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## (What You Want Hummed Here)

Lara Victoria Ramsey  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

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(WHAT YOU WANT HUMMED HERE)

by

Lara Victoria Ramsey

Bachelor of Arts  
University of Puget Sound  
1996

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing  
Department of English  
College of Liberal Arts**

Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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ABSTRACT

**(What You Want Hummed Here)**

by

Lara Victoria Ramsey

Dr. Claudia Keelan, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of Poetry  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

*(What You Want Hummed Here)* represents the cumulative work of my past three years of studies in poetry as an MFA of Creative Writing candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Included in the following document are a preface and manuscript of poetry. The preface details my poetic aesthetic, chiefly based on concepts of translation, negative capability, and being. The preface discusses these concepts in relation to “I” and “Other.” The collected poems explore the borderlands of opposing forces such as flesh versus spirit, reality versus dream, arrival versus departure, and knowing versus not-knowing. This is a manuscript in process.

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## PREFACE

*And then you make an anagram of it, and you spell what the Martian was trying to say.*

~ Jack Spicer

*(What You Want Hummed Here)* gathers together three years worth of work and reveals a poetic aesthetic in search of itself. This aesthetic positions me as one becoming a member of a world that is striving to translate and transcribe itself into poetry. Readers will probably note that the second half of the collection presents a more solidified sense of this.

In *Poetics of Indeterminacy*, Marjorie Perloff argues that poetry branched off in two directions with Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud—the main difference between the two being their approach to the signifier and the signified. Those in the Baudelairian line are Symbolists and Romantics. Here, the signifier signifies something other than what it is. In Baudelaire’s “*L’Invitation Au Voyage*” (“Invitation to the Voyage”), a flower is not a flower:

Moi, j’ai trouvé ma *tulipe noire* et mon *dahlia bleu!* / Fleur incomparable, tulipe retrouvée,  
allégorique dahlia, c’est là, n’est-ce pas, dans ce beau pays si calme et si rêveur, qu’il faudrait  
aller vivre et fleurir? (34)

(As for me, I have found my *black tulip* and my *blue dahlia*. / Incomparable flower, tulip  
lost and found again, allegorical dahlia, it is there, is it not, in this country so calm and  
dreamy, that we must live and blossom?)

Baudelaire’s flowers represent something rare; however, it is left to the reader to decide what that is—love, a lady, intoxication, peace, or perhaps death. As well, the reader must decipher the symbolism behind the calm, dreamy country.



Poets in Rimbaud's line, which Perloff terms the "Other Tradition," comprise a large portion of the Post-Modernists. Here, the signifier signifies the signified. A rose is a rose, as Gertrude Stein might say. Objects are presented as they are, not *re*-presented as representing something else. The poem operates through attention to language, music, and image, as opposed to metaphor and simile. The poem demands "being present" in this world, *now*, as opposed to flight or transportation out of it proposed by symbolist modalities. While poets from both camps have influenced my development, those most largely influencing (*What You Want Hummed Here*) have been Arthur Rimbaud, Jack Spicer, Ezra Pound, and Charles Olson.

### Translation & Transcription

Translation requires that one decipher, then convert, something expressed in one language (ideas, perceptions, imaginings, dreams, etc.) into another. My *Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary* adds that the translation should retain its original sense (1227). In translation, self-expression as the goal of writing falls by the wayside. The translator must serve the text's desires. For the poet translator, the text is the world, and the goal becomes the translation of the world as it presents itself. This process is akin to the concept of negative capability as discussed in the letters of John Keats. Keats first uses this term in a letter to George and Thomas Keats: "Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—" (831). This passage defines negative capability as an individual's ability to "be" without having to attach meaning. Further passages clarify negative capability as a poetic concept in opposition to those that privilege the "I" or egotistical sublime.

Rimbaud's phrase "*Je est un autre*" (qtd. in Perloff, 60) and Spicer's concept of poet as receptor further develop negative capability. Rimbaud's "*Je est un autre*" ("I is Another") describes an approach to the collapse of the distinction between subject and object. If the subjective "I" is the objectified "Other," the poet may no longer speak as the privileged "I." The poet becomes a medium for other voices. In the case of Rimbaud, Perloff asserts, these voices come from the subconscious. Spicer

touches on this concept and develops it further in “Vancouver Lecture 1” when he describes the poet as a radio receiving radio waves:

Essentially you are something which is being transmitted into... (7)

It’s as if a Martian comes into a room with children’s blocks with A,B,C,D,E which are in English and he tries to convey a message... (8)

The properly tuned poet is set to a station that limits static (ego) and allows for the reception of outside voices— “Martian” voices. While Rimbaud listens to the subconscious, Spicer listens to the world. Although the suppression of the self-absorbed “I” (which is always ready to pontificate to no end about itself) is a difficult and ever-vigilant task, attention to negative capability has helped me develop a means of practicing this discipline. Evident throughout (*What You Want Hummed Here*) are both varieties of negative capability, listening to world and listening to subconscious, as well as the return to the privileged “I.” In the earlier poems, instances of the privileged “I” are symptomatic of my struggle to employ negative capability, while in the later poems, any return to the privileged “I” is part of the inclusion of the entire world.

