

Spring 2019

# A songbird in flames

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## Recommended Citation

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A Songbird in Flames

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A Thesis

Presented to

Eastern Washington University

Cheney, WA

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

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By

Taylor D. Waring

Spring 2019

Thesis of Taylor D. Waring approved by:

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## shades of blue

sometimes your *trés hombres* cassette starts squealing  
over hot blue & righteous & you know billy is telling you  
something through the screeching erasure so you drive  
back home the long slow way through town  
down streets named after trees you've never seen  
in time for the sky's pink organ to rupture  
into fleeing gold like the hopeful damned who conjured this burning land  
from bones & blood & sorrow & isn't this your life this road  
that goes off far past that strange gold out into the helpless ocean?  
in this way the sound of water keeps you up at night  
in this way you'll die praying for liquid light  
to reach your broken crown swearing you'll kneel should the morning come  
& when it does don't you wipe the dust from your eyes  
& look out the window at the crack in the concrete  
where you swore just yesterday a giant violet had burst through?

**in this way i haze myself beyond infinite sorrow**

i.

every morning i wake  
& a new tooth  
emerges

from my mouth  
already  
turning to coal

& every morning the toothfairy

leaves

another unapologetic  
match beneath  
my pillow

ii.

i roll over  
& stare

at the match as the sun tries  
on the day's hemorrhaging

array of shadows

wondering

if sight can set flame  
&  
if so why not mine?

iii.

when the match refuses  
to answer  
i cradle it

lull sulphur hymns  
dazed

inside a beast in chains  
igneous drool  
cooling  
on my lower lip

iv.

bereft  
i strike it

on my tongue  
it splits

a river

v.

it is true

since Apemother's firsttear  
we have wandered  
through uncertain aether

which will drown us  
before the sun  
splinters

god's third eye

vi.

how many mornings  
will it take to remember

we are made

from the same  
numb combustion

as rain?

if you want to keep  
warm  
you need to set your mouths aflame



*& slithered my way  
to the headset*

*& then i remembered*

*snakes don't even have ears*

*& though they have vestiges*

*of the hearing apparatus*

*strung to their jaw bones*

*they cannot use sound to communicate*

she replied with a gesture

of uncertain origin  
& the ground trembled

like a child  
hiding behind a curtain

a bustle grew in my jaw  
slow in a way  
i can't enunciate

without the sound of rust

as i watched

that strange woman turn to glass

& my hand

reaching

turn to sand



**the glamorous reptiles begin their soft parade**

an ocean of variable prayers  
refutes all revolution

amidst our casual bedlam

in the televised reflection  
we watch ourselves

hunting innocent mirrors with tire-irons

a terminal ritual  
a maze of granite & rust

winding through the flat & hollow earth  
like an atomic anaconda—

of course we no longer believe  
in the cold-blooded

notion of artificial suns  
our skin is molting

we've finally figured out  
which came first

the lizard or the gun

### the ghastly comedian's last words

the ghost in the foreign      phone booth  
 is flipping through      yellow pages  
 & reaches "L"      for locksmith  
 forgetting      for a moment  
 ghosts can phase      through glass  
 the line is dead      the irony is lost  
 on the ghost      for whom everything  
 is grave      a man walks by  
 talking on his phone      forgetting  
 the nexus of invisible cords      tied  
 around his throat      the ghost  
 sees the whole world in the man's smile  
 the man doesn't look both ways & crosses  
 over when a hearse      runs a red  
 the ghost in the phone booth remembers  
 an old joke      *3 ghosts walk into a bar*  
 & the bartender      *never sees them coming*  
 no one laughs      so the ghost picks up  
 the receiver      taps twice  
 three times      asks *is this thing on?*

**a songbird in flames**

i.

climbing spiral stairs i heard tapping through plastic on my winter window. i knew it was your cat: i'd just thought about sneezing.

ii.

i could interpret this only as a foreign but familiar smoke ghosting beneath my door—how could i not interrogate, in that breath, each of my open wounds, with eyes entwined like a rope and a hangman?

iii.

i want to believe there is neither too much nor too little fire in this world, but a sad song i cannot sing burns in my head: an injured bird, volcanic ash.

