

SIGHT WORDS: POEMS

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ABSTRACT

Sight Words is a collection of poems that questions the image as the central unit of meaning in poetry. *Sight words* is a lyric *bildungsroman*, that traces the process of metaphysical alienation that an individual undergoes in the postmodern world. The speaker is exposed to an overabundance of meaning that the visual world transmits and as the order of language deteriorates, meaning multiplies and falters. The language and poetics of *Sight Words* struggles to reconcile the disconnect between visual language and spoken language. Every missed communication points to a denial of access to the self, which the speaker apprehends as a death of self. The creative process of this book takes as its inspiration Guy Debord's *Theory of the Dérive*, after which I recorded the fragmented and erratic changes in ambience of my sojourns through the city in which I live. *Sight Words* pits this death of the author against the *Dérive*'s root in physicality in order to make the philosophical claim that dualism of body and mind is spiritually fatal. With this truth at its center, the broader implication is of the fugitivity and dispossessed status of the artist and art itself in the contemporary world.

PREFACE

the passing of time is the time that the image fragments, a sudden glimpse that vision brings to us, a lapse-movement with/in respiration, this book is for the love of that vision, of its glances, which themselves always remain unseen - you are the passing of time - this book is ~~for~~ the passing of time - in memory of that which has no presence

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
PREFACE.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
PART 1: SUN SETS.....	1
PART 2: REFLECTIONS	14
PART 3 : PROXIMITIES	22
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	51

I: SUN SETS

To put our life into that which we cannot touch in any way... It is impossible. It is a death. It is required.

- Simone Weil

These are Concrete Terms

below

a one
or maybe a zero

tawny threads

sunset's gristle

alone means hourglass:

a one or
maybe a zero

means safety
from disposal (mostly)

as metronome
turning,
plastic face riddles

holes through nightlong
space:
long hallway

Lossy Fragments

here, under a threshold

(a letter)

a place where thirteen stars

(still-born)

wink

among this gleaming motel -

the angle at which

the neck is craned

angle of what is known but

never seen -

in throes of being

i look for a carcass - amber

roach feet point to sky

- that kind of being

always there // but flickers

a sign: go on // go out

Pollen

the center is the part
which you throw out

not that i am
a green thing
in world of gray

let the flowers die.

what flows from their center

their design
~~desire,~~
fruitless

the posture
of existence straightens
and we drive
without looking at our hands

Mise En Scene

how my throat feels
coarse like sand
-paper open
and i can only say:
there is never enough
to say

we sit at the dinner table
eat the flesh
before we pray

another winter
of grief

having been touched
by god

it feels like love
because no language can hold
the things i covet -

permanence
of plastic clockface
a body (statue)
running out of time

wanting is not an action
i know that now

it is a thing
it is nothing without you

Light Fragments

glowing blue
bruise in
visible place i

love you shadow
of a bright monument -

my love
is a version of your
failure -

i don't
enough

((no morning))

i don't life

the parking lot
enough

((no breath))

i feel new
in an unwashed city

my best limb:
my bleary

face, the too-dark
mirror or the window

-face the storefront
of authenticity
defaced with lush
graffiti

((no time))

i watch with the sun
i put off
the poem
a moment
so i can live a little more

Skein

 i was seen
through a window like this:

pane of green
spackled with time
where we skeined
over again, over sandwiches

now nostalgia
 this witness
 pure sugar
 the debt is like

highway
 roll down the window
shoot out
 change // watch
 them loosely tangle
 away from lofted circle

color of a penny tonight

is it significant?
 wind in your hair
 window lets in noise
 of city of brightness -

money
 in my mouth
i can't eat
 the window we observe
 not shapes // only brightening
shades as we fall to sleep, loosely

tangled

is there anything more neon than i
love you

Picture Namelessness

wake into pink

light shining through
orange curtain

that's what you look like

ask me the name of this tree

aberrant flowers

i don't know

its leaves

shining

conceiving

likelihood

as pictures

(nothing in its center)