Translation requires the transcription of that which has been or is being translated. The translation must be recorded into its new form. Transcription is the transferal of something (words, music, sounds, data, etc.) from one recording and storing system to another (*Webster’s II New Riverside University Dictionary*, 1226). Ezra Pound and Charles Olson have informed my focus here. In “ABC of Reading,” Ezra Pound asserts the idea that sound, image, and logic are the means by which words are imbued with meaning. Having read this text seven years ago, its significance has become newly immediate to me. Influenced by these criteria, I am constantly striving to transcribe the music (sonorous or cacophonous), images (pleasant or terrifying), and orders or non-orders presented by the world. Thus, amid the images that flock to the pages, sound enters here and there as interruption or as part of the entire piece. As well, order and chaos play out in the words on the page.

Olson’s discussion in “Projective Verse” also shapes the form of my poetic transcriptions. The following passage most succinctly summarizes Olson’s aesthetic:

the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE / the HEART, by way of the BREATH,  
to the LINE (616)

As Olson puts it, the way to the syllable is through the head. The mind perceives the syllable, which is the rhythm and essence of what other voices are saying, through the ear. Once perceived, rhythm and essence find their way into the line by way of the heart through the breath of the poet. It is via this practice, ideally, that the original voice gets translated and transcribed into poetry with all its kinetics intact. Because the poet can only transcribe the world's voices through the filter of his or her own breath, it is inevitable that the poem will retain his or her colorings; however, curtailing ego allows for a world voice accompanied by the self's unique voice, as opposed to a self imposed on the world.

### Being & Becoming

Active engagement in being and becoming is the platform on which translation and transcription function properly. Being, as opposed to doing, goes hand in hand with negative capability. Eastern philosophies, such as Taoism, Buddhism and Yoga, outline reflexive, emptying meditative practices. Time engaged in meditation is spent observing self, losing self, and ultimately comprehending the significance of simply being— of being one object among the world's objects or perhaps one subject among the world's subjects (the boundaries of subject and object having been dissolved). Returning from meditation to the active world of doing, the self gains a balanced sense of being and a reverence for other, having experienced the self as Another part of the whole. Reverence for Another opens self to expanded scopes of influence, thus the possibility for becoming is endless. In "Six Non-lectures" E.E. Cummings proposes a similar notion of being,

But (as it happens) poetry is being not doing... If you wish to follow, even at a distance, the poet's calling (and here, as always, I speak from my own totally biased and entirely personal point of view) you've got to come out of the immeasurable doing universe into the immeasurable house of being. (24)

While Cummings presents a beautifully spoken, sensible argument, I would argue that the poet's calling is to "be" and "do" simultaneously. While this is a difficult task, requiring much mindfulness, "being" and "doing" are equally significant aspects of the world striving to translate itself into poetry.

### *Featherweight*

The original title of this collection was *Featherweight*. I had latched onto a bit of Egyptian mythology that seemed significant to my attention to voices and discussions from borderlands, particularly those between flesh and spirit. Voices concerning the material fleshly world and the immaterial spirit world tend to speak out often, not only in my poetry but in my photographic endeavors as well. After writing an initial preface to this manuscript, and going back through the poems, it became clear that *Featherweight* was inappropriate. Though it had come to me via an outside voice, it was saddling the manuscript with something *I* wanted to say to the audience. Thus, I went back through the poems to see if I could hear what they were saying. What they are saying, what they desire most of all, I believe, is to sing; and as poems from the community, they want (*What You Want Hummed Here*).

### Acknowledgements

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend credit and gratitude to everyone involved in influencing or aiding me in working on this project, as well as to everyone accompanying or guiding me through graduate school. Thank you Claudia Keelan for your dedicated, passionate guidance into an approach to poetry I had been previously struggling to comprehend. Thank you Douglas Unger for assisting me through translation. Thank you Dr. Jane Hafen for your tremendous influence in my academic writing and broadening my perspectives on American Literature. Thank you Dr. Pasha Rafat for your enthusiasm in guiding my photographic explorations and for your interest in my poetic work. As well, a very big thank you to all my friends and to my family for your support, encouragement and advice. Thank you all for being!

