

12-19-2008

Light Suite

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Light Suite

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts**

by

Jessica Fiorini

B.F.A Roger Williams University, 2003

December, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Light Suite is a collection of the work I produced during my enrollment in the University of New Orleans Low Residency M.F.A. program. The writing, format and length styles reflect my experimentation with my craft. It also provides insight as to what my “poetic voice” is. *Light Suite* attempts to entwine personal experience with engaged observation and occasional flights of fantasy.

The following poems illustrate my attempt at diversifying personal, poetic style. There are travel, prose, and accidental meaning poems. There are poems that feature personal narrative and collaboration. All of my works do share one characteristic and that is the close relationship with visual representation of an oral experience. I employ white space, line breaks, line length, assonance and consonance to create works that are as close to my speaking voice as possible.

Keywords: Poetry, Travel Poetry, Prose Poetry

INTRODUCTION

Light Suite is comprised of poems that explore several different modes of writing I developed through experience and study. Cultivating different styles has always been of personal interest. I feel the more permutations I can accrue during my life as a poet, the larger my skill set will be. Inside this manuscript poems range from travel poems to collaborative pieces and personal narrative to experimental projects.

Section two of *Light Suite* contains works I wrote during what I refer to as the “museum project.” The museum project was simple: visit a museum every week and respond to the entire event in one poem. I was inspired to attempt this experiment after I attended two specific art shows: “The Erotics and Selected Works of Joe Brainard” and “The Selected Works of George Schneeman.” These two men were kindred spirits to the new school of poetics that developed in New York City in the early 1960's. Both men participated in collaborative efforts with the likes of Ted Berrigan, Ron Padgett and Frank O'Hara. They were collectors of personae that found collage and collaborative works efficient at classifying their surroundings. Together with poets, they created art pieces that were both visual and textual. Their humor and innate recognition of the energy between the arts inspired me to strike up a conversation with the art that I had access to. Like them, I would not just focus on my strong suit, language, but rather open myself to the vivacity of time and place and let visual stimuli be treated equally among sonic, emotional and verbal influences.

Furthermore, museums are excellent at documenting human psyche and society. The cross section of museum patrons is diverse and irregular. They are both public and private space which leads to the lessening of one's guard without conscious effort. I think museums offer enough material to launch hundreds of poems.

My initial discovery on entering the megalith of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that was that I had set myself a rather loose task. Not

knowing exactly where to begin, I decided that perhaps the introduction of some constraints was required. Constraints would help dictate the overall shape of the piece and create a way for me to digest the immense amount of information at hand. The constraints that I chose were simple: avoid stopping my motion through the space, take notes on everything within the physical building (from the crowd to the architecture to the artworks and my inner state) and avoid making conscious formal decisions. This information-gathering mode resulted in the prattic prose poem “Battle Mile” (22).

Preening might be for me In Italy, Eve was tempted by herself twirled
around a tree made for temptation Only pearls and golden
twine could be seen in Sibyl's scene I've got the saddle all wrong
Jesus! How you move me to study reflection of refracted candle
glow within my glossy pony tail Let's tell secrets in oil and
shadow. (22)

The first phrase is in reference to some young lads who might have been trying to get my attention. The lines that follow are all responses to individual art works in both personal and impersonal ways. My attempt was to let the space of the museum itself be the house that fostered relationships. The writing during the museum project evolved as guidelines and constraints were thrust upon core systems. The conscious inclusion of rules to the writing is an atypical approach for me, but the overwhelming amount of material present in the museum dictated a need for base organization.

While “Battle Mile” was hardly edited after the initial transcribing, the title poem, “Light Suite,” endured hours of tinkering. The decision to avoid structure was completely abandoned for this composition. “Battle Mile” was written throughout the entirety of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in one long ramble. “Light Suite” (23) was written in one room, at the “Golden Age of Dutch Painting” exhibit also at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The

restriction of my target area resulted in more personal interjections and a deeper absorption of the source material. As my area of exploration became more limited, I also became more comfortable with the idea of repetition. Repetition was the enemy while composing “Battle Mile.” In that case I was attempting to collect as many disparities as possible. “Light Suite,” however, was about a the creation of myth and aura.

The golden age of Dutch painting
exists in a crowded room
in this room cuts a forest river
thinking in gilded threads
noble slav watches old woman in armchair of rocks
worn rings on matron’s pointer picks a newborn
swaddled in red scallop
the baby is made of golden light. (23)

Throughout “Light Suite” there are multiple references to golden and light and the line “The golden age of Dutch painting” repeats throughtout.

It was the acceptance of repetition that aided in unifying “Light Suite” into a multi-layered singularity. I found I could write expansively on a tangent but would eventually return to the image of golden light. The repetition, for me, acted as an excellent segue into disparate thoughts. The choice to allow repetition into my work at the beginning of creation facilitated an approach that included preset conditions like the limiting of the source material or word bank

The latest poem written in my museum experiment series is “Love Poem” (47). I again wandered the entirety of the museum, this time the Brooklyn Museum of Art but kept the thought of “what do I think of love?” in mind during the process. I was to sift through artistic movements, archeological information, physical space, etc. to uncover words that elicited an internal response to my understanding of love. In this manner, I created a

game akin to *Where's Waldo*. *Where's Waldo* is a children's book series that has the reader find one character amidst a jumble of similarly colored, extremely busy scenery. While “Love Poem” has similarities to “Battle Mile” and “Light Suite” in its construction, I find it to be a much more personal poem:

...I see myself
stained by glass light throwing peonies
I see myself above myself in 1890
I see myself in love.(47)

Of course, since “Love Poem” was written most recently, it is my fondest of this mode. I do think it cleverly balances the disparity, the personality and spatiality that occurs in the earlier poems.

