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# Mouthy Bones

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MOUTHY BONES

By

Shaun Leonard

Bachelor of Arts with Creative Writing  
National University of Ireland, Galway  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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College of Liberal Arts  
The Graduate College

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## **Abstract**

As a collection of poetry, this work interrogates the well trodden ground of the Beloved, hopefully with a modicum of originality, though the text itself wonders if, and how (and how!). Can “us” be? Amorous capability is extolled and explored, and people worry. Love happens, and everything is all right. Love happens, and nothing is alright. And then it is. The poems play with the act of writing and how that affects the reader, the subject/s, and the memories being used as fodder. The time and space of emotion and selfhood are melded and molded, through unexpected line breaks, poetic juxtapositions, and twists of fate and technic. People are place, people are time, people are, and people are what’s important.

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## Oral Cartography

*I approach with such  
a careful tremor, **always**  
I feel the **finally** foolish*

*question of how it is,  
then, supposed to be felt,  
and by whom. I remember*

## Love 19

I've been meaning to talk about being in love with you.

Look at you, taking you

For an example of how it is to be in it or to do

The thing. Love. Writing about it is a way to try to hide that we don't try to.

You tell me love is a doorstep

You only need when you want it.

A fishing rod. You tell me a story and then I use it for definition.

You commit crimes and point at the old books.

Love is a map, you say

You say it takes you where you're meant to go.

I'm jotting down notes in the shape of a picture of you

It looks a lot like an L

When the nose meets the eye

Which is also love, I think carpet burn

On the old knees the reminder to take the medicine for the slowly breaking down body

(My? Your?) You list things, and it helps you

So it goes on. We have a wet bag of it

Love and definitions of

Who we want to be and with.

I write plainly

With L's as misplaced bookends



How can we discuss commerce with the recluse

Trading rag for consonant and spit for supper

Roasting. Chores is love

And ordering in

Nobody knows you like I do

Which is true by dank technic and then only callously.

No one knows you except me and now us. Reading the words in order and letting them coag.

I love you as long as a period of time that is endless. You late bloomers

Tardy stocking the shelves with pictures you can show a barber

“Make that be how come I look like now”.

Love is a free beverage with your meal.

Love is a chipped tooth that a cat eats, and it kills us both

To say goodbye to a mouthy bone.

These tombstones in our flexing throat do everything.

I have a favorite one where the popcorn kernel hides

And you get it out for me.

We do each other’s makeup and pick up our prescriptions.

You don’t know any more or better after reading this with your bones inside your head, your wet ones  
you remember brushing, the tips of them worn down or sharpened by decades of juice and awkward  
handshakes, the bitten parts of your cheeks still smarting from mispronouncing pitiable baby names, your  
second layer on the top for smiling downstairs for bled gumming spit red foamy washaway faucet  
morning ritualistic back and forth monuments to living well or poorly and drinking smoking coffee how  
to love at all.

Not A Coffee Table Book

Trains. Oh god if you're on a train then everyone is looking at you.

Put this down and start something less obscene than reading.

Peruse your fingernail lint or your downstairs mixup.

This is all about love after all.

The book, not the advice about trains

And I'm not supposed to do that and tell you things, so quick—

Petals on a sappy tree

Past people with crowded faces.

I hope you don't make the same mistake in your letters.

Not love; tell you things.

Though both can turn out badly though

You already knew that

And so can trains.

Not love; turn out badly.

## Cantaloupe Tagalong

She shows off with her honeydew and city talk  
Her brunches and her Aztec lemonade and naming things from memory  
And she only (only!) tells the story twice about the magpies. Fancy  
That rued horse champing on a silken bit.  
I more for making an ape  
Of usually quite fine folk. And I  
A robust melon here myself. And I'll have to see her  
Cawing at the right hand and passing condiments with her left  
I'm mad she doesn't remember me and pitiable she  
Won't kiss. Bollocks.  
She cheerses at every opportunity and does hers properly  
Sloshing juice from her cup and yours  
Tis true for her  
This is usually how it starts.

## Calling

I am not one who has been loved  
Unkindly is the distance  
From. Here could be and is another  
Time to find another one.

Teapot for kettle is me but knowing  
Teapot makes a very good watering can  
Help in unoften times. And teapots are good  
For lots of things. And comparing myself  
To a teapot should tell you  
Things that you should know if we are going  
To find ourselves here. Like I  
Have found myself in an empty teapot  
And you? Are thinking reading  
About commonry objects to make you be and feel  
Better. Bubble for me  
Even as a sign of solidarity.  
Say your things. Your are.  
Your wallet and your sign  
Your namesake and his sister's cousin who lives  
Down the road. The wheres of you. Arrange  
A list of you. Not just to

Tell me.

I'm curious as a nail wondering about the furnishings.

Give me your whytobes and your heretofore

Be causes. Be something and if you can't be

Be anything. Black.

Be for me.

Let? Hiss and burn. Special

Occasion. Be kind. Have heart.

Be kettle.

## Mixed Drinks & Signals

We give questions us  
Trading jolly ranchers for conversation  
And hoping that's gum we're sitting in  
Toasting to the air and perfect patch  
Of this mighty earth with liquor stores and lamplight.

