

What Breaks through the Dark

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THESIS

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SUMMARY

This collection of poems takes seriously Kant's argument in the *Critique of Judgment* that art is a means of understanding, that the poet attempts to give "sensible expression" to ideas and experiences "in a way that goes beyond the limits of experience, namely, with a completeness for which no example can be found in nature"¹. At the same time, I am interested in the limits of art in producing understanding, and for this reason, the collection examines doubt—and specifically what happens when the lyric speaker, a figure for the poet or artist, is faced with limitations that impede knowledge or successful aesthetic pursuits. It seems that in this position, one has a choice: embrace John Keats's call for *negative capability*, "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason," or reject *negative capability*, and thus "irritably reach after fact and reason"².

The poems contained herein are traditional or "mainstream" lyric poems in part because of my commitment to lyric speech. It is not the subjective self that I am committed to so much as the fiction of a subject who speaks, the imitation of a speech act, and the rhetorical purpose this serves. These poems, interested as they are in ideas and imagination, need to be framed in terms of thinking and creating, and the lyric speaker is precisely that frame. I vary the type of lyric speaker and, in turn, the modes of lyric speech and address. In doing so, I try on different positions to highlight the multiplicity of perspectives on both the world and art, but also to demonstrate the push and pull of negative capability. For example, a number of my speakers speak didactically, with a great sense of surety, and in such cases, I often use the first-person plural: a choral "we." Such a collective speaker becomes a more direct version of the Everyman

¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987.

² Keats, John. "Letter from John Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817 (excerpt)." *Romanticism: An Anthology*. 3rd ed. Ed. Duncan Wu. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 1350-1.

SUMMARY (continued)

speaker identified by C. Day Lewis in *The Lyric Impulse*, in which the lyric I “is not this unique human being but Everyman singing through him”³. What’s communicated in Everyman lyrics are generalized or relatable feelings and experiences; in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, Day Lewis explains, this was necessary for the lyric singer to relate to his audience. In my own didactic, choral poems, the speaker’s surety, then, sounds like a collective surety—everyone feels certain about the workings of the world and lived experience. But in other poems, the choral We expresses exactly the opposite: everyone is uncertain, even untrusting, and mired in doubt. In the context of the lyric collection, which Paul Allen Miller describes as “integrational,” these two types of poems establish a kind of conversation with one another, showing a We that is sure beside a We that is unsure—confidence beside fear—which works to destabilize what is known and by whom⁴.

In order to extend the oscillation between doubt and certainty to the reader, I also draw attention to metaphor as a linguistic construct. I work to craft *realized metaphors* to draw the reader’s attention to the vehicle’s dual frames of reference: its literal and its figurative frame. Typically, the vehicle of a metaphor is read in its figurative frame alone—Eliot’s “patient etherized upon a table,” for example, is seen in its figurative frame of the evening sky, not in its literal frame of the hospital; the literal frame is suppressed, implicit⁵. I’m attempting to resuscitate the vehicle’s literal frame by producing what the Russian Formalists called *realized metaphors*, and in so doing, cause the reader to oscillate between these dual and co-present

³ Day Lewis, C. *The Lyric Impulse*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

⁴ Miller, Paul Allen. *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness: The birth of a genre from archaic Greece to Augustan Rome*. London: Routledge, 1994.

⁵ Hrushovski, Benjamin. “Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference.” *Poetics Today*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1984). 5-43.

SUMMARY (continued)

frames. The production of realized metaphors, and the accompanying oscillation, is a means of making the reader aware of the ontological structure of a metaphor; in so doing, the reader comes to recognize the ways in which language and art can frustrate or reinscribe our curiosity about the world and concepts.

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 - . "Everything Beautiful Has a Name." *Kenyon Review Online*. (Spring 2014)
 - . "Haibun on the 650 lb. Grand Piano Standing Upright in Biscayne Bay." *Grist*, Issue 8. (2015)
 - . "He Awakens Our Imagination, Our Desire to Transform." *Salt Hill*, Issue 32. (2014)
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 - . "Medusa Likens Her Gifts to Pseudoscience." *Puerto del Sol*, Vol. 50. (2015)
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 - . "On Social Graces." *Cream City Review*, Vol. 38, Issue 1. (Spring/Summer 2014)
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 - . "Resonance." *Ninth Letter*, Web Issue 1. (Winter 2012-13)
 - . "Some Questions About De-Extinction." *Passages North*, Issue 36. (2015)
 - . "We'll know to imagine the horse's snout, the gelatinous head of the octopus." *Passages North*, Issue 36. (2015)
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*We have a strange Fancy to be Creators, a violent Desire
at least to know the Knack or Secret by which Nature does all.*

Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury,
The Moralists

I

Nocturne

In the dark, magma
crawls across
the lawn, a thick
and fiery sea searing
grass and rhododendrons
and all the soil
beneath. A slow-
moving current
of light. It is a quiet
volcano—the lava
barely hisses.
Watch as this forge
rises from the earth.
How does one turn
from a ground billowing
sunset? A daze—
and then we are lost.
Maybe this was what
Chopin had in mind
when he wrote
cadenzas stalling,
repetitive, then falling.
It's not evening,
but what breaks
through the dark.

He Awakens Our Imagination, Our Desire to Transform

A Chemist Lifting with Extreme Precaution the Cuticle of a Grand Piano, Salvador Dalí (1936)

A solution,
a string of chemical
bonds, and the wood
fibres fissure.
The piano deflates.
Its body has become

membrane or polymer.
The chemist pinches
a corner with his finger-
tips, peeks inside
as he lifts the limp
white skin. Only he

can be so delicate—
his precise
and penetrating eye,
his hands like calibrated
weights, attuned
to proper tension.

One miscalculation
and the cuticle
might rupture—
spill liquid dampers,
strings, and hitchpins
onto the cracked earth.

What a transformation,
this body to be carried
or floated with helium.
Imagine it—chemically
weightless, a five-foot,
six-inch jangling balloon.

A Polarized Scene

This time, the tides are changing
color—indigo at dawn, dusk the red
jewel of a grapefruit. We argue
whether, in the dead of night,
water stains the beach a color
like persimmon. The tidecolor
is a message to the sky, or a form
of fisticuffs. In earlier attempts, the sea
drew attention to itself by shouting
the names of sunken ships at the noon
hour. Once, it returned a mast to its
country of origin, but this read
more petulant than memorious, and
the sky continued its long, engaging
silence. There's a storm coming,
and the sea does its best impression
of calm, but we see the waves
swelling, and the pinkened clouds are
ominous. We forgive the ocean
its desperation. While we name colors
for fruits, we know we're as allured by
beauty as by sublimity, impending disaster.
We run, but we're always looking back.

