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Wobble, Said the Hedgehog

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WOBBLE, SAID THE HEDGEHOG

By

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Bachelor of Arts in English
Gonzaga University
2008

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Department of English
College of Liberal Arts
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2012

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Mary Elder

entitled

Wobble, Said the Hedgehog

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August 2012

ABSTRACT

Wobble, said the Hedgehog

By

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Prof Donald Revell, Examination Chair
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My thesis is called “Wobble, Said the Hedgehog.” However, there are also things in it that are neither hedgehogs nor wobbly. These include, but are not limited to, the body, kingship, Catholicism, cats, mice, betrayal between friends, jam, alcohol, badgers, love and the military. There is less actual discussion of sex than one might expect. For the purposes of describing my project as an assembled whole, however, this prospectus will attempt to transcend “badgers” as a summary. (This is not to say that “badgers” isn’t a useful signifier. It should be referred to almost as often as “Catholicism.”)

I attempt in this work the exploration of certain central ideas as brought about through the evolution of form. The images used in “Wobble, said the Hedgehog” do not become more like themselves, but they are brought into the focus of a first-person speaker. In a bold move, the work is divided into three parts. The first consists of poems written in free verse, explicitly concerned with a female friendship; the second is a loose collection of sonnets which explore the power dynamic between a male figure and the emergingly distinct “I,” and which blur the specificity of the previous “you;” and the third is a crown of sonnets unifying the upper and lower kingdoms of the thesis. As the work becomes more formal, so the images of the woman, the apple, the king, the

hedgehog, et cetera, become more diffuse, so that this unification is inevitably also an explosion.

The problem that this sequence of poems must most definitively overcome is the problem of boredom. Someone else's private landscape can be tedious to slog through. This is why dream-stories are dull. "Wobble, said the Hedgehog" obviously represents a solid try at good writing, but it also attempts to entertain. The most obvious method is via a sustained narrative of sorts. Each poem can be considered a small story, often retelling sequences that have come before. Serious or grandiose moments are offset by puns or campy allusion. All in all, the construction of "Poems About Women and Apples" is a series of images, sounds and forms in service not just to the driving ideas of the work, but to its approachability as an art object.

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SPLENDID ISOLATION

That Last Age

The sky was white. I was eighteen. I lost a friend.

The colors changed and I was embarrassed,

trees turned so bright I thought

I left my clothes at home. A sudden softness

to the natural cold

and the surprise of others.

When I ate a Gala apple I ate it all.

I ate her share of cheese.

I was mad to see each part of her

correspond to me. I do not know her really.

She said I did, and believed her. I thought

that I could show my heart.

I find that it remains inside me.

Small Zodiac

I was born under the sign

of the hedgehog.

You were born beneath a juicy star.

Something sweet fell on your shoulder.

I have been your sweet soldier

in the hedges,

where I found an apple core

for your jelly.

It Has Become Known as a Brief but Influential Dynasty

I.

I have been disenfranchised on the ottoman!

Privately I take it all back. Halfway
to the door, there you are,
in your pinstripe pants
and the red snake which is your shoe.

II.

I touch the red pock
on your shoulder while the beef
in our stew comes apart.
I'd like to be under your bare foot
and spiny. Put down
a bit of milk for Mary
the hedgehog poet.

III.

The strange man lurking
beneath your window was me all along!
I told your fat male lover
that I was smuggling apples.

I'm here and I rode all night
to warn you that I was coming.

Bohr and Heisenberg

Come to my capital.

Borrow my cyclotron.

My schoolboy

my uncertain particle

my blond German

with long black hair.

Let's split an apple

in the war.

Werebat

At night you come soapy
with a bowl of milk
and a strong white mask.

I am a fat happy bat
who gives your exposed chin
milky bat kisses and smears of insect parts.

Here I am
damp in your hand
while a sun brims

and I am transformed into the same bat
who removes your covers
with her yellow thumb.

The Kiss

We are done with this run
through the bottle brush.
We aren't coy under the tree.

I told you to call off your dogs.
When you could move again
you came after me barefoot.