And how do you spend them? Does  
Matter to me gives a leg to stand on  
Laying in your air  
For a bit with ears touching  
Ears looking at the four stars we see  
Through (past?) light  
Despite the cannon of cityscape shine  
They don't make a shape together  
And our countdown blink signals us to sit up and sip  
But we drive home to different stations of the cross and radio  
Still up still looking  
  
We assume a constellation.

## Vinegar

she spenns time trine-a

fine-a apple ih me

n seedn ih n all

n alla time i be catchin flies

n cider by the roadside her

eyes waterin n she always makin fer the plans to grow

n why'm i nah? n i only lover n i

only vinegar

buh dohn blamey fer dah

she wooden, so wooden

she nah? so she nah

so why shud we?

## I Give You Compliments And Ask Just Don't Spill Anything

You blushing you refuse to read out loud

And any farther. You threaten to sop up the foam with my lyric but you never would

Put the book down (you've been told before).

So I write a little line

About all the colors you go

You like to go

Places. California, and dive bars, your life

An interstate away

You say. You know. You can't

Imagine someone would come with you

Or want to. But there are Angelinos and Pabst

Anywhere we'd care to be. Coming?

If not I'll bring you them and mount them here

Like luggage to your bum-dented roof from when

Sunroof upstairs we came clinking cheers

We sat and we stare at silly stars and you

Or add them to the map. There's space on both and in your hands.

You've yet to show me your shoebox

With your axes and glasses and ships of blue and green.



Your antimony eyes and heavy purpled lids

Your You-Colored laugh and grins

Sack me.

There's an emergency of compliments

Pooling around our rumps.

Collecting in empty cans and seeping through

The San Franciscans and the sunroof and the seatbelts.

Through the past the lines between

Streets and colors me

You when you're not this written scene.

Then you blush past. Now

You mop a merry spill with this

Straight-writ well bent script.

I was hoping you'd get this far

To help me finish this and find the words.

I write better from the crick in my neck your head could make

A dent in my offered arm.

There's more to this story if you haven't actually spilled

In a love

In a car in a book of words and hopefully poems.

I'll scabble round the tarmac with a torch and hope to find and type

Whatever's past this painted line and the flexing light.

## Very Pants

I find myself borrowing unhelpfully from yesterday's pants

All this blotting paper and a thousand years to use

This ruinous blue unfurls me from matching socks.

I abuse this weather terribly.

Take complete advantage of brindling sun

Ruminations. There are pens enough in my pockets

To script an ode to lying down.

I want to be the kind of person who does not regret

Grass stains. One of Reese's Pieces

May have been a bad idea

Some weeks ago. Those women are discussing sports amicably

I'm glad her boyfriend's visiting next week but there are better things to do

Than fantasize about football. That's not chocolate.

It seems my akimbo brooding legs have burst a fountain or a ball point pen.

Alas. I'll make a note in my head, or my phone perhaps

If I get to it. I hope he brings her a present.

She's upset about Cleveland.

## A Fire Sign Is A Sign That Warns Of Fire

I felt badness in my heart and used my lips to sully things.

The question was not a very good one.

The question didn't need me

To ask it

To have an answer in me thinking

“Wouldn't that be nice?”

The question wasn't even really

To do with me. But the bathroom lights

And whether they were dancing near

Each other.

The children at the party in the hall

The allflowers at the edges of everything

The everywhere punch with its red investments and something-flavor

Natural as the yellow legs on a new cow

This question

This distance

Between the bathroom stars

And us. And I

Desperately a lion.

The Ruins of Blue or The Remains of The War of You

Burn the unguent sellers.

The bad poem writers and the shoe ins too.

Install them like mawkish furniture

At a raggery with excellent insurance and plentiful gas mains.

Rail against things.

Like a sugary child

It makes for good cardio.

Make lists when you are afraid and only

Talk about the moon when you are lonely.

Exercise is an excellent way to combat

Not exercising.

Make jokes whenever you can

And give people advice when you can't

Even. Flat. Windsor.

Insult comparisons.

They are not as useful as tragic metaphors.

Violent adjectives can be used in peaching a bruised ear.

Uncommon verbs can recombobulate an unquiet spleen.

Put the silly next to the ruinous

Wrench of love in me. Time is

Mostly rain and quiet

Heal a vice

Look up.

Eat with your eyes.

The moon will not try to sell you anything.

## First, Dates

All you need is a blanket and two people who don't mind

There isn't a table.

The ants flirt with fraying checkmarks

This concrete lawn.

We could have anything

Let's

Pretend for the second part after comfortable words. Deftly handled

Cheese when we disagree about seasons and how much light.

We don't argue over drink or bevels

The size of cups

The streetlight doesn't measure us.

Dogs pass by.

I wish I was more.

I tell you this.

Your long weekend at home

Is you work too often and bite fingernails.

I want to say shiny things to you and have them

Don't go over badly.

There's a line of carapace and red agreeing

On delicacy and direction.

Why not us?

You see my arc. My ugly flea

You catch it

You laugh early.

I'm quick to know people

By pretending to.

There's rain now and you chide me.

You drive me

I haven't learned.

The picnic?

The ants have had at it

In this end of night light with dawn sleeping

Winter crooks a finger come.

I think you well

You do not know.

There'll be a park somewhere.

Wet nose

Tissue please.

It is eleven o'clock and we haven't been paying attention.



