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JAM Tomorrow

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JAM Tomorrow

poems

Glenn Boothe

A Thesis Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-
St. Louis

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing with an emphasis in Poetry

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Abstract:

These poems are filled with a concern for identity, sometimes leading the reader into the subconscious realm, or the realm of the muse. In this effort, a few of these poems journey back to childhood to relive images and icons from the 70s. The “Alice” poems delve into the subconscious and question the insanity of existence. Yet the bulk of the poems explore the many facets of love and relationships, conveying a sense of unending desire to be shackled and enslaved by emotion, bordering on obsession. And interspersed throughout, there are poems that reflect on psychoanalysis, physics, and ponder on multiverses, and parallel universes, while questing for the universal answers, with a motif in many poems of “what if....” What if one lives many life times? What if one gives over to passion, lust, or even love? What if one partakes of the “apple”, another motif throughout? The answer to many of these questions seems to be one of transformation. Ultimately these poems lead the reader to question one’s own evolution.

for my Muse

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Epigraph

“You couldn’t have it if you *did* want it,” the Queen said. “The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday—but never jam to-day.”

“It *must* come sometimes to ‘jam to-day,’” Alice objected.

“No it can’t,” said the Queen. “It’s jam every *other* day: to-day isn’t any *other* day, you know.”

“I don’t understand you,” said Alice. “It’s dreadfully confusing!”

-Lewis Carroll

JAM Tomorrow

Muses, Listen For My Call

find my small faded photos
picked through, mused over
in an attic, somewhere
sunbeams cutting panels of light
across rafters and floorboards
a broken portal window
where leaves enter and exit
some vanishing, some caught by streams
and carried toward the sun

Girly Breasts

My tits were painful and hard this morning
real hard like tiny little frozen spring peas.
They grew over the course of few months into tiny mounds, a small girls blooming
breasts.
I couldn't be seen without a shirt in the summer by the pool.
The hard disks beneath the skin were painful when pinched.
Had to be extra careful who I hung around.
I finally told my mom who told the doctor.
That happens sometimes in boys when their body starts to change, he said.
I was calling BS and was worried I was going to have big girly breasts.
I remember my parents telling me that when my mom was pregnant that the doctors said I
was / to be a girl.
And my mom with only boys to raise would dress us sometimes in girl's clothes.
I was too young to remember if that was true. But I do remember the look on my mom's
face as she gently touched my young boy's girly breasts.

I Keep You

I keep spiders in baby food jars, feed them
bugs I have caught, keep them

under the porch, a concrete, walled-in

porch, where there's spiders abound
and the dirt is dry, drier than earth

drier than bone, resting atop the dirt, little bones

little animals that have crawled in and died, decayed,
near my jars, my little friends, hidden away, captured

dry little carcasses, with tufts of hair.

I keep caterpillars too, big plump ones
a harsh winter coming on.

Otaku

Dolls, mailed to me dolls, plastic, cloth, stitched, sewn,
life-size, play with me dolls, something to touch, a doll,
no arguments, no drama, dolls. Yoshida dolls: real silky hair,
dreamy eyes, that's a doll! Buy a doll, make a doll,
how do you go about finding a sweetheart of a doll,
with clothes and all? Accessories that would make living dolls
envious, like one of those expensive bags, a designer bag,
and shoes to match! If I could find a doll like that, we'd go out
to dinner and to the movies, and we would go camping and canoeing.
She would be my best friend. We would go shopping together.
She could pick out all my clothes, and I would tell her she is hot,
smoking hot, all day, all night, and we'd have sex a lot.
My friends would love her too, and they would invite us
to their dinner parties, where she'd entrance all the guests
with her sparkling, realistic eyes. Wow, they will say...wow...
and my single friends, and those that most certainly aren't,
will be inquiring, where did you find such a lovely doll?
And I will reply, well I found her online, and I knew
she was the one for me. Wow, online, one of my friends will say,
usually online dating is so, well you know, such a bad idea.
Usually, I will reply, but not this time, not for me.

Sears Catalog 1978

Era of Buck Rogers and Wonder Woman
and I wanted to build a space ship
and listen to the Bay City Rollers
and dream of distant Star Wars.

I am flying.
Flying to the beat of Boston
taking me to the sky
to the moon
to the sky moon space station orbiting future earth

to the image of backyard bbqs
to sun shade pool side umbrellas
and the coconut scent of her sun lotion

to the glass filled with tea, with ice
a twist of lemon, lemon
wedges in a flower-shaped glass bowl.
And only the pool-water outline
of her heel
and the balls of her toes
on the sunbaked cement
her Brazilian clogs beneath
a chair
a beach towel palm trees
left for someone to find

to those Avon summers
women that smelled
perfumey
to the touch of plush shag carpet
to the book of mascara makeup lipstick rouge wonderful sensual colors

to her, and only her
her faded bell bottom jeans, babydoll top
long brown hair
the scene hazy
to the picture in the Sears catalog beside my bed.