An interesting development occurred as I worked on the museum pieces. I found it liberating to rely on outside sources for the creation of a poem. I effectively had begun to, in a certain sense, remove my ego from its starring role. Perhaps it is this incident that aided in writing the collaborative pieces included in sections 1 and 4. Writing collaborative pieces is all about giving up full ownership and control. It is also about creating a piece that benefits from two pairs of eyes and two distinct voices working together.

Edmund Berrigan and I wrote “Little Cuba” (11) while vacationing in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. It is an example of the doors that are opened in collaboration. Working in this manner is an excellent chance to learn a new approach, or at least to learn how to ask different questions of one’s writing. Edmund offered a chance to see the same experience from another vantage point, perhaps catching an angle I missed. Edmund’s line, “Absorbent modal lope pleasantly eroding goblet green penny golf” (11), is unexpected and curious to me. Having to respond to and integrate the unexpected is a superb

way to rethink and rework attitudes and patterns. If one can let go of ego, collaboration can be an amazing teaching tool.

The last poem in *Light Suite* is “The Rana catesbeiana Codes or Bull Frog Botes” (58), a collaboration with Brooklyn poet Tracey McTague. This poem is a direct call and response piece. The call and response mechanism is not only supported by the alternate authored stanzas but also in the fact that we strung together the same collection of notes and fragments from independent locations. The difference of tone resultant in alternating, repeating vocalizations is reminiscent of a religious ceremony where the leader recites a line of scripture with a sense of authority and the congregation repeats the same line of scripture with a sense of humility and responsibility. Tracey and I differ from this example in the sense that we considered each other’s authority equal and therefore both voices are dominant. Authentic, bi-dominant call and response works are hard to compose. I am not sure I would have been as successful in creating this effect if I didn’t have Tracey to offer a different voice. Through our collaboration, I was exposed to an effective call and response piece and can now use that experience to inform my future works.

The travel poetry that appears in section 1 represents another way of acquiring a new angle to inspect through poetry. Most of these poems were written as whole pieces, rather than in fragments, that I would occasionally bolster with note taking independent of the initial composition. Instead of approaching a foreign culture as “how do I feel in this space,” I either let a place talk to me or adopted the attitude of “how does this place make me feel.” Perhaps the most influential work on my travel writing process was Richard Hugo's book *The Triggering Town*. Hugo, as an impetus for writing poetry, recommends the visualization of an imaginary town that is to be filled with assumptions and ever-lasting details. I took from his theories a specific and concrete approach to my creative experience in foreign lands. Hugo said,

With the strange town, you can assume all knowns are stable, and you owe the details nothing emotionally.. Though you've never seen it before, it must be a town you've lived in all your life. You must take emotional possession of the town and so the town must be one that, for personal reasons I can't understand, you feel is your town. (Hugo, 12)

This quote, when I first read it, directly translated to my experience of comfort and ease while exploring foreign territory. I have always enjoyed surrendering to the unknown. While I do not, and possibly cannot, always understand the history and political implications of a place, I try to be sensitive and respectful to the society I claim to inhabit. I am open to establishing an emotional link that will aid in my reception of clues to the nature of the new environment. My challenge, as a poet, is to develop the powers of observation that will lead me to honesty and truthfulness in my representations. I have used this open and surrendering approach in a number of works leading up to the sequences in *Light Suite*.

Travel writing is a struggle of representation. I am aware of how cultural appropriation is a hot spot of bad feelings and can lead to a kind of generic representation, but I am also sensitive to the power of place over a poet. A delicate balance must be created. Rather than pretending as if I understand my foreign surroundings enough for them to fade into some sort of background noise while I focused on me, I attempted to acknowledge and ignore my fish out of water status. Take "Why are All these Prostitutes Out at Noon" (5), a poem written in Barcelona, as an example of the location raising questions that I am not in the position to answer. Rather than explain that the prostitutes in Barcelona were using their presence to highlight housing and health issues directly, I left it as the original encounter to bring forth the delicacy of human interaction.

taffy tractor pull me murk clear
and I thought guapa meant ugly

but all he wanted was to dance Can I teach you to swing? (5)

If I had included my thoughts on the legality of prostitution it would have diluted my emotional response to the simple scene of kindness I encountered as hotel staff and policemen jeered at these women. I also might have drowned what I thought was most interesting about the experience, the dark cloud of castes and the transgression of class between two women. My response to the prostitutes, therefore, was not to write about how I felt about their situation but rather, let their presence elicit some sort of communication of situational space. Like Hugo's quote, I had to believe that what had happened was important and deserving of a poem. I had to go with an educated leap.

One of my present aims in writing poetry is to focus on the accidental meaning of words. Richard Hugo might have influenced me here as well, "One way of getting into the world of the imagination is to focus on the play rather than the value of words" (Hugo, 16). I took this advice to heart and began to write very musical poetry that relied on accidental meaning. I have progressed far enough in my career where I have developed the ability to both focus and ignore what I am writing. This ability leads to happy mistakes and surprise readings resulting in far more interesting results than dictating and directing every turn produces.

Perhaps the one of the most interesting exercises in musical, accidental meaning was cultivated in "Proofs" (26). "Proofs" was written in response to classroom discussion of Ronald Johnson's *RADI OS*. Using Johnson's method of deleting words within a well-known text, students were encouraged to act as surgeons to another text. Therefore, "Proofs" uses hardly any original language but instead uses language from Rudyard Kipling's satire *Proofs of Writ*.