Flavor Is the Price of Scarlet

Color pours from the life
of things—scarlet dripping
from the skins of apples;
a field of lavender, seeping.
When we talk of a color's
richness, what we mean
is its worth. Capital
has always been a figment
with value, and in this we see
its excess. We are told:
Everything is made.
Taste, like color, is something
we cultivate. We prune trees
before they're matured,
because this stunting
produces the best fruit.
When it's full-grown,
it's no longer trying
to prove itself, to reach
the source of light.
You cannot make optimism
work for you—nothing
perfect comes of chance.
These are the instructions
we were given. We abide
the best we can, making
value, making demand.
Then we watch the skies.
When the persimmons glow
wildly on moonless nights,
you know they're ripe—
worth the price of their hue,
a carefully cultivated bronze.

Questioning Diurnal Thinking

A pond burrows uselessly
into the marsh, its borders
ignored by the emu bathing
in its muck. The pond sees
itself distinct—water floating
on water. If you could see
these immiscible layers,
would you want to shake
them up like a jar of oil
and vinegar? No need—
that's the job of storms.
What is the use of cherishing
life in spring when summer
opens the sky each day?
Some say the sun was made
by throwing an emu's egg
into the sky—its emerald shell
made molten white as it broke
through the atmosphere. Here,
let's believe the sun reflects
twice—on marsh and pond—
layered, weighted. In a world
with two suns, we can forget
about time's constraints,
the usual period of mourning.
The dawn is twice as bright;
dusk more threaded with gold.

The Sound of the Wind in Newport

It is the mansions that bellow
across the harbor:
Aurora heralding dawn.
This is the voice of
prudence, a voice
with hands that need
never flex. Even the motes
come when called
into the light. But there is
another calling: eight
of nine muses beckon
from the walls of the music
room. Their voices are
silent, but you can hear them
reaching out, their arms
rupturing the surface
of their platinum inlays.
Eighty fingers creak,
attempt to grasp the weeping
birches across the lawn—
figures for their missing
sister, Polyhymnia.
That's what's missing here:
the sacred hymn. Don't
tell me the structure itself
sings to the gods. We flit
from room to designated
room, and never
do the yowlings sound
like worship. No, they
wail, like need.

After the Storm Passes

Good, the sky's still there.
We lost it for a while,
to clouds like spirographs
shaping and reshaping
their patterns, spilling
torrents of inkdrops
that pricked our skin
and monochromed
the ground. We worried
the sky had changed
without our knowing—
the clouds were similar
enough, lingering
above us. We worried
the sky had become
a kind of atmospheric
mondegreen—a mistake,
easy to make and make
permanent: *Blessed*
art thou amongst women
become *Blessed art*
thou, a monk sinning,
preferred by all
the young congregation.
The sky returning
is the prayer righted,
and like the nuns I cross
myself—father, son,
Holy Ghost—relieved.

Some Questions about De-extinction

If I've hidden
a selkie's skin,
have I made it
human? If I've
folded and tucked
its blubbered satin
away in a cedar
chest, beneath my
mother's and grand-
mothers' wedding
gowns, have I made
it extinct? I don't
know how to love
a creature like this,
how to be parted
when parting feels
like cleaving. I hear
him call to the sea
at night with a voice
that shushes like
seafoam. I've read
that soon, scientists
will re-birth the woolly
mammoth in an act
called *de-extinction*.
We'll once again see
their wide and hulking
tusks clear paths through
the trees. Does this mean
that one day, we might
unify a dichotomous
creature? When I see
the rules of nature
bent, I want to bend
them further. Is this
worse than theft?
Would you call it
beautiful or *terrible*,
the power to make
a creature over,
make it your own?

Medusa Likens Her Gifts to Pseudoscience

A kind of alchemist,
with this hair.
Snakes that short
the body's
electrical pulses,
alter its
molecular structure.
I can't make you
precious—
just eternal.

This is not
delightful work.
Your frozen,
contorted face
is no philosopher's
stone. I prefer you
soft. I like
the faint sound
of fluids rushing
under your skin,
the crackle
of synapses
across the hemispheres
of your brain.

On the Violence of Doubt

Split the Lark— and you'll find the Music— – Emily Dickinson

Anatomical sketches
can so resemble
technical drawings,
it might be easy
to mistake
a bird's syrinx
for the mechanism
of a music box—
a tiny barrel
inlaid with metal
pins, rotating
against a fine steel
comb.

We're all curious
how birds sing.
But we don't need
to take a knife to them
anymore, do we?
We can see
the lark's insides
with machines—
magnetic fields
aligned to the shape
of the throat
without the gush
of blood.

We can see
where the air
plays upon folds
like a reed,
like a nymph
turned into a reed,
like an organ
named for a myth—
like all myths,
an uncertain
explanation
for origin,
phenomenon.

Pictures at an Exposition

Six live lobsters—
their claws robins'
eggs in the light
and raised like pugilists'—
seem to dance to the sound
of Glockenspiels pumped
through the static of old
wooden speakers. This,
the placard tells us,
is how they fall in love.

A star-nosed mole
snuffling—it smells
in stereo, we're told—
forages for small fish
in a replica of a Canadian
lake rattled from under-
neath by a man with two
strong arms. The mole
alerts us to seismic
activity, its nose
a magnificent flower
of art and industry.

An x-ray of reindeer
antlers taken, it seems,
by a man with salt
in his eyes, displays
inconclusive results.
The reindeer is likely
fine, is likely white,
and will shed those
antlers come spring.
It is the very animal,
the artist claims, from
which the constellation
Rangifer gets its name.

Haibun on the 650-lb. Grand Piano Standing Upright in Biscayne Bay

I put it there because the sea stopped singing. The water swilled about its legs, floated its long black body easily, like a bar of soap. Out there, it was a lightning rod, or maybe the lightning. When I pressed the keys, the steel strings loosed themselves from the pinblock, whipped into the water, and drew out melody—a voice like cellos, like whalesong.

a quiet ocean
is not an ocean at all
just salt and shimmer

Who knows how long this will last? Slowly the salt will eat away the legs, rust the pedals. The strings will corrode. Or perhaps the shore itself will erode, taking all the piano with it. What will be the catalyst then? All the people wading in the water will turn their faces upward, the sun warming the seaspray on their cheeks, their ears filled with silence.

crustaceans make homes
beneath the felt-lined hammers
claws strike the quiet

Pythia of the Fields

She dreams of her own
vitreous humor, jellylike
and filled with wisps
of images. They are
portents, really, and
unshakeable. She knows
that God puts them there,
but believes some
are designed to fool her.
They appear within
her eyes, and the eyes
cannot be trusted.

Dear God, she says,

*I'll have none
of your nonsense.*

When she sees scythes
unbent, their blades
glowing from the forge,
or when the smell
of nickel and acid rises
in the fields, she holds
her breath until
she collapses,
and the signs fade
into mist. But she cannot
hide what she has seen:
her absence
among the rice plants—
her body curled
on the fieldground—
is its own prophesy.

Mysteries of the Sightline of the Ever-Virgin Mother

A statue of Mary prays
to the powerlines.
She'll never see
the cotton bolls bloom
at her feet like lambs. Like
balms, like *palms*—letters
disassemble in the periphery—
referents, too. Is Mary
suspicious of changelings?
Does she believe that the world
eludes us? She's haloed:
her aureole is outlined
by the yellowing air, polluted
with pollen. In art, this
is called *glory*. Sometimes,
glory glows the color of ice.
We wonder if she can see
her own holy cocoon, or if
she can only contemplate
electricity bellowing
through cables that seem
to cut through cloud.