spat out by a polaroid

the colors more

vivid

than the feeling

of your body against mine

Black House

the bar in which i tell you
the poem isn't right
is a still image the next day

what is the distance
between
told you i would write about you
and here you are

smell is the closest sense
to synapses
so is plain air at night

my eyes are still sensitive to the light
the houses dripping

everything so sparse

portion of sky
effervesces its orange over us. this
portion of my life
building

up to this point

the house
is still burned
chiaroscuro
how to gain
perspective

how to trace
a point with no origin

concealed moon
fast-moving

~~a disease~~ even nuller
radiates in me
these pathological forms
never told me

how to trace
a point with no origin

the house is being burned always

the house of forgetting itself -

to be glossed

over in mind
on walk
 in time
 everything shown
on screen
 from the outside
 like tv

uncovered:
an unturnable condition

//

stooping to my own voice
 i came all this way only to forget
~~the key~~
i know you arrived

in the middle of things
~~starved of apprehension~~
but in thinking there are things
 i am unable to grasp
 ~~attention~~

the obstinance
 of definition
 and lack's movements
 through this heavy pillowness light
 brown billows of wrack
 how to hold
 what is always moving
 always emptying

what is fashioned after my own emptiness -
to hold is to disguise

fall down in its spentness

some day is a chasm

to come

to have

to have come

Under Everything

nothing in its center as
forever

murmurs under
imperceptible music

from every or
any place

the light rejects any new
moment:

i was thinking
your body
floats in the dark

i couldn't stop thinking
as i was falling
asleep about all those people

what people?
your neck cricked like that -
scent of freshly dug earth

hollow space in your chest
fills with a sound

II: REFLECTIONS

To whom do you think he writes? For me it is always more important to know that than to know what is being written; moreover I think it amounts to the same, to the other finally.

-Jacques Derrida

i want to send a letter
splayed across states

when i say i i mean

we

are on the other end

of the mirror after a shower, the precipitated

blurs of my particularities - i mean we

lose our lines

borders to squander likelihood in

I Have The Wildest Dream

mental clatter
 writing with an other in mind
the shoulder naked after

the line before
 stopped

flickering
light between

 this and the other
 room, i hold you
 like a corset

i have too many daydreams
to walk through - blue flora
of spring - nothing
is edible there

so my mouth
moves

how to speak
 to an animal?

the same way i'd know
who you are in a dream

The Walk

do i need a lot

the walk

failed as language

birdsong

bugsong

cello's voice

utterance from a leg

i am tired

of walking

left the cane

like a dream,

in a warm shadow

of the door

this morning:

sheer in time, this

little light -

no dream

or grain of light

enters my skull

when i sleep next to you

in elephant-pattern yellow

sheets and over

and always again

the light reflects my new face

Created Myth

eviscerated star

epistle burning in the sky

burning

for no one

~~but me~~

(bright)

the legend

of us, the

myth

the architecture

of a giant mass

of city birds

fluttering, they burst

away from each other

the center

someone else wrote it

no discovery

nearly missive

i miss when

we had everything

clay in hands

asking to play

it was easier to speak

that way, without being

~~so overwrought~~

the sun is just

a star

Causing a Body

After Peter Gizzi

To explain suffering is to console it ; therefore it must not be explained.

-Simone Weil

starved wisp
of oxygen
lips string of syllables
this is where
the poem ends

the deformed section

of a body

"this is how i am wan..."

the impoverishment contours

our understanding of breath

we can't understand our names

let alone theirs - does it have to be

always languishing - the trope of struggling

always makes it in

specification is struggle

sectioning is always against the material

barrier of doubt - and this glimmer of my skin

too against the material of sunlight

wan and waxy, embalmed

as a proverb in a proverbial book

with dust living in the pages

causing

without apology

is what a good book does

is what a strong book does

fucked up like a spine

bent-over book,

simulate a letter

for me in this dream where i experience language

for the first time, and i am unsure if its the last time

dreams

happen in the present tense

they stay with us like the eyes

III: PROXIMITIES

I must love being nothing. How horrible would it be if I were something!
-Simone Weil

The human being "has the word"; it is the way he makes known to himself his being, and the way in which he sees himself placed in the midst of beings as a whole....
-Martin Heidegger