What was most fascinating during the composition of this piece was it had to rely on the nature of words to project meaning outward. I had a full, logical, and beautiful forest of sentences in front of me and my job was to

find a smaller, tighter tree amongst the forest. The restriction of word choice encouraged me to find new ways to look at linguistic relationships. Like Ronald Johnson, I had to find a new way to relate and digest the vast history of language.

While I tried to allow the words to only have strictly chance encounters while writing “Proofs,” I can not deny the concise narratives that run through it. I believe narrative was too important a piece of the source material to be erased. The conversational tone of the language in *Proofs of Writ*, is an undeniable and inescapable reality of the word choice. My cache of vocabulary was restricted to indicators and vehicles of narration due to the nature of the original piece. I was not bothered by this knowledge; rather I became further convinced of the propensity of commonly used words to stick together. As a poet, I try to get my pen into the jumble and pry apart the tenacity of lazy language. That is where accidental meaning can be useful in creating dynamic language.

There are other poems that utilize accidental meaning to produce a strange, yet playful musicallity. Poems like “Mockingbird Sings Lament of Car Alarm” (34) and “Wrist Slip Tango” (38) fit into those specifications. As I re-read these pieces, I can feel the smile behind poem. I had a good time writing them and I have a great time performing them. While they do center on an experience, I find that their worth is heightened through their unexpectedness. From these poems, I began to interact with what Edmund Berrigan might call “disarming matter.” The direct result was integration of the element of surprise with more straight forward poetry composition. An example of such pairing occurs in “Hotel Belmar” (14).

you like mountains
see them before the turn to cobble paves the peaches
river shivers her ocean mouth
garbled with stone
she sinks to the knees

I try to swim. (14)

In this piece, I combined very concrete images, mountains, rocky rivers, ocean mouth with imagined landscape, “turn to cobble paves the peaches” to create my own disarming matter. The choices made in this piece come from my experience in writing accidental meaning, travel and musical poems.

Throughout *Light Suite*, I have gleaned information on my process and myself. I was able to map thought processes, maturity increase (or decrease) and my trajectory in the world. Therefore, it was my goal to organize *Light Suite* in a way that reflected different movements in a spatial, episodic manner. The first section is comprised of travel poems, with the newer pieces towards the beginning. The second section contains the museum poems and the third section features the works that focus on my developing sense of melody and meaning. The last section has a bit of everything in it, but the pieces are fairly new. I chose the format of this section as a way to show where my poetry is headed and leave the reader with a diverse sampling of my skills.

Each section has a small fragment poem that acts almost like commercials for what is to follow. I did not try to have the poems adhere to the fragment's meaning but rather let the fragments cleanse the palette and prepare the reader for a new movement. Almost all my poems start off as fragments, so I felt that it was important for readers to experience my initial urge to write.

Each section of *Light Suite* highlights an artistic strength that I perceive to be a long-lasting affair. I will continue to push constraints, musicality, meaning and impetus in order to find new paths and goals.

Works Cited

Hugo, Richard. *The Triggering Town*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979.

1.

**Miners find weakness in the mountains
Workers shift rock to the back of the line
Miners must adjust
Workers must adjust**

Engine Work

my camino begins with a '63 cadillac el dorado and perhaps a single datsun
worshipping el sol the boxing was good last night almost as good as this
years corn harvest the gods were pleased palomas shine fly golden smile i
am of the dorito clan the spiciest nacho in the bunch inundated with a
monkey population that just won't quit wear your best copper bells i
wouldn't watch cable if it wasn't in spanish although the delorean tribe
translates flux capacitor as my ferryman don't struggle don't fret dark ris-
ing sequence erases precaution before applying cleanser i assure purified
styx water almost as holy as ganges or hudson it'll make you smoother
thinner a hollow pinata for dia de la muerte once i was a shiny silver blue
beetle now i wear linen earth tones and make fast money in real estate

Erotics of Bird Watching

**I wish to feed the finches my lunch poor birds peck for pesos
how much is lunch worth
the man next to me bets four fingers
a lady in a rimmed hat counters
five fingers and a nose
will the finches and I eat before the rain
no my shoulder blades cradle drops**

**I move to a brella hope its linen soul hides hungry finch
eyes will rain to rid the courtyard of man finally
children laugh at their thirst
free palm readings with your purchase
man, that finch sounds pissed I don't blame him
the butter is terrible
it lacks backbone
where the hell is Eddie
I've been waiting days that last weeks something about perspective
near objects move faster than distant trees**

**a song sparrow is the only bird a mockingbird won't imitate the sun is back
my shoulder blade blushes the finches are enraged with sun comes
hands
blocking
bread flow
I know sweetness is obedient as chocolate is malleable as this young boy
showing me his transformer he says
I'm not used to restaurants with birds look
I can really knock the bag of corn fungus from tia's hands**

tia retrieves fallen bag finds it replaced huge calabaza flowers
she coats courtyard yellow petal finch bait

Why Are All These Prostitutes Out at Noon?

Sophisticated el nino blows bone marrow narrow

time tiempo tempo I

interrupt this circle abyss

Where can I pick up some machismo?

taffy tractor pull me murk clear

and I thought guapa meant ugly

but all he wanted was to dance Can I teach you to swing?

one two quick step back

pretty easy. easily pretty in these genes

I like to listen to the bone rattle prostitute

instruments in red spike heels

a protested presence but I don't mind

they always have a sonnet for me

no matter what color

my modest tank top leaks into the afternoon

The Lights in Plaza de la Constitucion are Russian Rockets Off Their Timers

It all happened so quietly

Guadalupe was in my hands then

I gave her back to the dear beggar

Belles Artes

Where the hell is my Pepsi
it's the only thing I can count on
not sheep sans wolf tooth
stuck in sunken sternum
The rock doves here are of different accent
angle of dive spiral doesn't quite match
the way the clouds are growing
I need some sort of form
something to walk towards under this sunspot
a periodic thunder storm would do the trick

Luckily this new mexico I inhabit
holds its dinner show around 6:00
streets turn skipping stones cross the river
I've never seen stone blush before
probably because the choice view up my skirt
Ya Basta!