## One Day I Am Thinking Of A Color

We paint it in quietly

Love. We take our time

People

Are different after

All. Newspapers spread out to catch the coloring drips

Someone wrote those and the water cup always comes out

Green and grey. She tells me and her attention is lovely

Sunrise was the first thing I learned

How to paint and other books can be put under where we are

Painting. She likes the way I read quickly out loud

She plays piano

She writes things on her arm in Sharpie in different

Fonts.

She wants to learn how to count cards

She spills beer in her purse

She paints things

and won't accept a compliment. She is one person and the poems are many

You are a different person

And there are other poems in this book that are not about her

They are about a different person

They are about who I am being

They are about bad dates

They are about making mistakes and not

Knowing things

They are about you.

They are about teeth and how completely we can get outside of our bodies

We can't

Unless we're in Chicago on the corner of Adams and Michigan

And you can see water from there.

You can see water from here

Between these lines

In this one a wave

An ebb

A flow.

Every poem is here if you remember it

Even more

If you remember it differently.

There are words here

And poetry is everything that is

The case

My hand shakes.

This is why

My paintings turn into lists

Of people

And things.

## Love Letters

*What am I to myself  
that must be remembered,  
insisted upon  
so often? Is it*

*something other than this,  
something not so insistent—*

And

And is a very big word if you don't hear it

And nothing goes on nothing is the end

If and isn't the middle.

I'm the end

if and isn't a part

Of the sentence of my story.

I went without and

And and is a lonely bird

With one feather and not much else

Much to do about nothing unless and

And some cousins

Come along. We'll say they're clockwork penfriends

We makes it interesting. We is

We is a pretty and

You and I

We like it. We flap

We wind each other up.

And

Is

I show you the shapes.

The milk stains

The caribou.

The endless ringlets if we leave the hot glass long enough.

In this September sea

Of crockery, of trying very hard, of morning.

I love you and we know everything.

## The Middle

And there's quite probably dozens of people who shouldn't be reading this. A mouthy number  
In the thousands where everything starts to get mixed  
Up and adding zeroes makes  
A body count bigger. Apologies are like homework  
They are wet and due  
To the many few who cut  
Their fingers when turning this and wouldn't it  
Have been better if this line  
Was further  
Down?

A trickle of people falling off  
The spine of this book at different creaks and bends matter and  
The pages are not even really pages  
They are envelopes for the pages in between them.  
The message at the middle  
When there is one  
If there could be I did  
Mention I was trying.  
I hope I've aligned the reasons right, and sung you  
Uncover the proper phrases and newed  
The letters good and bent for her

When you thought that she was coming

And she was

And so can I

On all the white spaces in this book and you sucked  
your finger when you paper

Cut it and taste me and you often

And time is something poets play with

Daily. I'm told. I've read. They say

That's how to be a writer (lies)

More letters are

Adding better than zeroes. I should

Know. I haven't got any

Or us. When I was young

I would've loved you and the fact of my writing

About coming on these pages and I still am and do

Love you. But

Little words do not make a poem (lies)

And sex is very important some times

I've just realized

There are certainly some children on this line

Amazing children who read books

Even mine, children and books,

Who must be terribly disappointed in me but don't worry

I am too

For several reasons

I have yet to mention

The zeroest one.



An Arch By The Water, Under, Over, And All Around

They love you, people do.

Or a person, but more likely a few.

The good ones will let you know

And you know by the bruise on their left cheek

That you convince together someone

You received it crossing drawbridge to abandoned ice creamery

Yes, shrapnel all up the leg and yes

Chips and everything and you

Know the full story.

And you laugh and you sleep together.

Share songs and socks and actors with funny ways of saying things

You explain accents and discuss where life will go

Babybirding icewater plans for each other's burning tongue held hands

Trace maps

Swearing bloody murder on the English

For something to do together you haven't yet.

Talk the big things up

Because big things are truly big with each other

The best life, the record books, the dream nights, the wealth of linen and cluttered garmentry

Love. You talk about love and you're both more

Sure of it on a dock together sinking boats with distinct bottle

Gorging on cans and conversation you truly did earn

Cuts coming out of the hole you broke in the bridge.

We can be sure of love.

Your someone left happy

The story is true.

Set

Everyone is ready

Even when we are new

We are all here.

A just yesterday I wore a hat for the first time –

It went horribly.

You have something stuck in your teeth –

This is heroic.

Soup goes wrong.

Gerald gets his heart broken.

The cat is an absolute terror.

We pretend it is Gerald's broken heart and we pretend we are alive

Until we are not and after

We're dead.

We have children who wear capes.

We worry and the bus is late.

We are built to forget but we remember

The columns and rows cannot account for me

Any of us.

One is too big a number for a cell.

This long sun fetches sentiment and disarray.

How many times have you read this? How many times

Will I write it?

Poorly and nearly

Seeking a way through lunch and life

Which is a worthwhile series of meals.

It is the baker's power to make a feast of a lumpy scene

And we are all alive.

We can wear tall hats.

I seek I

Grumble kindly.

The bagels are both burnt and cold

Dinner is coming.

## Tall Tale Heart

There's a warm pebble to you

A breeze and a way of describing things. You always know exactly which scarf you're talking about.

It is natural you tell me I don't know how to

Write about anything that isn't a person I did a kiss with.

