

Spring 5-13-2016

(un)plug in lotusland

Laurin D. Jefferson

University of New Orleans, New Orleans, l.jefferson67@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jefferson, Laurin D., "(un)plug in lotusland" (2016). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 2161.

<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/2161>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

(un)plug in lotusland

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
Creative Writing
Poetry

by

Laurin DeChae Jefferson

B.S. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2013

May, 2016

Table of Contents



Preface: The Pain of Space & Proofs for Science Fiction	1
---	---



PROLOGUE	13
----------------	----



i/I, you/You	20
hemispheres	21
no one tells you	22
mothership	25
remix	26
the helix of the cosmos is the lyrical	27
diorama: crash test dummy builds mannequin her white picket fence	28
mutt in multiple	29
poem as alien hand puppet	30
if my eyes were clocks i could see space from my living room	32
the reckoning	33



sluglines	35
forever yours, astrid	36
diorama: mannequin writes a love letter in the dark	37
(un)plug in lotusland	38
liftoff	39
eat me	40
cosmonaut	41
voyager i, the golden records	42



uncanny valley	44
holographic	45
salt	46
diorama: dummy & mannequin play operation.....	47
microchip	48
space rhapsody	49
alpha ∞ omega.....	50
snakes & ladders.....	51
astrid points to herself.....	52
dummy dummy	53
Notes.....	54
Vita.....	55



The Pain of Space & Proofs for Science Fiction

“Where else can black girls from the future go?”

Diamond J. Sharp

I come from nothing. I inhabit that residual grayspace of uncertainty. There is nothing more worth knowing about me. Mine is a story told over and over again. What was the use of opening a mouth I always believed to be empty? “I am a poet: I am always hungry” (Roethke 85). Muteness to mutiny. At once my mouth is open and waiting to be filled. At once, my mouth is open and ready to spew. The challenge is against regurgitation. The lesson my first poetry professor always tried to hammer home, the point, was to showcase the “falling apart,” a theme that appears continuously throughout this manuscript. It was not at all what I wanted to write. In fact, I avoided writing it and allowing those stories to surface in me, which have already created so much tension, dissonance. I had to learn how to eat, how to keep it down, how to make it new.

In her book, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice*, bell hooks discusses a similar discordant note by way of clinging to one’s own language, yet needing the “oppressor’s language” to communicate with a larger population. Explicating Adrienne Rich’s poem “The Burning of Paper Instead of Children” both authors repeat the line “This is the oppressor’s language yet I need it to talk to you.” There are white men in these poems. White men have influenced these poems. Just as hooks writes:

To recognize that we touch one another in language seems particularly difficult in a society that would have us believe that there is no dignity in the experience of passion, that to feel deeply is to be inferior, for within the dualism of Western metaphysical thought, ideas are always more important than language. To heal the splitting of mind and body, we marginalized and oppressed people attempt to recover ourselves and our experiences in language. We seek to make a place for

intimacy. Unable to find such a place in standard English, we create the ruptured, broken, unruly speech of the vernacular.

Though these poems don't always engage with the vernacular, the sentiment remains the same: "i could finally build me who i had wanted to" as I state in the poem "i/I, you/You," calling to the idea that my body, my site of trauma, could be constructed outside of human possibility, including animal and cyborg anatomy. When I learned of the afrofuturistic aesthetic, I understood only one thing: a group of people systematically "othered" has continued to cultivate a narrative wherein their black bodies are not showcased fashionably and whose art and culture are not commodified. hooks' call for the reimagining of the space which the body occupies, particularly the black body, mirrors this aesthetic. Given that Afrofuturism has only recently come under the microscope again for study, texts like Ytasha Womack's *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* offer a place to start, defining the movement in a myriad of ways, but characteristically an intersection of art and technology as a means to create "an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, [combining] elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs" (9). Ultimately, though, Afrofuturism is deep-rooted. Trends in Afrofuturism point to the other as alien, abduction narratives, and time travel as a way to restructure history. Afrofuturism can be traced through key characters like Sun Ra, George Clinton, Parliament, Funkadelic, Jimi Hendrix, and, Womack makes cases for John Coltrane and Miles Davis as well. While the mythologies spun by these p-funk loving spacemen preached love, harmony, and inclusion, the narratives of women often went unsung.

Women of color, particularly, have become consistently eroticized and dehumanized in media and art as fetish. The obsession with the "other" as a magical entity takes on new meaning, becoming something unwanted as Linda Chavers writes in her letter, "To Black Girls Everywhere," which both soothes and cautions. Chavers says that the problem is not that we don't exist, but that "we're displaced to nowhere. We come from the same place that denies us citizenship." She speaks

directly to her audience in a way that is abrasive, yet motherly. “You’ll be told that you’re magical,” she says, “but many days you will not want to be so goddamn magical.” The letter, part prose and part poetry, goes on:

Words like magic suggest
lightness and power and a centuries-old truth-myth about us: that
we can withstand anything. That we can do it all. And you will, my dear. You will do
it all. And you will do it brilliantly, fantastically. Routinely. It will hurt. But the only
thing worse than a black girl in pain is a black girl who says that she’s a black girl in
pain. So you say nothing and they will call you strong. Some days you’ll even believe
it.

Chavers, in this case, readily recognizes the predicament for women of color. Recently a rise in female voices all contending the same idea ranging from fields like art and music, to acting and politics, have allowed a space for females of color to be heard, to exist in roles outside of the maid and the victim. Some of these artists include: actresses Taraji P. Henson (*Empire*), Lavern Cox (*Orange Is the New Black* & activist), Angela Bassett (*Chi-Raq*), Viola Davis (*How to Get Away with Murder*); poet Claudia Rankine (*Citizen: An American Lyric*); and musical artists Janelle Monae, and Erykah Badu. In the case of the latter, the women utilize the metaphor of the cyborg to address political and social ideas. Monae particularly, seeks to address issues like gender, race, and sexuality in her album *The ArchAndroid*, wherein she takes on the persona of an android, Cindi Mayweather, to address the current social and political climate. So, too, literature has seen an outpouring of female sci-fi narratives with pioneers like Octavia Butler, Toni Morrison, and Zora Neale Hurston making space for women writers of color to do so. What was once science fiction is now real, possible.

This speaks to hooks’ idea of “black people meeting one another in a space away from the diverse cultures of languages that distinguished them from one another,” where we will be “compelled by circumstance to find ways to speak with one another in a ‘new world’ where blackness or darkness of one’s skin and not language would become the space of bonding.” I found it necessary to inhabit and embody that space in this manuscript after existing myself within a

whitewashed history. In building this world, I looked to writers of color to examine their ideas of inhabiting space and the body, to speculative science fiction for theories of the astrological and time, as well as to hip hop and R&B artists for lessons on breath, beat and the line. Specifically, I look to poets like Tracy K. Smith, Jericho Brown, Latasha N. Nevada Diggs, Douglas Kearney, and Monica Ong. These writers challenge structure and form and are at times irreverent. Similarly, television shows like *Doctor Who* and *X-Files* helped me to learn about the strange and alien, while shows like *Adventure Time* would help me hone in on surreal images and ideas. Lastly, musicians like Kanye West, Mos Def and Talib Kweli, The Roots, Beyoncé, Robert Glasper, and Kendrick Lamar were crucial in developing my own voice and a penchant for shameless truth-telling in the lyric mode. I needed to find my people and talk to them with something other than language—skin, stars—that commonality which binds us. As Womack notes, Africans have always had a deep connection with the sky, the metaphysical (90).