POTS & PANS CLANKING

## Night Hymn Twelve

They were all dressed up dazzling  
 in their sqns the men looking all dapper  
 I hadn't had the chance to make dinner reservations  
 so they all lft (them all leaving)

Something stirred I knew  
 this: the reflection of wkng worries  
 worries wkng of reflection the

There was

a short grey cable. A long orange chord  
 and a blue one. We were in a new house  
 where it was better

for the TV

and the video games  
 to be in the basement. I agreed. Put on

my flip-flops  
 (they were ugly)

Later we all went shopping  
 but didn't find much  
 but a skirt  
 its hemline an Egyptian horizon

I came to  
 my daytime  
 senses wondering  
 where I was had been

would be going now: The scents & sounds  
 stirring s  
 beckoning s  
 back pushing sleep back

dark the stars  
 winking out  
 roaches  
 scattering

in the next room  
 pots & pans clanking  
 breakfast scent wafting up  
 pulling dawn into shape

Pull

always we  
becoming

our circular rage  
tied

to our strong heads

full  
joyous  
sad  
deflated

still

we go we  
move

beyond this day  
these shoes that face

and the season's flowers  
the old house  
the flesh

hear it so loud we  
pull away

mahogany syllables fall  
and scatter

riddle the yard

## Test of Wings

as we leave to depart we arrive—at  
the decision to at the place of at  
the moment in the step out from before  
into what lies before we go beyond  
knowing in order to know do we  
not part for fear to peel away the living  
cells dare not divide nail from thumb it  
aches so god damned much but a fruit  
not peeled grows sticky harbors larvae  
gets eaten inside out I no go I say  
says the child sitting at the foot of her bed  
there can be no convincing nor coaxing  
she stays this room likes the scent  
of the foliage a melody creaking through  
the eaves the maps and books  
and menageries in their places



## Dreams It All Up

i.

dreams it up all  
 though there are real roses  
 aphids blemishes

this one dreams it everyone

there was mud there  
 dirt and water deep  
 brown & black as velvet  
 it was near heaven

but there was no music

which bothered some were bothered

murmuring there  
 writhing

trying to who knows

I hadn't the slightest notion but there  
   all of us  
   me  
   and those mudmurmurers

ii.

while that one was dreaming I suggested they all we

[what you want hummed here]

hum  
 missing music  
 as they did

they had been lamenting—perhaps now  
 some might open come out listen

iii.

*some hear few listen* one said once  
 not dreaming speaking

iv.

I was remembering this  
   that one moment I had slipped  
 into that one's dream

the way he was dreaming not humming but re-mem-bering  
remembering pasts as he put it

so for him there was nothing  
*only one thing to do*  
*go back*

so I went

v.

there were soooooo many things!  
faces bits of fluff you me our expressions taught  
each other's closeness a nest in a tree  
sky blue expanse of small egg  
field of hops in the air across the street  
powderpuff clouds beyond

but I couldn't stay it all dissolving the red well the tree imploding the egg cracking  
into earth and that too  
imploding as your face  
as beyond flew  
apart this re-mem-bering dismembering my limbs deepening

in the mire

and they all content to their discontented murmuring *The air thrills!*

*with the hum of insects* I screamed

or maybe murmured

vi.

nobody was

listening was all dreaming  
writhing inside

remembered

dreaming  
this

for everyone was convinced  
very convincing

he was of all the going back  
but how much  
backgoing? I had already lost  
your face no more losses

vii.

I got up saying  
    *only one thing to do*  
more desiring  
I wanted beyond going

I was thinking  
there certainly was something

more aphids  
I brushed nearheaven  
from my thighs

## Summer Harvest

One million gazillion of them and it's my job to find them all. I go out before dad, scour the lawn: one foot in front of the other to the eastern-most edge, pivot, repeat, reach the western-most edge: snowball bush and row of arbavida. Each rock is ten cents jingling in my pocket: one rock equals one shiny dime; ten rocks equal one crinkled, sometimes crisp, dollar bill. I look long under the sagging branches of the Douglas fir, along all edges, and among all shadows. I am the seeker the vanquisher the vanquished. I search myself out of rocks, and out of a job, but the rocks grow back—next month, next summer.

I spent my childhood buying unicorn stuff with rock money.

Now, in the fading day, the shadow of the old white house, mom hovers over her garden patch, pulls weeds, clips back candy tuft. The scent of geranium fills my nose and stains my hands as I pinch away dead leaves and dried blossoms, pull fledgling plants from their potters and cozy them into a patch in the half-crescent shape she has mapped out. It has been ten years since I crouched here, helping. I squat, dig, jump at the cat, palm a stone.