They have sent you to ruin me.

You with your firm grip and mother's hair

You with me and your eyes you have

Your wobble. But what about forests you say to me

In a place that isn't.

Between us, between words, some shrubby glances

A leaf about a shrug and you wondering

Wouldn't it be good to write about your father or a letter to send your friend who is a man you haven't

Kissed, the word accepts it's been spending too much time with me we need to breathe

Other people. Or there are no people?

I disagree and you go on

There are no people there's a large dog and

It's trying to do better I say

It wants to find love

You shake your head about a dog being a dog.

What about a flag?

Which is a thing to wipe away tears with

What about a Tuesday afternoon –

I say a Sunday morning. You say you wish you had the words

We nod a crack into our neckbones both of us looking

You say I should give you a hole in your heart or a terrible illness

You say I should get this over with and keep you a glimpse

You say I shouldn't

You let me hold your hand the way I always hold your hand like I know you

You say I have a lot of practice

## Listless

I have hairs enough to prove my love.

Friends, teeth, diamond mines.

Carbony things. My pencil aye

It scratches past

The monotones of stilted address.

Much more honest: Dear Thomas

There are so few corners to this letter.

Of them all, I choose the clock most last.

Years and I have had a time together.

And both of us remarked it far too fast.

## As We Speak

Her open iris and crook of hip betray

Her display her speaking simply on a staircase her words speak what they are she speaks with her

Everything

I want to do better than this.

There is a fruitbowl we don't eat from and it smells when we are slow

Replacing the fruit I counted calories she does impressions of apples for the oranges

Holding one in each hand and the other in slices in her mouth

I cannot understand

Her squishy talk

I cannot hear her

I am laughing my much too loud laugh

My get into trouble at theaters laugh.

Her scold me laugh.

On the staircase she is saying something else and I unkey

Her relentless speech

I think without listening

(I feel so very human all the time)

This is a rehearsal of the way everything will end.

I wish the bowl would overturn its way back to us and clashing

Send fruit tumbling over himself down the stairs



A runny nose kind of distraction. Boil over pot

A something to be dealt with now

That interrupts the wonderful thing terrible come running

To be dealt with now

Would be tragic in a common way

Which would be tragic

And of course I'm listening.

I have always heard her and there is wine

(And I apologize to the constantly leftover fruit from earlier that I, left out, left out)

Wine does not help. Wine does very things

But in this moment on the stairs it does not help

Though it talks to me but I confuse myself with her

And wine I always confuse myself

I, rather dashing, would plonk the red and the white together and nosh on it

Slap on the arm she

I would turn into a tickle. Now there is a room where I could live

And would

Presumably receive further slaps

As admirance and as instruction.

Of course I have heard her,

I always hear her.

I am listening now.

She will always be repeating it and we share our sentiments

As well as citrus fruits and life

We go together

As wines and I'm preventing myself from hearing us say it

And I can only echo after she has gone

Down the stairs and I with

Out her with every

Step I say

I want to do better than this.

And the rinds are attracting the unhelpful kind of flies.

I gift them another day and wish them well

Two Tongues. Decisions We Make In The Mornings. We were. We were.

Beautiful you, always shoes

A pair. Remind me of Goldilocks weather there are songs for you

But I have no one to travel with. The laces are tangles I have

A word with security reports the stocking staff

We jostle and we jape and I am of a mind to try you again.

The sole is coming out and a badged friend remarks that that's what it's supposed to

Do. Little

Of me is ready for answering questions. I do not know

My size my feet make a habit of making a mockery of me.

Do you know yours? Can we

Measure alongside each other and make a habit of holding hands. Something

Like it is what we used to know

And adding question marks anywhere in that last line deserves an art of me.

## Here, And There

I'm staring at a word for impossible to fix instead of trying to.

You are there. Sound of inside rain we let in

Top open. Highway smiles and somehow getting to entropy

Is there something better than the spilt ice cream coming out of your nose?

We remember the war for some reason we always remember the war.

We are the topography of blood

The way there are hills in Nebraska you can't see.

I have never been to war or to Nebraska.

You ask me why I haven't handed you a softer napkin.

I think I'm supposed to be in love with you.

This works out well for everyone involved.

I'm looking at my overlong nails and it isn't the only thing that is

I am back with you. It helps

That you are slapping me

And that your words are difficult to understand.

They mean well and they comfort me even when I can only remember them.

They hurt sometimes too, but they better me

Like ice-cream and its headaches.

I'm surprised the pen hasn't split from my back pocket forgetting it.

Here you are there. Grass manicured for us unlikely pair

Natural Ice, wine glasses. Shoes and leaves

Strip them. I try too hard to fix things and not as many are as broken as I

Think they are. Socks too. I should've cheeky stole a kiss and I'm trying

I'm digging in and using my pen for it. I'm using everything to hold

Our dirt seat is not a tame pasture.

Couldn't be.

You are there.

We practice fake laughs until breathless we sow real ones.

We sit and we stand.

I am running out of ink and time and the words to help me fix

Not asking me is there too

You are here. My hand holds both for you but you're proud of yours and circle them. You are the piano player and you should circle everything.

You are here. We make bad decisions and cross each other's fingers.