When the Crickets Clash

in clay bowls, for sport,
there isn't blood.

Opponents circle
one another, mandibles
open, snapping. One
succumbs to cowardice,
cowers, tucks
his antennae.

They're goaded
by territorial markers—
reeds, hay blackened
with the pollen
of wild poppies—
and by swarms
of females.

Winners are fed ground
shrimp, housed in white-
washed bamboo cages.

Defeated crickets
are returned to the fields.

Some say watching
crickets fight quells
human aggression.

Some say the loudest
singers are the fiercest
fighters. Some say
crickets were first kept
by the emperor's
concubines—

their bedside chirping
exorcised moon-
light, loneliness.

The Need for Ornamental Hermits Is on the Decline

We came up knock-kneed, stood
awkwardly with our too-white hair
and too-white skin and too-red
eyes like a rabbit's. They don't need
ornamental hermits anymore,
though we were once perfect
candidates. The men grew luxurious
beards. We were punctual, popping
outside at the designated intervals,
feigning nonchalance. Sightseers
applauded our rusticity. Now,
some of us have taken to sighing.
Me, I wail like a banshee, willing
myself a new identity.
A banshee is a different kind
of spectacle, I suppose, one
I can't imagine falling out of fashion.
Death will always need a signal;
death will always pair with fearful sound.
I don't even need to be seen—
this wail makes a magnificent cloak.

The Homeopath Is a Confectioner

I eat bluebells
to ease my migraines.
She fills the blossoms
with jelly
or meringue,
mouthfuls of sugar
and perfume
that *pull the ache*
from the temples
to the tongue.
She's made a believer
of me: When I swallow,
I swallow
the clanging of light.

For palpitations,
tea. Her scalpel carves
the nutmeat
from an acorn
and halves geranium
seeds she immerses
in a mug of hot sugar-
water. It scalds
the mouth and rights
the pulse.

Some say nature
isn't meant to be eaten
like this, that scalpels
are best suited for skin
and sinew. They should
sample her lavender
and licorice braids—
meant to be eaten
in small segments,
unraveled by the tongue
before we chew them—
her remedy (she calls
it *foolproof*) for doubt.

Unsung Elegies Offend

The horses are tired
of standing in barns
painted red for
the color of dying
stars. A dead star
crumbles into iron,
so red paint is made
ferrous and cheap, and
the horses don't want
to play into your
indifference. Also,
they are tired of bearing
your burdens, and
of wearing your
saddles and mail into
fields or battle.
Give them a dragon's
hoard of apples—all
you'll do is placate them.
The horses want
to witness the death
of the stars, bend
the knee in mourning,
and celebrate those
distant, fiery lives
the one way they know
how: galloping at dawn
through settling dew
like a comet etching
its long arcs
across the galaxy.

As Winter Ends, We Marvel at the Sun

When the solar wind blows,
you feel it—
charged particles
prickle your neck,
the crook
of your elbow.
Its gusts shock open
plum blossoms and make
Aeolian harps of the trees.
With so many god-

in-a-sunbeam metaphors,
we forget
the sun is a fireball
lapping storms of ions
into space.
Let's talk about light
for what it is—
electromagnetic radiation,
packets of photons disguised
as golden rays.

But how can we help
marvelling at the disguise?
Soon the solar wind
will pool auroras
across the sky.
We won't call them
nitrogen emissions—
we'll say they're curtains
of electric current,
hurricanes of light.

II

The Imaginary Space Where Parallel Lines Intersect

When you meet, there will be sparks
because for so long, you repelled
each other like magnets: a fixed
distance held by law and logic.
This force must be shattered
for you to cross, and that crossing
will be brief.

 We intersect
somewhere, all of us, a result of
chance or parallax. In a wheat field,
there's a man carrying an Akita,
their heads mingled in a shadow cast
long and thin as brushstrokes.
Janus sowing, or sowed.

Missed Connection

Gazelles were crossing
the wet pavement,
steam rising from its
warm, mottled surface,
cloaking their nimble
legs in fog. It wasn't
a herd, exactly, just three
or four. I don't want
to say it was *twilight*—
that makes it sound
too romantic—
but it was, of course.
I'll say *early evening*.
Their hooking,
ridged horns clove
the air, released a smell
like beeswax or tapioca
pearls, and I realized
I wasn't alone—
you were watching
them, too, from across
the park. I waved.
Did you see?
My hair burnishes
in the waning daylight.
You were standing
under the leaves
of a magnolia tree, wearing
a wide-brimmed hat.

Alternate Plumage

Forget the egrets.
Forget their snowy,
rakish plumes.
You're no less
magnetic.
Around you,
a field
culls metal—
iron filings,
rusted or weathered
debris—
into ellipses
sprouting
like wings
from your ribcage.
You're the mandorla
between. You need
only stand
and concentrate:
your wings
will slip
into a skin of
mirrored sun,
hallowed, almost
aflake.

First Impression as Enchiridion or Score

A smell like rainwater
or shelled peas
clinging to a person's
neck tells me he's distant
or insincere. Like the
opening chords of
the *Sonata Pathétique*—
this is ominous, but
somehow lulling.
You were a puzzle,
smelling only of skin.
No tempo markers—
the only directive
a piacere. We'd had
to make our own way,
pupils dilated in the dark.

Intricacies of Our Japanese Puzzle Box

In lieu of lock
and key, we manipulate
the box itself. Panels slide
in comb-shaped grooves—
millimeter gaps appear,
the box grip loosening—
and the top slides open.
It's a trick
measured in sun.
The more sun, the more
secrets we can hide.
It is said that 59 moves
makes the most beautiful
sequence—the etched
geometric pattern
rearranging itself—
and the most secure.

Honeybees
can be taught
to detect landmines—
might we find ourselves
so deftly discovered?
Should we hide in there
the virus and fungus
combination responsible
for the deaths of so many
hives, wrap our secrets
in its microbial coat?
An additional three moves
reveals a hidden drawer.
The grooves are stiff,
the panels thick
and stubborn for even
the nimblest of fingers.

On Social Graces

When I say
you're *laced*
with bitterness,
I mean it
as a compliment,
your distaste
for formality
some ruggedness
in a manner that
might otherwise
cloy. This is why
we salt icing.
There's some good
in a hint of rain—
the metallic
smell, the sky
threaded with grey.

A Pagan Love Story

You told me once:
*You can't imagine being
a forest, and then suddenly
you can*, your voice
a quaver, a quick,
and of course I furrowed.
Then, an itch—
hawthorn tangling,
sprouting red blossoms
and haws. Synapses fired,
and I bourgeoned, swathed
a field I'd never seen,
the rising scent of waxy
leaves a constant drumbeat
tinning. This was a calling—
not to the field, but to you—
a strange handfasting,
as though you'd already
taken the tie from round
your neck and wound it over
your palm, then mine.