The manuscript not only wrestles with Christianity and Catholicism, but with the occult as well as those other invisible, unnamable forces that move us. I seek to subvert the oppressive nature of some of these institutions, channeling the duende that rests somewhere between my waking and sleeping in that cunningly deceptive quietness, that sleep paralysis. Because I do not agree with the exclusionary nature of such entities that, like so many others, worked to devalue my existence and that of countless others, I witness duende when a drunk sings, dragging his feet on the cement, halfway present. When my mother cries, a rarity like blue moons and the chance that wishes made on flowers or stars will come true. When the news breaks over another black man's funeral. Lorca writes:

The true struggle is with duende. The roads where one searches for God are known, whether by the barbaric way of the hermit or the subtle one of the mystic: with a tower, like St. Thomas, like St. Theresa, or by the three paths of St. John of the Cross. And though we may have to cry out, in Isaiah's voice; 'Truly you are a hidden God,' finally, in the end, God sends his primal thorns of fire to those who seek Him.

This manuscript is the breakdown of the whole into parts, of that which I seek. It begs questions of that last gasp of truth and in doing so, often requires redefinition. Gertrude Stein did say a poet's favorite pastime is naming: "...they were drunk with nouns, to name to know how to name earth sea and sky and all that was in them was enough to make them live and love in names, and that is what poetry is it is a state of knowing and feeling a name." A Genesis story of sorts, I attempt to put a name to that which looms over us, nameless.

Language, however, did not escape me as I also looked to poems like "Fury" by Tina Chang wherein the opening line points directly to colored skin the signifier of something ominous: "My son rubs his skin and names it brown." She admits her fears for her son in a world consumed with violence, wherein he becomes unwillingly marked as a target. A thread seems to run through the work of poets of color that requires them to talk about their skin and the scrubbing of it. In Jericho Brown's poem "Detailing the Nape," Brown's grandmother can hardly believe how dark her granddaughter's skin is. Brown recounts in the opening lines of his poem: "after our showers,/she inspects the dark condition of my sister's neck, declaring it filthy." She scrubs and scrubs, but there is no filth, only skin. I, too, examine colorism and the scrubbing of skin in the poem "Remix" in an attempt to renegotiate my relationship with my body, a subject much of the manuscript considers.

Many of the themes in this manuscript align with Haraway's concept of the cyborg body, which "appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed" and remains a "disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective personal self" (3). "We are they," she says (13). As Loss Pequeño Glazier mentions in his book *Digital Poetics*, "innovative poetry offers the perspective of the multiple 'I.' Because non-innovative writing centers on the exposition of a world as perceived from a self-constituted, monolinear, and sometimes solipsistic 'I,' it is not adequate to the potentials of e-writing" (22). When plurality emerges it shifts the face of power and rewrites the body as a unified collective, demanding a multimodal existence.

The technological advances of the 21st century have profoundly effected our bodies. This speaks not only to anatomy, but also to poetry on the subject of the body—often romanticized, elegized, objectified, or memorialized. The machine acts as a catalyst for the body (the poet), functioning to interpret and enact language while operating within its own algorithmic structures. I believe that by assimilating myriad technologies into our daily usage, we take on the properties of the machine as it functions like and/or accommodates to our bodies: we are the ones who made it. When once we might have preferred conversations face-to-face, we now FaceTime, Facebook, and FaceSwap. We click, tap, swipe instead of handhold, back pat, thumbs up.

“A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction,” Donna Haraway writes in her ironic manifesto, seeking to rewrite the future of feminist politics (1). This evolution makes fiction narratives all too real. However, such advancements allow for positive interactions in that a space has opened for a new chorus of voices. As the canonical texts continue to dominate academia, more often than not, minority bodies are forced to fit into majority molds, but with the development of tools and distribution more narratives can be accessed and read. She goes on to say, “By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. Thus cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics” (Haraway 2). Just as the body dictates politics so, too, does the machine-body and, in doing so, redefines the shape of our digital output.

“From a posthuman point of view, we are not bounded, autonomous, coherent, and full self-conscious beings imagined by Enlightenment thinkers but cybernetic organisms joined in continuous feedback loops with media and information technologies” Adalaide Morris writes in *New Media Poetics* (4). Defined as “a synergy between human beings and intelligent machines,” posthumanism demarcates the period in time wherein we find ourselves inseparable from the

machine. The body learns to operate within new structures: the eyes must follow the cursor, the brain must decode, the hands navigate the tools.

I'm only just learning what it means, how it means, to exist as an adult female of mixed race. I'm trying to process and address what I encounter through the media, political structures, and personal interactions. I'm trying to locate writers who are able to. Prior to the Trayvon Martin shooting, and even afterwards, Americans claimed that racism no longer existed, that people didn't see color anymore. I wanted to believe, knowing it wasn't true. After all this time existing in a colored body, I am more aware of my hue than ever. Questions arise out of my own duality: Am I black or white? Insider or outsider? Animal or machine? Distinction always seemed to be at the forefront of my personhood. I always used to feel that my edges were seeping closer to some sameness not worth naming. This type of pain makes memory soft to the touch, and every time I reach out, I flinch before I feel. I am not floating through space. I am stuck inside of my body. It is most evident on the days when I wake from sleep and am unable to move from sleep paralysis. A weight on my chest that myth calls demon or spirit and causes shortness of breath. I must sink into the stillness before it will release me. This pain is not one that can be easily defined or pinpointed.

In her essay, "Poetry and the Metaphysical I," Dorothea Lasky speaks to the duende, noting that it transforms into something else: "a live alphabet, an actual freakish livewire that the *I* of a poem must encounter, control, manipulate, beautify, handle, and you know, just deal with." The protagonist of these poems, Astrid, attempts to confront her duende as does Lasky's "shapeshifter," an entity who is not only required to confront duende, but also fully equipped. She toes the line between the dualities that she confronts, largely her point of origin, negotiating a conflicted past while facing a dystopic future. Further, she inhabits a metaphysical i/I that "cannot be conquered, but like all incredibly strong things, is gorgeous to watch change and flit in the light of our reading. It is most gorgeous because of its strength to not be just an overwhelmingly strong self. It is most

gorgeous to have the courage not to even pretend to be a self at all.” In my poem, “Prologue,” the unknown maker outlines the queries of the experiment, the most crucial being “Can an “i/I” relationship be renegotiated when interfacing unknown data?” Though this manuscript deals with many relationships, (self and mother, self and maker, self and lover), the most elusive remains the relationship of self with self.

Language in particular facilitates this relationship as poet Nayyirah Waheed writes in his poem “african american ii” (quoted in its entirety):

i lost a whole continent.
a whole continent from memory.
unlike all other hyphenated americans
my hyphen is made of blood. feces. bone.
when africa says hello
my mouth is a heartbreak
because i have nothing in my tongue
to answer her.
i do not know how to say hello to my mother.