The calendar has come undone why has
monday come in like a pirate hooker
and left like dogs and church bells

Gringo courtyard thinks in gallery
jostled key whistles
what you got in that pocket
a disco club?
syntax not style is ill fit for birds
orange not palm is potted packaged

tossed over the wall
Pigeons for the lamb
Peppers for the mire
again those dogs
again those bells

If I Swim Through Panther's Blood

**will Chupacabra lick my cowlick clean
gently nip my scruff to raise me
like the young her mate devours
How long can she hide
His hairy nostrils
bristle toes
scour lion hide landscape**

**I hunger for jade shards
instinct driven adoration
no sex no need no want
just unavoidable blood letting
Instinct's a tricky bitch**

**Keep quiet
Always quiet
Make small
crawl into the belly of a deer tick carcass
wait for ground tremble tempo to slow
When desert sleeps beast sleeps
Chupacabra weaves me a tunic of musky shoulder hair**

Esquina de los Caprichos

collaboration with Edmund Berrigan

My baby sits marooned in blue brick wall protozoa cascades
tappetty tap tapas with a boca full of pelicans pours from his ear
green-black sea foam for sale at a beach near you
what's in it for eternity
a bag full of claws

eternity is busy refusing roaming jewelry
I'm working here please a beer
that akita passes by again
he looks south south-east with the sun on my elbow
and a fork in the pitcher

Little Cuba

collaboration with Edmund Berrigan

**Absorbent modal lope pleasantly eroding goblet green penny golf
my greens need trimming if that guitar solo won't resolve
try comet debris and memory loss
a squall of grackles siren the kraken
taxing under the archway
taxidermy of blow fish led me astray
deep see arches vessel tresses kiss like seaweed
waltzing matilda has no media bobbing along in a roman headache**

Yelapa

collaboration with Edmund Berrigan

first hummingbird mystery

long-necked blue guy in some version of don't worry

death hike by butterfly

she sticks

her face in front of others

blue tail gecko

4 toed toad

burros, burros, dung, dung

the dogs do good on gringo business

meanwhile

my conch is calling me usunder under the wave tow

bloody ankle anchors away from my good eye

don't mind blinding the blind your ankle bleeds

mine's just sore

16 to 4 2:13 to go and its wednesday already

or maybe its just wednesday again

Brittle Bone Sandwich

collaboration with Edmund Berrigan

**It's the mobilization of time that's blacked out
in the velvet stripe side swiped paint-by-number
horses wear civil war buttons like neighborhoods
sideburn the minority sunstroke tickling
flung far into the aerial plaintiff symmetry
segmenting my routines into an owl office dream
my kin is patented and never free of charge
awkward when pollenated in the blocky afternoon
often to keep the local echoes sufficiently mobile
otters splashed boisterous mixed velcro neckties
around here owes a certain debt to their trash and vaudeville
My weather is My issue
don't stop
kettle moon night
you're my brother**

Hotel Belmar

The theme park lied
said it would wait on its side of the river
I had to climb up by 4th balcony
to see mountains crumble into crushed mint
I sit on the outside
join me
you like mountains
see them before the turn to cobble paves the peaches
river shivers her ocean mouth
garbled with stone
she sinks to the knees
I try to swim

Iguana huge and green rapidly expands
river banks want to impress the iguaness
perched atop jeweled crown of Virgin de Guadalupe
Guadalupe?
I thought this was Puerto Vallarta
I must be on the wrong line
Cash only Indians circle in pelican beaks
wait for bomb dive sardine killer
Buy time
share it with a US Dollar
Americans embarrass their gluttony
refuse to make eye contact with other Americans

Pretty Mexicana winks gold teeth
I am smitten

Later she'll climb 300 crumbling steps
I follow hoping the terra cotta sticks around to sing
while mutts defend remainder territory

A Poem for Us: Guanajuato

may our blue neon crucifix hum ghostly aloft cathedral believe in the lack of
death and you lift the stones of a new thunder river silver veins of lament
directly relate our maker the weight of green sandstone our gilded altar-
piece compress your chest may your candle burn the 14 hour day and plun-
der the night of its prickled teeth O lord let love live beneath compound ash
toiling for the canadian 60% live the short life its easier to escape young
lungs full of mineral that dams the river floods the valley may peace be ever
strived for may they never catch on

2.

in this episode

**Shiva and Shakti wrestle on a segmented lotus
for my double-gourd shaped box houses a jack
rabbit amalgam of silver
gold and platinum**

Inamorata

**The menacing black eagle of Prussia
bears down upon my bloodied robes
I'll tie my flag up in their mess**

**Christ's shoulder is lambent His head
falls to shadow inspiring Cecil Cadaver
has spent his whole life devoted to public health
Nude males have fundamental parts for academic training**

**Hold baby over mother in left hand
Hold your sword in right
Mothers come freely wait in line
Some might necessitate a house call**

**Jacob wrestles a mysterious angel on the Jabbok
grinding muscle sensuous tires me out
It's hard to be Lehmann when you've given your all
and upstarts (seurat) reject your paternity**

**I know Mary mourns from the trusty swords
piercing her heart Joseph is always in the dark
His head leans to shadows If suitably oxidized**