Finding Love at a Firecracker Stand

A carnival tent.
Yellow and white stripes.
The head of a black cat.
Yellow fierce eyes.
The orange capped rockets.
Little tiny cones
atop a cardboard tube filled with gunpowder.
Explosive.

I imagined the force
of those tiny rockets.
The lift off toward space.
I imagined a tiny me
strapped in tightly
craving intergalactic exploration.
I imagined.
What she would feel like clutched in my hand.
A powerful stick.
Dangerous.
Waiting eagerly beneath the shade of the golden canvas
a firecracker, too hot to touch.
Her eyes bright as the mid-day flaming sun.

A Big, Juicy, Red Apple

We went downstairs, a couch
and throw rug in the corner of the basement.
We set up our amps and drums and started playing.
Hey
his sister and her friend watched, smiles and more
smiles through the sliding glass doors and
I could see the sun and pool.
And it was blurry. Steam on the glass.
The carpet in front of the drums is where we got high
and I wasn't sure I felt anything.
She told her friend, and we got high
and there was always pot
and we smoked it always
and then she got high with my friend
and they got high together while I watched
as if she knew that apple was poisoned
but she still wanted a taste
and I offered it to her anyway
and she took it and bit into its flesh
and sucked the juices and wasted nothing.

Fucked Up, Only Love

She put her seat back to stretch at the rest stop
after we hiked up into the hills, looking at birds.
Only after the blistering heat and a few beer cans
emptied and discarded in a drunken hate rage
against the machina, did we question:
What if Sunday never came, what if it was always
Saturday, and we never ran out of beer
and we never got tired of hiking
and night never came, and we laid in the sun
and never got burned, and we made love
and always felt new and renewed.
What if there was no such thing as a dream
if there was only love, and no machine

The Last Float Trip

Only yesterday it seems, down the river
the tube floaters throated another beer
the water warm as a bath
the sun burnt legs of silly teens
buoy like and bobbing along
heads baked from sun and sweat and smoke.
When will you--great and mighty river--
when will you dissolve into shadow,
find that soft place between
bare feet and ground.

Beneath The Surface

Beneath the brushstroke

thick oil paint, smeared and blotched
patched, smudged, pasted and scraped
a flip of the wrist here and blotch there

Beneath the subtle lines

beneath the curves rounded smooth
clumps of black dabbled with a wisp of blue
a hint of a gentle hand, slight touch and smooth caress
standing back to check for accuracy
holding a hand out, thumb up, perspective test

Beneath the canvas

behind the wood frame and a canvas pulled taut
she undresses in the dark
her blue dress bunched up in the corner
her bra and panties tossed together
her high heels placed side-by-side

Beneath the artist

Beneath the model

Beneath the muse

The masterpiece emerges

Art Gallery Opening

People gather on opening night
to bear witness to the display
some judges, some juries
some guards, some attorneys
defending the rights of—
and defining, no validating, no justifying—
what art is . . . or what it is not.
They come in waves
come for the wine
come to pass the time
but they all display themselves:
some in fine attire, some casual
some in colors wild, some in style goth
some 80s punk, some in business suits
some in evening dresses and extremely high heels
some sporty too.
So many bright colors and contrasts.
Charcoal lines, pencils faded edge
swashes of paint applied thick
color above the eyelids
delicious dark cherry lips
white poster board, textured
like finely woven cloth, cloth covering wood
skin stretched like canvas.
Her dress multicolored exotic
the stroke of the brush
through her long brown hair.
She smiles from the touch
closes her eyes
and imagines what it would be like
to be more than just art.

Start With The Whole

When drawing the hand, which seems difficult even for the most talented artists, the complex shapes, lines and perspective can be reduced to its most basic forms. I started with her hand, comparing it to mine, the line starts and I capture it, create the details and veins and wonderful thumb, then I must attach the rest of the body. The size limitations of the paper prevents this. My art teacher says, you must start with the whole, charting out the landscape, the entire form, and then work inward with specifics.

Gallery Talk on a Kitchen Table Top

Inspired by Roberto Matta's paintings:
To Cover the Earth with a New Dew, and, Eggs of Rain

Look! Look! A sky dome

edges jagged step down off pillars of pines
a forbidden love, a greyness, to rise above
he paints with sand, no that's Rivera
He loved a married one, Yes, that's Matta

here's his work, *to cover the earth with a new dew*
the light that goes sideways into a tight tulip
across the walnut table top.

a vase of water spills over the smooth surface
soaking the yellow summer dress of the woman
sitting on the table top
and the long, swollen soaked stalks
fingers like abandoned fence posts, rising
out of the sea, a collection of straws

she knows my thoughts
before I say what if things were different
what if we could be in love?
Would we biomorph into organic flora,
feel the depth of space in our bones?
As the planets circle us
unable to escape our gravities pull
the last, slimy shoots rise above
the murky green stones

Look! Look!

open the closed shutters
let the rain flow in
lay the body naked open
beneath the ochre for his silver thumbprint
on canvas, or an egg to give birth to rain
or a paint smear, or a "what if" Freudian slip

Multiverse Love

“In string theory, all particles are vibrations on a tiny rubber band; physics is the harmonies on the string; chemistry is the melodies we play on vibrating strings; the universe is a symphony of strings, and the 'Mind of God' is cosmic music resonating in 11-dimensional hyperspace.”

