept returning back to intimate moments in time through objects. For example in “An Abandoned Cardinal Couch” I returned back to a moment in time where I experienced profound intimacy and while I tried to describe that intimacy I noticed that I mainly wrote about the objects that surrounded that relationship. Objects such as the chairs by the dining room table and the books and the medicine resting on the counters. There is a theme throughout my thesis of connecting intimacy through the objects that were present in moments of intimacy. Another example of a moment in my thesis where I portray intimacy through objects is in “Bathroom Tile”. In this piece a moment of intimacy is described through the shower, the bathroom tile, and underwear.

Throughout my life there have been objects that have defined a moment in time, objects that carry stories with them. When I first moved to Denver I bought a new pair of sunglasses since Denver is famous for its endless days of sunshine. I managed to keep those sunglasses around until a few months after I graduated from the University of Denver. When I look back at old pictures from college, often I am wearing those sunglasses, because as I said, Denver was almost always sunny. Those sunglasses seemed to carry the memories of my undergraduate years within them, like all of the moments walking to class while listening to music and the moments reading under trees on campus. I lost the sunglasses while paddle boarding. A storm came in with great winds that turned the tides of the water wild. The paddle board flipped over and my sunglasses sank to the bottom of a lake. When I look back now, I define the moment I lost those sunglasses as the end of an era, the end of my undergraduate days.

The start of an era occurred when I opened a box and was hit by an intense apple green color. A big and bold piece of chrysoprase stone was placed on top of a silver ring. It seemed like this ring and I recognized each other, and were meant to be in close contact in the way I felt excited when I first saw the ring. I researched what the chrysoprase stone on this ring symbolized and I found that the stone had a motto of “forgive and forget or become paralyzed”. At the time this ring came into my life I was struggling with heartbreak and depression. This ring gave me a phrase to hold onto, a phrase that offered a hope of healing.

With this new chrysoprase ring in my life I felt shifts around me. I started feeling less emotionally “paralyzed” by coming back into my body through going out to art exhibits, through going to poetry readings, through dancing alone in my bedroom. In some way I felt myself breaking free from depression by leaning into who I am through art and writing and by being encouraged by my chrysoprase stone to forget the things that cause me pain. I wore this ring for nearly three years without ever taking it off. When I think about the beginning of my current relationship, I remember my chrysoprase ring. I had been given that ring about a month before I started dating my partner. I remember intimate moments in bed and the apple green color seeming so vibrant against the bedsheets, against my partner’s skin. There is a moment in time, where intimacy was being discovered and created, within my chrysoprase ring. Lately I wear the ring less, and this to me means it is a new moment in time.

Not long ago while visiting my sister in France I saw a rusted ring with a red stone on it stored behind glass in a dense wooden frame at an art museum. The ring was placed on top of a note that I couldn't read due to the writing being small and written in messy cursive. Since I didn't know the story behind this ring, I remembered my own stories with rings, and then I wondered if the artist would consider the ring cursed or sacred. The ring with a red stone on it

was featured in an exhibition about objects. In the exhibition there were replicas of dining room tables that had ashtrays, empty bottles of beer, and several plates with ketchup and grease stained silverware. There were also replicas of bedside tables that had coins and hair ties and shoe laces on them.

During the first year of my MFA I was assigned to write documentary poetics. I turned to an Instagram account called “queernightstands”. On their Instagram page they collect images sent to them of bedside tables all across the world. I picked out a few images from this Instagram account and the stories started flooding through me. I ended up at the museum in France by chance, and found it personal that I had just written about stories inspired from bedside tables and then came across a museum with more bedside and dining room tables emphasizing the stories found in objects. These lines of energy Bellamy writes about became clear as I created stories about the objects captured on the bedside tables, and when memories and stories came to me while looking at the objects in the museum.