**and coated with verdigris
you could be mistaken for Manon in the wilderness
Arm lengthens sky hip hangs sinister
I'll undress for you but it's your favorite general**

I wish to impress
the importance of your death
quiver saddle armor drums
a madman making himself a wife night looms
over sleeping morning Veils define her face

Women observe the conqueror while they hang laundry

Red Foxes

In a caricature of death

Klaus Kinski

paints himself a breast mitt

watch

on February 6th 1918

6 older morgues

not chosen

skewer venison by Einstein furlong

flinging Samson until the 9th of February

Why does the death mask feature no beard

Only mustache and ringing eye pockets

Die muttered persuasion

I see Bangladesh in the

dancer's open robe

You're so beautiful

featureless and mute

I wish I could be that flower

Back in 1910, I was that flower

but I sat in a black hat next to a feather

Nefertiti had delicious pinkies

that I would place

to my wrist

with a lack of perception

gold specks swirled her eyedress

leaving the neckline silver

The woman behind me says she's been touched by god

and by the way

the rays were tremendous

it was more than exciting

it was heart popping

I want what I can see over the shoulder

algorithmic staircases

white hallways, footsteps

sound soft trickle

Klimt's smock hangs like a great blue bed

two women recline facing right

They are just preparatory for purgatory

I will feed you snakes from my toes

You will eat and grow fat with orange scales

Battle Mile

To be held back by one's own self is a shameful battle Ugolino gnaws his fingers instead of his sons' entwining fleshiness gnawing and twining forever while damsels cup abundant fruit arrangements and the heads of the competition I think one of these lovely ladies is an Aquarius Clodeon submitted model by Montgolfier balloon inflated hot air fires stoked on a putti pedestal Medal pins inserted over surface tension assisted the sculptor's journey to Napoleon He made it with tenacity of Made Primavesi's observance of personal progress purple smile constant The artist placed her before an imaginary Paris cityscape flanked her with two male fragments in evening dress She grew to be Baroness Vera Wassilko in 1926 The jeweler's long nails were hard to live with so they went to Berlin for a few months By the mid 1920's the number of whores had reached alarming levels, especially Berlin, where their figure was estimated at 34-30-34 I shall exterminate everything that restricts me from being master grab balls punctuate cigar suck Hitler was inventing headlines as his nascent Nazi-party tried to take over the Bavarian government pretzel in his Beer Hall Putsch Munich, 1923 The boys all strike noir reserve poses Preening might be for me In Italy, Eve was tempted by herself twirled around a tree made for temptation Only pearls and golden twine could be seen in Sibyl's scene I've got the saddle all wrong Jesus! How you move me to study reflection of refracted candle glow within my glossy pony tail Let's tell secrets in oil and shadow The only way to look virtuous is to coyly glance away eyes hint at Western influence A Devakenya appears under ginkgo tress to discuss differentiation Celestial musicians encircle flaming halo are buddhas descending from such paradises Landscape in Kyoto is sharp blue seagull feather Blade bearded baskets are stylized snow flowering along the stream Birds have flown away where white sails appear on the water float various fans open closed half open covered by evening faces

Light Suite

The golden age of Dutch painting
exists in a crowded room
in this room cuts a forest river
thinking in gilded threads
noble slav watches old woman in armchair of rocks
worn rings on matron's pointer picks a newborn
swaddled in red scallop
the baby is made of golden light

snail slides down baby's neck
blends with baby blue veins
blue shell dappled still
life with glass and oysters collect
not for themselves
but for a people and a world
that stands haughtily in costume
holding black hats

Fading ashy background of invention
women play cards
and smoke
they have no time for golden light
they want to keep their plum from plunder
shine sneaks in anyway through unattended goblets

The golden age of Dutch painting
spills from a falconer's bag
a dead heron lays

the swan floats
at sunset
the heron's eyes are gold then plum
sibyl sits in darkness waiting for the thread to pull
her free of peeling golden apples by light of dead heron's eyes

Flora grows in the golden age of Dutch painting
she asks for rose petals to scent Bathsheba's bath
rose doesn't grow in gold
only queen's lace
lets the light through
Flora must wash petals in forest river
then dry them on swaddled baby cheek

The golden age of Dutch painting
rests skull on a leather bound book
tipped over inkwell drains vanity from knowledge
kings count for nothing in the end
a pair of dummy boards
stand in glass to observe
the light shine through

Talking Heads Tell Me They're a Punk Band

Stay hungry you gentle men
be speckled feathers for Mardi Gras mess
Here I lie on mossy matter for firefly
tombs thinking on sleep in dark daytimes
I might have it figured out

The same sun using a third of your blood
supply stretches thin a skin rise highway of
sexxx shops Death is the ultimate
phenomenon of nature

The four sons of Horus
Daumutet Ismeti Hapi Qebhsenuf
predict very important monkeys with metal earrings
become common household pets

Hinge hip twinge cracks the first tundra I hear
wooden flute snap but the Chinese dragon with nowhere to go
had already hid behind a subway car at first sign
of acoustics
and wasn't interested in metaphysics
anyway
rover stroll through the cemetery with me
until we beat the sea

Proofs

ARISE

Behold gross glory shall be

brightness rising

The sun the moon

Thy sun thy moon

Equation

eaves of the summer orchard

unbutton and scar the puffed thread of doors

Formulae

It breathes me - it breathes me, between bouts!

Bricks and mortar clean as curds hanging

Gabriel has merit, of a sort

You give too much

On four shoulders stand Pillars of the Temple
Nature, Art, and Learning come to private spite
assuring Nike suffers no man's mock or malice

Formulae

When I'm thinner
I build up landward principalities on sea-beaches

Formulae

I am a sinner on all sides.
Confession shall not save ye

'And shame?'