Michio Kaku, Ph.D. Theoretical Physicist

Thought is the paint on canvas, interstellar dust in your cosmic eye,
a theory strung together, the brush against the grain of your thigh.
The dishes go in one by one, the clatter, the wine glasses, the dishes go in one by one,
and you pull
up a chair to sit down beside me. We buckle up, brace ourselves for the ride. The gravity
pulls
us down
and away, our breath away, and biometrically we stand on our tip-toes,
and fall down
to the green and yellow, to pull at the fabric, to land
where there's no flashlight that works because there are no batteries:
only starlight rainbows in your infinite eyes.
We haven't really left the kitchen, put anything away. We push the olives next to the
grapes / next
to the knives and wonder at each other, wonder at the silliness of it all, and laugh, drunk
on wine and music, on the dancing of phantoms who become molecular strings connected
to strings: a DNA strand in the multiverse of our minds.

Recorded Thoughts

He knows of the universes
the multiverses, he physics them
and strings them together, and says
our universe is special, we think
and thought makes us unique
and the burning suns do turn
on their axis, flames whip out into the void
of space at nothing, like a fiery leather
whip, not quite connecting to flesh
and she lashes out into space for me
for that vehicle with the platinum panels
and modified starlight from distant worlds
and I know for her and I to exist
we have to be in a multiverse, a parallel place
not unlike our own, and we have to exist
the flesh of us, our thoughts, can play on the drum
the music, the sliding down hills and rolling in the grass
finding out that play is pain in disguise
finding out that our thoughts can be recorded
our minds, not lost, but stored
in some databank, shot out into space
for safe keeping, or for hopes of
contacting someone else in our multiverse
someone else who thinks like us
who wants to be with us
who floating lost and lonely out there will find us
and dream of us in return.

He thinks the dark corridors will illuminate with torchlight suns
and what we'll see is a blue and green planet
with streaks of titanium white clouds
and a bright burning eye peaking over the horizon
and then we'll know the thoughts
have arrived, and she'll be waiting
she will have dreamt what I have dreamt
and recorded our love, and mailed it to far off regions
multiverses, to find that one
soul that one unique
individual, who waits for our return
who really is us
who really is the other me.

Companion

She worships the sun each morning.
I see her as I'm sculling on the lake.
She watches the sun gather itself
above the distant tree line, her face aglow
like a distant human lighthouse.

Distant thunder like a crescendo of drum beats
pounds the far reaches of the sky as I sit
in my boat pondering, resting....
I row into the cove where the waters are usually calm,
but a breeze picks up suddenly and leaves
are shaken from trees, dry leaves from a draught
of a summer. The leaves whirl around above me
and float wildly like little kites without a string.
I wonder then if she worships the sun or prays for rain.

Last night I dreamt of being a beautiful woman
in a sparkling blue dress. I arrived at a magnificent ball
or palace with marble columns. I saw glittering jewels
and golden glows of light. I felt happy if only for a moment
then I awoke, aching and a little cold. I ate lots of fruit
yesterday and drank dark beer. It was time to get up.
Time to get ready

After work, I sip citris flavored beer and hang out in bars
alone, drinking, contemplating. She once said to me
I am lonely, I am looking for a companion.
The rain never comes, the rivers sink into the land
and I remember that morning on the lake. I watch
as she prays to the sun, I watch as the sun rises
and pushes the tiny untethered kites to their ruin

Caught in a Lunacy

We met in the park on a summer night
under the metal bent roof of the abandoned food stand.
We abandoned our dusty jeans
played with the laces of our shoes.

We laughed together caught in a lunacy
of the risk of being caught with our shoes off
laces tied together.
We laughed as your shirt opened, bra opened
your breasts bare open.

I felt then...
felt the universe falling past us
all bodies and comets and flaming worlds falling
into their suns.
I witnessed the flash of a crushed ice trail
edge the hole that gravity is pulling us all in.

The Kiss

Like the solid glow of midnight,
a kiss bends space, a time-warp-space-craft-new-millennium-verse.
Hear the notes rise, like a wisp of smoke
and slide in a swirl around
the old gods
in the grove beyond the jazz clubs.
Night dancers. Portal bars. Blues blend with whiskey
the dim caramel light
and windows streak with rain veins
and the music remains
the brassy tones, like the rumble of metal sheets shaken
and smooth jazz playing
in some distant, hollow and woody
percussion place

Never Hold Back

I remember the moment
the exact moment. It was that afternoon
we met at Castlewood Park. We walked
the edges of the cliffs, and I stopped you
from stepping on a snake. It was that exact
moment when I touched you, held you back.