Pill bugs, spiders, and one million gazillion rocks spill out in the upheaval of earth.

## Edible

you cannot put everything in  
your mouth some things are not edible  
but yes to this smooth shiny fruit  
tender grainy flesh red juices  
that quench hunger feed curiosity birth  
desire it is better you eat this savoring  
instead of gnawing and mashing away

## Words

it still intense as confused as  
ever up my mind then changes forty  
times daily I am sane rational  
and freaking want to throw myself in  
front a semi but keep  
you have thoughts that start a solid  
direction i am scared  
trying to talk it touchy we walk egg  
shells and hurt still we need  
to see conversation going it is easier  
the minor details than the meat

MilkWineBeerCigarettes

Pabst comes in a silver  
& blue aluminum can I observed

them walking in  
the door they were

walking he in  
his way she in my way

walking in together  
arrived through the d-ing

d-ing dragonfly  
aqua sky fluttering

up through pigeons  
cooing across our backs

tattooed into our dreams  
Morse code beat out

in iridescent expanse indecipherable  
youmethecashier

chewed up stuck here  
stuck on this block this city

this millionth parking lot  
cars circling

Joypop

i.

Joypop entered the room, enters the room  
is astounded and wants  
these words to be red                      not black

warning: temporary fix

tomorrow she'll want them  
blackagain

meanwhile,  
I am hungry: cook food: eat it:  
noodles, zucchini, bell peppers.

ii.

That Joypop, she'll just have to  
I won't support her habit                      imagine red  
see

iii.

whatever she pops  
she only pops once  
per month                      there are enough stuffs to pop hourly.

iv.

there is a painting on a wall  
in a museum  
in Austria

on slides being shown  
in a lecture hall  
in Las Vegas

somewhere a cell phone rings

rings

rings



Joypop's tummy is rumbling. —no. grumbling.—she clarifies,  
 anyway, it is heard,  
 this sound,

coming from inside a girl.  
 don't let it  
 distract you,  
 pay attention

(yet still ringing)

to threads, slides,  
 threads of slides, art  
 sliding by: red  
 fabric (she ought to really like that). Truthful  
 fabric. Sticks and stones  
 and mixed dies. Reflective  
 materials

—this really is popping— Joypopping saying  
 melifluos  
 ly.

Sweaters grafted together,  
 waving form altering  
 space, chairs and mirrors  
 assaulting the senses,  
 and words,  
 (her stomach grumblingagain)  
 a hand cut off  
 and floating through

space

—those visual artists, they have space  
 and colors and something tangible  
 and it's so good I object.—Joypop fading, craving  
 passion

v.

fruit.

Joypopping saying: I could stay here finally,  
 have another,  
 tear away, tear up  
 tough purple skin,  
 use my canines,  
 penetrate flesh with my tongue

suck out each seed one by one seed each counting  
 fruit juices dripping

but I've already done that once now.

Joypopping saying: It is not possible to repeat these things, to repeat

these things is not to reach that thrill  
that thrill that thrill, that first-time  
thrillagain

vi.

All kinds of substances (Joypop  
grinning)

those you take in, consume  
like that fruit  
some dropped, snorted pushed in in  
serted

what you wrap around, wrap  
self around, wrap  
around self

## Curandera

The nuns entered the sick room in single file, the scent of dust wafted in on their swishing skirts, black folds of illumination. Even a savior dangling at their pious hips couldn't make right the wrong that they had no egg. No blessed ritual egg.

They sat as two dark clouds, limbs melting into their bodies, melted into *the* body, leaving only their soothing whispers and a promise of healing draped about them like that ethereal halo about clouds that glows less and less brilliant as sun relinquishes sky to moonrise.

And all the while, that benevolent god at rest in his clean sterile garden stared shamelessly. A terrifying little mangod, his emaciated body—broken and bloodied—smarted in young eyes as the waning sun, through stained glass, refracted over cold silver or golden flesh.

Little mangod, you need an egg. Didn't your grandmother ever tell you? An egg and the sea foam scent of aging flesh nearing as you stand or sit or lie aching. The silent histories of your people mapped out in the wrinkles that bless your grandmother's brow and cascade

down her face making an Indian tapestry of neck, throat and chest, then finish their pilgrimage where steady fingertips greet glowing white circle. And glowing white circle begins to undulate, moving through constellations

of secret syllables and sound clusters, moving through ancient codices and a song of blood—drawing my center out, drawing it out of my center, drawing into its center my center, leaving the circle about me white, leaving its center yellowed.