A handful of the poems I wrote for the documentary poetics assignment are featured in my thesis. One of them is “Blue Frames”. For that poem I looked at a picture of a bedside table on “queernightstands” that had a piece of paper with the words “on me, not in me!” framed inside of a pale blue frame. Next to the framed written note was a self help book about sexual assault. Through these objects I was able to create a prose poem about a woman going to a store to get a new frame and while she is on her walk back from the store the smell of a cigarette triggers her into remembering a time when she was assaulted. Part of this prose piece is fictional while another part of it is inspired from true experiences (like most writing is). Not only was I able to create an imagined situation based on the objects this person who submitted this photo had, but I

was also able to remember a moment from my own life and tie that moment together with the objects in the photo.

Another poem in my thesis that was created by looking at objects on bedside tables was “Borrowed Books”. I used another image from “queernightstands” to write this piece. The image featured in “queernightstands” had a glass of water, an empty white plate, and the book “So Sad Today” by Melissa Broder. I had read that book many times over quarantine and I loved it so much that when I reconnected with an old friend who happened to also be in town due to quarantine I recommended and lent the book to them. “Borrowed Books” is about the memory of when I lent “So Sad Today” to that old friend and the feelings that arose by giving an object so personal to someone I didn't truly know anymore.

Although I never caught the name of the artists in the museum, and although the pictures on “queernightstands” had no names, I still was able to make something out of the objects and connect the objects to my own world. Because there was something “missing” from the art pieces and from the photographs, like a name or a note I could understand, I had the liberty of filling that “missing” space with my own life. In some way, my life and the artist's life and the life of the person behind the camera blended together, and even though we will never meet and never know each other by name, an intimacy was still shared through the collision of memories and stories found in the objects.

The lack of names and bodies that surrounded the works of art in the museum and on the Instagram page made me realize that there is a greater intimacy found when we exclude our names and our bodies and offer ourselves through the things we experience intimacy with. The lack of names in the museum and on the Instagram page reminded me that intimacy is something that is boundless. I think the intimacy that can be found in namelessness is similar to the

intimacy that can be found in objects because they both demand a connection to feeling, relatability.

In “Paterson” William Carlos Williams writes “no ideas but in things”. The town Paterson that Williams writes about is not only a place but also the story and the makings of a person. Throughout this epic poem Williams shows how the specifics of a place can be found within a person, and how because of this, places we live in are alive. This is the same with objects like my sunglasses. The sunglasses I lost were an object but they also carried a part of me in them, making some part of them alive or even part human. In “Paterson” Williams quotes George Santayana, “cities are a second body for the human mind”. This is also true for objects, in the way feelings, memories, and intimacy are born from objects we hold close to us and go through life with.

The concept of “cities are a second body for the human mind” is present throughout my thesis in the way my speaker is constantly looking outward to discover what they are feeling inward. This is especially present in my poem “Three Types Of Men” where my speaker is wandering through the city and because of things they see and smell they are reminded of a moment from childhood. The concept that cities are another body for the mind and also the concept of “no ideas but in things” are also present in my piece “Spending Time” where my speaker is developing a deeper intimacy with themselves by wandering through the world and examining objects that make them feel closer to themselves.

Intimacy is at the center of my poetics. Intimacy is what allows us to bring objects to life. Intimacy is what allows us to feel and connect to ourselves and things outside of ourselves. Intimacy is what allows us to understand books, art, music. While creating my thesis I realized how centric intimacy is within it when I realized my speaker is discovering the destruction that

often comes from intimacy and what they can gain from intimate destruction, while also discovering how to create a deeper intimacy with themselves through seeing themselves in the world and the things they love.

While moving through the creation process of my thesis I worked very closely with experiences of intimacy, and I held very closely to me “Ladies Lazarus” by Piper J. Daniels. This is a book that has a piece of me in it, a book that latched onto something inside of me. I’ve read this book a handful of times and this past summer I brought this book to Montana with me to read again. I sat at the end of a dock on the lake and cried because of how understood I felt by it. This book offers me companionship. As a writer, I often feel misunderstood and lonely. When I find a book like “Ladies Lazarus” I feel not only completely understood but also less alone in a world that is so lonely, especially for writers and artists. Although life can be lonely as a writer and as an artist, it’s objects like “Ladies Lazarus” that remind me there is a great and deep and unique intimacy I am offered by being a writer. Throughout my thesis my speaker realizes that to be a writer means to experience the world differently and to have access to the extraordinary intimacy that is shared through writing and art.