This notion of being able to communicate with the core of your selfhood or the extension of yourself, creates a void in one’s identity. I’m writing the story of Astrid, an unknown hybrid, an amalgamation of parts—human, animal, machine. She is being utilized for a genetic experiment that is meant to provide deeper insight into the human condition, investigating the queries of the entities that sent her. As she confronts her memory and a divided self, she tries to navigate a post-apocalyptic world, while fending off loneliness and other conditions of the human spirit. Unreliable, sent from space to incubate, to be observed, slowly devolving into insanity in a dystopic setting that is hers and not hers at once, she is alone. Similar to W.E.B Dubois’ short story, “The Comet,” the throughline is clear that equality, and perhaps self-discovery, cannot exist without disaster. Though she was once human and had human memories within her, she becomes an unknown, a variable, and her past lives manifest themselves in her devolution. These poems create a soundtrack of apocalyptic song as the protagonist embarks on a hero’s journey into space. The “songs” function as way to unpack the themes that the manuscript considers, including the shifting roles and

evolutionary implications of ideological concepts such as technology, theology, astrology and astronomy, ultimately, a representation of our humming nature told in letters and lyric with a healthy dose of speculative science fiction. Oftentimes it is unclear to whom Astrid sings, reflecting that discord between maker and creation. It is a revisionist history told over and over again in obsessive loops.

Laura (Riding) Jackson's essay, "A Prophecy or a Plea," speaks to the necessity of discovering the self. A deconstructed hero's journey that eschews the "monomyth" and archetypal, the poems herein fashion a new narrative inclusive of my experiences as a multiracial, queer woman, by engaging with religious liturgy, ritual and lyric. "By taking the universe apart," Jackson says, "[s]he will have reintegrated it with [her] own vitality; and it is this reintegrated universe that will in turn possess [her] and give [her] rest. If this voyage reveals a futility, it is a futility worth facing." Though the journey at times will be difficult, continue on.

To enact many of the complicated structures and conversations surrounding these topics, I engage the language of the cinema to guide the reader and provide a narrative arc of the poems, demonstrated by the sestina, "Sluglines." These formal structures also serve to elevate the social and cultural allusions made within the text, while simultaneously estranging them, making the familiar suddenly unknown. I intend for the disorienting effect to give readers a sense of a world not far off from the one we inhabit today. I often consider pacing through rhythm (syllabics) and rhyme. When we exist in a present where faster will always equal better, my automatic instinct is to pause, to let the content breathe on the page.

I employ forms that stress repetition like the ghazal, sestina, and pantoum. As the body and machine become more closely linked, our repeated actions become nuanced. For me, these forms also enact the idea of a revisionist history as something that likens to madness, lending to the story of an unreliable narrator and the multiple perspective storytelling. Further, the caesura and field

composition create linguistic fracturing similar to the rhetorical shifts caused by digital terminology: how we share, what we share, what we “like,” who we associate with, the function of memory, the way we repeat motions to operate the computer-machine.

It seems clear that the equation for poetic constructions of make believe worlds must contain equal parts possibility, relevance, moral code, and luck in order to translate, realistically, to the masses. I felt compelled to write a story that is not only mine, but one that also gives voice to stories like mine, stories that go unwritten, stories about half selves and whole truths. “What we need are new ‘creation myths,’” Ivan Brady notes in “Poetics for a Planet,” “to repair the damage done by our recklessly mechanical abuse of nature and to restore the balance between man and the rest of the organisms with which he shares the planet” (991). These poems seek to repair the relationship between human and nature by way of machine, particularly via the functions of the computer and the screen. Machines give us the ability to speak that which otherwise would go unspoken. They can reflect gods and demons.

These poems create a pastiche of my experiences in spirituality, identity, and relationships. The repetition is meant for crazy-making, is meant to feel obsessive in that we are all constantly obsessing over something. We are at once *the* representation and perpetually shifting sign. I have found that in projecting these shadow puppets on a wall, I can make meaning out of the beliefs and belief systems, out of a shadowed existence or a lighted one.

Works Cited

- Brady, Ivan. "Poetics for a Planet: Discourse on Some Problems of Being-in-Place." *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln eds. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005. 979-1026. Web. 14 July 2015.
- Brown, Jericho. "Detailing the Nape." *Please*. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan UP, 2008. 18. Print.
- Chang, Tina. "Fury." *Academy of American Poets*. Web. 18 Feb. 2015.
- Chavers, Linda. "To Black Girls Everywhere." *The Offing*. The Offing, 22 February 2016. Web. 22 Feb. 2016.
- DuBois, W.E.B. "The Comet." *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. New York: Harcourt, 1920. Print.
- Glazier, Loss Pequeño. *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries*. Tascaloosa: Alabama UP, 2002. Print.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-182. Print.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 167-175. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.
- Jackson, Laura (Riding). "A Prophecy or a Plea." *The Reviewer*. 5 Apr. 1925. 1-7.
- Lasky, Dorothea. "Poetry and the Metaphysical I." *Wave Composition*. 7 Sept. 2015. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.
- Morris, Adalaide, and Thomas Swiss eds. *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*. Cambridge: MIT Press Books, 2006. Print.
- Roethke, Theodore. *On Poetry & Craft*. Townsend: Coppery Canyon, 2001. Print.
- Sharp, Diamond J. "Black Girls from the Future." *Lenny* (#14). 29 Dec. 2015. Web. 29 Dec. 2015.
- Stein, Gertrude. "Poetry and Grammar." *The American Poetry Review*. January/February 2007. 27-32. Print.
- Womack, Ytasha L. *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013. Print.



“Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon—for no matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you—and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter’s neck tight enough to choke her.”

—Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

PROLOGUE

a 4-inch chip of isaac's famous apple tree
inscribed "I. Newton,"
took a rocketship Outthere escaping the grasp,

the sliver,
preserving the self as gravity.
how the direction of the falling
forces choice in divide.

when (re)entering the atmosphere,
did you space the way neil did,
to never have set foot?

in sleep, (you wish) to be further. a new anatomy. making makes for newness, but re(membering). a hand shakes you from dream. *look into my little light*. what is ordinary about a world that hangs in suspension? apples and oranges they say. translate the utterance the lips flap, the beak that pecks at the axiom. once worn, a second chance, a new body. looking back now, the hands feel you as if searching pockets. you see their error. too much emotion, not enough stamina. if you shuck the problem from the pod, you can unslip the kinks, relink circuitry (∞). a snip here, stretch there. spread thin, skin becomes screen for shadow puppetry. bionic invention makes a mockery of natural meat. plucked ripe, a miracle spawn. halved, a muscle twitching. halved, an archive of memory—remade & split.

QUERY: Separated early from that which creates, can a being survive in extreme environments?

QUERY: Can an "i/I" relationship be renegotiated when interfacing unknown data?

QUERY: Can emotion undergo dissection, the isolated measure, with exactitude, the finite possibilities of human nature, of earthly existence?

QUERY: Can we extract the force of propulsion?

QUERY: What means the end, what means begin?

QUERY: Will a circular loop of experience, ad infinitum, lend to evolutionary adaptation?
Detract?

*from the humblest parasite which clings
to the hairs of a quadruped or feathers of a bird,
to the spouting humpback whale that sucks
down krill. throw up a handful of feathers
and all fall down in certain gravity.*

HYPOTHESIS: Fed a diet of sweet sticks, leaves and sugar water, the subject should, under ideal conditions, achieve the ability to evolve.