Graffiti Fragments

re

-sist the urge to re

-coil at

language re

-formed and un

-lit

this darkness which is not like darkness

but a fragment of language which the back

of my hand ~~covers~~ protects

preserves

~~all that exists~~ all written word

in other

words, love

fashions rips

partage of a gradual

consciousness -

a phrase aphorizes knowledge

and severs it from

form

this laughter which is not like laughter -

penny light fills the point ~~in time~~ at which the sky

meets not-sky terrain

the war between body and mind

is imaginary

without form and without

mind

the words

echo inside

Graffiti Fragments

road broken
pieces the window
entering body

stays time
(and again)

beginning to look
like myself

-

beginning to look:

te amo
te amor

a man or
trash truck
breaks furniture to pieces

-

commuter train
breathing

a washing blue
-jay flickers

past a junkyard
idyll-esquing

room without cement
moon crescent

Unfinishing Poem

people die from arrhythmia

.like this

stop seeing

moving

on the periphery

language

happens to us

because there is no us anymore only one

half

like i am trying to pull

oil out of a river

that fragments a hometown

from infrastructure

or like a plastic morning sheen

really phenomenal

that we are a half-remembered dream and my always

slipping back into it

i want to believe we can

something new

like a picture

~~becomes~~ a word

and a scene

~~becomes~~ a sentence

and a history

~~becomes~~ language

and the close proximity of all our acquaintances

the people who live on top of us

///

then gray is a texture

seen ~~and~~ felt ~~and~~ heard

the gray of the gun (loaded?)
pressed against my sight
your moving mouth
and my eyes cave
language ~~could not hear~~ not spoken
intimate knowledge from that one gesture

the memory is still enough
that an edge becomes a covering

both sharp
enough to cut a finger
~~and to break a window~~
and to break a window

i want to believe we can create something real
not recreate the past

all this coming from a choir of the dead telling me i did nothing wrong

very wrong

intent is spacious
and then so too is a grave

so no person is really missing but shattered
particles accompany the breath

like shape of cloth
not to be gathered but formed

i gather i animal
like that even though the shape
seems anatomical forgetting
verb comes before noun
repetition before attrition

Before Language

childish mountain
mountain of children
meaning,

a river
 rich vein
suburb turning
 the city inside out

light foreshadows
 black fur,

from which children decipher
 before language
 from what won't -

even sound becomes

heavy as i learn
you (repetitive
motion) as i know
us, coiled being
 concentrically living

 the spoiled small
petals uncolor

the valley in between
 two mountains
 bicycle in a tree
 pasted two things that don't belong

together-

are you

Stars and Blossoming Fruit Trees

bathe in dirty
sunlight
old lived
time-sound
 heartsteps
 in ear

 i heard a puerile accident

plain: on pure silent

moon
 with fragment of earth
 in its sparse face
 abyss
 can be moved
 not removed
 absence
 above black
 sea of flowers

translates to plains
 come morning wound
 ash to
 immutable flame
 like saying makes
 memory smooth
 like glass
 the picture i hold
 the gap

 i wait for a dark film
 to substance
 although i don't believe i
 wait for you to appear i

 climb into it i
 look through it

Organ of Sight

it is here the desert

makes a complete
dog of myself i pull
apart body and mind

song in my head
i try to sing:
organ: "body part adapted to a certain function"
also: "this timbre which shakes the rafters"

an organ
 which relies on feeling
is hearing
an organ
 which creates its own sound
is sight

thought
 i heard the friction
 of your clothes:

pale leaves
 waving lucid glass
 contains their composure

at some point
 all melody becomes noise

Looking Out Of

faint windows into milk

-blue streetlights, denuded

sky caught on film: time

-eaten apple

-colored old wound

the ideal world

on film,

ideal light

little cenotaph -

topaz limbo

in animated car wash

glimmering noise

i just want to be clean

///

echoing boy

roaming

mother in the supermarket

pale and enchanting

exhale

polluting

earth's borders

specks

of my own self

there is only this, only

the long black car's growl

idling

in vivid night

i am tired

of pounding on the door

I Can Leave You

night maroons the parkway
leaves it to chatter
idle in camouflaged
relief sole
of foot throbs dull
of 3 AM fucked up
in motel can access
raw pattern: expand and
contract the chest
deftly leave this room
cover this desert
grown too big
to control itself