Here I am, opposite! Here I am
on the day of your saint
wearing her colors and red.

We are the great barbarian warlords
with thighs like cedars
who stomp the ground.

An apple has filled up the whole
robin's nest. A rum raisin hatcher,
your egg.

I am so happy to be outside

in the morning. I can see
that you are your own messenger now.

A Hard Day's Night

I came down from the hills
and cheerfully surrendered to a man
with dark hair and an enormous army.
He gave me fruitcake in his tent
and his own red cape to cover myself with.
He was so handsome that I told him
about you and he said,
“Never mind, my dear, we’ll get her one day.”
I told him I was your cult following
and in fact, this revolution
and all the others had been about you.
“I am riding north,” he said,
“to become king. I was the resistance
in my own country. In the new world
the people love me.”
I was not afraid of what happened to my untouchable body.
He knows I meet you in the crab apples.
We go north under his bright flag.

A Tactical Retreat

I.

In the tree's shadow

where the grey dogs sleep

I like to wait, sweaty and hidden

to see him pass me, lost and angry

weapons hanging in disrepair.

I am the unrestricted submarine.

II.

I see him bottled in the mountains

after (with a kind of wing) he saved a cow.

Some creature tried to milk her with a sword.

Magpies snatch the buttons of his army now.

III.

A hard bit of sun shines through

my jellied skin and pains my guts.

I am not undone.

This is my militant nudity

at the foot of a new road.

I proceed holding slops for the sphinx pig.

The saint cannot hide himself
in the red and gold striped tent.
I am at his flap.
He rises in the light of God
and comes to me winning.

The Love of a Good Worm

I was a worm in a full green bush.

We made a knot!

You gave another person

the smooth leaf I wanted.

I called it a hallway.

I am a worm with green parrot wings

flying with a butter knife.

You are glorious, let me see you!

with my internal worm eye.

Trafalgar

The Napoleon apple you gave me
yellow-dashes down.

My apples
in the crimson plump
wrote him a poem, lost
the kitchen. His nice base
collapses on my peeler.

I'm just lying
with my fingers in the channel
watching the louche ducks paddle.

I don't know any man with a green head.

This Poem is About Women and Apples

I.

We heard hoards of bodies cheering in the dark
and their sweat slapping the ground.

You had dirty eyes for them
and an apple for me
in your stripy purse.

II.

If you use my grandmother's paisley scarf
to hang yourself from the apple tree,
people will find me in corners,
trying to fester.

III.

The apple you left me
pressed four dimples into the earth.
I put my thumb in them.
That was a yellow apple.

IV.

Here in the old room, I'd like to shine

a little, with you,

with an apple at the gates, in our new delicacy.

Rip those breasts open.

COMMONWEALTH

Rump Parliament

Lord Cat, Lord Bottle, Lord Dustpan&Brush

Lord Cat's mistress and his Lady Wife,

I have made everything better.

Sir Cold Ham, we choose

what we cut away.

Wolf at the door, wind at the door,

pigeons thumping the window for a vote,

the tea lady has taken up

with the man in my chimney.

Syndicate of hats, collusion

of wigs

I've got the kettle now.

Such an effort to be surrounded

by friends and the loyal opposition,

the flesh I took off

and the body I still have.

Robustus

So chipper cheese

hay slipper shoes

amble we roll if I choose.

Jar

I got what I paid for.

I paid in pickles.

I put a thing in the pickle jar

to be a friend for the pickles.

The friend is in your fridge.

The Keen Sense of Direction

To myself I say, "I've found stomach."

I rise prickling tonight

to settle my account with an old hatred.

I'm nutritious and afraid.

I had some suspect plan,

a possession in an animal's stomach

that I'd take roughly.

It isn't mine. In the small room,

I didn't expect transaction.

My thumb touched a ridged belly

and turned my belly red.

I'm inside the slick bog,

the flesh part

of the deal, my body's ingestion,

the account of my mistake.

A stew for my seven brothers.

MERCANTILE SYSTEM

Rout

The hedgehog and the common fox
were fighting for the crown. The hedgehog dug
a base camp and he settled to take stock.