### ferrotype of a drowning swan

in distant night                                  a cold moan                                  creaks  
 through leaves                                  & the flutter & the trembling                                  light  
 dancing                                  in the orb                                  shimmers like an old halo  
 dreaming                                  of fog swelling                                  in the lake's hollow gesture  
 o uncryptic ripple                                  o sad song of sight                                  why watch  
 the white bird                                  from a bridge carved                                  of wishbone  
 why kneel as its wings weep                                  like angry wax                                  into the lake  
 a half-hearted retablo                                  a violent humming                                  in the tongue  
 like 15 rusty guitar strings screeching a cruel though modest rendition  
 of amazing grace & why sing along & why light a candle in the choking  
 throat of dawn & why cast a stone                                  out into the pale shiver  
 & why in this way with wings                                  splayed                                  must i learn to pray  
 with my pockets full                                  of stolen pennies                                  & crooked teeth  
 to any sprite                                  who might dive out before me into this fragile water  
 & bring me the wet                                  corpse of the swan                                  so i can open at last  
 its terrible yellow mouth                                  & climb in                                  & sleep

## the cosmopolitan guru is born again

i.

you look for a way into the eternal city:

the presiding heretical envoy suggests  
an ardent manner  
of disbelief

since, finally, there's no door.

ii.

*without a door, no door handle,  
no lock, nothing to break into  
or out of — they shrug —*

*just this uneven chandelier  
shuttering nervously,*

*our milkyconscience.*

*it's true: we can write nothing about the sky  
with our neon pinkink  
without also noting the cars,  
which rumble*

*like moloch, balthazaar, leviathan.*

iii.

ignoring all signs, you drive to the Grand  
& take the elevator to the twenty first floor—

knock twice on the third shadow.

a crone in a bedazzled wedding gown answers,  
if you have her teeth, place them one by one  
into her wide & gasping gums.

she'll invite you in.

you won't be in a position to decline,  
so she'll lead you by hand  
to her bedroom & show you  
the empty cradle.

*it is yours, my rare and desperate flower.*

**the devout auto-mechanic writes off the youth choir's prayer mobile**

i've been listening to gospel music with no intention of saving your engine from divine rust. you think this makes me a shade of green trees long to forget in autumn. it's true, used car sales are down, so what do i care if you forget to put the bus in park & roam senselessly through corn fields? i don't expect we can answer this question in the dry season, but, as the choir kids said "it's always raining in our heads...don't forget to wash our galoshes...can we walk on water now?" though they can no longer return in iron clouds as apologetic rain or an unpolished memory of glass & like that memory, i lack the necessary architecture to continue singing your praise, though the engine just turned over & my mouths are wide open.



### 3 failed attempts at sunflower meditation

i.

o wilting through stilted blinds

o afternoon piss & pedal-limp inertia

o slide in the world's saddest View Master™

ii.

can you pass

through glass

like light laughing

through a prism?

can you reach out

& lift

its sloppy yellow

head on high

& tell the sky

heaven might yet

be on its way up there

if you can find

a little luck

& the right wind

before november tucks you in

without a kiss?

iii.

bereft i turn refusing

to watch the wilting

light wandering

down my stalk

that rare honey sweltering

down into my left sock



**krankentraum**

i.

i walk  
 the hospital  
 when the sky  
 resembles cheap  
 marble & i  
 marvel the sick  
 ward is full  
 of the sick

the children  
 quiet reduced  
 to a series  
 of fuzzy  
 green  
 blips

it's disgusting

how tonight  
 the elderly blend  
 w/ the drapes  
 & everyone  
 is weeping  
 w/ their terrible  
 static lungs

it's disgusting

it's absolutely disgusting

to see so many humans  
 being human stuck  
 to their beds like dirt  
 gummed dreams  
 to low hanging  
 cloud catchers

ii.