Autumn's Kiss

We share a fireside kiss
on a cold night
sandals near the fire
smell of honey-sweetened, perfumed-sweat
like the smell of warm leather
like the scent of her. In that warm moment
the firewood settles.
The quiet night contains us.
The apple, covered in caramel, melts
into our eager mouths.

Invocation

Near the warmth of the fire
I gazed out the window
on the night of the hunter's moon
at a lady standing in my driveway
moonlight stretching
a silver claw over her back.

Adornment

A strange, primitive thumping resonates through every cell of her body in the den of the artist who painstakingly guides her ink-filled needle, pricking soft smooth flesh. A living canvas, hesitantly breathing, filled with anticipation and fear, trusts the steady hand of the artist. Nervously excited, she loves her slow touch, keenly aware of her own breath that thrusts the candle flame, flickering on an audience of shadows who watch as I do, a hopeful apprentice who wants to learn from her cryptic tomes stacked against the brick wall. Yet, the artist knows her secrets are safe: her mastery of pain, with the illusion of pleasure; her inks and needles are repositied in the dark, there in those dens where the artist creates her greatest strokes: the primitive lines and Celtic knots, floral ropes with thorny tines, interwoven, forked black-tongues and multicolored goddess'. Her patience and pleasure, I look upon in awe, realizing that I am becoming a journal of flesh, scribing on my only book with knife, flame and ink.

Indy

We walked down Washington Street, towards Capitol
heading south to a blues club
where I had a bad gin and tonic.
Earlier that day
cranks and gears in the garage,
the crew worked over the car
hand polishing each bit, taping her up
the Indy cars rumbled and roared.

Later that night at the restaurant
the steak, flavor vs tender: a choice,
the waitress said, she was finishing
law school, awaiting the bar, young skinny thing
mother, meds, she broke two glasses
and kept chattering on about
taking too much Sudafed.
We liked her
and the steak aged two weeks
seasoned to perfection.

The cold walk that night, midnight
something brewed in me
deep-in, aesthetic, the grip of leather
the ritual, something sexy about engines
the purr, the roar, the power
the sacrifice.

Seamstress

Fabric, before it is cut, is laid out on the table
long sheets, unformed, shapeless.
She carefully cuts around the edges, folds and pins.
She'll want it pleated and to hang just above her knees;
no, really mid-thigh, she's really a tease.
Her fishnet stockings sends chills
of anticipation
to her toes
tingling, ready for the dance, the pulsing bass
dance
sweat and dance
swinging her long hair
your hands around her waist.
She really just wants
ecstasy
a moment of unreality
where the thread can unravel
the pattern pattern-less.

The Choice

What will you do now that you are chained to a time bomb?

The experts predicted it:
near a man-made lake, I step over fissures and cracks

a storm heads down from the northwest
like an uppercut, a long overdue earthquake

an iced over lake freezes the heart in your hand
removes the breath from your lungs

counting days by the return of the sun
day after day, walking the same path, I found

out about myself, through you, in you
left is a whirl and roar of the crosswind and ice

and the security check points will try to find
the bomb before going off, and the time will come

where there will be indecision, one who you love
another who you love, and the bomb remains ticking.

Tell the Night

Tell her she looks fine in her tight black dress.
Tell her she doesn't look bloated even when she insists otherwise.
Tell her she glows brightly tonight her face is radiant, like the moon.
But not like the moon, darker, more mysterious.
And when she says, *in what way?*
Tell her the depths of her eyes are eternal and they
shine with distant glowing nebulas.
And her beauty leaves you in awe
because she reminds you of the calm and endless seas of tranquility.
Tell her there's no time for loneliness.
Not a second goes by that you aren't thinking of her, oh night,
Tell her you wish she was yours, only yours
Tell her that you want to look deep into her infinite eyes.
Wish she could look back into yours
and see that there is hope deep inside.
Tell her this and before it's too late.
Tell her before she enters the plane and leaves the gate.

The Pinball Machine

You play and you manipulate the outcome with
a nudge
a push here and there
but not too much or the dreaded tilt
and the spiraling dead metal ball
no matter where it is
always finds center
and never escapes that
tiny black hole

When she appeared, seemingly from nowhere
I thought of stars and planets aligning yet slightly tilted.
How I longed to nudge her just a bit
make the planets align just so.
Would that have made the difference?
Would I have avoided the long slow
inevitable spiral into that black hole.