truth looms
in me in rooms
with no windows
in light burnt out: dried
apricot i don't want to be

a room with no
windows the distancebetween no light and
darkness

I Try To Say

i work

 in a wax-colored building
never know
 if it rains

 on the way home,
 the supermarket sings:
 faster faster as fast as you can

certainly it isn't saying
 the opposite of remembering the smooth
 striated rock
dismembering blue
 rose and translucent
 pictures
of myself in the window

 sun loosens
the colors loosened -

 utopia is real

Never Rest

should i wrap my best finger
in gauze and call it a ghost?
i'm counting time with boxcutter

the window oozing –
spent too much
on wine last night
for you – din of change
hits the hard floor's ears –

everyone on it froths
from the mouth – pine
sap bleeding out –
insect birth – more
hours, hours
now spectral

in a child's eye, whose empty
sky fills the same time
every day, a child's mouth
unfurling tongue
to taste, to harbor

angel tears on sides of my tongue –
and what are angels like,
dusk, like morning, like all
the boxes in between

Solfege of the Image

can we seem

bird whites
its beak
because it has no form

before the image
stutters into
existence
stunted by
language

gaze pearlescent
finger painted doves

unformed by too many
years missing
from experience:
the leitmotif

of time
recycled inspiration
fills fossil-reeking
balloons like lungs

the leitmotif

marching forward

Shared Exhale

there is to be nothing personal at work

i saw someone on the train i

love spaces

between friends and i
synonymous i
on the subway i

s
a a w
s
w

a wool hat
left on the tracks
or a mouse
looking into space
not a hole

walking home
on concrete

glass winks or
stars

i think i saw someone on the train i

have a relationship to it

our containers
weft silent
through dark

affects:

shapes:
furry,
soft,

and water-colored fume filling

the space or holding
the time

an artifact -
vessel contained
by its contents

Teal is a Natural Color

suspended by a bridge
a desert between desert and

jagged serpentine
of the river endlessly eating itself

without knowing
how a crystal forms,
we look on

i love you
a crystal
forms as substances alien
to each other

the world's face
and we almost lose it
no surface
gnashing depth
churning
up to the surface
surfacing
no instinct to preen
no possibility to seem
impure

motion makes oblique
where i think there should have been clarity

i don't know what i think

sun is raining like introspection
bleeds onto the real world
porous earth
warmest surface

a desert
made smoother
than even telling
i love you
without any tool like
shyness or hidden want
beaconing in the difference

like distance
could keep me from likening
you to a tarpaulin

smooth against space
wind excoriates

mind purgatory
the face after all these years:

warmest surface -
 to scald is to remember
 in your wounds
 smooth now the particles
 oblivion
 in the entire

Nothingbody

my hands are sore and i don't know what to do
with them speaking honestly

i never did
and that's why a liver of a calf cut
 into thirteen parts
 unequals death

 there is no craft to butchery
no meat reds perfectly
like in a painting
 a thin murky liquid
 the color of earth
 coddling
 the parts on a white
 plate
 the heavy snow

is gray in the city
to which i emerged
 out of infinite
and into imperfect
shapes of unfinished
constellations made handlessly
 and endlessly and mirrors
 and mirrors of mirrors and symbols
 of numbers
 molt from my fingers,
 suddenly wrenched from the abstract

world of language
and mirrors of mirrors

the achroite nausea of summer
deserts the senses
the scent of nothingness

 to remind me, somethingness
pulls from itself strands of itself
to become
 more whole,
 more than -