one calls me  
 by my first  
 & middle name  
     i laugh  
     i cough  
     i stub my toe  
     i cough again

*i have a headache  
i feel like dying*

i lose my erection  
& the nurses lust  
w/ disapproval  
fill me  
w/ their bizarre tubes

it's absolutely disgusting

*not my fetish*  
i say to lighten  
the mood but they  
are brooding

*you didn't wipe  
your lungs when  
you walked in*

i apologize  
i tell them *the organ  
itself is foreign  
but familiar  
like a german  
accent or  
ivory?*

iii.

eventually they thank me for my honesty

they tell me *the elephant  
is the most majestic creature  
to ever harbor the great sorrow*

i tell them *elephants are absolutely disgusting*

## the mad scientist finally opens up

"I will not replace a candy heart with a frog's heart" – Bartholomew Simpson

i will fasten my own heart  
to the furnace  
watch it smolder

& leave

behind a thin veil  
that long-lost emerald

vacant & reflecting

those flesh names which lived in my body  
before the upgrades—

the spare alternator behind  
the ribcage

two red balloons

splintered broomstick spine

eyes that stopped seeing aeons  
before i replaced them  
with golf balls stranded

on the Lake of Our Cosmic Destitution

lord, i abhor this blistered state  
of unbecoming

this faithless ash  
rising up

this flesh that sings as it burns

**the deep-sea astrologer rejects theoretical photonomy**

i.

you needn't wait long for the obstacles to arise:

insatiable octopus, jellyfish  
lit up  
like thunderous & jealous gods

regardless

you wade through water  
avoiding the plausibility of first contact  
with the deep & ferocious

creatures howling in your ocean

ii.

instead look out past betelgeuse  
through your splintered  
monocle

at that same deep & frightful blue  
rioting among light's distant  
graveyard

feel it prance in your frontal lobe  
feel its ghostdance beyond your third globe

**the volcanologist searches for meaning between eruptions**

the cracked earth laughs like my mother when she sobs

near me a strange man appears to smolder

oddity billows from his solar plexus

i tap him on the shoulder & he turns

his teeth are coal & his tongue a sharp dry rock

for a moment i mistake him for a snowman

shocked we both point to the no smoking sign

he wants to apologize but instead ignites

we smoke until the world is flat again

in the distance burnt trees shiver

**the uncertain pyromancer tries to lighten the mood**

outside streetlamps resemble embers  
dancing behind telekinetic curtains

like half-drawn doves.

a frail pane creeps between us  
like mother's glass bell,  
a telegraph a smile wide.

but you don't call on holidays,

though, you might for a minute, on a rainy day,  
watch puddles fill themselves, as if making  
a statement on happiness

when suddenly you find yourself  
with a rusty pin  
poking

holes in anything that might hold light.

everything in this room  
burns  
as it goes down.

rare honey in a lonely chimney.

surely, the smoke has charred your lungs, your heart.

nevertheless,  
you should start a fire  
if you're cold

you should light the whole world on fire  
if it warms your bones.

**wizard's rebuke**

i.

he found me  
by the blacklake  
still high voiced  
without beard  
or balance  
wielding  
a great wooden staff

ii.

i'd run away from camp  
& imagined i was an old  
wizard who'd seen  
the end of the world

& there was no more fear  
& there was no more  
& there

iii.

like an unholy black bear  
red scar blazing  
on his chest

he roared some ancient  
hex for mutual disdain  
& knocked the gnarled  
stick  
from my hands

iv.

i suppose  
if i were a young wizard  
when he knocked that stick  
i'd have raised my right  
index finger mumbled  
some ancient word  
& cracked

a giant fucking lightning bolt  
right between his eyes

v.

i wonder

is this the human heart's frailty

or my own?

vi.

later i hear him  
tell my mother

*he was holding it  
like he was going  
to fucking smack me  
in the fucking head*

he cracked

a bud lite  
& started a fire

vii.

all night i sat  
in my tent  
whittling  
a black bone  
until  
my fingers  
bled

viii.