The Heart Is No Shapeshifter

月澄むや狐こはがる児の供 -- Bashō

clear moon, / a boy afraid of foxes / walked home by his lover -- trans. Jane Hirshfield

He feared not the *kitsune*
 so much as the *kitsunetsuki*—
 the woman possessed,
 fox-fire pearl at her throat.
 The road home was long
 and trailed through the mist
 country. In its true state,
 the fox spirit is androgynous,
 its fur white or pure gold. It enters
 the body of a woman under
 her fingernails. Its only trace
 is in her nine-tailed shadow.
 Despite the moon, this shadow
 would be swallowed by the mist.
 He asked his lover to walk with him.
 He never thought she might
 already be possessed, that she
 might bear him fox-children
 imbued with their own
 brand of magic, that she might
 bargain for her soul compressed
 into that fiery pearl—
 a negotiation, or a taming.
 How easily he forgot
 he met her on this same road,
 her voice made faint like gongs
 in the thin light of dawn.
 She carries the weight of centuries
 in each of her nine tails.
 He will learn and admire this,
 his fear lifting like mist.
 Japanese fairy tales end,
medetashi, medetashi—
so blissful, so blissful.

Hymn

We aren't godlings who can speak
change into being. Nothing is so clean,
so simple as that. I know this like I know
there is not one wind, and even one
wind alters its direction, constitution,
picking up debris—leaves, branches,
trees—as it wends with varying ferocity
across the world behind the weathermaps.
It might be easy to think of violence
as a metaphor: arterial spray like a storm
of cherry blossoms—stunning and brief—
but blood is not so lovely drawn by force.
We draw our skin around us, but it's open
as a shrine gate. Praise it, defenseless.

In the Alternate Universe

You will be given a body.
Do what you will with this body,
but remember: you only get one.
It will be sensitive to light
and heat and touch, and it
will most certainly bleed.
As in this universe, candle
flames will contain millions
of tiny diamonds. The difference
is, you will notice. You will reach
out into the heat, roll the gems
between your sensitive, plush
fingers. They will embed
in the whorls of your friction
ridges—your fingerprints—
so that when you play piano,
you also play percussion.
It's a lovely tapping, a nostalgic
tapping, calling to mind
memories of shadows,
shadows of sounds.
But your diamond fingers
will easily cut flesh, so take
care with your touch.
You can be malevolent
if you choose, but don't
mistake this for bravery.

It's Hubris Makes Us Think Ourselves Large

Here, the banyans
have fused.
Seeds planted in their trunks
grow roots like thick
whips, braiding
into each other—the already
knotted limbs—
a heavy, wooden lace.
We didn't think much
of its breadth
until we measured it—
thirty miles in diameter:
at its center, a cradle
of branches creaking
in the wind. We sleep there
sometimes, when we forget
how to be so small.

Beneath us, Earth spins
at a tilt, emitting a low,
low note—a G, they say:
the music of the spheres.
The tone was born
when the earth was born,
a pair of conjoined twins.
Does this knot of banyans
sound harmonies as the boughs
intertwine? Do we,
as we climb and breathe?
We press on branches
with our feet, a tree
of organ pedals,
but even the music we might
be making is swallowed
by the canopy, wind-flourish
big as a small county.

A World Made of String

It was difficult to say
if the world was made
of a single string, or many.
Everything was a bundle,
a raveled curiosity—
the bees, the air, the year
of our births. We could find
no ends. We seemed to drag
the world with us. From a distance,
it all looked normal—flowers
the texture of flowers. We missed
their sueded petal-feel, the idea
of *wet*. Our voices, too, were string,
the sound like twine. There was nothing
to discover, nothing to fascinate.
We dreamed of another world
where we were once again flesh
and our hair wasn't string
but keratin. A world where
the mists dissipate on their own,
not via an elaborate fly system,
each of us at the riggings.

When the Difference Is Almost Nil

It wasn't a floating city,
but a tower on wheels
masked by dense fog.
You could hear it creak
through the streets. Megaphones
bleated, *Nevermind the birds!*
Tricks and imperatives were
necessary to keep us all in check.
It was the alchemists who rolled
through the streets like this,
hawking chemistry as magic,
effortless gold, and the promise
of everlasting life. But in dark
houses, soothsayers examined
the stars through the lines
on our palms and warned
of alchemy's dark motives,
cautioned us to look upward, to
remember the sun. It was a war
between scientists that read
like a spiritual conflict. One looked
to the earth, the other to the sky,
but both tried to break down matter
to its constituent parts. We tried
not to take sides, kept our gazes
straight ahead, but there was so much
to distract—lightning breaking
into the thin white arms of birches,
a leash of foxes. It couldn't be helped:
Our eyes factioned us.

Revision

It is the seventeenth year, or the thirteenth—
a prime number—and I watch the cicadas exit
their burrows and attach, like polyps, to the trees.
They are not nymphs, not anymore.
They make a noise like tearing paper
as they molt, and they unfold damp wings
in unison, a planned awakening. Their shells—
shadows of their former selves—
populate the tree bark, a colony of ghosts.
This is the schema of re-making. Remade, we still sing,
or hollowly whistle, together. Our bodies are still
doubled (one filled, one emptied).
We've *shed the golden cicada skin*—the decoys are
for others to find. This way, we are protected.
Even if you burned all the marks of your prior-
ness—the whetstone of your new, sharp self—
you would still leave traces.
There is nothing you can say to convince me otherwise.

Two Kinds of Conception

The light batters us, warms
the temperature of the room.
You see, this is how we are made—
as in petri dishes. We are born
of cells: conceived, then grown.
When we learn to speak,
we cultivate a self, a spooling
forth of green. Does this
make our mouths like soil?
Like bulbs? You might ask:
Are we natural?
Princess Alexandra of Bavaria
believed she swallowed a glass
piano; it sang through her mouth.
She thought her voice
was not her own. We must not
confuse our windpipes for
our gullets.
Just remember this:
We are made.
We make ourselves.
We are made.

Creation Myth

The organic form...is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within. – Samuel Taylor Coleridge

My bones came first.
Like long needles,
they knitted muscle
and tendon
and tissue and skin.
Filled themselves
with marrow.
My bones created
electricity, sent
electrical signals
to the brain
they carefully raveled
and the nerves
spooling like thread
toward my extremities.
But there are limits
to what bones can do.
My bones taught me
to breathe, but not
to count. Many things
my bones made me
do for myself.
All I have of my own
is the voice I make
with breath. With it,
I learn the world
and its workings.
I speak the flightpaths
of birds and mimic
their sounds:
whistles and screeches,
the song of their wings
sculpting the air.
When I sing, I feel
my bones applaud.
I learn to mimic silence,
the shape and spell
of lightning.