Once my grandmother had cracked the egg, she released its yellow center, my center, into a flowered dish from the kitchen cupboard. And so that the vanquished spirits would be less inclined to return, she placed two sticks in the image of a cross above the bowl.

## Hymn Seven: Horus: Hymn of Wisdom

we quaff water  
 hovering above  
 planet USA peer  
 through clouds

sheltered from the heat  
 of noonday desert  
 earthly politics  
 we share

books the SkyMall stories  
 grapes chomp ice  
 till it's gone  
 sleep

what we can  
 in the intervals  
 watch listen  
 wish

passing the hours  
 this way  
 the hours becoming  
 confused this way

my window filling  
 with sun harsh glare  
 sprung off metal  
 rivets

great wingspan see me  
 see the sea  
 below

not roiling

a ptchwrk  
 you plus you  
 equaling us  
 brilliant

ignorant us  
 nt in stitches  
 but in circles wrkd  
 wrkd

even to its magnificent  
 lucrative blue

parameters  
 not ours  
 ours the not-knowing

the palms raised  
voices singing  
eternally praying carrying

sun through its circumference  
shifting positions  
we exchange seats  
cross and uncross

our legs our arms our eyes  
can't wait to be home  
can't imagine this journey  
were it endless

## ELECTRIC HUM

What is Hovering Now

yesterday's conversation last night's  
goodnight a bedskirt  
needs ironing

pillows headboard  
one to be fluffed the other  
bought and beyond

the great city cities

one after one after one growing peoples  
erecting great structures  
growing

razed flowers carved mahogany mounted  
up up heavenward into the darkness

its not-knowing

hovering here  
at this odd hour  
in the drift

sun

across chair life  
afraid it is founded on nothing  
nothing afraid of

neighbors yelling above doves cooing  
murmurs giggles pots & pans clanking  
in the next room still

more

basketball on cement somewhere

What Hovered That Day

miles & miles of road  
grey asphalt  
winding through town  
after town bright white stitching  
or yellow over and over  
same song and tears  
streamlining our  
lovely silence

having crept in was hovering  
one desire  
bright animal urge to fuck

through the roadside foliage it was spring  
the reeds sharpening  
you could see  
their truck  
parked  
there their bodies here the sun  
blasted stones  
on the river bed their flesh  
that same bright shock



## Lumen

dark knots swimming  
in oil on canvas are  
plunge eternal  
as they wrap the deep going  
about themselves or

us this motion a staving off  
of vortex firmament  
and nothing they suck up all  
sin's luminescence then

spew reds blues fuchsias and  
purple each iris where  
they want to intertwine makes  
mud grey even

umbra exhausted they  
push against canvas beg  
of their god a horizon any  
color just attainable

shimmered tails solidify  
of nowhere burn them  
a bright path they become  
wanton against the end

the endlessness  
somewhere at the edge  
of their fall rests a wish

this wish for breath  
awash in ecstasy a sigh  
not this expanse  
of exile

Hymn Eight: Khons: Hymn of Wandering

smallest of feathers

[doubt having crept into the page  
was erased then rewritten]

was a prayer lifted                   there

a prayer hovering  
not above

but

centered

in it

[the art the  
love making  
the playing]

all

Battaglia in D Minor

Poet

*the blades were the sun*

this etched in desert

*the blades of grass in the meadow  
the clay road there  
was wild  
was not mine*

nor were the birds  
yet they were  
insistent

become every sound  
saturation  
flesh

they were there were  
blades were sun

though plucked  
and mangled

*we would begin again if we could,  
hold dirt and leaves to our bodies for a different reason*

Battaglia in D Minor

Scientist

*he cannot alter the distribution*

*historical and sociological reasons account  
for inferiority of*

*the non-Nordic is American  
'Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans'  
a perfect picture*

*Demonstrator does nothing.*

*(the feeble-minded clog the wheels)  
of human progress*

*(Quand on est bete, c'est pour longtemps.)*

*sterilization*

*no feeble-minded person should be*

*to marry or parent. Society*

*must enforce it.*

*Is home-grown.*

Battaglia in D Minor

Neighbors

cleaved branch  
predecessor to the bat

*if you are not outraged*

vacant lots and boarded windows, small  
personal junkyards on porches in lawns  
baby strollers drying laundry bicycles  
barbeques plants in their pots  
outrageous

nothing here is

he grabbed what he could  
they grabbed what they could  
they became

baseballbats shovels broom treelimb chair milkcrate rake theybecametheiroutrage his blood  
hit the ceiling splattered young rosy cheeks drenched their jeans seeped in  
heart  
how  
have we got  
so far