Being intimate with a reader is something that draws me into books, and something that I hope I can put into my own work. I wanted my thesis to have the potential to hold someone, describe the interior life of someone, as closely as “Ladies Lazarus” does for me. My hope with my writing is that it can have a deep emotional connection with its readers. I tried to achieve this with my thesis by being honest with the way I feel and observe things. My attempts at honesty creating a deep intimacy with my readers is present in “Passionfruit and Dark Chocolate” when I confess to my readers my sexual attraction towards women.

Throughout my thesis my speaker is grappling with the questions, what is intimacy and why do we seek intimacy? “Ladies Lazarus” helped me think about this question in the way I had to examine why I felt so connected to this book and why it feels so good to find something I can feel connected with. I think honesty is often a rarity in this world, and to be a writer and an artist, for myself at least, means to be unapologetically honest in order to help a reader understand that they aren’t alone. From a young age I always felt most understood by music, art, and writing because it was these things that revealed to me I wasn’t the only one that felt or thought in certain ways.

In “Paterson” Williams writes, “because those very ideas and feelings which make one a writer with some kind of new vision, are often the *very same ones* which, in living itself, make one clumsy, awkward, absurd, ungrateful, confidential where most people are reticent”. In examining what intimacy is and why we seek intimacy, my speaker is holding a hand out to their readers asking, “Do you see me? Because I see you.” And if my reader and my speaker can both see each other, through the intimacy revealed in art, then intimacy is creation and we seek it because it helps us understand that we are not alone in our experiences and thoughts.

The rusted ring with a red stone on it that I saw in the museum made me remember a moment from thirteen years ago, during the summer. My then best friend gave me a ring that had silver and gold braided together. The day she gave me that ring she got down on her knee and pretended to propose to me, and I pretended to say yes, and with that pretend commitment, we became twin flames.

According to many spiritual people, and an article written by Yve Anmore, there are eight different types of soul connections. The eight being: soulmates, twin flames, karmic relationships, kindred spirits, soul partners, past-life soulmates, soul ties, and soul teachers. I

would say throughout my thesis my speaker experiences many of these soul connections as my speaker explores what intimacy is. For example, my speaker connects with a soul teacher in “Life On The Moon” when my speaker meets a random woman on the street who offers words of wisdom. Another example of a soul connection in my thesis is in “Green House” when my speaker and their partner discuss their future together as soulmates. And, in “Dead Air” my speaker experiences a moment with a kindred spirit.

Most of these soul connections have to do with a feeling of being drawn to someone, or a moment where someone comes into your life at the exact time you need them. A twin flame is different from these other intense soul connections in the way you can only have one twin flame, and in the way a twin flame is meant to be a kind of mirror to your own soul in order to teach both parties of the relationship valuable life lessons about themselves. When I first met my twin flame, it was an instant recognition. We were in choir class together and I clearly remember the thought “that could be my best friend” coming into my head when I saw her from the soprano section in the alto section.

Richard Chiem in “King of Joy” writes, “When we were reunited, it felt so good it was as though I had survived some sort of trauma or natural disaster, being away from her.” It did feel like that when we first met, similar to how I felt when I first saw my Chrysoprase ring. There was an immediate recognition that the thing in front of me is magical or otherworldly, and that the thing in front of me is supposed to be with me. When I was with my twin flame I could see the best and the worst parts of myself. Every time we had to say goodbye I felt as if I was leaving a part of myself. This made it that much more difficult when I decided to say goodbye to her for good.

Twin flame separations are common because it is often required for twin flames to separate in order to grow. A twin flame separation is described as feeling like dying or feeling like a world is ending. In “Paterson” Williams seems to explore a twin flame relationship as he shows intimate letters written back and forth between two people who long for each other but can’t be with one another. Williams writes, “That kind of blockage, exiling one’s self from one’s self—have you ever experienced it? I dare say you have, at moments; and if so, you can well understand what a serious psychological injury it amounts to when turned into a permanent day-to-day condition.”