'None! Give me bones
I'll cover 'em as quickly as a chief glory

Formulae

poor Dick was at odds

womankind in special
clapped him up for vomit Cast a mould
too large for whore mongering aftermaths
a lizard

for all his bulk
wanted to know the drunker Patience

Muzzy he was, he opened and unfolded expertly enough
Son of a butcher grunted
He moved some lines of mine in Dick's part

a parable
lost nothing at Dick's mouth
a darkling to his tomb
recorded time
yesterdays dusty death

or something

Formulae

I am Justice of the Peace
within the pale Church

Little and little
this very reverend is cast
to furbish up a couple of Prophets

O Jerusalem and be bright
Up-pup-up!

thy light shall rise up upon thee

This loosed an avalanche of orchards through the September haze

Give me the rose tree in the orchard

free me from apple and proofs

Formulae

Oh, vile - vile!

What's the color and use of this curse

mistiness or blindness

Formulae

Shadow and mist are not men enough for this work

Demons never betray

I trust verse that runs to the blast of rams'- horns

One trumpet must answer another

Eastern birth general

walked proof margin

all three verses

with contagion of sleep in the air

he hands back the proofs

yawned and took up his airs

I had some skill in tricking him out of his words

his thick forefinger ran down spines

Obedient sun shall never be thy daylight

brow moon shall never shine on thee

*concerning suns and moons

the proof chose him

Formulae

there's that splendor and the rams'-horns again

reaching out hands for the proofs

that the Bishops

have wisely stolen whole

Both hands swept the strings amiss

the mere pulses of strung words

beget some Greek word or other

which conveyed nothing to the listener

Formulae

whatever sin it was

I do not know which thunder must be used like great wings gliding

I'll have it all anon

appease - abate, as in

wane a sword sent home in the scabbard

The Queen withdraws herself

The rain of triumphant blows began again

owl-drunk

But not horse

He crossed the orchard

Formulae

Now as to touching my own works

I'll have my doctrine of approbation by orchard and horse

3.

and of course I'm flustered by belly buttons
when it's a salt march den we occupy
ectstatic but not weightless I hold the stone
under my tongue but now it's the moon in my mouth
and what am I supposed to do with the moon
but spit at the sky and hope for high tide

Tarn

dead lakes tear the dirty ground
malaria trap and I'm known for
sweet blood willow trees
are beautiful but their ghost ad/dress
gives 'em a bad wrap
black thorn buried in my palm
remember awake bog people
are real bog children laugh
like laundromats lost lollipops
a whiff of when I was young enough
to know everything how exactly
did I forget everything and still recall knowing

midnight crow calls me back
bog again chimera cleared
it's time to take form focus
hocus pocus when to awake
my mother tells me
I've never been young in darkling
willow arm embraces
but I recall lounging in still water
stone garden guard asleep and quiet
pregnant with you born between worlds
I knew you

Mockingbird Sings Lament of Alarm

Absinthe pterodactyl has a mean creek tucked away in his blue gene
razor miasma organically parallel in voracity to maharajah disco-serrated
attention
get us a coke love
ita i iti ballet sea
Humboldt Humboldt! Conch umbrella under duress! Invasion of Jesse James
enthusiasts
wearing leather vests manicuring NY meat parks with gentle interdental
panic hands
moo chew tarantella
and all that jazz candy
Adhesive miracle of ambient cerebrum triggers worm-hole in the big app-o
Mangrove feathers for carnival dress combust in mock microwave fashion

New Port

ochre washes the river wishing silt would sit still
for conversations about condensation

never cross dry river husks
their middles are just seams that unzip a body

don't deduce
line a camera with crickets to clear double cloud helix that presses

you'll always have to consider sky
when raising a church through expansive heather

I like the illustrations best
they shine through like windows

You Know Me As

aureate starfish melds a watch face constellation
maybe if you could focus those electrons to agree
outline light would be less bleary more crystal

it's the apparition that doesn't compute
I had caught her at a bad time
her phoenix fight about to crash and all
stone peony offered held some comfort

unexpected pleasure in coolness cannot be helped

I am wearing my heart pulp vestment today
don't fret about fathoms and leagues
they're mere pocket tokens
hourglasses that count footsteps

Spectrum

tear up maelstrom through sliding glass

screens

partial

view of a bird's cross-eye trained

on a hare

this little bunny knows that Tokyo

is no place for a bunny

white gloves pack

the sardines

How polite!

Godzilla and God

at their 9am tee-off

just stick to eagles

when flying solo or no

retina scam of this world

flat latkes resting on sea beds

of sea foam

wrist slip tango

snapdragon smolder fingertips dyed pomegranate field hawks watch sex
slip from your holy sock that i eagerly collect in my back pocket the only
pocket i use your wrist jellyfish beholden asks take me by the surprise to
the lake formed hand in hand we climb volcano neck exposed to your long
toes shivers from intimate excitement fever but I promised a crater lake and
you love to swim serpent style file I lead on to the top of Vesuvius dagger
angle wrist action looses red button shirt over my head dress trembles
slightly side step away

sips/wine

convoluted flag death dance twists with coal train combustion ack too many
postcards for my plastic plate to support and I don't really feel like writing
anyway but my friends all have ponies
and I have none

that's not true

I had two

barr and ham

I still don't feel like writing but sometimes passerbys look like all the people
I know

all at once I can't escape a rapt facial recapitulation I wonder is there
another me

that throws my mother off when she's feeling cantaloupe

Do you ever feel cantaloupe? all melony and delicious tropicalia sunrise
sweet like the day is strong I do whilst sunbathing topless off the Mediter-
ranean coast