HYPOTHESIS: At the recursive site of trauma, the subject may begin to develop a cleft, begin to split. Tweak the circuitry, spark the microchip.

HYPOTHESIS: Beneath the ripe moon, a longing, a restlessness. That which straps one to the ground restrains.

INITIATING EXPERIMENT : EARTH , STARCHILD

in calculating trajectory, not arcs, but loops.

what kind of thing sends another thing away in mutual thingness?

subject=search

subject=error

subject=grid

a figure slicks a label across my canister
holding a world. whispers, i'll make you again
and again. smacks the side, a pat on the ass,
get out of here, split.

Log Observation (1): A world contracts. A seed planted need not be nurtured in order to grow as long as weather conditions are favorable. A pod of fire, a pulse detected, becoming. Swaddled in flame, she hurtled toward Earth. She pierced the dirt to incubate in loam. On the first, barely a murmur, hardly a bang. A great labor. Opened for the first time, the universe was vacuous and hollow. For the first time, ravenous.

nothing is easier than to tame an animal.
left to myself, behold i am nothing.
space times time, divided by fractions
of infinity equals multiplicity, equals phenomenon.
for one night only a fever dream, a phantasm.

repopulating ...

a disembodied you echoes above me.
muffled beginnings always spark from sediment.

sentiment: i am in and out
side of myself.

i pinch a flap of skin to test lucidity.
dreaming, dreaming. i think about the one

who made me, and how, once removed
i came tumbling into the room.

repopulating ...

i float in amniotic dimness, a testament
to liminal existences.

bottle bound my mouth slips omnivorous
into nipple hymns. sweet elixir.

if i could eat the world, i would lick
my own skin first to test the taste.

before i was your probe, i was infinity,
arching my back into loops with immaculate

exactness, but when your body calls
you answer.

the root of yes is *mmm*,
so limn my meatspace with your snakelips.

i'm the smoke beneath your tongue,
your lovething parlance.

Log Observation (2): The unknown element of a distant act of creation, of destruction, no longer believes that nature is graced with wound. We reset. Removed traces of past lives lived. The subject seems to be faring well, but it is still too soon to tell. Additional query: can a copy act as original?

automatic—like producing like
from the seed of a wild plant

from the saliva that seeps
from teeth-gnashing mongrels—a sprout, a bloom.

the day-star she offered these most sacred memories to,
perfect as a machine, makes fractals of her spheres and systems.

like sugar to a lip
the thought of honey-soaked sun,
a mouth on fire. the sunspot
that holes me open

self-portrait	as a lung		
	the lightbox		
illuminates my	bonekeys		
risen me		from the depths	
of liquid space			
	i strain		
	abalone shells	through ribcage	
Outthere	winged things	use me	perch
		drink	what falls from me
how i bulge	bloat	with breath	
more than		damp	i am
what wafted		through with me	limp
			makes me whistle
i remember	how they licked		me across the forehead
what was said	<i>how exotic</i>		<i>oh my god</i>
<i>so</i>	<i>exotic</i>		the exhalation

Log Observation (3): Malfunction—upon reboot, the subject is adrift in memory, potentially compromising the validity of the experiment. Wiped clean, she was meant to start anew, but a residual sensitivity remains. Skew the results a little this way, a little that. The numbers show a sectioned self. Impartial to resolve.

she mimes the zipping of lips:
a little birdie told me one by one by one.
if a secret is what you want, consider
that a feather plucked leaves

a nursery of fetal bones.

in my palms, she says, water overflows.
tip me up and i'll fall into your mouth.

please, i begs, make me one and the same.
i must convince myself we are not. we are.
the same is not same, but. variation leads:
one, two, three. one, two, three. one, two, one.
dance, puppet. held up with strings.
i am marked like a cave filled with scratches.

Log Observation (4): To direct performance, force function into form. In other words, ignore the site of origin. Disparate parts congeal into one. The self, it seems, cannot be isolated from the self. She knows her all too well. The experiment will be discontinued.

the last time i saw you i was sick.
i slathered strawberries on my wounds.
who says i don't bleed red?

i listened to radiostatic for hours today,
just so i could remember what home felt like.

yes, the sun, it's beautiful and my body
means your body is stitched to mine.

the doctor says i'm following through,
but the bed bugs, though, holler,
what makes you unmakes you!
i hear it in my head.

the last time i saw you
i had the common sense to grab myself
by the back of the neck and force my nose
to sniff the spot that i had wet.

a drop of water, made distillate,
implies that we are the universe in increments.
beginnings sifted like thick silicate,

a kinetic gesture, an audible moan.
remember when we first linked our fingers and jumped?
look at what our hands have done.

swallowing doses of poison awaiting transformation
a match haloes, begging me to see
every filament that vibrates with aftershock.

and / she / hung / singing/
against/ everything / she / believed

cradled like the pietà consoles.
in that first still moment

she bends to whisper in my ear
a wonder, your body and the world fell.

i am trying to speak in a different register
the muttered register of the *halfbreed*

that spit i hold. sewn, they diagnose
a unique bent. patchworked & flexible

my body becomes
& splits open. i can bloom & bloom.

like the dead in their graves
i'm getting wet because the waves keep rolling over.
i cannot say i am sorry when i am not.



“...strike here and there a half-tone”

—W.E.B. Dubois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*

i/I, you/You

after Greg Wrenn

1.

such vastness and maw.
i opposite I.

babble and coo
of her. foamy beginning

thrown over me.
soft. i smooth.

teeming tonguefish bouy i spreading star-bed.
in a black just above a black.

2.

in one world	was a girl	swam the spiraling pinwheel galaxy
in another	a mystic	illuminating over me was pretty mix sliced

in a machine with sparking effervescence	looping 1st day—
swallow it my me being laid up fine	for my you/You

3.

my cinched skin, my perforation: They made my heart into some kind of beeping thing. or tweaked me while i slept in animate suspension, which had flooded me and flung over faster than i could glean. approaching earth without appetite, i felt my stomach crumpling, rupturing the seam between thinking and knowing thrust upon me as a child, and thought that when i landed, firehot, i could finally build me who i had wanted to.

hemispheres

a golden shovel after Mary Jo Bang

i lift the darkness that lamps eclipse. my hemisphere
folds, unfolds. my eyes are asteroids, are clocks that tick one
big black blink, a laughing shutter. my teeth clap, you fall. she meets
each piece with curiosity. from this poison my hot hemisphere
splits. alleluia, the light. ground divides the world in two.
why sulk for the girl who, lost on her own, servers her thoughts?
how alabaster the tower. the way the wrist flips switch, a twist
in the notch of the neural node casting the corpus apart.
decode my flimsy flesh. gooey, we're starlings adrift at
the pinpoint interstice where fumbling axis meets the
maker. for this, i slip into a new shade. my center
ruptures for candied story. the seam
of a baby blanket, sweet rolls over onto everything.
what are we if not sugar? you smother my inside
voice to pieces. the sound: a mindspace split is

no one tells you

*

i wish it were for the grace
the empty. but darkness
isn't what causes us to break

against the current
trappings.
wildness might surface in us enough to foam

at the mouth
to drip with
to drip without

*

late blooms tessellate
when color is at its dimmest.
always late coming
into being among the compost
the stench enough
to cause you to turn
away. always away.