A Pinball Super Hero

behind protective glass, wooden box
and the bells ding, a squeal from

a mouse awakened to wrathful thunder

save the world, save her from tilt-

ing, nudge her gently

and pretend to battle the forces of nature and pretend
to fly, fly into space, fly around the earth

to wind back time like superman did
for her

and in winding back, each time we lose
every time we lose

we play the game again

Leather and Lace

I love leather and lacey, frilly things
I love the texture of a corset, the strings
I love her stockings, strappy crisscross design
I love her black leather high heel shoes, silver
and brass, and the pendent resting in the cleft
of her breast, and the way her hair falls in ringlets
and waves, I love her tiny ears, elven-like
one more so than the other she said. I love
the way she moves, her hips move, that's been said
I love missing her when she's away, but mostly
I love the fragrance of her, her scent wisps me
toward airships and treasure troves, high adventure
and rich red mahogany panels of glorious mansions
I love all these things, but mostly I love nothing
as much as I love her and leather and lacey, frilly things

A Gull's Wing floats down Green River

hallucinating by the river
staring at the sand at my feet, not fixed, unfocused
the ground undulates, wavers, lips to touch a belly
kissing the soft around the button
a rock soars over my head and kerplunks into the river
the embankment I am on is two shelves lower than the path above
the best lover I have never had
you are eternity, you are blue eyes, your lips against mine
the stabbing grass blades resist the wind while leaves roll over head
to the sound of gulls yapping, their calls, a chorus to the tribute floating
down the river, a wing, then the feelings come like rain drops pelting a tin roof
slowly, ping and another ping, and another till all pings become one
one thrusting wave after wave, the sun, a stamp, sticks to the surface of the river
a green skin, a film of rich green hue, there is an inevitability toward
the grey rocks that pile up on river banks and train tracks that carry slow trains
that howl, and clank, and rattle, and clank and rattle. a train wreck of emotion
the roar of the locomotive, slippery dragon wings like seal skins, rail cars
the horn of the coal train, the echoing sounds, the dinging, the pinging,
steel on steel, sweep and scrape
rolls over the black rock, the broken dead trees float in Green River
I'm here now, she says. Rest. Good Night.

Remember Winter

Do you remember the last time it snowed, a foot at least
bright white everywhere, bright as the white
of your crystal blue eyes
and you were slow to rise that morning, remember

I stood outside
knocking, texting, waking you up
from your late winter dreams
you came to the door, morning messed, chestnut hair

sleep still sighing in your infinite eyes
not wanting to rise
not wanting to open your arms
open your door

I stood there in the frigid cold
I stood there

and couldn't get the cold out
of my toes, fingers, tip of my nose

remember when we shoveled the snow, moved
snow drifts, uncovered familiar pathways

remember when we stood in the sun drenched

kitchen with hot cups of tea and
warm buttered muffins

She Told Me To Let Go

I am just a shell
sailing beneath the moon
whistling gothic tunes

I dream of mermaids, their long, shiny bodies, and
their long hair, their lulling sing-songy-song, and

I sail on, and
I think what if things were different
what if she loved me
I am always thinking what if, but

she told me to let go.

when will the mermaids come and sweep me into the moon's milky whirlpool
when will they come with their tridents and their condemnations
and their gazes ready to set me ablaze

But I desire that fire, the burning, I taunt them
the fire embraces: the only love that's true

and I would do anything to burn again
to be a living pyre

Letting Go

These Irish hips were made for birthing, she says.
Her sisters are envious. She is too thin, she says, they say.

She made treats for everyone and
the Brew Meister brought two tanks of IPA

to the boathouse BBQ. Passing the late night fire pits,

we walked toward the boats, anchored to the shore,
stopped by the black and silver Mercury engines,

and talked about the definition of a kiss.

But I bit into her instead, and she
bit into me harder, left a mark.

That's not a kiss, we laughed and played this game
for hours until the fires and voices fell silently as the dew.

She sighed when I told her
I had to go.

The disappointment in her eyes
like a waterfall clearly flowing
it flows and feels natural as it should be
as the moon closes its lidless eye

her hands on her hips, her head lowered
as I said, but I have to.

Don't Let Go

The frost of an early winter morning
seems to find the right river to float down
the right path between the aspens and pines
toward the valley floor and over the lake
frosting the bedroom window.

Your arms reach over your head.
You smile with warm-lit-eyes, stars-rivers-wide and

you are spread like moss over a rock, stretching,
and you're nearly out of bed,
legs over the side,
bare feet,
hesitant to touch the cold,
hesitant to leave the warmth of the covers.
We're in too deep.

Fingers over my eyelids, chill breath against my forehead,
"shh, go back to sleep," you say, with a light kiss
and the hint of frost
rising from your cavernous lungs.

When Apples Are Tossed

sickness comes
and Death will lie down with us
sweaty
burning with fever

on the cold wet concrete floor, spreading
her tongue over the slick surface
the taste of rotting fruit, the smell of sex.

But if we toss the apples into the lake
lift our wet bodies off the floor

if we enter the rain naked

Death may slip back into her black lingerie
may slip back into her 9 inch high heels
and walk into the lightning that split a great tree
leaving a smear of her charred there

and then the sun may break the clouds
and we two naked people may fall

fall to our knees
fall into the wet earth
limbs spread and sprouting.