This idea of being so connected with someone that they seem to be part of you or an extension of you is also present in “Ladies Lazarus”. Daniels writes, “I like how you said *you are beautiful*, as though it might destroy you. As though if some part of you isn’t anchored inside of me, you might very well fly apart.” This quote from “Ladies Lazarus” gave me a deep sense of intimacy in the way it so accurately described my relationship with my twin flame. I believe one of the reasons I had to be separated from my twin flame is because I have struggled with insecurities my whole life due to a lack of self love. To recognize my twin flame was beautiful felt painful for me because I could never see my own beauty. It was when I was separated from my twin flame that I was finally able to start working towards recognizing my own beauty and see that just because I think someone else is beautiful doesn't mean that I'm not beautiful. To acknowledge the beauty in other people, especially in my twin flame, is to also acknowledge my own beauty.

I had thought I had thrown away the ring my twin flame gave to me, but recently I found the ring in a box in my old bedroom in Montana. When I saw that ring again I wondered what it means to never use or wear an object but to also never throw it away. I wondered about the

energy tied to the ring, and if that energy is still latched onto me because the ring is still in my personal space. I wondered what it means for a person to never truly leave you. I wondered why and how I was able to feel such an intimate connection with another human.

My twin flame and my relationship was closely tied to nature. We both moved to Whitefish Montana at the same time, when we were eleven. My family decided to move to Montana because they had always wanted a home in the mountains. Her family decided to move to Montana because she had tried to jump off of a hotel balcony. I was too young to understand what hurting so badly that you wanted to leave everything behind was like.

Growing up in Montana, there was a trail that was only a few inches wide and was surrounded by tall pine trees, Red Indian paintbrushes, beargrass, huckleberries. I used to walk this path all of the time. When I would bring my twin flame to this path we would imagine what life would be like as a tree. Lyn Hejinian in “my life and my life in the nineties” writes, “So that later, playing alone, I could imagine myself developing into a tree, and then I yearned to do so with so much desire that it made me shapeless, restless, sleepless, demanding, and disagreeable.” We both became that way, as we grew up and smoked endlessly and talked too much about dying and the meaningless ways of the world. Yet we always appreciated the beauty of nature, we always found an intimacy in nature, as we went on walks to pick flowers and as we swam to fallen trees in the lake and studied the life still growing from something that was gone.

The day my twin flame and I parted we were in Bozeman together visiting her aunt. After a night of partying we returned home and sat on the roof. I took a big enough drag from a cigarette to make me collapse. As I laid there shaking and vomiting I heard her say “she’s fine”. Somehow I couldn't sleep that night, and after sitting on the roof for a while she passed out in the bathroom next to the toilet. I opened up her phone to the messages between her and the man I was in love

with at the time. I discovered all of the things her and this guy did behind my back, which included having sex when I wasn't around and talking about me in negative ways. I uncovered a world I had no idea existed and I became disillusioned. My reality seemed to not exist anymore. For a while, I was convinced the trees were fake.

This disillusionment is present in the section “The Floating Downwards, The Looking Towards The Surface” in my thesis. In this section my speaker is trying to understand their reality again after experiencing destruction. My speaker leans into their subconscious mind and moments from their childhood to better understand how an intimate relationship with a person could alter their reality and views on life so drastically. In this section my speaker offers intimacy to my readers by revealing the process of discovering a new reality.

While my twin flame was still asleep in the bathroom I packed up all of my things. When she woke up I told her I saw her messages and that I had to leave. Her body was so small, her eyes looked empty. Her aunt checked the tires on my car before I drove home. My twin flame and I had been waiting for rain for months, because rain meant we would make noodles. As I drove home it started pouring rain. Then, the days following our separation, wildfires raged and covered the whole town in smoke. I was unable to see the sky for weeks. Then, not even a week after our separation, my family and I flew to Oregon to see the eclipse. In the moment of the eclipse the birds were acting strange and the shadows on the ground made shapes that looked like fingernails, and then the sun went black and there was a moment of night during the day. It felt as if parting with my twin flame caused the forests in Montana to burn down, caused the sun and the moon to collide.

