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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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Lara Victoria Ramsey

Entitled

(What You Want Hummed Here)

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in Fine Arts, Creative Writing

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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*).

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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

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

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 & 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

& 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

& 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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