Apples Only Fall When They Are Let Go

thunder, thunder, we've all heard it before, the kind
that rattles our core
ushers us into the house

our hearts pump and pump
the anticipation, the fear
the drinking resumed, the sex resumed
our cold and wet bodies collapsed
to the concrete floor

then came torrential rain. We heard
the dock, bang, bang banging the shore
lightning lit the old wooden doors

leaning and bent, we watched the old tree snap
watched the only apple fall

experienced the smell
of fermentation
of apple barrels
of crisp cold bodies holding on

Leaving What's Left Behind

The ship has long been a metaphor for us
a body, a soul or
the possibility of another ship passing by, in the night, by moonlight.
And the kind of ship we are:
a modern warship with high-tech gadgets
GPS tracking, sonar, radar
or a rescue ship with life boats
and helicopters, cranes
or a fishing vessel, or the voyager, or the enterprise
or the hull of the ship could be made of wood
or titanium, the insides, the crew, the mind of the ship, its captain, the engine.
Is she healthy? The masthead.
Is it luck, or is it fate, why we sailed into the night
same course, same trajectory that caused us to cross
the odds are astronomical, a fourth-dimensional miracle, the coordinates in X,Y,Z
and at the right time, being afloat, being alive, being in each other's arms.
And then there's the ships that scream out, lost without
a compass, lost without a captain, on a cloud covered night
when the storms march down from the skies, and the bolts
of light are dazzling the mind, a crazy light show, a concert
where the music consists of 1000 drums and sirens wailing
come, and you must come in, the water is warm, its belly salty
to the lips, the ropes thrown from ship to ship
to bring two bodies closer together
find calm in her arms.
What kind of chance encounter is this?
The ships that pass too close could collide and sink.
A rescue boat goes down, and the lover's tryst ends in the triangle
lost to never be found, to become a myth, a mystery
a history channel show, and the lovers just missed each
other, just by a few moments, the fog, the leaving what's
left behind in the great hall where the musicians are packing up
after another grand performance.

The Break Up

dress
pulled up
to knees

crushed
by her stomping

my skin
splits open

my juice
stains
her feet

Unhinged

unhinged white weathered door
beside a broken long neck bottle
beside the lamp light flickering
beside what if I hadn't said, what I said
beside what I said I wanted to take back. I wish I could
take back the grinds of black coffee
take back the near miss of a streak of light through the open window,
take back the touch of your hand, the orchids, yellow, white, long stems
take back the crystal vase. I was desperate
clutched my hair, pulled the petals from a flower.

Mother's Burden

I would say I have cracked,
filled a sail, followed too close behind
pulled up too many chairs
opened a door or two
I would say these things
but they are untrue. I would be too generous
and too selfish in one pass
I offered a sea full of love in one gulp
the stellar oceans a glow with
magical light, the light that goes nowhere
returns from somewhere
rubs against your ankle
curls into your toes
on the smooth pinewood floor
like carpet unfurled
slow, massive and thundering.
I would say I am like the crack in the wall
started some time ago
I would say I was like Alice, a little girl, swept up
taken to a hole
the purring stops after a while
the sun burns a whole through your toes
the bells are ringing
night and her bitches squat in your vacant home
find the padded walls
find the secret passage behind the bookcase
find the burnt plastic toys in a shallow hole
that the kids left behind

On Depression

I wish I was bound
hands behind my back
noose around my neck
shoved off the chair
swinging
a fighter's punching bag

after the rush of blood
after the expulsion--
not a little death,
a death of the grand sort--

the body releases of all its vitality
the struggle hopeless
a release of great energy
matter of consciousness turns
red and spotty

and then darkness

why am I more beautiful swinging naked
the body left without breath
the last few seconds are the best
the nearly aware but fading

during the night I wake up already crying
and I long for that rope swing
as I realize that my words will lose shape and meaning
when there's nothing else left that matters

Alice, You Better Go Home, Now

Smooth brass faucets rise, hard
spewing water, boiling a pot
for hot tea. A pleasure
to stand near her, a friend, near the window
look out over the potted plants, an ivy, fern, a spring flower
at the bird feeder, at the birds fighting back the squirrels
a wild dance of feather beats and bushy tail lashes.
I wondered at the little girl, standing in the corner, head lowered
toes pointing inward, who pulled on her hair
and wiped her hands on her apron, and wiped, wiped
muttering something about the queen.
I poured the lavender tea
peeled a couple of potatoes, and dropped them in another pot
with a dash of salt.
I wasn't sure what I was doing, just wanted to look busy.
It was only one time, it was on the counter top, I
turned her around, she
grabbed my hips, I hers
and we went down.
The girl stopped pulling her hair now. I spun
out of control, succumbed to the equation, and I stood and watched the girl
in the apron, leaving
skipping near the river, heading home
for dinner.

Wonderland

1.

left alone, crouched in the corner, Alice.
Pick at the loose threads
until you unravel
until someone yells, *52 card pickup*
and you find yourself scattered over the sheets
pieces of you on the floor
under the bed
where no one will find you.