woozy i slept  
for seven years  
with the bone  
in my mouth

when i awoke i thought  
it was a wisdom  
tooth  
swollen  
with red ink



ix.

for seven red moons  
i wandered until

i found a dead owl

white & bloody  
& without feathers

x.

i cradled it

nothing like sabbath  
nothing like sweet leaf

so i took off my clothes

& howled  
& beat two great rocks

until spark  
until flame  
until i & the owl

burned  
through the night

xi.

we rose  
into violet morning air

torn in a gentle geometric light  
dripping through our ash

like honey  
from the sky's  
cracked egg

in this way the rain was made

**armus**

i.

in the red desert  
where glass turns to sand  
& dances on lightning's breath

i saw the shadow of time  
ooze from a crack like black honey

i leaned down searching  
for a reflection or a shatter

& felt a tremulant in the organ of weeping

i closed my eyes  
lay two fingers in the oil

brought them to my brow  
making the sign of some dead god

eyes turn back

within me a shadow stirring

like a child named  
*memory of water*

& when the water broke  
& that red planet flooded  
& the sky turned to marble

i held the umbral child skyward

drought mouthed  
heaving sand  
i brought the wailing  
shade to my mouth  
& drank like a quiet vampire

& when vesper pooled in throat

i turned my jaw to the sky  
& swallowed

ii.

a tremulant in the temple of weeping  
ugly organ

technicolor wail  
hieroglyphic mouth

*armus stitching cancer into stellar fabric  
armus opening his chest to find no heart*

there are no words for his longing

the hierophant has eaten them all

poisoned plums

a jackal god rises  
engorged oil coats  
atrocious fur  
a memory  
rotting in the mouth

dead water

i spit it out  
i hear it split  
my tongue

*drink, child*

i offer jackal my throat  
& when tongue laps jugular  
hunger turns to lust

jackal bites  
& when full

slumbers

iii.

i awake & the sun is a new color

& for a moment i remember  
the piece that was torn for me  
though as it starts to rain

i am certain it will be washed away

**memoirs of an interplanetary yeti**

i fuzz between worlds, not quite an astronaut, but lonely as one who watches the earth from so far away the great pyramids seem molecular. this strange though primal longing to disappear, a ghost hiding under a bedsheet. its unkind to be here, with my polaroid memory, but in the future, nothing is disposable, hyper green like the little creatures who brought me to this planet in their papier-mâché space craft. their telepathic alphabet had no phonemes from which to shape me, no metaphor for abomination. naturally i wept emphatically when they threw me out the window.

**a songbird in retrograde**

when you were thunder  
my mouth  
watered an ocean of terrible violets

i spent the next millenia  
reinventing astrology  
in a cardboard box

one night you came to my window  
tapping like  
a bird with  
too many wings

i opened  
a gesture of polite lust  
a rudiment of bodily longing

when we woke  
the sun could not sing

**domestic ectoplasm**

the primordial house dripping green in the month of passion  
you turned the light on the electricity went out we cackled on  
about intimacy the weather feeling like sleet in houston  
a melting fantasy love the crayons left in ma's toyota redorangeblue  
in summer heat & why was the house yellow why did ma throw  
baseball cards around the living room why didn't i see that thunder  
bird in the drive way again again again i pull these memories from my ear  
a boutique candle burning for you my light my nightlight o  
trembling washing machine your fleece your fleas your  
felicity that hole in me which eats & eats & eats & please  
don't answer my phone calls if you're not ready to listen please leave  
a message please leave a message on the answering machine & i'll get back  
to you when phone wires quit buzzing in my head  
& the ceiling quits oozing green on my bed





**the widower washes his hands**

the stuttering savant at the wheel of the super charged  
hearse says he played the church organ  
before god cut his off fingers off  
& turned them gold.

*the most money a musician can make, he says,  
ever had your fortune read?*

you show him your burnt palms, your knock  
off fingerprints. the name your tongue can't  
shape, a seventh shade of sundown.