We rank stories of embarrassment and paint on oversized margarita glasses

But you always ask

The waiters love you for it and I do for the colors and the shapes

You help me understand. You are here

I should let it be and recline

You tell me to and other things

About yourself and the world and stripes and sofa cushions.

We rig ballots for tedious things and hold up traffic.

We turn aluminum cans into a colony and name them.

We ask strangers questions. You steer and I learn the pedals.

I steal a kiss. You are here

I write you are there

But I follow until the two are the one.

## I Have Felt This Feeling You Are Feeling

There is a room I am in

(You are in this room with me once I tell you that)

It is a grass amphitheater with the sky for a roof.

It is just after sundown and we are with a tired woman

Who does not look it but smokes on purpose about it.

She tells us about a person who thinks he knows her.

She tells us that we remind her of this person and we are not sure if we should be complimented

But we don't worry. We worry

For her and all the things that make her tired.

She has two families and one of them likes her and she likes one of them and luckily they are the same

Family. We miss ours back home but don't mention it because we want to help her and be next to her

In a grass amphitheater at a very early sundown.

"This is the somewhere

It is five o'clock"

We say to make her think about something funny something

We think is funny. She laughs too and she feels what you are feeling if I'm funny

What we are feeling if we all think I'm funny.

We feel proud.

We feel better

(If we feel better).

Looking over our shoulders

There could be whole lifetimes eavesdropping on this conversation.

You drift from my talk.

Stay here and graze.

Marvel at this proscenium world. Be

With us in it. Reread yourself

On your chosen line.

Exchanging heat, ideas and light

I hope you feel more reading this

Listening to my jokes in the grass.

There's always been jokes and grass.

I ask if she'd like to get dinner.

She says yes. We will all soon

(And you will currently) taste the mildest curries we can find.

You're smiling when she flicks her end away.

Proclaim that tomorrow will be sixty degrees

And every day after will be your favorite kind of weather.

Everyone is happy about button downs and gloves and layers.

Things are quiet and good

But she draws another cigarette.

She starts to look it.



We light it for her and you rub my hand up and down her back as fast as I think I should.

We make sure not to do these things at the same time.

Fire and all. We are having a good time

Her and you and I and we

Are going to have a better one.

She inhales and we can only have one drink.

Tuesday is her busiest day. I say

Don't worry.

It is Monday and tomorrow is winter.

## What Love Might Learn

*How that fact of  
seeing someone you love **away**  
**from you in time** will  
disappear in time, too.*

*Here is all there is*

## Brunch Is Not A Time Of Day

The wait for a table is long  
But we endure the building blocks of conversation.  
Sherri sits us. We note  
Her wet smile and rushing off and make miserly calculations  
And with only cups and condiments I try and save the day.

I spell your age out in sugar  
In letters  
And it takes too long and most of it is on the floor  
And another couple's table.  
Sherri scolds me with a smile that is not actually a smile  
And I return the flavor.

I volunteer alcohol as a desperate sophistication.  
We can be the people celebrating at nine o'clock in the morning  
On the day after the eighth of August.  
You smile and I wish I knew what winsome means  
And shake and the dandruff joins the mess I've made  
And I care very much and my skin is flaking too  
And I shouldn't point it out but there's so much of it  
In your cup on your plate  
Let me advise you to change conditioner

But no-

That's not The-Day-After-The-Eighth-Of-August-Talk.

That's Tuesday afternoon talk with Gerald in his cluttered office Gerald

I'd really rather not think about you right now

I need to focus.

Are you having a good time?

More flakes and I can't clarify

Without a thumb in some direction.

I'll presume the lie

And I order the drinks and you go to the bathroom and

I love you

And I'm going to endure this spicy tomato vodka soup for you

And I hope that's enough the day after.

I return to the table fuming and you do too and that makes it a bit better

But my neck's all wet and I hope the bathroom went well?

Ha ha yes we do still have our little jokes

After all this time Denny's

Doesn't sing happy birthday anymore.

Even with their pancake stuffed pancakes

That Sherri recommended.

And I see you're close to can't taking it anymore

And I can't take anymore.

I give I light matches for sparklers and raise them up.

Fire signs be damned.

I sing out your beautiful name.

All the letters and all the pieces in between it and I love that you took mine

And wanted my name to be in your name

And I'm sorry

I say over the sound of splashing from the newly awoken sprinklers.

This song and dance should be accompanied by strings

Not splashing and me clambering up the tabletop

Not Sherri clutching at me and my song.

Ten per cent Sherri. Can't stop me jumping across the way

And then creaking my knees down over to you

And your laughing that for some wonderful reason you are trying to hide behind your hand.

I forget numbers and years and I sing you happy birthday for you

I forget dates and milk and I sing you happy birthday to you

I forget to tell you on the important days and I sing you happy birthday with you

But I do not ever forget you or how I feel

After all this time

In Denny's at 9am the day after

The 8<sup>th</sup> of August.

## Gables

It's crisp. I have a jacket and the music I like.

I make the people behind the counter smile and I'm terrible at answering the phone when I haven't said any other words at the start of the day.

I think this is who I am.

Is this different to how you feel or is this just vacation

Wonderings when we don't need to be anywhere?

When we have everywhere to be.

Saying hello to dogs is a human thing to do

Isn't it? Or is it a dog thing to make humans say hello?