Lament, with a line from Tennyson

The first time the baby laughs,
we celebrate as our parents did,
and their parents and so on,
with wine for us and milk for
the laughing one. Some eat food
seasoned with salt made from tears
of laughter, or when that is scarce,
salt made from tears shed while
chopping onions. But there has been
little laughter of late. Once, we
blamed this on colic, but we know
better now: mirth's gone
into hiding. We go in search of it
like cryptozoologists in search
of the krakens, sea-mist and heather-
back, who *winnow with giant arms
the slumbering green*. But we would
not wake it with fire, hellflame
or otherwise. If the creature terrifies,
remember its size, its unwieldy
limbs. This is why it hides.

The Chosen

Here they come, a long
line of bloodright and pomp.
They claim to see the forbidden
colors, those too complex
for the human eye.
We'll never know for sure,
and to challenge is to commit
to eager, early death.
I was once welcomed
into their fold. I survived
a lightning strike, my
Lichtenberg scars a sign
of my worth. They traced
the fractal patterns
with their fingers, claimed
they were not red but reddish
green. No one knew my scars
were temporary, that my
ruptured capillaries would
mend and leave no trace.
When my skin cleared,
they called me *apocrypha*,
called my skin perverse, green
below the surface
like a lizard or a toxin.
I can still shock with a single
touch, a remnant of electrical
discharge, but lightning
striking from human fingertips
is the trick of some false god,
not the mark of the proud.

A Cunning Ecosystem

In the mother water,
the fish water runs:
an undercurrent—
minnows their own
motion—as though
the river were hungry,
digesting so slowly
a wriggling school
of scales fluid
as mercury. Or they
are not swallowed,
but germinating
in the river belly,
a spawn of bait-fish
already bait. I'm rarely
filled with a longing
to be cast out, but
this sight pulls at my
heart so that I want
to escape my own body.
I imagine the planet
Mercury is molten,
undulating like these
fish. Its orbit is the most
eccentric—the most
circular—in the solar
system. But so perfect
a circle is like so
perfect a stream—even,
calculated—and I shiver.
I need ellipse, ellipsis,
a word written in chalk
or spit on blacktop.
We're held on by gravity,
but something else—
something like love
or fear—keeps one water
above and one below.

Corrosives

When the streetlamps
exploded, we blamed
the swamp gas,
which for years
had been yellowing
our nails and our homes
with its acrid,
wispy feelers.
We believed it corroded
the light itself, not
the filament or plastic
housing. Like attacking
language in order
to silence one man.
Some blamed the white-
smiths, retaliating
with staves and salt-edged
pewter swords
against their long
forgottenness.
There were other theories.
But in our new, blacker
night, the smell
of the swamp grew
sweeter, and we grew
less tetchy—
the cicadas' buzz rose
the air to a quiet
simmer that warmed
our cheeks like fire.

On the Flood, Grown More Perilous

I measure the river
in amperes.
Sparks whip
across the surface
like live wires.
The river has swallowed
a pylon and all
that pylon's power.
Down in the murk,
the current shapes
itself into parentheses
like a corn maze
modeled after
a magnetic field,
iron filings seized
in place. We think
we want to feel
the sparks—
dive in and glow.
But we are
not conductors.
Despite our own
small currents—
the brain and nerves
at work—
we are soft. I drop
a galvanometer
into the water,
and it spins
and spins and spins.

Sometimes, We Think of Our Place in the World

Sweet machine, you
electrify the night—
the planets whir
with the noise
of your churning.
And when the volcanoes
erupt on the West
Coast of America or
into the Sea of Japan,
you beautify them
with magma thunder-
storms, which make us
think of Mars, the god
and the planet—an electric,
unified whole. We are
drawn to your charge—
and, I think, we are
your charge. If we
were to write palm-
of-the-hand stories across
our palmist's lines and
thatches, we'd say,
*The sweet machine thrills
the air like the blades
of a helicopter, or
In the end, we'll think
of snow drifting, little
helium balloons.*
We imagine whole
galaxies radiate
from our chests and
extremities, and we'll
write what we believe
to be true. This
is your influence—
we want to be gorgeous
little moments, too.

A Bird in the Hand Is Worth Two in the Bush

Aren't we always searching
for the value
in our hands—
the things we hold
cupped like birds
or overripe peaches,
the pies we bake
from scratch
with fruit we pick
from market displays?

When we touch,
we mark
with potential—
the power of our hands
is their capacity to alter,
to better, to care for
and sweeten.
The birds in the bush
warble and preen;
in our hands—
prehensile stage
and spotlight—
they perform.

Wabi Sabi

侘寂

To love a thing
whose demise
you can foresee:
a swallow flying
through a windstorm,
a cracked teapot
bound to entropy.

A lopsided house,
its stone roof off-
center, the leftmost stilts
sinking. Inside,
a couple living
off-balance:
stacking bowls
in downward-sloping
cupboards, sleeping
on an incline.

They aren't afraid
that the house
will crumble.
In its pitch,
they hear the chime
of the stone roof shatter.

A Single Mulberry Tree and a Colony of Silkworms Hanging Like Fruit

I've learned this unforgiving art—
dunk a cocoon in a cupful of tea, unwind
the teacolored thread I'll use to make
a teacolored dress.

Should I electrify
this mulberry tree,
the silkworms would spin silk so strong
even birdshot couldn't rend it.

You could see the appeal:
a ripple, a smell like static
before a lightning storm, a ball
of shimmering, high-tensile thread.

I pull the cocoon from the tea:
this sopping thread smells lightly
of bergamot,
of stunted pupa.
I'll make a bergamot-scented dress.
It will be delicate. I've not yet learned
to wield electricity.

III

It's Not Glossolalia,

the ability to speak
a different tongue—
though it is, perhaps,
miraculous. Think
of those in Nagoya,
said to speak like cats—
a dialect peppered
with sounds like *nyaa*.
The language
of animals is the most
difficult to master,
and cats are elusive.
I imagine it happened
all at once—a voice
bestowed on the whole
port town, seamless
and fluent: from the twin
keeps of the castle
to the sakura branches
along the harbor,
bodies awake—
ears attuned, larynges
vibrating, newly
blossomed. Here,
in Nara, deer walk
through the streets
unafraid. We call them
sacred. One stands
beside me at a crosswalk,
urges me to be cautious—
the sweep of its dark eye
now a voice like the wind
arcing through
branches or antlers.

Vantage

Of course we can
never see earthlight
from here. We cannot turn
an eye back on ourselves,
so we forget we glow blue
like Venus, like lapis
lazuli. We forget there's
even a word *earthlight*.
When I say it, I feel
my tongue is not my own—
flesh curling, sentient,
inside my mouth.
My tongue is reluctant
to shape concepts unseen.
Even *retina* and *amygdala*
trouble. Imagine, then,
how the tongue must knot,
uttering another language:
who is this *watashi*?
Not just the word,
the perspective changes—
looking at myself with
another's eyes, as from
a distance, a distance
so great I am lost
in the light of this
radiant earth.