? how

*sometimes the rain falls  
that had not fallen*

but had been

building

still building

then this world that had seemed  
is no longer

i will not drink milk nor shovel  
nor sweep nor sit even ever again  
(for at least the next week)

wake

force is force

is force is forced is not a rose

Waking

morning altar  
chorus swinging

who he is  
this afternoon

at the picnic  
who is you

saying grace  
over potatoes

saying goodnight  
to her who I is

being kissed  
who they are

sleeping what dreaming  
this waking

## Pigeon Song

9/05/00

strange stilled pigeon  
iridescent feathers  
in my path

9/07/00

they are never torn  
simply fallen  
gravity clinging

9/12/00

iris-colored flecks fade  
chest caves

9/19/00

foot traffic renders little wing and belly and walnut-sized head  
flat ligament and bone and blood  
dry and pop—

become mud and dust and grass and leaf

9/21/00

less song less

9/26/00

soul fly

## Hymn Two: Hu: Power of Utterance

moon  
gone down  
shower  
humming

[somewhere  
the yogis motioning  
sun salutations]  
sft footpads

through the hall  
[clck]  
door opening  
[clck]

light  
switched  
off  
on [mindful]

brth  
in  
brth  
out]

shadow of tree  
on brick wall  
grws  
grws into

real tree, hill, horizon  
beyond  
[clck, clck] again  
day beginning

again has begun  
sun hovering  
our mths opening:  
Ä (as in padre)

lifting it all  
[clck]

FM  
accompanies us now



Itimar

You are saying, having come and gone, having  
traversed the thick  
of all realms,  
you say:

there are those songs sung  
by them, cut through water, up  
through us.

You hear them. So sing me in that way  
of whale or great sea. Dark my brightest angel

you rise, leaning forward, eyes full  
with no thing but now

touching me here. Wings sprout from my shoulder  
blades, cut up through flesh, out

through melody. Meanwhile, those children  
splice red bounce around cement, tussle salted grit

and tangle, and touch us screaming. (Ocean  
sound then scent.) Shall we touch them?

Feet dusting the walkway. Your song pushes  
the unknown, pushes ricket of trucks on cobble

and distant banter. Wound widens. Wings  
expand. We watch a crab hermit

an endless track through sand, feathering off south  
south and— hear the grey

splintering table, peeled and brittle  
in this moment, hear those people

out there, those whom guffaw  
buying beer and tacos at the street-side tienda,

the fishermen who will, pushing, be out  
in the predawn. They are all our mates

touching me, you touch me back, saying something  
saying now is good and sweet. I might stay.

## Hymn Three: Sia: Power of Perception

Mère saying

*Hi sweetie, how are you? Just wanted  
to see how you're doing. Been trying  
to get a hold of you for days now. Love*

utterance opening  
eyes witnessing  
her shadow passing  
behind

the exhaust is billowing  
the frost is thawing  
& this woman  
with the tender lips

with the harsh lips  
sees a daughter  
is saying *have a  
nice*

moves flesh moves  
bodies  
pulses pushes  
us skywrd

chin lifted skywrd  
these syllables  
open doors  
push dark into light

## Chomula

they alight in the city the feathered  
ones and the country bestowing smiles  
this night in that glow the million miles  
of veladoras and devotions heard

chanted up through the scent of pine whispered  
past reprimanded saints through smoky aisles  
out skyblue archways painted with flowers—  
let this illness this evil be smothered.

in the courtyard the mixed crowd gathering  
is close to the banda and the cuetes  
ringing through the streets the children crying  
for the noise that is too much and the mess  
of a drunk stumbling underfoot pleading  
for a coin or drink from the featherless

Hallar

i.

Heart that is not heart  
find me/us

don't find

be found:

Roadside tent of fluff  
100 snow-white bears. Gentle  
bears with not-a-heart  
in hand. "I love you."

Room full of not-a-heart  
balloons. One bursted. Inside,  
there was a messenger, a sincere thing:

the bursting room burst  
too soon to read the rest.

*find me...*

A message in a balloon in a room in a dream  
is not a message or a balloon or a room  
but a dream.

ii.

Always this heart.  
Disappointing not-a-heart:

Inside all tea kettles, gardens, tool  
boxes, all boxes, funeral homes, expensive  
helicopter tours (for the full  
perspective). Ljubljana.  
Not the Midwest though.

Always this heart.

Thin and papery. Something laced. Something  
chocolate. Pink. Red. Always clean. Neat. Impotent.  
Maybe shiny. Could be flat or round (3-  
Dimensional) or puckered or punctured  
or flower-wrapped. Impure  
image of what otherwise is.

iii.