*i see a screw which will not turn, a nail  
behind your eyelids. a ghost watching  
you sleep wants you to know*

*she's grown tired of your dreams.*

you think back on the piles of laundry  
the smell of other men around your bed  
& ask him to pull over near a rusty bridge  
overlooking spectacular water.

he knows just the place.

**the lizardman cuts the cord**

neural rain. a fragile octopus.  
all ink & glass eyes. difficult to be  
here. again. with you. in this room  
we can't quite afford. among forbidden  
lamps & difficult wax there is a neon blue  
fog which phases through the door. weeps  
like a thin green candle under a reptilian sun.

i just wanted to tell you there is a frantic  
ghost that watches me sleep without you  
also imagining me vulnerable to attack  
in my autokamasutra of askew fetal positions.  
in this way i am an open book. this is why i  
curl around the subject of mutual arousal  
like a dying viper. why i left my skin  
on the floor. why i won't answer  
your phone calls anymore.

## the plastic surgeon courts a holy mannequin

i.

she fell on me in the k mart maternity ward  
our immediate love was only skin deep

on the drive home  
down streets laid out by the insane  
i heard through the radio  
a voice  
like cindi lauper

*maybe we' re going too fast*

ii.

i checked the speedometer

the streetlights turned to smears  
lost like the color of rain  
in winter & i thought

i could hear the static weeping

iii.

when we got home  
she slept  
at the foot of my bed

for 1000 winters of no light  
on an abacus i counted snowflakes

flittering through trees  
until my fingers bled

& i could no longer distinguish  
each fragile flake  
from the frozen red pond

iv.

when she woke she told me  
*the great sorrow is about to swallow itself*

half the moon crumbled  
before us in that sleek  
twilight

v.

that night i caught her nude  
in the kitchen

spooning the other half

of the moon  
out  
of her plastic  
eyes

vi.

she tied a noose around  
her waist & wailed  
like a nun blind  
with ecstasy

plastified i hailed the nearest doctor

*yes? an eyeless angel is twitching on my floor*  
*yes? erotic and unerotic*  
*yes? a sea of sand turning to latex between us*

**the remorseful used car salesmen files for divorce**

she told you they all played in the same band

she told you she first heard their music loitering near a pay phone  
waiting to call bb king collect

you loved that indirectness about her  
the way she'd bend each note blue

on her transdimensional violin

you no longer recognize her now as she pronounces  
her own brand of operatic truth  
to the whole church

*Our Very Catholic Mothers of Great Sorrow*

after the sermon you start wondering  
if it isn't working out

& yell *Dammit, Gillian, I know your pain*

but you don't

even know if that little girl

y'all left bundled in that texas gas station  
will ever stop  
screaming

in your rearview

**the astronomer's husband finally coughs up**

i wanted to tell you the moon has no color  
made as it is of used light, but when i opened  
my mouth you shined a yellow d-cell  
into my left eye, told me to quit whining,  
& returned to clipping your wings.

second guessing the weather, a bird  
emerged like rain from my mouth.

i began to count backwards, tongue  
asleep. each number tasted like a  
dead star, an alphabet of lost light.  
the next morning, after you brushed  
your teeth, several blue feathers  
blossomed in the porcelain sink.

**the fisherman finds love in all the wrong places**

the river was watching me  
through an eye so deep  
& so dark i could hear it

only as a song lost in the wind.

someone sang, it was the fish  
near me on the shore, spilling  
its bellyful of foreign currency

plastic worms & long forgotten  
engagement rings.

whether out of a profound longing  
for the cold comfort of another pulse  
or a sick passing fancy, i fell

to my knee & proposed, holding out  
one of the recently surfaced rings.

it was white & gold with rubies  
in the center, sobright

the river colors seemed  
to dim; the clouds flushed  
their demure greyscale.

by the time the first drop of rain

kissed the back of my hand, my bride  
had died, though, for a moment i'd thought  
she was breathless, naturally, despite  
the pole in my hand & the hook in her lip.