“A spiny claim is mine,” he said, “be blood.

A thorny-ball is not too small to rule
a thorny land.”

The fox had no such claim.

A sodden frame, a taste for fowl and jewels.

An orange creature. A short name.

The cheese-cloth shirts had wilted quick
on the hedgehog’s rose. The fox was in his hole
and plotting, bleary, matt-furred, sick,
his gin victory on a flat plain. He stole
the seat with a calcium lash. We stand
with the hedgehog’s human body
and touch his cold brown hands.

Alight

Let it come! this wonder, with wings
ripped at the shoulder. A cracked long neck
by the water of the river Pin.

It is a white offense hanging, a sudden prick.

Out of the earth-holes, with birthday bread
comes my dexterous lover, orange as squash.
He shades the old nettles. He'll die in a hedge.
In the Indian sun, he sits out with the dogs.

When I came to your country, I turned your head
with my hand. Into my torso, you forced
your muzzle. My half-swan fell out dead.
Let it come, this wonder, half a white chorus.
I am the young animal, fresh put together.
I am the downy lover, exploded into slivers.

Egg Journey

I slip with the hosts in the sky
and I feel thin, like warm blown wax
to be among them bodily.

I was told of protection
from the throats wrenched back
singing and I touch firmly
my own furled liar. A robin's arc
rises over a cat. It was a goldfish
slipping scales on human shoulders
who snatched a blue egg first.

I fear the sharp hum.

I am afraid of the water's edge.

Come little wingspans. It is just
the Atlantic, world without end.

Shooting Party

A seed grew up inside my eye. I burst
onto the swan's crest in your name,
for I covet unseemly the title: first
disciple baker, baked in steaming rain.
The bird's back carried me. The spine
I rode was like you, white knuckled—
so was I then. So are all the climbers
who say in tar, "I am unstuck!
I'm coming home!" I said it too. It was
a glorious yeast you left behind my nails,
a face-exploding proof, this lifey dust.
Find your gun. I proceed riding gales,
ready for the blow, the hardest part,
the closest whore to a dead bird's heart.

You Will Destroy a Mighty Kingdom

When you gobble your best belligerent,
I will have laid down mine one month
before. She has given me, for this event,
a jewelery weapon. I promised that if you won
she would not have to do it, that she'd
touch my follicle. Scrubbed she will be blown
away when you shuttle me to your sleek
towers. I'll greet her counterparts with roses
on your galvanized spine. Will your muscular
army do it for you, fond gory soul?
I have loved your abdomen more
than the generous treaty. The one-scale hole,
the basilisk mirror. Ingest a bottle's life
and stay for the glass with every angel's wife.

Midnight Snack

Set a tin of soft pink roses
by our bed for me. I looked inside
the Cassandra ball. Everybody knows
my features wear the long division high.
Beloved, do not hide, curled, your eyes
at night are not lovely. Some pastry
of a pigeon's heart you eat, in nooks, at night:
bird-bit prelude to your feast of faces.
The expansive eating chamber, the fat
apple dumpling. You come and we stand:
the shaking piglet stands, the slack
skinned auger stands, the pulpy women pant.
I stand transparent, a rosed west window,
organic dazzle and a blinding dimple.

The Red Eminence

You lose me, fair-haired boy, at the village
green. I pop prurient and find out alone
whether the sky swarm rising will edge
out the rain or not. Raise hairy homes.
Light your hiss fire, your ducking candle.
Here's the horizontal grid I use to shade
your face, the fox's salt memento, spangled,
the shilling I took when I kissed the book and said,
"Lard-weighted certainty! Shatter the jar
around my foot. Companion torso, this cavity
is good, and if it seems like a broken heart
that is a lying mouse I have in me,
my own mouse with my real name, who licks
the defending rain: my immolation switch."

Mariner Mouse

Who is the mouse walking always beside
you? When I count the seconds the earth
yawned to show us we could slide
on air, the beasts that run frumfrum your purr,
the times I offered an upward bite—I wonder
at roguey mouse and if it crept with thoughts at me.
You nipped me full of holes that it could come for
shelter. You share your little sailors sweetly
with your vessel. I'm riding fast and high
on salty water, I am ploughed on sand
and mouth the gravel. It was the water, not my
false messiah that I tasted, his hand
uncurled to let a mouse walk on the sea,
tail to fathoms, kippers to whiskers in green.