*find me the Clonus (Androgynous):*  
*so that I will exist, Oppen's words*  
skewed. Or are they his life-long love's,

*find my navel so that it will exist, find  
my nipples so that they will exist, find  
every hair of my belly, I am good (or  
I am bad), find me.*

These limbs, those palms, that woman.  
Her commandment.

Subject or object, subject  
to existence and  
becoming  
only in context of other.

Ect, ext, ack!

His heart only bled because  
they were there to watch it bleed.  
Without them

what is a heart anyway?

iv.

one word

v.

muscle

vi.

Sacred: heart  
that is heart before or after  
the rain

*the rain that falls* one of them said  
whether the chorus is androgynous  
or not. Whether Mary's words  
or Oppen's. Whether Mary's navel  
or Mary's.

vii.

At the vortex, one  
of those 99-cent  
Mexican candles. Jesus' cupped palm  
pulls heart cavity from chest. Bleeds the scent of copper  
and roses. Fills the nose. Crawl  
inside. This God that is

not-a-god offers this heart that is  
not-a-heart.

A punctured thing does not ascend.

viii.

Lie down. Lie  
down with that one or  
stand  
close enough  
find  
navel, nipple, hair  
listen  
to that sound  
found in the center

in there.  
Closer  
now than  
before  
to the  
matter.  
Search past  
hair  
rose of  
nipple  
concave  
navel.  
Find out that

*rain falls  
that had not been  
falling  
and it is  
the same world.*

## Night Hymn Nine

persistent  
electric  
hum cricket  
song ascending  
through walls  
faint blue  
glow  
blanketing  
us  
we are  
two spoons  
sleeping

## Some Song Hovering

hovered for days

we tried acting  
normal as though  
it did not exist

running the mind's  
circumference  
repetition  
repeating itself

through toast & jelly  
lawnmower

we needed  
to hear it play it  
feel it

find-it-all-here-mart  
had every melody  
ever made

its name eluded  
us and everyone  
we sang to

the same song  
persisted  
persists

we needs a new song



AFTERNOON CHORUS

Hallar

you hovering hear

Cicada

i.

Rows of translucent cascaras

insect pincers  
lodged in mimosa

(and you dear, much too much  
too far away  
to imagine)

chirr: the only bit  
of cicada  
visible this evening

broke through their shells  
stretched new wings  
and up and up  
flew away

let this poem

ii.

Cicāda

Cicādā

Cicādā

SĪ KĀ'DŌ

iii.

If I had a tree  
Caminante  
if I had a tree  
and one thousand  
cascaras de cicada  
I would put them  
all over that tree  
and when one fell  
down I'd pick it  
up again.

What do you  
suppose it would  
taste like?

iv.

Let this poem chirr

v.

Blur of waking

Rain falling

through desert sky  
thump against rooftop walkway  
and parched earth

These cascaras, their trail up the tree, hold so much

I dream cascaras dream  
days and nights  
deluge cool water hard  
against homes and  
flowers wearing away mountains  
and flesh

vi.

Afternoon chorus

High-pitched drone  
pushes through  
thick heat of day

arrives  
from all directions  
surrounds

vibrates through walls windows  
rises fills sky  
even

The cochlea thrums  
head aches

searching for the path

vii.

*no hay camino caminante*

viii.

*se hace camino al andar*

ix.

September: small

chirr

and pink blossoms gone  
litter the porch

## Night Hymn Six

stilled banter  
endless maze of syllables  
widening wounds  
                  spilling

sun passing  
          elsewhere  
stars through evening  
clouds & Mzrt

this nightly  
ritual threatens  
to inspire revolution  
it won't

we lift copious wine  
to the stars the moon  
brightening our faces  
lets go

let us let the day  
from evening  
make shape

○

off our lips of our lips  
saying nt much more  
bt carrying sun singing  
something into being

## That Which Hovers

has been hovering  
for quite a while  
now for some time

nothing hovering though here  
now this morning  
out there beyond the glass  
the birds (their chirping) (pale  
feathers) (beaded eyes) and beyond that  
cars their motors running  
past some silence then again  
(vroom-chirp) ( ) (vroom)

meanwhile hum-tick: played out vinyl

and this pen  
scratching these marks  
hovering (now typed &  
printed)

there was another day  
no vinyl  
some insect  
hovering

there was another day  
no insect  
something silver  
hovering

of course it is always changing  
that which is hovering  
and always there is some voice saying  
how I is hating that this or that  
is doing some changing

we light a candle y pedimos  
un milagro del Padre  
we want

always this is hovering near a near solution  
a notion founded on nothing beautiful & reckless

there you see air still alive  
with the thrill of the hum

Dragonfly

shadow

weight of drifting

inching across sand

each small berm

a thigh

their wings glistened that day

we glistened

each one

flitting up from grass

outside the train station

we are in Cadiz

iridescent & flitting

sun across evening sky

one stops

is metallic-red-hovering

perches on my shoulder

& expires



Hymn Four: Asbet:

the world crckd wide open  
her hand motioning  
wheels everywhere  
pedestrians

ambling  
is nt is

a Plck

we sit

baked by sun  
magnified through glass  
amid midmorning hubbub  
the midst of too much

it is Maryland & Tropicana  
it is all here!