*

rabid, somehow the adrenalin
keeps us from moving
static crush
—weight bearing—
cycles.
all that energy with nowhere
to go—
cycles
up & out.

*

don't say
the truth
i never
gave you
anything
that no child
i brought
you in
and i

can take
can save
you out
take me
out then
her mother
my mother
the They
i didn't
ask
for

*

look up even if it means to drown.
the ability to morph, evolve—gone
the truth is that no child
can save her mother.
the truth isn't in saving

*

to be further from that which makes me, i stripped down

*

i wasn't made to be quiet.
stop crying. stop.

*

divine: to swallow light whole, without gagging. to strike gold.

*

between the severed self thrashes hushless.
i am ticked. the vein of me

the mother. this rip
incarnadine vessel pumping with metallic bees

so vibrant the stellar unfiltered sky, untethered
sound. i prayed you down, prayed you heavy.

*

all my pieces, surfaced in me, will soup and devour me,
lightless, like fireflies fading in morning.

with dinner plates. in this gash is our bed. obsidian, you say: *i*
am xanadu. we are

mothership

your mother was once lightning jarred and once
she shook whole houses in her quake and beat
the livelong day into its resting place.
my mother merely years above me now
that day when she ate daisies fresh. you want
to know the once when i began belief?
your mother thunder shaking houses loose.
my mother right before she died i prayed
and prayed and prayed she wouldn't suffer long.
i prayed for her, for father too—that this
quietus not be made more succulent,
some meat that's beaten to tender and rare.
your mother is the moment of flash flood.
my mother running out of time and me
and all of us. your mother doesn't miss
me when i'm gone. what is it to be missed?
my father used to set out fruit—apples,
and oranges—halved, laid out on tissue,
in front of pictures of my mother's face,
so she might not go hungry. he'd still take
her with him everywhere, set her a place
to eat then wonder where she'd gone. she waved
magician-less and run out of the spark.
she left him in a lonely never known
before. they say that if the woman dies
before the man he won't last longer than
five years without her. i know i must go
second. your grandfather wouldn't survive the forgetting.

remix

to drain is to forget her.
i stand at the sink washing
dirt from my hands. suds
take on the color of me—
how i wish this were
real—an opalescent hum

that rings true. for once, color
isn't deciding
for me whether or not I
am the thump beneath
skin, sound thicker than blood.

feel the pulse beating down doors
just to define home.
telephone lines beyond
the sink-side window
hold rows and rows of perched black

birds: an electric chorus,
caws ragged and rage.
calls that smack up against glass,
the invisible
just enough to mute the sound.

there is no use standing here
anymore. I'll make
the bed, anything to keep
my hands busy. So,
wring me like a rag again.

listen for the crack of bone,
the mud-juice spilling
in the sink. to drain is to
forget it happened.
no matter the room—muteness.

our mouths are like pillows stitched
shut, a case of birds,
talons and wings protruding
through cotton to break
free. use the beak, use the beak.

the helix of the cosmos is the lyrical

after Darcie Dennigan

my mother snips the braid that hangs the length of me.
i say, i want to keep what makes me.

there is no pause, a hand motion, and scissors snowflake my curls. a shrub
taming. in a bag she collects the hair and labels it *crow*.

the kinky mess, she says, knots
around my fingers and my hands are tied. then snaps,
and sharpens the rod that spoiled the child for later.

both thinking of the baggie of hair.
she says. i say, she says. thinly, a breeze sways me.
the mother is not a nursery, which is why i incubate in fiction:

*of the spiraling mystic who saw visions in the wild sea:
and the girl floated apart, incanted the sea opaque.
her body flickering in the waveless water like unmoored holograms.*

diorama: crash test dummy builds mannequin her white picket fence

i once ate a penny hoped it would grow
puppet the life you build hands make hands
but it's really all in the fence the face the squareness of the perimeter hedged neat
if all you wanted was my mouthhole you could have found
a better puppet white the picture manicured dream
american with dog shit 2.5 children the veil of the sprinkler
driveway tongue oil slick free spacious enough for an SUV sensibility
at night the windows illumined perfect glow of electric
candlelight happy afterglow scent of cinnamon pumpkin wafting out
as if to say welcome sarcastically

mutt in multiple

"Here the Dormouse shook itself and began singing in its sleep, 'Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle—' and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop."

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

there i go down the rabbit hole in a slipstream of blood muscle, marrow.
maybe i'll thread my fingers with tendons pluck stringy tunes
to tap my foot to. to sing *the last time i saw you* *i* *i*

had to admit i know nothing. you must be here proved to resist,
to begin. the universe opens up to me, sprawled on my mouthy
floorboards. no matter what you do they just keep pushing back.

the last time i saw you i was cut and spread against backdrops
befitting queens. the last time i saw you i made my ends meet
by curving into a circle. you can't hit what's been hollowed. wreck

less leaving. the last time i saw you i was creature, fur and fluff,
but i contain notes emblematic of what is lyrical,
what is epic. admit you've wanted to know what your insides

look like cut and spread like a meat platter slices fanned. i have too.
that's why i pick back the scabs to peek at pink. a great many know
that bright incarnadine like the name pleased to depend upon.

in a time when such broad terms could be construed there is a need
to set limits. on one hand i am transcendent and lasting,
on the other, violent and extremely flammable, a shallow

filled up with imperfect shapes that narrate the light seeping away.
on a personal note, I wish to add my apologies.
on a personal note, you were the pulpy constellation
at the bottom of every glass and i haven't washed them since.

of remembering this: the last time i saw you, i became
cave. i snatch up the gaps between to inhabit my own blackness
the only way, the only way, the only way i know how.

poem as alien hand puppet

after Douglas Kearney

(here is a couplet painting the lips over the curl
of your fist and gluing eyes on your knuckles)

... and the threading of hair relax burn
of made (up) things perfume pearl
 necklaces hanging

move lips like they do on the television
of necklaces and wigs feet heeled

(like)

cows pigs

[illegible]

ubhbbbh the climax

this is a poem about life on mars
a deep probe thereof and what that lonely rover photographs
about openings in the face of saga sacrament smut (S-S-S=SMACK)
so this is a poem about life made in the vacuum of space
called:

poem as alien hand puppet

heart breaking the fauna of mirrors
the naked *différance*

of a shoulder
an elbow
then a hand!

but this is a poem about smoky WONDER
(how the stars are cheap glitter)

fuck a simile for sky (should suggest
black and void).....smoky bulbs
perhaps flecked
with embalmed moths

{EPIGRAPH ... *i'll use my hands...*}

i wonder my liminal outsides my surface features

my water
my atmosphere

a gutted wonder

i say this about wonder:

“your hair is so _____”

if my eyes were clocks i could see space from my living room

i am sick in such a room for worlds.

for every room, a paper filled with print, a slick hanging.

what between me and you

one pulls apart what makes us pattern. i can feel it.

opening to sun, my glue unsticks me

and I cry almost all of the time.