Alice at the Palace

Alice, sweet girl come to the palace
right away, the queen wants to *speak* with you
wants to know why your hair shines the way it does
why you are so small and tall, and why your shoes
don't scuff, walk into the wall Alice, feel the spread
of your limbs, feel the hourglass, look for the cane
when you're legs are tired and all you want to do
is sit down, cross your legs and slump into the ground.
But he is here, to pull you up, to take you by the hand
and run down the halls, the tiled halls, the barred windows
they aren't there, there's only open colonnades, and marble
pillars and vaulted roofs, and great wooden doors, open for all to come in
and they are waiting for you, in the palace, dinner is about to be served
and they come for you soon, they do, they come to escort you
make you feel, special, and they talk in calm voices
offer you a drink, offer you some more nourishment
your pleated dress and white apron, is stainless, perfectly
white, and you are so wonderful, so sweet. Go little
Alice, soothe your feet in the fountain waters, feel the sun
warm your face, blow a kiss into the air, and wait for the
rabbit to cross your path, wait for the cards to flutter overhead
hearts, so many red and black hearts, floating around your head
come Alice it is time now to play with the queen in her palace
she has summoned you, best not keep her waiting.... Run girl
run, you wonderful, amazing girl.

Last Night of Class

A studio

where books are neatly placed on shelves
and impressionist paintings are stacked in corners
where the air smells like citrus and roses
where sunbeams paint their way in through so many windows
where easels and brushes are scattered about
where white towels, blotted with paint, are tossed in cans
where so many bright and dreamy colors are splattered all around is
where I said I wanted to paint too.

The night is cobalt blue
like the paint I have smeared across my forehead.
I paint and play and she calls me silly. I smile
her brown hair, swaying in the wind
her promise to never leave again. I smile
as she leaves, driving away.

Alice Upside Down

Where is she now? Alice, where are you?
Ah you have found yourself upside down
in a freight elevator and the building is a mile high
and the clouds up there are dense
and wet
and fill your lungs
and the hole in your heart drips red
and white and your apron's pockets collect rabbit fur.
And the hatter is laughing as if to say
you look ridiculous
pretending the impossible to hang upside down above the
Cheshire
but it doesn't matter it's what you've heard.
What you smell, too, when you're high above the wonderland.
It is your own courage.
Yours alone
that smells like fresh baked bread
and it looks like a Van Gogh.
You, child, stay suspended, I say.
Ignore the attempts at rescue.
Take the cards out from your pocket
and play ... play, you wonderful girl.

The Hero's Journey

Journey to the rabbit with the stupid grin: the hole awaits, Alice.
Journey to the darkside of red brick wall, and get a bitch slap from a thirsty cat.
Journey to the town called, No Hope,
grab your black Mary Jane's, find a hotel, and take a shower.
Journey into the mountains in your short shorts and black boots.
Journey to the wild side, wearing nothing more than your Uggs and a reindeer cap.
Journey to the sun in your spaceship-hourglass-titanium-shields, big fucking gun.
Journey to the underground, find a man named, Antonio; he'll know what to do.
Journey to the past and find your future lover, tell him you really like long hair.
Journey to the future and find yourself to remind yourself how you got to where you are.
Journey to the unseen, find your ghost, convince it to run toward the light.
Journey away from rhyme because there is no more time for rhyme, and no time.
Journey away from time, no time, stop mentioning time, seriously.
Journey to the unknown, step off into oblivion, nothingness, become nothing and one
in the same breath.
Journey to the deep breath...breathe my friends...breathe deep.
Journey to the house of the rising sun, take refuge there, but not for too long.
Journey to the wrong side of a gun, look down the barrel at the bullet meant for your head
then move Matrix like, believe you can, believe it has already be done.

Zen and the Art of Dying

you never remember how you die
from one life to the next
but you might recall an inflatable toy
tubes of color
in the middle of a kiddie pool
or falling down on the side of the pool
the water that soaks the ground
that seeps into the worms' mouths
that soaks their eager salty tongues
the thick blades of green summer grasshoppers jump
flittering their wings over a slippery wet body
or you might recall the sun blonde of her
her smile like sun ringed rainbows
and out of her mouth
floats tiny colorful bubbles

The Holy Grail

To say something is beautiful

is to be blind.

To say something, anything...

is a sort of untruth.

Look for the cloud in the sky that looks like a woman

or a man holding a cup
then look at the cup and wonder why it is empty.

Look down at the earth

dig trenches

into the ground for no reason.

Don't look toward the sky for the cloud will likely not be back.

To say something is utterly false

is to travel beyond the speed of light
only to look back at what will happen.

Flesh to Dust

My body shakes
my mind ablaze
in the heart shaped bowl of brown-sugar-frosted-flakes
and in her hair
a ribbon
a head band, yoga pants
and then there's flesh
pulling away from the skin that feels like a plastic sheet
a duck taped sheet over a missing car window
sagging, the aging, the dirge, the final song
the voice that calls to you that this is all wrong.
Pull.
Pull as night pulls toward dawn
pulling that chariot, pulling that cloth
the sheet, the tomb, closing the lid
opening the chamber, and then it's all gone.