Tasty Bunker

I, having hotly the unspeakable thoughts
of a child, by a child's horse-tree hid
to bite your juicy diamonds. You taught
me another name. I say, with skin and pits
and the young shine of a dazzle-torpedo:
only diamonds. All down the burying place
we go, among the mud-walls, kept and seeded.
Let the bald sparrow preen. Its face,
pasted with skin, can nestle in the Sunday
hat. Beak airholes. Over our heads,
night siren blackbells, which is the only way
you said to name the air-shake. I've lead
a thousand, lover. They call it deep eclipse,
a bird-song thunder sauce, a quiet tip.

Food Taster

I'm red-making pearls, the globiest gift.
They do not cover the body's smell
and I am bodily ready for dry wishes,
for glossy beads of myrrh and chip-lid shells.
I've even given your moat a tide.
In a slick dress, with the third finger,
I perform your wound-check. Inside
your mouth are the grains I test for anger,
and everyone waits for my biteless hand.
The birthday cake is full of possum stink.
Slice its hairiest edge, most mobile marzipan:
and the incense comes soft. Your good eye winks.
Most organic rubble, king with golden
feet. The deep, untreated scratch has molded.

The Lantern Out of Doors

At the sign of the spiky circle, there is
a room of lights. Versailles ceiling, holes
dashed in the floor—I hurt my ankle, missed
the several points. I gave the sign to all.
There will be a way to loathe the dead more.
All the guzzle-ground now kicked through,
it was a math-animal from a simmering core
that ate me at the joints. It was the skewed
rest I thought was sleep, robin's egg ruins
where the dashing stops. From a beast's bed
to a beast's funeral, from unremembered fluids
to the bells. Sink all cathedrals under water, set
a glass mosaic where the beds once squatted.
Wash the backs of the locked and the mottled.

Spot and Stripe

And I say to your stupid threat of death,
bluejays and robins dismember me
better! Come to the wonder bra, insect
heart whose name is Legion, for he
is cotton candy. In the land of the short sword,
through the tablet darkly, I became as you
are. I put away the fast feathering corps
and in the cleanness came the many-scented zoo.

Where is the mealy-tooth zebra?

It has gone to wait in the deep waters.

Where is the council of people-eating cats?

Asleep in the beds of our ugly daughters.

Prefect: what a rich carriage of salts!

The truth is, a dryness. A split-lip talk.

In the Time of the Poultry-Eater

“How did they all get so fat?” I asked
the Fox King, who said, “I only eat
the fat ones. The men from the North
have passed the hens in a siren dance,
all feet falling twice. And yes! In the dish
of whole milk you put down, my face:
your bridegroom. I am the cat and the fish,
my meal and yours. If a thing is not a woman
yet, let it see my redness by the water
and catch me in this glass. My blonde
wood has chartered. I’ve slept with every
baron. So come the kings!”

Then I said, “I will go with you.
Four and twenty humming birds humming.
The Thames itself is swanning.
Outside the fire, three men are crowing.
My love, how tight your body is with wings!
King, I will eat them out.”

CROWN

1.

In the filmy dryness after gin and shaken
vital fluids festers a home behind the counter.
It scalds the orgy, it thrums small and preyed on:
it is the mouse riot. A pimento bounty
rots them, new cheddars delude them, their
guts have been sold to the carnivore guild
and the scuttle-prophet, surviving female heir,
sags drunk on cat-bell cockiness and mills
around an ankle. "Take me with you always
on your human campaign; camp with me before
the foxes come inventing longbows and Calais.
I will gallop sober when I win your war."
Compost her in minerals. Her body is made new
by the salt-ground cycling, egg-shelled smooth.

2.

By the salt-ground cycling, egg-shelled smooth
among the calcium craters, I blew happily
a woman that day, and you a fruit.