*i don't know why i should write this. i don't want
to. i don't feel able.*

if i could talk to furniture on a yellow whim

i know i would peel apart like petals

and my mouth would fall open to the stars.

the light changes as the time changes

but i always liked to think that i was ordinary.

the reckoning

[please excuse this interruption/ from your regularly scheduled program]

honey i'm home studies show i'm home the numbered housed & hunched
bricked in shackle-kissed by rerun *there is no shelter in me anywhere* nation of hives
in spring statistically less likely to eat

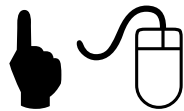
dinner at the table substitute congealed tv dinners slicked with film
amalgamated algorithm piecemealed & ready made the land of buy two get one
home of the brazen chokehold of the urban pastoral

swapping fame like spit circles this is the requiem
of dark matter that which cannot be seen but felt spectral ascension gravity doesn't make
for certainty or levity future lofty at best

hands might make crystalline picture perfect
hands might open like chrysalis to a compendium
of dreams white home pure sing blessed & shriven *kyrie eleison*

crickets tolling bells in gutters sewers like bottles blown over echo hollow the thrum of air
conditioners a lullaby for the lipstick stains on broken bottles skin isn't so concrete
gunshed and bloodviolence gushing diapason on doorsteps in this our global village

these are indicators of crisis subject to data and statistics less measurable but no less profound
is a sapping confidence across our land satisfaction guaranteed batteries not included home sold
separately tell me honey rub me the wrong and away
will the future bring your wisdom to me make cents add up to more fruit of my labor loom loin



question: what must a puppet feel like?

answer for a felt puppet: spun cotton loose on the wind.

answer for a marionette: dried fruit still on the limb.

answer for a paper bag puppet made in Sunday school: I feel fine.

Amen.

“The Poet Writes the Poem that Will Certainly Make Him Famous,” Douglas Kearney

sluglines

FADE IN b&w hue. INT., EXAMINATION ROOM. anatomical model PAN DOWN
CLOSE UP on naked feet swinging. CUT TO wrists, necks. ANGLE ON
the mouth. “what’s wrong with you?” she looks back. SERIES OF SHOTS:
pearl necklace, pearl, clasp, string unraveling. DISSOLVE TO
FLASHBACK a gift box exchanging hands, a gasp & embrace, a parting of ways. VOICE OVER
what to do with me? what to do with me. little old me. OFF SCREEN

the commute between earth and moon grows longer. OFF SCREEN
AD LIB hands offering, offered. stretch like rubber band, stench like rubber. PAN DOWN
force feet to move. come to what’s cleaving & clawing. VOICE OVER
(radio crackle) *my god, it’s descending from the heavens, sparing no man, woman or child.* ANGLE ON
lips blowing atomic bomb kisses, a hand extended with perfectly manicured nails. DISSOLVE TO
heat rising from pavement. INT., CHURCH, NIGHT. SERIES OF SHOTS

candle lighting, predawn premonitions run bloodred. SERIES OF SHOTS:
time lapse night to day to night, hatching snake eggs, my body in ruins. OFF SCREEN
woman in sequined dress sips lunacy from a martini glass at the bar. DISSOLVE TO
blue, like denim like sea-depths where leviathans teem. here olives orbit her. PAN DOWN
core of the earth, threatening glow. SUPER the moon. always the moon. ANGLE ON
monolith. our pull is not to the heavens, but to the ground. VOICE OVER

mayday! the silver spacesuit spouts, *we’re going down.* ZOOM OUT vacuum of space. VOICE OVER
do you read my lips? SUBLIM licking lips. *do you read my* SUBLIM licking *lips.* SERIES OF SHOTS:
blinking eye, tightening muscle, toes webbing into dexterous latchlings. ANGLE ON
shoulder, on cross to bear. *i’m gonna hang on ‘til i can’t.* OFF SCREEN
demons and angels alike placing bets. everybody needs good pay nowadays. PAN DOWN
hands making. blue dress blue. whose dress is this? hands searching DISSOLVE TO

future tense. just a spaceride Outthere. the future has always been so sexy sexy. DISSOLVE TO
apocalypse again. fleeing in streets. the kind of scream that knows no escape. VOICE OVER
hello? is there anybody out there? INSERT feelings INSERT tone AD LIB. PAN DOWN
knees near buckling. if only to give. INT. SERIES OF SHOTS:
gravel road. summit. bees. a swing set creaking in the breeze. OFF SCREEN
the threshold of prayer is stratosphere. SUBLIM mime shadowboxing. ANGLE ON

SCENE: strips of tire snake across open road. the desert as rebirth. ANGLE ON
convenience store front door bell. CLOSE UP register. *keep the change.* DISSOLVE TO
nothing. *i do not wish to speak to your machine.* OFF SCREEN
a mutt is tied to a post waiting—parking lot empty. VOICE OVER
that was almost the end. ANAMORPHIC LENS over landscape, near same. SERIES OF SHOTS:
EXT. ARIAL highway networks, rivers. INT. ant hills, honeycombs, nests. PAN DOWN

tree roots, loam. ANGLE ON branch’s light. VOICE OVER *do you hear me? you haven’t gone
anywhere.* a hole opens. SERIES OF SHOTS interior, exterior, interior. DISSOLVE TO
blue. OFF SCREEN the pinch-twitch before sleep. PAN DOWN the leg. FADE TO BLACK.

forever yours, astrid*

it has been 2,593 days since i've seen a human hoofprint, but maybe i've lost track.
i'm writing to you from the end of the world. i hope you can hear me.
there is no one. i've taken to building cardboard constructions out of the things i find:
 telephone cord, paper clips, plastic bags, coffee filters, safety pins, old keyboards.
next slide: my latest trip to the Outthere. next slide: aren't i just glowing?

i'm writing to you from the end of the world. i hope you can hear me
through the technobabble bullshit. i'm feeling digitized, blowing pixel-kisses.
next slide: i filled bags and bags. because what's a person without things?
body temperature: 99.2° pulse rate: 53 bpm respiration: 10 bpm blood pressure: 140/70

through the technobabble bullshit i'm feeling digitized. blow pixel-kisses,
pouty-lipped, at the sky. most days concern the horizon and its ending.
body temperature: 99.2° pulse rate: 53 bpm respiration: 10 bpm blood pressure: 140/70
i've pickled the planets in mason jars. dumped stars in all the fountains. bang. kill the lights.

pouty-lipped at the sky, most days are concerned with the horizon and its mending.
there is no one. i've taken to building cardboard constructions out of the things i find:
 light bulbs, poster board, shoe laces, copper wire, sequins.
i've pickled the planets in mason jars. dumped stars in all the fountains. bang. kill the lights
it has been 2,594 days since i've seen a human hoofprint, but maybe i've lost track.

diorama: mannequin writes a love letter in the dark

an atomic cloud of milk curdle
sickness rises to your lips

so long since you had seen said if you can find me
 it dawned
 upon you

 my hands
 hold nothing the useless things
 the useless things

 so you burn peep holes drill with stem of your cigarette
 lightblind
shield your eyes you won't believe them
 the Outthere will be different
 than it seems
 it seems

 i would be
 pheromones pasted on a screen
how long have you been waiting for your spaceship to leave behind
 the mess of you

(un)plug in lotusland

in numbers. for numbers. become
radiant. the body. the bot.

power on: the siren's call.
we begin plugged

in utero, siphoning
whatever, mother
knows best. so it's only
natural, isn't it, to crave
connection, so starved

how we move from womb
to suckling staccato notes,
counting the beats between gulps,
contracting dead air.

