What Breaks through the Dark

BY

BRIANNA NOLL
B.A., University of Scranton, 2005
M.F.A., Florida State University, 2008

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:
Christina Pugh, Chair and Advisor
Jennifer Ashton
Mark Canuel
Roger Reeves
Averill Curdy, Northwestern University
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epigraph</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nocturne</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He Awakens Our Imagination, Our Desire to Transform</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Polarized Scene</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavor Is the Price of Scarlet</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning Diurnal Thinking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sound of the Wind in Newport</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Storm Passes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Questions about De-Extinction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medusa Likens Her Gifts to Pseudoscience</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Violence of Doubt</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures at an Exposition</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haibun on the 650-lb. Grand Piano Standing Upright in Biscayne Bay</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pythia of the Fields</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysteries of the Sightline of the Ever-Virgin Mother</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the Crickets Clash</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for Ornamental Hermits Is on the Decline</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Homeopath Is a Confectioner</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsung Elegies Offend</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Winter Ends, We Marvel at the Sun</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Imaginary Space Where Parallel Lines Intersect</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed Connection</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate Plumage</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Impression as Enchirion or Score</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intricacies of Our Japanese Puzzle Box</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Social Graces</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pagan Love Story</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Heart Is No Shapeshifter</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymn</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Alternate Universe</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s Hubris Makes Us Think Ourselves Large</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A World Made of String</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the Difference Is Almost Nil</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Kinds of Conception</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation Myth</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lament, with a line from Tennyson</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chosen</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Cunning Ecosystem</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrosives</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the Flood, Grown More Perilous................................................................. 44
Sometimes, We Think of Our Place in the World........................................... 45
A Bird in the Hand Is Worth Two in the Bush................................................... 46
Wabi Sabi......................................................................................................... 47
A Single Mulberry Tree and a Colony of Silkworms Hanging Like Fruit......... 48

III...................................................................................................................... 49
It’s Not Glossolalia,.......................................................................................... 50
Vantage............................................................................................................. 51
What Returns from Sea.................................................................................... 52
Kintsugi............................................................................................................. 53
What Bedtime Stories Become......................................................................... 54
Divination........................................................................................................ 55
We’ll know to imagine the horse’s snout, the gelatinous head of the octopus... 56
Resonance...................................................................................................... 57
A Lesson in Sight............................................................................................. 58
Yūgen............................................................................................................... 59
Dawn............................................................................................................... 60
Not Ruins: Reclamations................................................................................ 61
Shibui................................................................................................................. 62
Minka............................................................................................................... 63
Understanding by Comparison....................................................................... 64
Everything Beautiful Has a Name................................................................. 65
Material and Transcendent............................................................................ 66

Vita.................................................................................................................... 67
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

---


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 whom\(^4\).

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, implicit\(^5\). 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

---


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.
Parts of this dissertation were published in the following journals:

---. “The Chosen.” *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, Issue 53. (Fall/Winter 2013)
---. “Corrosives.” *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, Issue 53. (Fall/Winter 2013)
---. “Everything Beautiful Has a Name.” *Kenyon Review Online*. (Spring 2014)
---. “He Awakens Our Imagination, Our Desire to Transform.” *Salt Hill*, Issue 32. (2014)
---. “The Heart Is No Shapeshifter.” *Fugue*, Issue 47. (Summer/Fall 2014)
---. “We’ll know to imagine the horse’s snout, the gelatinous head of the octopus.” *Passages North*, Issue 36. (2015)
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
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 Dali (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 blubered satin away in a cedar chest, beneath my mother’s and grandmothers’ 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 wooly 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.
A statue of Mary prays
to the powerlines.
She’ll never see
the cotton bolls bloom
at her feet like lambs. Like
*balsms*, 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 moonlight, 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.
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 aflame.
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.
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.
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 traile...
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  
an 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,
it 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.
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,
odies 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.
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
(estionancy, alimonancy, 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.
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.

隱れ家や  
kakurega ya  
sanctuary—

冬鹿の背で  
fyu yu shika no se de  
darkness approaches

暮迫る  
kure semaru  
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  
hikari chiru  
light scatters

春の陰から  
haru no kage kara  
from the shade of spring

花吹雪  
hanafubuki  
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  
inazuma ya  
lightning flash—

ひぐらしの声  
higurashi no koe  
the evening cicada’s voice

空を切る  
sora wo kiru  
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  
aki shika ya  
autumn deer—

枝角が木を  
edadzuno ga ki wo  
antlers walking

歩いてて  
aruitete  
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 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 motes 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 director: Christina Pugh  
  Dissertation committee: Jennifer Ashton, Mark Canuel, Averill Curdy, Roger Reeves

- **2008**: M.F.A. in Creative Writing, Florida State University.  
  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**


**Poems**

“*Kintsugi*” and “Medusa Likens Her Gifts to Pseudoscience.” *Puerto del Sol*. (forthcoming)


“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)


“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)


“Everything Beautiful Has a Name.” *Kenyson 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 Chosen” and “Corrosives.” *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, Issue 53. (Fall/Winter 2013)


“Hearing Is a Talent that Must Be Honed.” *Verse Daily* (25 February, 2013)


“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)


“Exhibit.” *The Sow’s Ear Poetry Review*, Vol. XX, No. 3. (Fall 2010)


**HONORS AND AWARDS**


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)
CONFERENCE PAPERS PRESENTED

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