For my punctured bust you were plucked, Apple,
I rationed you inside the hidden trench
where I shed a guilt-sweat because I wanted
your joint-and-shoulder case dispensed
with mine. Shells peeled, only what was watered
in us steams the English celandines.

Rain rebuilds our mass. We soak in salt,
our bellies gestate yeast and we are beamed
on by the sun until our roots hit chalk.

Stumped with no deep purchase, in stagnation
I wake, dear friend. We fill the draining basin.

3.

I wake, dear friend. We fill the draining basin
with toxins I worked in sleep and you in bedrooms.

I lie bubonic with your happy leeches grazing,
you are the plucking squeezer, the red-room
doctor. Lady! Are you shame-shaken?

I take you with the leech inside my paw!

Invest only in gold: we are Spanish men facing
America in God-suits. Paint the doors:

we are firstborn. We are not empty of nations.

We are a dynastic merry-go-round cracking
at the ponies. You cry my jubilation

with your chainsaw cough and meaty hacking.

We bubble to find the rawness soothed

with our slack bodies, newly green and moved.

4.

With our slack bodies newly green and moved
by music played on jelly nerves, we dribbled
a jam. We were mistaken for bloody and bruised
when we cried raspberries. Seeds trickled
around our nostrils. Every woman loves
a guitarist. We itched to ride his smoking hat.
He wore us like a cheekbone shoves
itself against the skin in manic laughter at
a better cat—mad lover, throne of jasper, break
the eighth sealed jar and send in the preserves:
Us! some summer cavalry to fill your cake.
Clothed in white linen, named by stones reserved
for cooking, I want to be refined, made dear
by the Holy Fox's pity. I met you in rushes here.

5.

By the Holy Fox's pity I met you in rushes here
in the mushroom cloister. Your hair lashed
the grey heads and they liked it! Fear
the creamy toadstool dear but dash
yourself in love on the good buttonhead.

While our Lord will sweetly let us meet
while the traitor mouse has broken feet,
be my glistening rock-and-roller red
with constipated giggles. The mouse,
called angels, pops your crown of spores.

A stem unction rolled. Sink in bows
to a hanging judge with a polished claw.
He sports a dead-sheep wig and a lower crust
with milk-tooth jaws, before the underdust.

6.

With milk-tooth jaws, before the underdust
protection of the furniture in paisley hips,
the cat came. And my allegiance must
recuse itself; I touched the rumble-lips
and I was many fishes. By your ankle
I cheeked as an eel, and by your little wrist
a veiny fanger—but kind, a tranquil
kind of slither. You made my waters hiss.
Marmalade the privateer gestates guns
in the flagship's gut. He wracks the sop work:
the fathom spread on toast, the hairy ton
who breaks a mouse, the soupy final jerk.
He frowned a sinister prune for years.
We furled in a fruit infancy, in a pulp, clear.

7.

We furred in a fruit infancy, in a pulp. Clear
a spy-good iris and locate your spangled viscera.
In that sacred assembly, smuggle my ear
for a double-organ's lobed messenger.
The Catholic king over-the-water smiles
for us—your reproductive ear knows,
in the tower where I locked you. Sire,
the brown egg leaks and succession sows
my wildest oat. Give me the little boats,
evacuate me from the people we made glad.
My greengage ruptured awfully. Everyone knows.
I voluptuously partook of pork and the bad
wound reserved for Mother Church. Just
as the thumb-wound I slit you, it is a crust.

8.

As the thumb-wound I slit you, it is a crust
and as the day of your dismissive oystering
it looms an irremovable wafer, smooth enough
to glue my mouth. Game-watcher! Bring
your noble reserve to the frogmarket where
I suck the sloppy queen. I tasted you
and surged afterwards carnivorous, unfair.
Participate. This yellow cigarette pumps new
when I love and I will share a cot with it
when winter freezes my friendly amphibians—
they love you in the thick sleep, slick-lidded.
I'm a membrane, baby, I'm wormy and plebian,
when I dry, I chafe to your shadow, my sly home.
We hold together on the unchartered loam.

9.