In “Some Say The Lark” Jennifer Chang writes about our relation to destruction. Chang writes “How can I love a damaged place?”, “I loved a man for how he damaged me.” In recent

years Whitefish has turned into a place I almost can't recognize. The shops downtown have turned boutiquey, the local markets have been bought by Californians. My parent's neighborhood on the mountain is expanding. When I first moved there, it was quiet and there were only a few weeks out of the year when tourists would come and rent the empty houses. Now, trees are being cut down to make room for more houses. The path I used to walk on is not there anymore. When I see that the trail I used to walk on is gone, I feel a sense of detachment from myself. The destruction of nature near my home in Whitefish seemed to happen almost in sync with the destruction of the relationship with my twin flame. When I visit Whitefish now there is always a bittersweet feeling in the fact that the scenery isn't the way it used to be and the fact that I no longer have a best friend to call and invite over. When the world matches your emotions it seems almost too personal to be a coincidence.

Intimacy with nature and the world matching emotions is present in my thesis, especially in pieces like "Limb Lake" and "Red Ache". In "Limb Lake" we see how my speaker is describing an intimate moment with someone by describing a moment where they went into nature together and swam. The water from the lake that dries on my speaker's skin alludes to the short amount of time my speaker had with this person, while the fire in this piece also alludes to how intense the relationship with the other person present in "Limb Lake" was. In "Red Ache" my speaker questions intimacy while looking at two horses sharing intimacy. The sunset in "Red Ache" serves as a reminder that the speaker feels a lack of intimacy in their life.

In "Imagine A Death" Janice Lee writes, "what was it about intimacy that could push a human to be capable of hurting someone so cruelly". One of my first encounters with darkness was watching the way my twin flame operated in the world. I didn't suffer from long term depression until I parted with my twin flame. There's part of me that thinks the long term

depression that came from separating from my twin flame is a lesson about intimacy. Someone I loved turned my world upside down so that I could understand a different experience of life better, understand a different part of myself better, and become more empathetic. Alok Vaid-Menon writes, “We must have the courage to break our own hearts. What we thought was love wasn’t, who we thought we were isn’t, what we thought kept us safe didn’t. We must outgrow the stories that we have about ourselves and to do that we have to say goodbye to what no longer serves us, even the things we once cherished.”

In my piece “There’s So Much More But I Only Have A Page My Dear” we see how my speaker is breaking their own heart through realizing they are becoming a different person due to the loss of someone they once loved and once thought they would never lose. In this piece my speaker scratches the surface of the question of why intimacy can be so cruel by showing that the pain that stems from intimacy allows us to outgrow past versions of ourselves.

Mary Oliver writes in “The Uses Of Sorrow”, “In my sleep I dreamed this poem. Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too was a gift.” This past summer I experienced dreaming a poem. The poem I dreamt told me that the person I was before experiencing the destruction that comes from intimacy was always meant to die. For a long time I blamed my twin flame for giving me this darkness, this sadness. But when I dreamt the poem that told me I was always meant to change, I realized my twin flame isn't to blame because who I became after uncovering and living through darkness was always meant to exist. It was only my twin flame that helped that version of me come into existence.

For me, to understand that darkness is a gift was to lean into the intimacy that art and writing provides. My thesis is the journey of my speaker leaning into the intimacy that art and writing provides in order to accept the gift of darkness. Although a lot of the content in my

collection has an underlying tone of trauma and darkness, my speaker still persists through their writing and through the beauty that their writing forges. My speaker takes the destruction from intimacy and turns it into something mystical, something that has profound moments of beauty. My piece “Simple Like Two Trees” is a testament to my speaker's ability to take a story that stems from pain and twist it into something that offers solace.