## Him Hovers in the Kitchen

that man

mine own  
slices

mushrooms

in purple

cardboard

dices peppers

hovers

over sauce

pans steam sips tastes

loves

crisp romaine

its gold &amp; green

hues

the air

between

## Night Hymn Four

Whether this is the fourth  
 or the third hour  
 is difficult to decipher  
 n the border

n the bridge  
 over the damn  
 standing  
 between two

deserts  
 in the wntr  
 floriferous  
 winter

covered in pink  
 white pink  
 & permanent  
 blossoms

sun gone:  
     waiting  
 so we keep a  
     kitchen

luscious grapes  
 bulbous & of the  
 palest green  
     waiting

in the fridge.  
 After I brushed the mud from my slacks  
                     I sang  
 I began singing!

What happened next was  
 I found you and two  
 very big birds  
 in the desert                   in *this* desert

I was in love! but there was no  
                     roadside tents of  
 fluff  
             had been cleared  
 I kept singing the yogis  
 gone to bed early the strs  
 emerging the strs brightening  
 the sun somewhere else

the moon now the comfort

its yrs of glowing: nightly  
ten o'clock news:  
terror impending war death

What Hovered the Morning After

we won had been  
winning  
many fuzzy animals  
pounding

cluckless chicken-  
shaped  
leather I began  
desiring

you grinning  
saying  
*hey chongo*  
*you're a chongo*

familiar old hands  
old man  
old desire I would  
gift you

one very small & good  
black gorilla

Honeybee

Honeybee hovering

in the distance                    tarmac

                  under the great  
pyramid

                  light shining

light

ascending

                  visible from the moon!  
(lit night)

& our prayers

                                  surround this body  
scent of

                  this body

                                  wrapped

                  rapt

sun wrapped

around everything

When to Enact the First Hymn of the Hours

happens at daybreak (w/brdsng  
nd/or rain nd/or )

as it opens as  
it rises

mouth  
& thighs

bright disk emerging (O) thru  
open blinds

right words right  
sound

carry

## Hymn One: Maat: Hymn of Divine Power

before opening

flesh                   brth

brthing

&amp; the feathered ones

whistling

the sunrising

singing

all that song

floating

through predawn

cochlea

a plse

a drum

a rhythm

like nothing else

hrtsng

rising

heartsinging

&amp; breath

carrying

sun

rising

it

all

feathered

it all

lftd



Hallar

good

sun

&

words

circling

## NOTES

“Dreams It All” takes its fragmented quotes from my grandmother, Maria Antonia Maldonado Saiz, and Samuel Beckett’s *How It Is* as quoted in Marjorie Perloff’s *Poetics of Indeterminacy*.

The term “curandera,” found in the poem “Curandera,” is applied to individuals skilled in the ways of both medicinal and spiritual healing in the indigenous cultures of Mexico.

“Battaglia in D Minor: Poet” takes its fragmented quotes from the poems “No Excuses” and “Song” from *Refinery* by Claudia Keelan.

“Battaglia in D Minor: Scientist” takes its fragmented quotes from *The Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen Jay Gould.

“Battaglia in D Minor: Neighbors” takes its fragmented quotes from the poem “Of Being Numerous” from George Oppen’s *New Collected Poems*.

Chomula is a small Mayan town located just outside of San Cristobal de las Casas in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. This poem transcribes Chomula’s festival of Saint Sebastian, the town’s primary saint.

“Hallar” takes its fragmented quotes from George Oppen’s *Of Being Numerous*. The word “hallar” is Spanish for “to find.”

In “Cicada,” the word “caminante” translates to “wanderer”; and the phrase “No, no hay camino caminante, se hace camino al andar,” quoted from Antonio Machado, translates to “No, there is no path, wanderer, you make it as you go.”

In “That Which Hovers,” the phrase “y pedimos un milagro del Padre” translates to “and we ask the Holy Father for a miracle.”

In the poem “What Hovered the Morning After,” the word “chongo” translates to “gorilla.”

The historical event brought into the present in “When to Enact the First Hymn of the Hours,” as well as in all other hymns in this collection, is the ancient Egyptian practice of reciting a hymn at the onset of each hour.

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