We hold together on the unchartered loam
the unassailable position, harlequin colors, low
and open. It's a joke we crack with bones
ready to be the best explosion: birds of paradise so
orange in their extremities the purple
part gets high. We gambled off a trench by dusk;
when we wear robes of candidacy the dirt will
touch and bleach itself. We wear the tusk.
Our teeth were sown when we were poor
dragons who flew suddenly apart over
the opening offensive. I am reborn sore
with holding bones who will be men and roses.
I live where your hand is planted undragonly:
it is an actual rose, and you a friend with me.

10.

It is an actual rose and you a friend with me
I want. Just as a rose engulfs a dairy
concealing a magic cheese that waits three
more days in mammal cool to kiss the hairy
fingers of the farmer, living culture,
before the fat cheese heart blows up:
it was a bomb-cheese. Just as the rose's puncture
bleeds a boy's nipple just grown up
into a soup course, in the center of a bowl
rimmed with roses. Just as those roses lock
the sustenance, just as the meal is cold
and fungal under a tortoiseshell clock,
I was dashed by you, I was ripped in rows,
getting your legs right and your hair: my home.

11.

Getting your legs right and your hair, my home,

I am a sulkpot in memory. Come crusade

down, I will gristle up again, blown

off course on palindrone regatta day.

My signal fights a melon. Let cats accept

you, cowl-born. I should be that son.

I forsake you. With a bad eye I expect

you to do your duty when the sign comes

blazing, though by land and by sea I have

not arrived. You bear the line while I peel

myself. Laugh at this burst banana half.

Boil the pussing leaves for me: I kneel.

You laugh with a good throat, sincerely.

I made such sodden noises. Forgive me.

12.

I made such sodden noises. Forgive me,
my corridors bloomed when I engaged,
I was all come out poisonly
and my men were dressed in gray.
When my bindings shone in public houses,
I meant to hurt you. Hid within a horse,
I turned the belly key and crouched
in squat ecstasies. These broke my jaw.
Let a rhinoceros lie down in splendor:
God's best unicorn. I pasteurize plainer
since the horn arose out of my center,
a babel of wing-shells, breast-bone cascaded.
In the form of a dove, I take you war-like
for I am sick with love. Feed me with orchards.

13.

For I am sick with love, feed me with orchards.

I want the bark purge and the loyalist curls

to hold when the monarchy grows morbid.

The King's body is my own body's pearls.

For I am sick with love, elicit my confession

in the green river and anoint me with butter,

this country's chrism. Ask the question.

I know not the time nor the rain-wracked gutter.

For I am sick with love, touch my coinage

and export me more than you render

me to clean King Gus. Bleat ton and poundage.

Pack me figs in the arms ship-tax lenders.

Come at me courtly, golden escaper in the forum.

Kiss me with the kisses of your roaring.

14.

Kiss me with the kisses of your roaring.
A badger sharpens on the Bridge of Sighs
with an unchangeable stripe. He's coring
a gummed apple. You mouth me fructicide.
Here falters the brown mouse rocked by rum
raisins. Not likewise ever again
for us, when the mouse's last calcium
fails. We had a good run, before then.
Purr pleased, cat-cruel reformation
limp for the mouse with a raisin-broke back.
Her ladder is gone. Badger, take station
in lush assembly: we are your organs waiting
in the filmy dryness after gin and shaken.

15.

In the filmy dryness after gin, and shaken
by the salt-ground cycling, egg-shelled smooth,
I wake, dear friend. We fill the draining basin
with our slack bodies, newly green and moved
by the Holy Fox's pity. I met you in rushes here
with milktooth jaws before the under-dust.
We furled in a fruit infancy in a pulp clear
as the thumb-wound I slit you. It is a crust
we hold together on the unchartered loam,
it is an actual rose and you a friend with me,
getting your legs right and your hair: my home,
I made such sodden noises. Forgive me,
for I am sick with love. Feed me with orchards.
Kiss me with the kisses of your roaring.

VITA

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Special Honors and Awards:

Guerian Award for Fiction, 2008, \$150

Thesis Title: Wobble, said the Hedgehog

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