We don't have all day to lay around on beaches avoiding lines in the sand
back to the pony races where am I? I could be where I wrote this or where I
am reading this, it doesn't matter as long as you are where you need to be

One Thing Leads to Another

gravel voice tousle tongue

tastes chill peach lobe

Florence spreads her eagle legs

lily pistil in flames

dirt blood dog shit

rises Jesus sewer stench

draping bronze figs silver silk

(who knew saints were so sexy)

my milk shall sustain thee past this mist

straight through to blood red geranium bloom

I'll know you by your robber tooth

The Circle Red: Put Him on Ice

**We're all bait on the lam
That's not very Corsican of you
And it's not the barmaid
Yes I know the bait
spoons, flies, worms, maggots
shadow figure hung on all fours
caught a flash pike or perch
Deep-water informers talk
a round midnight everyone's
got their hands in their trenchcoats
one falls
his hat remains standing**

I.

In order to show
I hold no spleen
I'll gladly
have an affair with the moon

C.

Look
dear niece
I have
cobbled together
a frozen rosebud
for
you

O.

Throw
a book
at Pound's
head
brain suck
to sponge
up the language

N.

My baby's foot

agitates a tune
What a pretty
parrot
He is hung
from the willow tree

S.

How
can I not
imagine
you
without a fork
stuck
in your throat

In Middle

swollen river clambox

marmalade extraordinary

mask dusk musk hover

vacuumish above chapped

lips open receiver like football

but not really

swollen river eyebrow furrow

quiz repeat actors amazonian

lightening bath scratch cameos

violet night locus on fire

that I love

no

that I covet

4.

Ignorant of Curvature
I judge depth with counting games

Sometimes I lose

Excuse Me

Sir

What happened to your head

There's half a fish skull on your skull

I don't know what

you mean

What happened is the rest of the fish head

you've got a scar where the swordfish head what

happened to your head

I don't know man

Your head

how could you fish scales man

fish scales like from the neck sword bird

like a tattoo but real head man

what happened to your head

Love Poem

Fifth floor again

and I've got a body of pipe organ music

last time I was here I forgot to

look the anemone light structure

crinkles spectrums into resembling

romance and haircuts I've seen

that red bowed choker before

eternal feminine decay such as

Vesuvius Chrysanthemums

and Bamboo Shoots You are

my picture of the floating world

my white peacock rain landscape

upon my nightside I see myself

reflected in 3 mirrors I see myself

stained by glass light throwing peonies

I see myself above myself in 1890

I see myself in love

I used to have a layer of brick nogging

insulation has gone the way of

let's move in together

festive rooms show tattered plumage

There's gold in the hemlines held with rabbit glue

Studio Dime

for K.B. Jones

What am I here

I don't remember

underwater icon Dolly Parton

or molasses shadow coral

chief of tidal tundra

black dog

like a rug

guards this painting

Help!

I said Help!

my dream is ending in unilateral unicornery

poppy oil makes paint

what you hide behind

let's walk to the subway

set fire to the garbage cans

gimme some of that black magic

that stuff that makes buildings grow

sure feels nice

gimme that dice

need to make some money

I know it's unfinished fish to you

but the red will cell

or burn down to the ground

down down down to the ground

We can put music on if we want

wear it to the forest game
a sort of vastness with glow
Hey girl wanna blow
I got nowhere to go
Let's find the glow
stow it in beads
not exactly aura
more
jail for twilight

Boxcar Jumper Cable

Brooklyn slips below snow only to catch on fire portraits of those killed are
gilded pieces of jewelry Saint Sophronia can't make it to the church George
Washington's grand manner obstructs unknown provenance I like July
during the Southern flood gentle lace neck and tulip fingers olive trees
pray the gods approve squinted left eye truth western explorer maverick
soldier failed politician magnet in my gut pulls together this coat of nails
powerful hands have a saint on every finger surfaces and hollows hidden in
flesh require direct contact with raw actual material making babies for
Indian market figure philosopher traces goddess as magician bathers
look away when drying Ah! you naughty fawn you've been eating the
flowers again

Octopi Lack the Backbone of Chinese Proverbs

I hear
they're better than
a couple of poems

What I want to want
is a body unfolded
it's your typical
ghost story

shower
hot water
streaks in the sink
empty space wasted

blood by the bag full
distinct district of non-events
hung with tenderness

It's not as if
the subway arrives
and we all exchange

square danced poses
It's more an issue
of heavenly bodies

exchanging atoms
ante up motherfucker

that's my air you're breathing

A Little More on Perception

I wish for once
my eye could reflect
uninfluenced

or

that my good eye
could catch the look
of my bad eye without
mirror convolution

or

that I could stop
watching myself
watch myself as I
walk on the avenue

or

as I watch
I could finally catch
that flash I look for

Consequently, So

A new day

horizon never felt this cloud coverage rumbly

Manhattan currently hides behind a fenced moat

cumulous conspires to steal my bike

it's the pen doing the work like riding the horse working the horse workhorse

I am the lazy part of the team

I am waiting for fireworks

and consequently, my boyfriend

the two communicate through parades and salamanders

be here soon

smooches and sow ears

horizon insomniac a coincidence of sea spray

directly relates right timing

cloud coverage no longer defines weekends

I constantly return home

Holiday Schedule

How can I write around in trains

waiting for the luggage to land

one must spring into action in order

to fulfill dramatic upswept hairdo

Used to be locomotes sounding ore

Now static shock drone sans melody

I heard this station feels of Paris

in Paris the weather is arcane

no, this is not Paris but some fizzled arcade

there's a man behind a curtain here somewhere

Let's pack the herring by their fins

I play the monitor you play the janitor

Don't be the Long Short of it

I'll be long/gone

you be short/stay

All right, I'll stay

but you go

Miss the flowers

kiss the children

Keep your nose clean

wipe it on my heart sleeve

There'll be trouble in the baby teeth

There'll be trouble in town and country

Stay together at a log lake is your final answer

But the \$100 bonus trial offer I'll take

I'll take you two um too to buy some bayou

hoodoo your ass

let's stay together with a chance of scatter abandon

Seasonal Thrust

fox in the cemetery
he wonders about hawks
or maybe they're falcons
will he destroy this raptor
deny my sin
let it walk away
watch me unravel into a small dove
alight on Foil's nose