## the paleontologist digs the apocalypse

you fear the violent humming in your tongue.  
 nexus of bees. sound of spoiled milk spilling  
 across the dirty floor like a tremulant  
 in the organ of weeping. that old wind  
 which calls us back home has died  
 but we can still feel it dancing  
 in the back of our itchy throat, so hold  
 your breath. count until we see stars  
 conflating in the rearview. hold  
 my mirror

all our years of bad luck  
 are still stowed in the trunk & we can hear them  
 hurl slow witted insults through the engine's  
 low idle at each blinking stop. sign. no. no turn  
 on red. no turning back to the old brown house  
 on the corner where we learned to tease  
 the mouth's rare muscle, a fraudulent  
 construction of memory

we are working  
 our way down somewhere, but the street  
 lamps won't stop blinking at us, sick slits  
 of blue & red. dinosaurs in a 3D magazine.  
 a reprieve

repression  
 itself is a highly evolved method of survival:  
 this is why we bury the dead, why we dig  
 up dirt to find what we lost in the rain.

why, if i looked up at the sky & saw a comet  
 slipping toward earth, i would call it  
 a cosmonaut's fever, an angel's femur,  
 a bastard's moon.



**the oracle moonlights as a shopping mall optometrist**

you're searching for something mystical  
strewn on a desk with too many pencils,  
but, alas, your gaudy thrift store ash  
tray won't stop filling at its breathless  
rate. it tells the truth: if you hold smoke  
in your lungs long enough, it becomes  
a palimpsest refusing to rest its head  
for fear a very large, very pink

eraser might fall from the ceiling & rub  
itself wild thinking of the possibilities  
of life as a ghost.

we were right to fear the advent of typography:

now, all our words are known, see-through,  
like your grandmother's raw peach negligee,  
a negligence of character. longing to arrive you  
tap your foot to a song you can't quite hear, but  
to arrive you must not shiver when the wind creeks  
through the window or at the possibility you haven't  
obtained the necessary humility to see anything,, clearly.

**the meteorologist prays in greyscale**

all color is carried on a wind  
which rises but does not  
converge

out there somewhere  
between the lead  
& shimmer

in the shiver  
of trees

water rises antithesis

of patience  
that quiet grace

growing since the first canine  
pierced flesh to quench

a drought we will never name

so i have come to ask for the birth  
of a new word

something incandescent  
& without sound

but i hear only a slow whisper  
ripple across the cold  
black lake

& turn to thunder

**the hermit at snapping turtle bridge**

i.

looking across the blacktop—

i saw a tree  
with no leaves & no memory  
of green or orange

ii.

a child walking down this same road  
saw a snapping turtle  
pissing  
on the rusty railings  
of the small iron bridge

his striped neck  
proud & yellow  
seemed to writhe  
in summer heat

but the boy didn't know  
not to touch him

like he knows now

iii.

he lifted the turtle  
by his jagged shell

& set him softly on the rupturing road

hoping he might find someplace  
at last, to surrender

to the slow song of sleep

iv.

the man watching from the tree had no teeth  
though he lived beneath  
the branches & sang  
with the cicadas like rain  
on a leaky roof

v.

& now, i too, am leaking—  
out into the rusty world

my neck

too yellow & too proud to look  
up

& see the headlights

**the haruspex finds god but loses faith**

i.

he dropped his prayer beads  
when his knuckles  
went numb

& he lost count  
& lost count  
& lost

every single bead  
in a pile of dead  
coconuts

ii.

frantic he split open  
each coconut on a rock

& prayed

to find even a single bead nestled  
in that strange & holy shell  
instead of the unformed blue

eyes of an owl

iii.

this much is true:

the world is not a cracked egg

life did not stir  
until lightning pranced  
through primordial soup

& something writhed

iv.