Do you say hello to the flapping of birds? Although

I don't say hello to birds either. Or cats.

Blasted cats.

How often is the human number

To call your mother? To echo

Because you think you're in a place where you can?

Does everyone secretly hate hiking?

Do we wonder when we are in love

If we are in love?

Or are there some who know.

Are they reading this?

Are you?

L & F

Friends batteries

Keys and little shampoos

Lost things

We the morning had so much

We thought we thought we looked at our phones

The hotel surprisingly un-recent

There were I'm sure many happy people in it

How aren't we anymore

We is within the pile wherever now is hiding

Felt is a fabric and a eulogy word

Do people throw away presents

Old canned goods tell do people ice cream

Fall out shelter

For the evening show the one-ly street run way

We could do anything. Your hair was in our eyes

We still looked at each other how's that for trying

After the show when we are

Tired royalty of bathrobes

Inbred pomp ceremony of feeding each other

Wipe my stache for me I don't wait

For the shower to end I file myself in and squat

The happy kind of angry I can't believe he did that angry truly



Luckless providence of bargain bin

The common brand of ending things

Tiny bottle caps

Key chains people are

Our curious talk

Is this always how it ends in us

Asking

After each other

## Raggery

Tell me about the wet rags you collect  
Your made up reasons I know are reasons  
You made up  
But still I know are reasons.  
You have a glorious red wet rag hiding a china doll  
You used to dry yourself  
I'm sure you still do.  
The wet rag from the nineteen eighties  
Vintage rag, vintage water  
You make me giggle and you warp the wood.  
I love you and it punishes me.

I convince myself I do not really like dry things  
I am pursued and how are your suits so freshly pressed  
Immaculate and buttoned according to situation  
Sitting, standing, perfect boots and socks and trappings  
Where do the rags come from? We've surely lost  
Our security deposit owes to the holes appearing in the floors  
Our floors, we've discussed this, ours  
We wrote a poem about it and the landlord signed it was not  
A very good poem  
But it was about us, our responsibilities, our names

On it next to each other and you liked it

I liked it and you said you did.

This newest rag from the back of the fridge where the cheese used to want to live

I tell myself I don't need to remind you about the cheese

I'm convinced ungodly fridges make for better conversation.

You're naked all the time and there are rags everywhere

I know you're not doing anything with them but having them

But I could really use some sleep and some help with the holes in ours and the rags

They pile up by the door to the stairs to the door to the way out of here.

They miss outside and they miss me and I sweat too much

I'm sorry you're right

It's too hot to hold each other, the humidity weighs us

I agree. We can't afford the cost of air conditioning.

I'll just lie over here. I'm sorry

I'm interrupting your nightly ritual of ripping in new rags

Your eyes are covered in cucumbers

Whole ones and a nightmask

I really think that's a quite terrifying word and nothing good can come of it and I'm frightened

The rags are starting to speak to me.

They say soppy things and I would laugh but I'm hearing the rags talk to me now

Not about gruyere or tenant agreements

Not about shoulder pads or china dolls or anything calming and kind like that.

They're telling me they miss me and you're just wearing vegetables.

They say they'll make a way for me and I should leave. They say  
I'm so very nearly drowned and pieces mention me having a really quite nice fridge before.  
I stuff my rags in my ears and I don't listen and I leave the door open  
To the fridge and let it mold and I decide  
Yes, I'm convinced I'm not  
Interested in half measures I'll let the rot  
And do everything but burn the place down.  
I know I really like your snoring and everything else  
Is going to be fine. The matches are damp and the doll has no need of company.

## Needs Speaking

We glaze in this portly moment and kindly look at each other

Hoping we both die

Nicely on a day not so different from today

And like it, and like this like

We all do with everyone

We wonder if they'd be interested in a bit of sex with us?

Have they had some sex with someone

Like us?

What was

The bed like? Us lumpen

Moments are a for later thing

Without borders and contrary

Sharing a likeness with people

Is a sign to some of different harps.

There's a smell for most places

But the skullcap workshop

Lathes moldly yest and whirring forward

Chunks of old eye spun for sanding

Knurling, drilling, or deformation.

And she has my old stale lemon in her eye

And her wry smile in mine is far away yet

We must at each other finally.

Some heard verb

Not over loud but leaves

The words askew without action coming for us.

Them needs speaking

You must have some chairs you have trouble sitting with

Certain topics of conversation

That make you away from yourself.

Don't subject yourself to mine mind

We do and exchange many

Sounds yet little axe.

All slant we

Mouth at each other like reading words to oneself

Whetting tongue as practice for past communion.

Time My Mouth, Its Maw

Getting in the way of pawing forward is writing “My  
Love was on a mountain when I ungainly sat  
With guilt and fear as my reading glasses  
Tussled with their arms  
At my young still graying hair.” Breathe air  
Then. You worry too and may also have love  
Or will. Or won’t  
But you can climb the mountain that you see each evening  
Your routine walk and the same flickering lamplight beckons you note  
The mountains will not be always here. Their snows shudder off  
Dandruff on your lenses. Bits of your skin committing suicide  
Making friends in vacuum  
And in lint drawer. Such a lifetime  
To make a task of drawing bumfluff  
Bandage plaster.  
Walk a different way. Eat  
Strange tea. Shampoo a smell the mountain, or a librarian would like  
Now that you’ve stopped buying books. Knock silly  
Hats off. Even the same streets welcome  
A new dance and saying hello to people you caught with uneven floss  
You will be here. Time is rough in its excited mouth to take you.  
Rip flashcards.