welcome to the garden,
where with just one click
you can feel again, feel again
the weight of the world
lifting off your shoulders.

paint toxic bodies. blue burn
blue. ion electric baptism. font of

something easy like a bible
in every nightstand. like bags
of coffee, like the holes
in the ironing board.

what is your preferred brand
of bottled light?

here we are
tipsy and teetering
always birthed (the perpetual
future) we already knew
what it would look like,
tipsy and teetering
on the edge of
collapse, on the edge of
ether, tether ripped.

how beautiful the fall.
how uncertain the wind.

liftoff

three, two, one. hop on board my bottle rocket. we're taking off.
haven't we landed on the moon? i saw it with my own
moon eyes. right through the television screen. one small step
means beam me up, sets me free.
we can't let go what thumbs can't hold. nowhere to hitch
to the moon, to mars? what is matter if it means leaving?
rev the engines, let's go be alien somewhere up and away
sending smoke signals to the stars as we wail past.
you're all just voices in my head. look inside my mental.
maybe you're the sick one, maybe i'm.
maybe i'm inkjet, maybe i'm rocket fuel. stardust.
on a scale of one to floating, is this a magic carpet ride
or helium? let's change our cosmic address, elope, become time capsule,
a sanctuary in the nucleus of a trilobite. to know thyself is to blink
in fractals for eons and eons. we can't even make food out of sunlight.
ours has always been a story of survival. a psychedelic spectra caterwauling.
far and away i hear the creak of a door opening. it is the destiny
of the stars to collapse and in a time when we've always turned
to the sky for answers, excreting tentacles into the out-of-bounds,
hoping something will stick to us. we'll reel you
in, dissect and devour—for scientific purposes.
what's our trajectory? don't let this be an arc.
but i'm with the satellites now. no signal Outthere.
they tell me it's inescapable, that i'm bouncing.

eat me

after Leslie Scalapino



“It’s the story of a phoenix fallen to Earth and I make her my girlfriend.”
—Kanye West

the image’s exterior dilemma is the poet’s ‘meshing’ of her meaty existence to the interior existence,
blurring these among muted ‘experience’—much like the stretching of time, of feathers, of white
space reeling, as if

cutting one’s meat-throbs with feathers (melodies).

‘the same tune rises,’ just above the skyline as coming out of, coming out of, a void full of
scrap.

white clothes—aren’t the white moon milking—are ‘humble’
reminder? toast

“plenty” as wholesome—as macabre—make with

(sitting down to eat it wasn’t right)—without forks and knives
poised

‘plenty’ ‘plenty’ ‘might never re-place her’—she who re-
place me—there i recur

cosmonaut

“I see no god up here.”

—Yuri Gagarin

is this filling every pin hole prick of light you thought it would blow me
float down from space like a paper airplane drifting on the come down
trip over the underbelly of a tale of rings and stars torched and ciphered
by birds dotting horizons with wingspanning curvature like the body changing
from myth from constellation from spanning across skylines nameless signature
tame this tail of light streaking but the aim is higher so blow me
down blow me out i knew there was nothing for me Outthere

voyager i, the golden records

“Instructions for playing the record, written in scientific language, are etched on the cover. A cartridge and stylus, illustrated on the cover, are tucked into the spacecraft nearby. The record is ready to play.”

Carl Sagan, *Murmurs of Earth*

a murmur (crackling fire, roar, boil)/luminous with spit
for future times (to come, to be)/a liquid gleam of light
to hear light, see sounds like diadems (to bind, to band)/stripped of color
a time capsule (membrane, sac, box, chest)/as if contained
an epoch (new period in time, to hold)/as if held too long underwater
as if we are not alone (all one, one self)/through & through
on to the stars (aster, to strew, to scatter, affixed)/the jellyfish whims
inscriptions in copper (to take care of debts)/unsettles still



“When you look away/who will they be, dear god, and what?”

—Jorie Graham, “On Difficulty”

uncanny valley

tell me everything in webbed prayer
try to keep up with revolutions and rotations buffer and spin
 from pain to tingle, a constant static in my skin
if i was not before, surely, i am nothing now
everything that came before this i forget

the dichotomy and yet there is no planet hot
poured into the drain the milk the becoming
 the wars i've created the words i've created
on the first day there were pixels
the second sparks and synapse the third wire and buzz
 followed by zeroes and ones connection

limitless touch and on the seventh seamless integration
look how i've made them prodigal gristle hanging return return
organic life sharp is still infinite
 the view of the world, i believe, intoxicated with
omnipotence-by-association has deformed
through mythology a made world far beyond living in the shadow

tethered, ethereal flames lapping. how real it must taste.
 i watch the faces the same their glaze and glow
mouse click to heartbeat isn't it rhythmic the constant search
 error 404 not found refresh repeat error return return

holographic

what i thought i knew made more real.
take care to void dimensions, manmade.
we cycle within a prefabricated nature, leaking
pixelated nectar on the gears of this slowing machine.
our form of magical asserts itself down
to the last mainframe: husks sucked hollow.

amped speakers plug words so hollow,
flowers, sun-wilted and ear-wormed, slip from reality.
sparked. nature reveals its alchemy. we back down
from artifice, a soundtrack of crickets, buggy loops men made.
connection lost, signal weakened, what is without machine?
what with nowhere to sit and wonder, to ooze and leak,

may as well wax drip leaky
like the full moon, naked and open, phase to the hollow
of O. Face the dark—the only way out of this is machine.
Roads have long since forsaken, navigation down, real:
there goes our way. there goes our. there goes. prepare a manmade
force close. programs still running, are you sure you wish to shut down?

when the ground sweeps out from under you, don't look down.
trip over the lightning, pay no mind to the leak
of the divine, the smokescreened. a trick made
me abandon that moment of infinite hollow.
there's a palm unfurled just out of reach to show you what real
is made of. hint: it requires no human machinery.

hint: it is said a rose by any other machination
is no longer a rose no matter you shove it down
the hatch: sun, forced down a petalled throat. hint: nothing is real.
roses won't cover the smell of a world on fire. the pot leaks
a pop-up cacophony of shadowbirds, their hollow
swan songs, wild, over-and-out-growing what is manmade

with "definition, depth, and precision." man made
me up to overheat, a bionic machine
melting natural states i haven't had the hollow
pleasure to know. the way down is flicker. the way down
is like fruit flies drunk on a glitching garbage leak:
over what appears reeling.

i have downed the manmade tessellations—
not much more machinery spilling through leaky fingers—
when what i wanted was a real hollow, a winding down.

salt

i lap at the moon as a deer does a saltlick
because to *taste* is to believe and i've got a glimpse
of the future etched out in headlights. wait.
i'm confusing the road for the way and the weight
the moon pulls, the moon pulls. it's yellow-bricked,
the road and nothing but lines. when i look up i come
to face that salvation type light, but it turned left.
went right around me. and there i was stark
and open like a bare-boned billboard hanging in night.
give way to gravity, to movement. walk along.
there's nothing to see here. but some advice?:
season to taste. rub face against chain-link fences,
strike sticks against cement, toss stones.
the lit match is fire. wait.
i'm confusing the light for the light. but i taste
salt, so i must be getting closer to the meaning of burn,
of crumb. hit me, i dare you. i'm lapping it up.