fox searches for a shrouded medallion
laying rusted in honor
I can fell fall in his pads
How does fog horn
make it this far?
small steps grow from hillside
rose grows from Frankel
its the fountain that prevents lilys
from taking hold
Prunus serrulata grows fox nest
hawk rest I've seen sparrows
defeat the frog hollow

Again the fog horn
Again no fog
It's fall and I haven't
told the branches yet
Smith sits still shaded
under ground

his tomb requires a lever
I'll ask about Aster Path
and the fungus peony that speckles
(that'll open him up)

44 yrs 11 mos 11 days
water springs eternal rings of pearls
hung from chapel teeth
If I sneak up on fox
will he shout
Poinsettia are led to believe
they bloom of their own accord
no one's told them about the injustice of winter

The *Rana catesbeiana* codes
or bull frog foot notes
collaboration with Tracey McTague

diving gear for a requiem
under a weightless future
beyond our encrypted files
& our frequent flyer miles
our nuclear commune
of Asian extras recline
in various modes of consumption
this hubris cross
between gorilla & reptile lust
bio-indicators fade to black...scene
of fire breathing techniques
for ancestral diction
& parameters of dialect

nuclear scientist's diving requiem
strains a weightless Benthic
community composition
Asian extras were hired
for various bodily sediment
grain-size parameters
a cross between gorilla
and whale oblivion
oxygen destructo mass
breathing techniques
to the only survivor
species fade out fire

I offer you my humanity to
influence a voice-over debate
from the shoreline
it's a lichen subterfuge
the apocolypto machine
is framed in bamboo past
we're all mothra indicated
in this disturbed landscape
of tree walk-outs
in unison with
fire under water & in the belly
a love story blossoms
on the tragic boat invested in
mycorrhizal friendships
notwithstanding
that old growth gossip
I wear several coats for now

ham fistled pile of sludge
for nuclear fantasy glass cylinder
rugosity depth wave energy
influence assemblage characteristics
a fiery voice-over debate
from shoreline to out skirts
lichen subterfuge
mothra indicatation
disturbed landscape
inner frame of bamboo and wire
fire under water
tragic tuna boat

mycorrhizal friendships
blisters and fainting spells
I wear several coats of molten rubber
notwithstanding transpiration
that old growth gossip

drive through last suppers
on the vermin mergers
the taco bell rat
eating take out
is getting fat

First stippled purpling
then chlorosis
eventually necrosis
analyses carried out determine nettle content
sulphur nitrogen phosphorus ship's wake
Japanese harmonica player morse codes
salvage yard wife beater
distress code a fan migration across the
Japan Sea finds it's way to Spain
birth mark sinking to murky muck
disappointment
he'll have to uncover the truth
damn shipwreck week

a ship's wake in Morse code
played by harmonica
in distress code across the sea
our birth mark heralds disappointment
& foreshadows new holidays

damn, its shipwreck week!
rocks are relics that fill our nets
12 guns, 8 germs & robust stealing
we've picked the earth's pockets
our intermediate creatures of
altered environments
its a history lesson
you are here...

rocks are relics that fill our nets
12 cows and 8 pigs
picked the earth's deep pockets
footsteps carry radioactivity
to the other side of the hill
intermediate altered environment
incredible really
Stontium-90 typical niche
history lesson- you are here
deep sea ship on fire
the ocean just blew up!

the ocean just blew up!
a monster!
a relic from the past
it will come to feed on...
well-what do you think?
underwater bombs blow up so sweetly
such a lullaby for going on the lamb
could you kill him?
cut him like a deck of cards
while you flaunt your scars & jaunty hats

she gives her bad news smile
under her good luck umbrella
only ask the hard questions
while folding the lace back
against a barbed fence coastline
a light returns

a monster!
a relic from the past that stinks
it will come to feed
contamination of knowledge
bombs underwater blow up so sweetly
what do you think?
could you kill him?
deal newspapers like cards
ante up scars and jaunty hats

she'll never look for more
its in the water
forever more
sickness overcame them
in the approach of fish
this contamination of knowledge
cut the lines
on the scientist so alone
underwater
in a diminished sphere

I won't hug you but I will
grab your shoulders tightly
her waistline varies

bad news smile
good luck umbrella
only ask the hard questions
while folding the lace barbed
fence longs for a coastline
light returns apparently headed for the river
she'll never look for more
water sickness overcomes the scientists
are all drowning in the approach
of fish of the youngest scientist
cut the lines

Vita

Jessica Fiorini was born in New York and received her B.F.A. from Roger Williams University. She has one previously published chapbook entitled *Sea Monster at Night*. Jessica is active in the New York poetry community and has read at a variety of venues including: The Poetry Project, Bowery Poetry Club, Battlehill Series at BBQ, and the Zinc Bar. Her poetry has made appearances in Lungfull, Brooklyn Rail, Poetry Motel and Puppy Flowers.