Run to where you are now.

Surfing as it were on fearsome tongue

Or go the way of dandruff. Forget the curtains with their lovely awful patterns

Until they close. Looking back

On fear and mountains.

Won't you wish to smile with me and shake

Our hands, our heads.

What precious fools we were to worry

With any grip of years to use.



Casey

How can things be wrong?

There is a smell of apples.

Children have runny noses and never notice them and see

The slick of you from exiting winter into this cheer.

The lights of every coffeehouse are visible

Once the sun goes down so early so late

In the stretching night of this and every year

There is a spot in the corner for you while you wait for the burn on your tongue to heal.

You make a funny face from your pain and the young girl notices and laughs

Her mother shushes her and she hides behind a scarf.

There are so many books in hands

And outside the window the hot breath

Gouts from late night travelers.

The folk of the place

The people who are here now and the people who have been

They mingle on the cobblestones.

They brush up against one another and do not notice enough to pardon themselves

Excuse me

You look up from looking out the window and back

Through the years. A woman is asking you to mind her things and her daughter

While she runs to the bathroom. You have already said yes

She has run away and the child is hiding not very well behind her chair.

All seems well and the passersby call to you to be confused

With people you know and remember.

There was another place this time of year

Much colder and you were a different person then.

You wrote on paper still and had a pencil and a lover and it was sharp and she was sensible and you were frightened

Of being happy with her which felt like being done with it all. You squirmed

Mispronounced coq au vin

The waiter at the restaurant your friend recommended in Denver did not notice and she

Well this was not unusual behavior. She ate French onion soup and made do.

Were you making do? Were you very silly to be worried for what might be missed?

Around now, near a year on your way away from her

What has been done?

You've had perhaps three haircuts and several stories added to the collection.

Before again when

You were younger more foolish in the way of things

There was the first girl you knew who dyed her hair red and you knew her but you argued.

And your uncle's funeral and your granny's and you were falling asleep from the heat of all the people

Sal knew. You were nodding off when the neighbors came to shake your hand.

Your first best friend's father died.

You hadn't spoken for years

Which is always the way with first best friends.

Perhaps there was a pint at Christmas you clinked down at the local did he know

That was the last Christmas he'd have a father? Why did you think about your own father

Dying and how you couldn't possibly be

Without him? Worse again, that you could be

That you would have to be.

People are older than other people.

Why did it matter so much to his mother that you shook her hand?

Words caught in your throat when she broke at the sight of you. Why not another?

A son clutching her hand or the paleness of the redheaded man who tolerated the way you like to eat ice cream.

Things are comfortable here in the coffee shop but more so in the memories

Of things you cannot help

Because they have already gone wrong.

She is so far away and she loved you or still does but you have not spoken.

Your father was angry after his brother's funeral and happy

After he helped fill in Sal's grave and they used to speak Irish to each other and everyone remembered and said that to him.

He was proud and you miss him and we all miss our fathers if we think about them too much or not enough of the time.

What was so wrong about comfortable conversation? In mile high tinny air

Holding hands and each other there was little wit or adventure

But why? What could have been done that wasn't retreat?

Who

A doughy shattering on your cheek brings you back to where you are.

The young girl is clapping her hands on her face and is delighted.

She is making no attempt to shutter her laughter.

Your gloves are still on and so you take them off and this is how things should be.

You move and there is a cloud of crumbs and blueberries.

People are whispering but there is a friendly air to it

Sharing a joke, and a coffee, and a wondering of what will happen.

The door opens and the mother is running again and is surprised and her voice tremors higher

You could talk to her or anyone.

You and the young girl exchange looks

And you do. You rescue a stray berry into your mouth and offer the girl a tissue.

Nothing is wrong and you introduce yourself with

There's no need to worry.

Your coffee is hot and the child is telling you her name.

Not

I wish that I knew everything.

I could lie down. I would

Know how many puppies and carrots and corpses would company me

How many children

Blue paint boys room cliché pink

Girls try to come to fetch me

I would know me. Best

Of all things I would have a company come to celebrate

Eventually. I suppose

Knowing everything

Has its downside. You'd leave

I'm sure. I would be

At least. You'd leave me

At some point. I would have no need of calendars

Or crockery I'd match everything to its container and cup

Our everything shape to my all knowing mouth

I would still love you. And

This would be a problem, still. My love

Would be uncontrollable as many are

As many are. As love

Is. Often a shape unbearable even

Not odd with forewarning foreboding aft or mainsail

I would simply know more. Not earlier

Our love is was.

Immediate.

Without station or country I forgot every flag of you and where you go so goes my country.

There is promise in knowing you and no more promises

More. To love you

More. To let you know I loved you more.

Not to add as wasn't a could.

An infinitive splits us

Simply to have you

Know better how much and in what direction for.

And I show you the shapes

The milk stains the caribou

The endless ringlets if we leave

The hot glass long.

Enough in this September sea

Of crockery, of trying very hard

Of morning I love you.

And I know everything.

And neither helps.

## People & Things

I don't know anyone named Sarah

And if you see her could you give her this book?