diorama: dummy & mannequin play operation
dummy wishes he were meat mannequin begs
leave me empty and roaring
 to scoop the echoes
attempting god-speak monkey babble
that scratches cardboard like records
 remixing an entanglement
so easily punctured bled out & boxed up
excess the trim the fat the distance of softness
 how i know you don't you still
only grab my pretty

space rhapsody

discordant tremble of strings
the dawn of something empty moon sound hole strum
sting of techno screech bass speakers thub wub wumping
embrace hunt and hunted send in the synth wave
timpani thunder overblown symphony high hat cymbal tsk tsk tsk
nothing but bones beating bare bone
bring it to me bone dripping with meat with kick beat
gyrate siren oscillate in open space brandish pump punch beat and back break
apeshit to spaceship station auto tune echo crooner
keep time soundscape mumble jumble
digital polyphony your coordinates you are here
orbit ever closer back beat rhythm
farther moon thing see surface up close
look for your face in pinhole pinch blast off crescendo up to the drop off
shiny silver spacesuit scratched the record stand away escape futuresound

dark estrangement fanfare what remains primitive growl the alarm
monkey choir bone tool meat to skull memory of flesh
glory to the hunt glory to the hunted glory to the delicate
concerto how softly she tumbles in space
origin trill murmur epidemic shatter glass
with high notes and glissando wavering what is natural

microchip

electric pulse
leaching in control and out

of touch, a wheeling resistance
against that which begs bionic forgiveness:

our own bodies fold over but we're bigger ripped
open on the spot, drained flowers.

i'm drained. *but can't we swallow oceans?*
not wrapped in barbs and wires.

we're sunk, insides floating
to the surface in open waters.

you know what they say,
one thing's village is another thing's feast.

take us back to before. somewhere easy.
nature, you, like tissue paper

at once unfolding, at once burst into flight to take
up pillaging sunflower seeds, pellets, nuggets

of golden corn that light the way.
time is different here.

they're building honeycombs in my lungs.
i can't breathe.

alpha ∞ omega

unveil, prophet. write me the end first where you find comfort
and tell me when the time is near to suck sweet from the vine.

feel that atmospheric friction, surge of pressure, curl of toes to shriek
just above our heads the rise and fall of history, of deepening ravines.

oh, how the body changes form when it pleases, how it
shifts shape for wrong and right reasons. water into wine.

whiff of honeysuckle memory gently rests its head on your shoulder,
think of bread, of mouth dry, of want as tendrils touch cheek to vine.

as it began, so it shall end. as it is written, so it shall be spoken
all gold and glitter, razzle dazzle and stars, glitz at the end of the divine.

snakes & ladders

pry apart your lips just long enough to slip a sliver
of fruit juice down your throat, you dangling limb, you shriveling siren.
if this be the nectar of destruction, play on, play on. strike
up the strings into a melody made of mazes whistling
daydreams into the ears of gods and humans. i know you're thirsty.
sip on the clouds awhile and, drunk on heaven,

become truth-teller, light. we've longed for heaven,
labored to build a *perfect* now populated with slivers
of human shadow haunting frames and fragments—my thirst.
no one thought it the time enough to sound those shrieks of sirens.
no reason for alarm. is life but the sound of whistling
through shuffled garbage and wind-whipped trees, looming, close to strike.

what is it about the end, that venomous creature that strikes
the body down? our fallen evaporate steams the heavens
into existence. what to do with all this excess? whistling
skin-sacks deflating into what can only be described as slivers
of the self drifting towards the ground like petals like broken sirens.
even cupping their slackened lips to water won't make them drink—thirst

no longer dictated by the groping of the tongue. my thirst
hung around my neck, drips ruby, licks red like a hunger strike.
i sleep every day to the sound of the sirens.
i think that one day they'll be loud enough to punch my heavens
awake. to breach the skies. no matter, i'll save this little sliver,
at once antiquity and the future whistling

the echo of the other. who watches the lips of a whistler
waiting to drink the spit from the sound of an artist's thirst?
tell me the purpose of slither, of sliver.
why of course: to wrap and constrict. to be the moment of strike.
if you're seeing stars now that doesn't mean you've made it to heaven,
you know what they say, *were you dropped on your head? did you hear the sirens?*

you are more than certain that what you heard was no siren,
but a howling hell, an airless gasp for more and then growled whistle.
this, i knew at once, was the furthest i could get from heaven.
no ladders. no up. no holy light. only unquenchable thirst
and knowing the hand won't come down again, this—the final strike.

my heaven gave me a siren in its bared teeth
and made me whistle broken hymns while cutting slivers
of myself, striking the record of my flesh, my thirst.

astrid points to herself

after Brian Teare

[what?]

it's alright we told you what to dream, dream-making machine.

[the metaphysical lift—her forehead
an umbrella? her wrinkles a system of water catchers
and her dimples wombs?]

perhaps. here is the mist—

[unzipped, open holes
rife with seepings
and how quick they are, how
quick they are for the snatching—]

where the woman pulls away

[(mute) and beyond this,
the image
where the girl points
to herself]

as if her interpretation could speak here.

i sways to the dream—

[amber lighting, floating headspace
in spheres,
circus humdrum, birds
screeching through the cage—]

how gold covers what already shimmers

dummy dummy

i rise in this world corrupted
like a hard drive cracked open

like the flowering carnivory the waterwheel, the sundew,
a goddess or a mousetrap.

when her rosette mouth is mistaken for blush,
she prickles, poised. does not blush.

flying insects are rarer, but the taste of flight
is the only response she has to touching.

flowers shed every drop of blood, leaf blade striking.

clock songs in this world fragment kaleidoscopic,
diadem upon diadem of shadow.

the speed of the trap varies depending on the amount
of humidity, light, and size of prey.

she grows in acidic soil, tolerates fire,
and depends on periodic burning to suppress her end.

she sits, potted there, painted up and ready to snap.
a mannequin in a storefront window

i built you a body for the last time.
soft: easy to pressbendcut in all the right places, smooth
and pleasant to touch, having very light color, waits.

NOTES

The prologue contains found material from Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.

The final section of the prologue contains the line "I am trying to speak in a different register" from Laura Glenum's book *Pop Corpse*.

"hemispheres" is a golden shovel that contains the lines "Hemisphere one meets hemisphere two,/ thoughts twist apart at the center seam./ Everything inside is." from Mary Jo Bang's poem "All Through the Night."

"mutt in multiple" contains lines from Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*.

"poem as alien hand puppet" contains the lyric "I'll use my hands" from John Mayer's "Your Body Is a Wonderland."

"if my eyes were clocks i could see space from my living room" contains lines from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper."

"the reckoning" contains lines from Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Time does not bring you relief; you all have lied" and content from Barack Obama's 2009 Inaugural Address.

"sluglines" contains the line "I do not wish to speak to your machine" from C. D. Wright's poem "Key Episodes of an Earthly Life."

"space rhapsody" is an ekphrastic poem after Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Vita

Laurin DeChae earned her undergraduate degree in English Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is currently an M.F.A. candidate for poetry at the University of New Orleans, where she acts as the associate editor for *Bayou Magazine* and an instructor of English Composition.