In “Don’t Let Me Be Lonely” by Claudie Rankine she writes, “Forgiveness, I finally decide, is not the death of amnesia, nor is it a form of madness, as Derrida claims. For the one who forgives, it is simply a death.” To know my past self was always meant to die was to know that I could forgive my twin flame for betraying me. To forgive meant to realize, as Rankine writes, “this has happened, is happening, happens.”

There is a story about Buddha where an angry man spits on Buddha's face. In the story, the man spit on Buddha’s face because he was upset that his children were sitting with their eyes closed with Buddha all day instead of making money. When the man spit on Buddha’s face Buddha had no reaction, and he even smiled afterwards. Confused, the man stormed away and spent all night twisting and turning. The next day the man calmed from his anger and returned to Buddha to apologize because he felt horrible for what he did. When the man apologized to Buddha, Buddha responded with “No! I cannot excuse you! Why should I forgive you when you have done nothing wrong?” The man reminded Buddha of how he spit on his face the day before, thinking that Buddha did not recognize him. Buddha said, “Oh! That person is not there now. If I ever meet that person whom you spat on, I will tell him to excuse you. To this person who is here, you have done no wrong.”

My work moves through my speaker’s death, as they realize to grow and to heal also means to die. In my section “Death In Sixty Seconds” we see how my speaker dies in order to be

reborn. The section following “Death In Sixty Seconds”, “I Came With No Movement At All”, shows how my speaker’s death opens up a new way of living for them as they develop a new intimacy with themselves through movement and exploration.

While writing my thesis I struggled with returning to past moments in my life. I felt as if I was giving the past power by writing about it, or I felt as if I was bringing old versions of myself back to life by writing about them. The motto of the Chrysopraxe stone, “forgive and forget or become paralyzed”, I think played into this fear of giving the past power. The past is something that hurt me, so why would I put all of this energy into returning to it in order to write about it? Wouldn't the energy I put into writing about the past mean that I hadn't forgotten and therefore mean I'm still paralyzed? When I expressed this concern to my thesis advisor Rebecca Brown she said that writing can be a form of exorcism in the way you can take something that is living inside of you and place it outside of you. When I started viewing my work as a form of energy transformation, I felt more comfortable writing about the past.

While organizing my thesis I felt a certain type of power because I did feel like I was participating in a form of energy transformation in the way I was in control of figuring out where to place moments in time in order to create an emotional story arc. While working with my thesis my thesis revealed to me that there is an emotional arc throughout in the way my thesis begins with my speaker discovering destruction from intimacy and then follows my speaker through rebuilding their reality and relearning what intimacy is for, all while using objects to feel and better explain what intimacy is.

The form of my collection is mainly prose paragraphs. In “On the Limits and Possibilities of the Sentence” Janice Lee writes, “the sentence is a performance of existence and relationship to the world.” My collection has a lot of movement through emotions and physical places. The

prose paragraphs display the unique experience of my speaker and how they grasp at intimacy through objects while also adding a feeling of things staying the same, even though there is constant movement. While my speaker is going through major emotional changes and realizations in this collection, and while my speaker is moving from the home, to nature, to the city, the familiarity of the prose paragraphs seem to be a reminder that the past, the future, and the present can all live in harmony together. To die doesn't mean to not exist anymore.

In "Citizen" Claudia Rankine writes, "The days of our childhood together were steep steps into a collapsing mind. It looked like we rescued ourselves, were rescued. Then there are these days, each day of our adult lives. They will never forget our way through,". This quote from Rankine hints at the theme of the past, present, and future all being alive in the now. To be able to look backwards and see how we got to where we are now, how our minds have shifted due to past experiences, is either a blessing or a curse. I think having a blessing and having a curse can both be true.

My thesis begins with my speaker experiencing a destruction of the world they know caused by intimacy. Throughout my thesis we see my speaker die in order to be reborn and experience life in a new way, experience intimacy in a new way. Through the destruction and death my speaker faces, my speaker is reminded of how art and writing allows a person in pain to carry on. My thesis shows how destruction and death allows for movement and growth, and emphasizes that intimacy can be found in all things. My thesis ends with forgiveness, because to open yourself up to intimacy means you are opening yourself up to forgiving the people and things that cause you pain.

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