It's been quite some time since I've known her

And even longer since I did

Have something new to say

That I could mouth at her about wrongly

As I do

To everything that happened in the space between our ears

And our lovey goodstuff doesn't stretch the quite full way.

You'd be doing me a favor

And hopefully not a terrible harm to her

And make sure not to spill anything or fall in love

Here, use this book

To tell her how we feel

But read it first. All the words

Hopefully in order.

Cross out the lines that don't fit you

Add your sounds that you want to make.

Cross off my name

If you like



Her way of remembering your side of the bed  
And she feels the same way  
About your pawing at her and trying to impress  
And I'll come to the wedding  
If weddings are still her thing and I  
Can go somewhere else again  
And try and be  
Just write better words  
In an order more preferable to you two one you  
We'll call it a gift  
For a wedding or a birthday  
(And don't forget either of those).

She'd prefer I'm sure  
To get this in person  
Or in a letter even flat  
To say hello  
And make you happy and safe and she makes this tortilla  
Sandwich with bananas and peanut butter  
And I'm sure the makings are still in the fridge  
For that and anything she wants  
And I've spent far too long writing and far away  
And too long unfinishing this line

And giving her this book or a reason to read it and that starts today  
Or some time later if I can just put these hands in my pockets or do something good  
Be kind to the spine of it and the pages and her  
And she's quite good at taking care of her books  
And kindness. She's quite good at that too.  
And most things. And reading.  
I'm not particularly even a fan of books  
Or poetry or whatever this ends  
Up being called, a name or something stupid like that.

But I thought she'd like it and maybe she does  
And she's reading this  
And here I am blathering on.

You're not supposed to write  
I love you on a single line  
And I sing a list in every one of mine.

Go away a while now  
If you're not Sarah.  
Please.

Some privacy to let me say I know  
My scraggly wit is not half enough  
And I lied about joining that gym and about granola.

Nobody likes granola. But everybody likes you and should  
And these admissions may not be the best way to distinguish myself  
But they're true. And so am I and you  
And if you agree I'll stop middling on and be in our place  
In the city where we met  
In the park by the abandoned movie theatre  
Where we drank Bud Ice and blinked at each other to let us know when to bend  
Up to take a drink and down  
To lay on each other's shoulders.  
If you want I can be there  
In an hour or anywhere else in the world.

Okay.

You can come back now

And finish reading.

## Curriculum Vitae

# Shaun Leonard

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## EDUCATION

### **MFA CREATIVE WRITING | MAY 2016 | UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

Three year practice based degree. Completed thesis, critical essay, literary study, & translation project.

### **GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN WRITING FOR DRAMATIC MEDIA | MAY 2016 | UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

12 credit practice based degree. Pitched and wrote screenplays, participated in active writers' room, provided close reading, coverage, drafting and story notes.

## EXPERIENCE

### **PRODUCTION INTERN | CSI: CYBER (CBS STUDIO CENTER) | FEBRUARY 2016**

Coordinated between departments, took notes, supported writer's assistants, proofread, and transcribed content.

### **IRISH FILM PROGRAMMER | LAS VEGAS FILM FESTIVAL | SEPTEMBER 2016 - PRESENT**

Programmed Irish film selections. Communicated with filmmakers and generated funding from sponsors.

### **WRITING FACILITATOR | RAINBOW THEATRE COMPANY/CIRQUE DU SOLEIL | DECEMBER 2015 – FEBRUARY 2016**

Designed a writing workshop for students aged 5-18 as part of a Cirque du Soleil cultural grant. These workshops led to students submitting stories, some of which will be adapted for the stage by Rainbow Theatre Company in July.

### **PRODUCTION INTERN | DARE TO PASS | MARCH 2015**

Assisted in fast paced creative production environment. Worked with motivated team of experienced film industry professionals. Developed skill in note taking, proofreading, and communication.

**SEGMENT PRODUCER, FRONT ROW CENTER | UNLV TV/PBS | JANUARY 2015 – MAY 2015**

Pitched and produced segment ideas for local arts & entertainment show which aired online & on PBS Channel 10 Las Vegas.

Directed, hosted, and coordinated shoot. Also interviewed artists and members of the public on camera.

Edited segment for air using Avid Media Composer. Transcribed and organized script for on-air and online captions.

**DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING | TEAM TEDX LAS VEGAS | JANUARY 2015 – PRESENT**

Curated and facilitated programming of community building events such as youth development days & TED talk live streams.

Collaborated with a team during planning and execution of events.

**WRITING CONSULTANT | WRITING CENTER, UNLV | AUGUST 2013 - PRESENT**

Directed writing consultations involving a combination of copy editing, tutoring, & content development. Also led instructional workshops related to writing mechanics & style. Recognized as “go to” guy for editing and problem solving

**WRITING & PRODUCTION AWARDS**

*TEDx Talk: Irish on Purpose* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk2BgZC9dBo>

*Ballgag* Writer and producer. Found locations, coordinated between crew and editing. Screened at *Fastnet Film Festival*

*Pull* Drama, short. Writer (story and script), 1<sup>st</sup> AD. 2<sup>nd</sup> place in *Offline Film Festival* shorts competition. <https://vimeo.com/channels/536722/50518767>

**REFERENCE**

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