What Returns from Sea

Oh, the things we lose
between earth and sky—
ships, sailors,
wind. My mother
told me voices
carry so far, they
slip into that seam.
I thought, like old
mariners, we might
touch it, lift it back
to reveal Babel,
a preserve of words
thrumming and familiar.
But no—like a tortillon,
the horizon blurs
its own borders.
So we wait, Penelopes
at the harbor line,
watching for the ships
to return, growing
into shape, to see
how they've changed.
But I don't look for
persons, the obscured
outlines of men.
I listen instead
for echoes like
spillover. I wait
for joy in language
unaltered, returning.

Kintsugi

金継ぎ

It is inevitable
that porcelain
will crack, that
the crack will fork
and rend pieces
from the whole.
This is the law
of odds, the nature
of time, that no
amount of lacquer
resin can reverse.
Imagine instead
a chronicle of change:
for even the crudest
stone cups,
cracks can be seamed
with gold, glorifying
the break. *Golden
joinery*: aesthetics
of repair. A trace
of the mender
and the mending.
You might call this
an imposition,
but what matters
who is first, what
is original? Fill
a *kintsugi* teapot
with matcha and water—
the tea will brew
a vivid green and taste
sweet and astringent,
like gold.

What Bedtime Stories Become

When I was a girl,
my father told me
stories about a pair
of rabbits, and I
proclaimed to *be*
one of those rabbits,
twitching my nose,
making the sounds
I imagined they must
use to communicate
across gardens
and fields. I learned
that rabbits could be
gods, could don
the outfits of saints,
so I looked for them
in the stained-glass
windows at church
on Sunday mornings,
but only found doves.
Even now, I delight
to see an urban cotton-
tail darting, so out
of place, across
concrete. The mind
is like the cassidfly,
which will build
a cocoon of gold
flake and semi-precious
stones. Provide it with
materials, and it will
make its sheath
of anything.

Divination

The centaur's mouth
is a lathe, its tongue
the belt, shaping words
divined by stars, by salt,
by one's own shoulders
(*astromancy, alomancy,*
aromancy). The consonants
make all the difference
in truth and prediction.
Despite what you've heard,
there's no blood
in a bloodstone, unless
you will it. The mind
is alchemical,
a centaur's more so.
They fill the grass
with chlorophyll.
They unravel
the signs of the universe.
We listen because we
can't do this ourselves,
because we look at their
faces and think they're
like us. Like horses,
they're measured
in hands. When one lies
down to sleep, the others
will stand around him,
eyes on the trees
(*dendromancy*)
keeping watch.

We'll know to imagine the horse's snout, the gelatinous head of the octopus

When you cannot draw faces, replace them with objects—
a cluster of mylar balloons blooming from the neck
of a blue roan, a vase sprouting eight tentacles. We'll know
this is intentional. There's a certain surrealism to the head
and its figures: steam pouring from the ears, the jaw dropping
to the floor. One day, you'll find yourself eye to eye
with a whale, and all you'll remember is *wet*, and maybe
square, and that its eyes are the size of grapefruits, soft
obstructions on the sleek skin of its face. When we ask you
to draw it for us, we aren't asking for photorealism—
we want you to send us into a swivet, wondering where
we've seen a raincloud like a cube, studded with fruit.

Resonance

The split hive itself
buzzes, the bees long dead.
It's the echo of the swarm,
 a lingering song,
the honeycombs a lattice
of nerves. If you touch it,
 it will flinch.
It's an electrical force, a force
of life. The hivematter is
organic—
 it's more than wind.
We learned to hum so
our lips buzz, tickle
 and numb.
Honey coating the tongue.
The tongue warmed
 with light.
Otherwise, the sound is hollow.
We learned to match frequency,
create waves,
 not breath.
Press your finger into
the beeswax
 and speak.
Feel it vibrate
like the skin of your throat.

A Lesson in Sight

I can / feel my eye breaking. – Robert Creeley, “The Window”

And this is how we shatter.
An image our unstable eyes
can't bear the weight of:
a tsunami frozen at crest,
a nest of fire ants a quarter-
mile wide. Our eyes,
like antique glass, melt—
slowly pooling at the base,
the top thinning—then buckle.
The first crack radiates
beyond the frame and we,
inevitably, crumble.
It isn't a question of actuality.
It's a question of truth.

Yūgen

幽玄

Snow in a silver
 bowl—an indication
 of the size
 of the universe.
 It might seem
 redundant—
 like the shadow of bamboo
 on bamboo—
 but don't you see
 that extending
 infinitely? We are
 confined to this
 world. But in the sound
 of a bell ringing,
 we might hear
 beyond it:
biting into a persimmon
a bell resounds
Hōryū-ji

Dawn

Hikari means light,
and sounds like
light—soft and plosive,
cracking horizon-
glass. When the first
light whisks through
evergreen needles
and imbricated cones,
does it sound
like a shamisen?
I don't know.
I don't know much
about light and sound,
except they move
like waves or particles,
or waves and particles.
Hikari also means
luster, the effect
of light, and it changes
power to *influence*.
This is how light
designs morning—
as it breaks, it compels
coastal pines to cast
their scent into
the salted air, dis-
orders chrysanthemum
petals so their shadows
curl like paper
touched by flame.

Not *Ruins*: Reclamations

When the people leave,
nature returns: an abandoned
church fills with snow,
hoarfrost blooming
from the tabernacle; a railroad
tunnel greens. This is how castles
corrode. O, as they say,
what a beautiful
demolition. Moss-blotted
mirrors, nests in the rafters.
But what becomes of abandoned
airwaves? Imagine: pollen
filters through the static,
softening the artificial
voices on a numbers
station—*The Lincolnshire Poacher*
muting as it yellows. One day,
like field surveyors, we might
find it an artifact, brush centuries
of sediment from the peaks
and valleys of sound.

Shibui

渋い

Astringent,
like an unripe
persimmon. Or,
to the eye,
austere. An aesthetic
of austerity.
Think of the shadows
on rice-paper doors;
think of the stage
of the moon.
Think of muddy
ink; its beauty
is unobtrusive.
We want to be
so quiet, to exist
as though
tiptoeing
through the streets
in blue-grey sheaths.
Maybe I'm wrong.
Maybe it's not
about us, exactly,
but our eyes:
all those cones
and rods. Beyond
the acerbic
surface, nuance—
thatched brushstrokes
on a white wall, bits
of mica flickering
in the garden sand.

Minka

The Japanese farmhouse is woven into the night. Its roofbeams cross like praying hands—fingers interlaced at the first knuckle, not the webbing. There are no *kami* here—no gods of things like lumber, glass, and spring. Their absence makes the space seem bigger. All afternoon, the windows draw in thick beams of light that linger at the sills, then quickly disperse.

隠れ家や	<i>kakurega ya</i>	sanctuary—
冬鹿の背で	<i>fuyu shika no se de</i>	darkness approaches
暮迫る	<i>kure semaru</i>	on the backs of winter deer

Even in snow country, the weather breaks. Violets open, oiled paper umbrellas along the banks of the stream bisecting the yard. It is too rocky for crops to take root, despite the loam beneath. Inside, the floorboards squeak. In a small valley, a pile of old lumber is laid to rest, the life cycle of wood not so different from ours. The violets came as a surprise.