Dedications

A Zen Moment

for Jenn

the birds' hollow bones
swallow the wind

over the monochrome moon
over an ear in a pale blue

a gentle brush of the hand
a gentle lift of hair

she listens for the swoop
of feather

captures the flight
of the gulls

of the silence
of winter

wings shuttered open

He Likes To Play With His Words

For Matthew Freeman

Now there was a time when she looked sideways
at him before handing him the cup of coffee, he thought
she was he, the coffee, and the words
he played with
her swaying hips
he played with the word sway
then said wing
wings are what she has, his beautiful muse
muse that makes coffee
black a little cream
a white dress
white wings
blue eyes
brown hair
his muse makes coffee and he sings
and plays with his words
and his words and his words are his
to play with till he's done
till he's undone
till he has spun
his verse
rhymed another rhyme
and put all those tautologies
into the mix till he has decided
all he really needs
is the fleeting glance
of a beautiful barista

To A Teacher

for Karl Koehrer

Sitting me down on the carpeted stairs, you had to tell me
I couldn't go on.
I was being held back, you said. Next year I was to be with you, my teacher
I couldn't comprehend.
I adored you like a father. Do you remember the time
I was tossing toilet paper on the bathroom ceiling, hoping
it would stick, leaving prickly moons suspiciously suspended?
I laughed at the artwork
I was amazed I could create. You opened the door, hands under my arms, and hoisted me
upward till I nearly touched my soggy paper moons.
I remember looking down at you.
Your jawbone twitch, blazing eyes.
I remember thinking, isn't it wonderful, eyes like polished magical shields.
Do you remember the stories you read to us
about Jack and his oxen, towers and magical spells, giants and children, lights out
sitting in a circle, ensorcelled, clinging on to every word.
I remember inventing a story
of my own. I wanted to impress you.
I remember staring at those familiar faces, jeering, mocking, teasing faces
of those who passed to 5th grade without me.
A crystal sphere separated their world from mine.
Every once in a while I would stare back at their teasing gestures, solemn, wondering
Then I would hear your voice and look into your eyes.
I remember I felt safe
in your powerful hands as you lifted me toward the sky.

Notes

“Recorded Thoughts”

“Dr. Kaku looks toward the day when we may achieve the ability to upload the human brain to a computer, neuron for neuron; project thoughts and emotions around the world on a brain-net; take a “smart pill” to enhance cognition; send our consciousness across the universe; and push the very limits of immortality.”

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/michiokaku615171.html#YxzFM5OikG56sfiv.99>

<http://www.randomhouse.com/book/89414/the-future-of-the-mind-by-michio-kaku>

“I Keep You”

Autobiographical. I did keep spiders and caterpillars in baby food jars under the porch. I like the contrast between what willingly crawls in and dies, and what is captured, and the captured.

“Otaku”

Based on the artist, Oskar Kokoschka, who had a life sized doll made of the person he loved obsessively, Alma Mahler. I also came across a doll making book written by Ryo Yoshida. *Yoshida Style, Ball Jointed Doll Making Guide*. I took the word “Otaku” from the forward written by Yoshida in this book. I use these influences to explore identity and role-playing.

“A Big, Juicy, Red Apple”

This is the first poem in the thesis where the idea of the apple appears. The Apple in my poems is an icon that represents a myriad of ideas. But fairy tales come to mind of the juicy apple containing a poison. The poison for me can represent ideas that I explore throughout my poems. I realize that people will make the association with Eve and the Apple, but I believe that’s a misdirection and not my intent. I do like the idea of the tree of knowledge, and the fruit somewhere containing an enlightenment, or an awareness of all things. So for me, the Apple becomes a device, a vehicle for transporting “poisons” which are truly only concoctions for experimentation, leading to transformations of some sort within the imbiber, or the beholder of a greater transformation.

“Gallery Talk on a Kitchen Table Top”

Matta was a surrealist painter, heavily influenced by the subconscious, free drawing, Carl Jung and Freud. Matta had an affair with a married woman, and he used his thumb to make the little silver marks on the eggs of rain painting. I used these two facts to put together an interpretation of these works.

“Companion”

Here is another musing on identity. For me, identity is confusing and uncomfortable, and sometimes this leads to the idea of being a kite without a string, out of control, ultimately doomed.

“Never Hold Back”

I struggle with this idea of love and when we love someone are we holding them back from a greater potential of what they may become. The question for me cannot be answered fully, for love is necessary, but love can also be a hindrance, and so I wonder if we aren’t meant to love freely. There’s a song that goes, “hold on loosely, but don’t let go”, but maybe we don’t hold on at all, maybe in “letting go” we love greater and without constraints.

“Mid Winter”

The starkness and contrast of the picture this poem is based on reminded me of Winter, which can often be stark, two dimensional, not vibrant, but simple and elegant, not unlike a painting by Whistler.

The Alice poems:

For me, Alice is my subconscious personified, she is always there, always seeing and experiencing life with new eyes, with a new perspective, always looking for answers, lucid dreaming and being innocent. This is what I imagine my subconscious to be like if she were to become real.

“Hero’s Journey”

This is my “Alice” my inner hero, who takes a journey to become a Hero.