this much is also true:

only a fool would hope  
that owl might cry  
might feather  
might fly

**the kryomancer searches for an antidote**

the snow is erotic in its salt

a gold rose hidden  
in its fragrance

thus the true barbarism  
of febreze: it undoes odors

so that the body becomes  
less and less

as if to say the soul  
is shrinking

back into its tin foil

but can you doubt  
the sound rust makes

weaving its way  
through winter?

nothing like sabbath  
nothing like sweet leaf

that nail weeping  
behind my eyelids

that oxidized cancer  
i can't enunciate

without growing cold

**the young train hopper rejects the notion of eternal transience**

i often imagined myself under the train  
looking up—

mechanical bones  
grumbling like an ancient sphinx  
with osteoporosis—

i'd watched it screech away  
as old questions  
grew in me

so small i thought

i could sew them shut  
like the holes in my only hoodie

already i knew it meant nothing  
to have the entire universe  
crammed inside

my skull

since there's nothing finally  
burning  
at the center of it all

still the screeching sphinx asked me

*what's the distance between rust  
& nihilism?*

i answered

*an iron angel's wingspan*

& i suppose the answer mattered then  
before that creature

flew off to some iridescent desert  
where trains

finally empty themselves

but i have come here to lay  
my head down to sleep



& dream of a quiet water  
lapsing  
down from the sky

to fill my mouth with rain

## ferrotypes of drowning children

i.

one sleeps loose toothed in florence, wi at the foot of the dam the one that took  
 great uncle fred trudell's twin brother's life as he built it legend  
 has it he was very cold & now one can forget  
 how the works of our hands will kill us  
 that summer i took the cheap gold knife from lon finger  
 i carved a totem  
 from the august wake  
 i the black moth

ii.

jordan left a dollar under a river rock & i pretended  
 i couldn't possibly know everything it meant  
 i laughed & left  
 a chrysanthemum  
 in a catfishes' mouth  
 that night  
 he bore a silver tooth  
 to the fire  
 never seen a catfish walk so fast  
 didn't know how to thank him

iii.

*elowah elowah god's greeneye* summer before the red winter

mouthrotted & moaning sunflower drunk

more than wanting to die

i wanted to eradicate

water's righteous  
claim

to baptism

but i had lost

too many names & can never hold  
my breath again

iv.

uncle randy has followed me through the wiouwash

trail to the slit belly of butte des morts  
he does not ask

why i cradle a baby's  
first christmas ornament

why i watch it sink in the bleak lake

i do not tell him why i am cold  
i do not tell  
i do not

& we walk home

who am i to throw away my mother or anything she gave me?



## Vita

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"A Songbird in Flames" & "Domestic Ectoplasm." *Mutiny!* Forthcoming.

"A Snowman to Abduct Me" & "A Snowman to Warm Me." *2River*. 2019.

"Hydrogenesis." *The Bastard's Review*. 2019.

"Ferrotypes of Drowning Children." *Mantra Review*. 2018.

"Swampwitch vs. Undead Protagonist" & "Castor / Pollox." *Manzano Mountain Review*. 2018.

"Dagon." *Levitate*. 2017.

"Drawing / Blood." *Oyster River Review*. 2017.

"Taylorina, the Ballerina." *Wisconsin Review*. 2017.

"Simple Machines." *Coup d'Etat*. 2016.

"The Lifespan of Black Ice" & "Host Story." *Pacific Review*. 2015.

"Broken Mirror: A New Look into Octavio Paz's *Blanco*." *Oshkosh Scholar*. 2014.

### Conference Presentations:

"Atomic Colossus: (Re)presenting the 1945 Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." *PCA/ACA*. 2014.

"Atomic Colossus: (Re)presenting the 1945 Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." *Ronald E. McNair Program Showcase*. 2013.

"Broken Mirror: A New Look into Octavio Paz's *Blanco*." *UW-Oshkosh Celebration of Scholarship*. 2013.

"Broken Mirror: A New Look into Octavio Paz's *Blanco*." *Susquehanna University Undergraduate Literature and Creative Writing Conference*. 2013.

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### Honors & Awards:

Graduate Assistantship, Creative Writing Department, 2018-2019

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