光散る	<i>hikari chiru</i>	light scatters
春の陰から	<i>haru no kage kara</i>	from the shade of spring
花吹雪	<i>hanafubuki</i>	a storm of cherry blossoms

The sun tries to break in. Its rays discover notches in the windowpanes and slip in like fingers. Petals of light, remnants of spring, pile along the baseboards. The center of the house is dark, is always dark, and cool in summer. Petals brown at the edges as soon as they fall. The lumber pile grows moss and softens—you could press a finger through a log, straight through concentric age rings.

稲妻や	<i>inazuma ya</i>	lightning flash—
ひぐらしの声	<i>higurashi no koe</i>	the evening cicada's voice
空を切る	<i>sora wo kiru</i>	cuts the sky

The darkness lightens its weight—it's alive as the fields. As the house cools, its center warms. There's a draft in the eaves, a sound like wings. Mockingbirds alight. Leaves unfurl orange and yellow, waypoints along the path of green's fading. They're so like fires, little hearths. Look in from outside: the world parallels, joins by degrees.

秋鹿や	<i>aki shika ya</i>	autumn deer—
枝角が木を	<i>edadzuno ga ki wo</i>	antlers walking
歩いてて	<i>aruitete</i>	through the trees

Understanding by Comparison

Hiroshima, Japan: Sadako Sasaki (1943 – 1955) folds one thousand origami cranes

They've given me a stack of paper, the color of the crescents in my nails. They tell me it's the color of seashells, or the inside of seashells. I've seen in it before in the sun reflected off the red pillars of the floating Itsukushima Shrine. Births and deaths are forbidden there. If your hand tremors, they escort you mainland. I will make things that float, like the shrine-gate, the *torii*. Imagine bending a liminal pier like the crook of your arm. Think of all the bends in the body, the pursing of the lips. This is how we make a beak. A thousand paper cranes. I think of the paper unwound from a tree, like the shavings of a sharpened pencil. There's a core of lead. My best friend made the first. It was gold. She left faint fingerprints on the wings—I think I hear them singing, like the rings of the white pine. You can miniaturize such large trees with proper tools and care. Their cones can be as small as your fingernails. But, with *bonsai*, the artist must efface himself. I can leave fingerprints. There's quiet in the creases of the paper. My legs are mottle, purple and white, like a stone.

Everything Beautiful Has a Name

Like *tsurune*, the music
of a vibrating bowstring,
the arrow just released:
a squawk that breaks
the still air, the rush
of notes rising from
the release point.
A perfect shot is measured
not by the arrow's mark,
but by this sound,
produced by purity
of mind. Such an archer
is honest—you can hear
her honesty. It's
the resolution of her
fingers, drawn back by
muscle memory, and
fluid—condensation
dripping down a glass.
Soon the memory
of this sound will fade,
and this, too, has a name—
ōjibōbō—the past
a vast expanse of weeds,
the sound swallowed
by their cunning leaves.

Material and Transcendent

All conceivable shapes exist
before we see them in nature.
Crinkled, pleated paper
displays the possibilities of matter—
each fold a building block, each
fold an algorithm. Luminaria, they're
gorgeous alight. *These are*
hyperbolic forms, you might say,
if you believe a concertina shape
just cannot arise from nature's
keen and cunning mind.
Language is another
means of seeing the world,
naming the spaces and forms
origami mathematics models with
paper. But language is
quieter; it speaks matter without
resembling matter. With a
single cut, you can make
triangles into stars, swans, sea
urchins. With a single
verb, you can make the rain fall.
With paper, we can
exhibit theoretical forms,
yet only with language can a
zeppelin take the shape of a zephyr.

VITA

EDUCATION

- Spring 2015 Ph.D. in Creative Writing. Program for Writers, University of Illinois at Chicago.
 Dissertation: *What Breaks through the Dark*, a collection of poems.
 Dissertation director: Christina Pugh
 Dissertation committee: Jennifer Ashton, Mark Canuel, Averill Curdy, Roger Reeves
- 2008 M.F.A. in Creative Writing. Florida State University.
 Thesis: *The Anti-Muse Speaks*, a collection of poems.
 Thesis advisor: Erin Belieu
- 2005 B.A. in English, Minor in Music History. University of Scranton.
 Graduated Summa Cum Laude.
 Honors Thesis: "Order through Orchestration: Musicality and Its Contribution to the
 Mastery of *Vers Libre*."
 Honors Thesis Advisor: John Meredith Hill

PUBLICATIONS

Books

What Breaks through the Dark (alternate title: *Flavor Is the Price of Scarlet*). Under review at Milkweed Editions, Alice James Press, and elsewhere.

Poems

- "Kintsugi" and "Medusa Likens Her Gifts to Pseudoscience." *Puerto del Sol*. (forthcoming)
- "On the Violence of Doubt." *Conduit*. (forthcoming)
- "Haibun on the 650 lb. Grand Piano Standing Upright in Biscayne Bay." *Grist*, Issue 8. (2015)
- "Some Questions About De-Extinction" and "We'll know to imagine the horse's snout, the gelatinous head of the octopus." *Passages North*, Issue 36. (2015)
- "When the Crickets Clash." *Animal: A Beast of a Literary Magazine*. (January 2015)
- "Too Much Power to Wear in Our Buttonholes." *32 Poems*, Issue 12.2. (Fall/Winter 2014)
- "The Heart Is No Shapeshifter." *Fugue*, Issue 47. (Summer/Fall 2014)
- "On Social Graces." *Cream City Review*, Vol. 38, Issue 1. (Spring/Summer 2014)
- "Everything Beautiful Has a Name." *Kenyon Review Online*. (Spring 2014)
- "As Winter Ends, We Marvel at the Sun" and "He Awakens Our Imagination, Our Desire to Transform." *Salt Hill*, Issue 32. (2014)
- "The Collective Unconscious." *The Missouri Review* Poem of the Week. (9 December, 2013)
- "At the Mercury Fountain, Barcelona." *Poet Lore*, Vol. 108, No. 3/4. (Fall/Winter 2013)
- "The Chosen" and "Corrosives." *Hayden's Ferry Review*, Issue 53. (Fall/Winter 2013)
- "On the Flood, Grown More Perilous." *The Nashville Review*. (Spring 2013)
- "Hearing Is a Talent that Must Be Honed." *Verse Daily* (25 February, 2013)
- "Resonance." *Ninth Letter*, Web Issue 1. (Winter 2012-13)
- "Echocardiogram." *Silk Road Review*, Issue 7.2. (Summer/Fall 2012)
- "Hearing Is a Talent that Must Be Honed." *CutBank*, Issue 77. (2012)
- "All the Songs Are About You and Me and Our Agoraphobic Dog," "At the Chinese Opera," "The Doctors Say It's Tinnitus," and "Poetry as Surpassed Nature" (introductory essay). *Blackbird*, Vol. 11, No. 1. (Spring 2012)
- "Documenting an Immigrant History." *Cimarron Review*, Issue 177. (Fall 2011)
- "Lace Factory" and "Mistaking the Road for Open Sea." *Salamander*, Vol. 16, No. 2. (Summer 2011)
- "During the Edo Period, We Sobbed Into Our Sleeves." *Redivider*, Vol. 8, Issue 2. (Spring 2011)
- "Cohabitation." *The Pinch*, Vol. 31, No. 1. (Spring 2011)
- "Exhibit." *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, Vol. XX, No. 3. (Fall 2010)
- "Because Audrey Hepburn Movie Marathons Give Me Ideas." *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (2010)
- "They Don't Ring Churchbells Here." *The New York Quarterly*, Issue 66. (2010)

- "After Killing the Giant Spider in Your New Apartment, I Dreamed of Its Vengeance." *Prick of the Spindle*, Vol. 4, No. 1. (2010)
- "Diptych." *roger: an art & literary magazine*, Vol. 5. (Spring, 2010)
- "Franz Liszt Snores Like a Buzzsaw." *The Pedestal Magazine*, Vol. 56. (2010)
- "How to Write a Sonata." *The Portland Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1. (2008)
- "Five Ways to Arrive." *Sonora Review*, Vol. 53. (2008)
- "Gossamer Armor" and "The Anti-Muse Speaks." *La Fovea*. (2007)
- "A Poem for Our Issues" and "Dear Claims Adjuster." *Literal Latte*. (2006)
- "That's the Thing About Velcro." *American Poetry Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (2006)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2015 *Best New Poets* nomination by 32 *Poems Magazine*: "Too Much Power to Wear in Our Buttonholes"
- 2014 Black Lawrence Press St. Lawrence Book Award, Semifinalist: *What Breaks through the Dark*
- 2014 AWP Intro Award nomination by UIC Program for Writers: "Shifting Frames," "Divination," and "Dawn"
- 2014 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award, Semifinalist: *What Breaks through the Dark*
- 2014 Wells College Press 2nd Annual Chapbook Competition, Honorable Mention: *Signs of Our Own Making*
- 2014 *Best New Poets* nomination by UIC Program for Writers
- 2013 "Discovery"/Boston Review Poetry Contest, Semifinalist
- 2013 *Best New Poets* nomination by UIC Program for Writers
- 2012 AWP Intro Award nomination by UIC Program for Writers: "On the Violence of Doubt"
- 2012 Zone 3 Press First Book Award for Poetry, Finalist: *Signs of Our Own Making*
- 2012 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award, Semifinalist: *Signs of Our Own Making*
- 2012 *Blackbird* Feature: "Tracking the Muse" and "Introductions Reading Loop"
- 2011 Pushcart Prize nomination by Jennifer Barber, editor of *Salamander*: "Lace Factory"
- 2011 AWP Intro Award nomination by UIC Program for Writers: "Missed Connection"
- 2011 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award, Semifinalist: *Signs of Our Own Making*
- 2010 Best of the Net nomination by the editors of *Glass*: "Because Audrey Hepburn Movie Marathons Give Me Ideas"
- 2010 Best of the Net nomination by the editors of *Prick of the Spindle*: "After Killing the Giant Spider in Your New Apartment, I Dreamed of Its Vengeance"
- 2007 John Mackay Shaw Academy of American Poets Award, Honorable Mention
- 2006 *Literal Latte* Poetry Contest, Second Place
- 2005 University of Scranton, Prof. Joseph B. Cullather Award for Excellence in English

COURSES TAUGHT

- 2009 – Present Graduate Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Introduction to the Writing of Poetry: Form and Experiment (English 210)
- English and American Poetry: History and Development of the Lyric (English 103)
- English Literature I: Beginnings to 1660 (English 241)
- Academic Writing I: Writing about Culture in Personal, Public, and Academic Contexts (English 160)
- Academic Writing II: The Happiness Myth, Inquiry and Research (English 161)
- T.A. for Professor Thomas Bestul, English Literature I: Beginnings to 1660 (English 241)
- T.A. for Professor Jeffrey Gore, English Literature I: Beginnings to 1660 (English 241)
- T.A. for Professor Anna Kornbluh, English Literature II: 1660 – 1900 (English 242)
- 2005 – 2008 Graduate Assistant, Florida State University
- Freshman Composition and Rhetoric (ENC 1101)

Freshman Writing, Reading, and Research (ENC 1102)
 Freshman Imaginative Writing Workshop (ENC 1142)

CONFERENCE PAPERS PRESENTED

- “Lyric Hesitation: How the Lyric Approximates the Fantastic.” *Hybridity: On Taming the Ligers of Contemporary Creative Modes*. MMLA Conference, Milwaukee, 8 November, 2013.
- “Embracing Echo, Rediscovering the Self: Teaching Strategies of Repetition in the Undergraduate Poetry Workshop.” AWP Conference, Boston, 9 March, 2013.
- “‘You’ll never be mentally sober’: The Presence of Despair in Frank O’Hara’s ‘On Rachmaninoff’s Birthday’ Poems.” Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, Honolulu, 11 January, 2008.

PUBLIC READINGS

- September 11, 2014 Program for Writers Reading Series. University of Illinois at Chicago, Tufano’s, Chicago, IL.
- March 7, 2014 *Women Write Resistance* Reading. The Book Cellar, Chicago, IL.
- September 9, 2013 Program for Writers Reading Series. University of Illinois at Chicago, Jak’s Tap, Chicago, IL.
- July 3, 2012 Wit Rabbit Reading Series. Quencher’s Saloon, Chicago, IL.

EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE

- 2013-Present Founding Editor, Poetry Editor, Copyeditor: *The Account: A Journal of Poetry, Prose, and Thought*
- 2011 Poetry Editor: *Packingtown Review*, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2010-2011 Copyediting Associate: *Packingtown Review*, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2009-2011 Poetry Associate: *Packingtown Review*, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2006-2007 Assistant Editor: *The Southeast Review*, Florida State University
- 2005-2008 Poetry Associate: *The Southeast Review*, Florida State University
- 2006 Judge: Berrier Poetry Award, *Esprit*, University of Scranton
- 2005 Judge: Berrier Prose Award, *Esprit*, University of Scranton
- 2002-2005 Production Staff: *Esprit*, University of Scranton
- 2001-2005 Editorial Board: *Esprit*, University of Scranton

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2013-Present First Year Writing Program Placement Reader: University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2013-2014 Planning Committee: Program for Writers’ Reading Series, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2011-2013 Graduate Assistant to the Director of Undergraduate Studies/Assistant Director of English Undergraduate Studies: University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2011-2013 Faculty Advisor: *Red Shoes Review*, undergraduate literary magazine, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2010-2011 Planning Committee: Program for Writers’ Reading Series, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2008-2009 Academic Advisor: Florida State University, College of Social Sciences
- 2008-2009 Academic Success Coach: Florida State University
- 2007-2008 Tutor: Florida State University Reading/Writing Center
- 2004-2005 President: Sigma Tau Delta, University of Scranton

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- 2009-Present The Association of Writers and Writing Programs
- 2002-Present Sigma Tau Delta