After Cézanne

the window

obscures skyline
angle headaches
spiritual anomie

the four
directions:
the father
of the boy with
no short temper
in his red
forehead

temperate: an otherplace
this desert

i fill my breath
with religion - the four
time-held directions

regions of the compass
like the clock
which should be burned

i cannot go back

deliverance filled
with grief
religion of grief
i cannot spill
opacity into your eyes
not that i would want to
because i can see through

the first
slit of light
that was spoken

with no warning
idiot tremens
spent upwards

kempt homonyms

special lacks or
souvenirs
kept for the sake of keeping

this desert -

i miss the hypnagogic city
we are deep in our
little nature,
we feel under

& it means nothing,
this desert

wearing many colors,
you take my eyes

Resisting a Parallel Universe

and i don't think there is any risk to reaching for the margins
striving for remembrance is so safe
that within it,
i no longer feel like i am of the world
 look closely at the words

 incision
 incision
 bared
 bared

lavage from a future realm
i have no memory of it
that's all that i'm saying

 nostalgic mourning in its always

 sting smeared with white cream

dark,

 soft-folding
 edges

 i'm going carve out of
 this place
 already smooth
 as marble

 there is no place like the cave
 memory itches like an allergy

restlessnesses

 what the sungold plant crawls up
 when it wants to live
 etches time and spirals itself

 into nest-like human
 i feel a lack arise (~~itself~~)
 and i feel a negation

i feel like california

Terrarium Consciousness

plastic estuary
your life green

i learn
 like a child:
 through touch

 the belief
 is healed
 i-am-sick

 desert of health
this fossil
body textures

 photo of new
 mexico, and sleeping

in the car
 this faintness:

 world
 behind your eyelid,

is there any
 of it left
 i came home
 too late

Gaining Distance

the west coast is a fairytale // no one dies in the
foliage is always dead there is nothing more
dangerous than the already dead // alerting others
to their natural state abandoning life abandoning
past abandoning future // i look into a puddle of
light on the dark beach a buoy of glassy waste
carried into the world // the movement i cannot
see what moves under on the edges of things
what inspires transpires // now is a seismograph
ticking at the edge of extremity its more than we
could know measured by numbers I was shown
a tool which measures // a circle's perfection
to the ten thousandth of an inch but they all
look perfect to me // my friend makes things he
needs perfection I look out at the sky back home
its revolving around us almost perfect how
it appears to be the same all the time

x

peaceful creation // something from nothing
no hole was made in the earth
it is speaking amongst itself
it is moving underneath us
"at the pace
of a fingernail per day" south
of us, underneath
us a flat map
reminds of creation
of being found
of being underneath

x

abundance // the earth
was trepanned
tattooed on machines
location: SF CA
unfolds it // takes all
the time in the world the sun

and the moon in the right place
seeing each other they see me without
knowing I see them without thinking

x

gold hands
stained glass morning

a tool to measure perfect circle
you can destroy the image

unwitnessed
the direction of fog
dispersed in every

old friend
ocean
covers the rest

before our knowing
my friend
was broken:
the window
of the car and the radio

the sill
of our knowing
in every
direction, look
it makes a pinhole
out of heaven

still
we can measure
a perfect circle
and express it
in numbers:

6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000
250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000
637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000
2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876
680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637

6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000
2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876
680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637
6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000
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680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637
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2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876
680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637
6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000
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680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637
6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000
2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876
680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637
6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000
2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876
680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637 6,000,000 196,000 250,000
15,058 65,000,000 6,540,876 680,000 749 499,657 33,000 2,200,000 6,000,000 60,000 637
6,000,000 196,000 250,000 15,058 65,000,000

in every direction
science eats the rest
of the ocean
leftovers
from last night eaten
by possum in the alleyway

rv parked there
fire swells in its belly
illuminating unfamiliar back streets

scars seen

from plane window:
the streets of a city crossing over
each other cutting each other
measuring by proximity

White Atrium

always in the vein
of food - the smell
of iron is always
nostalgic - the milk white
of the way the page was
our not hearing
our nearing leaving

to come

is to come *from*

but there there is no here

the glass is unthought

it just is there

i am

look,

i am

The Heart Only

across this

obscure

you only

read it

the heart only

pumps blood

burning tethers

to the world,

my fingers

warm

as i cross the

~~fingers depressing~~

tongue

delivery botched,

as now

i tend to it

here

with scissors

///

no, no, not work

i have life already

the diphthong

i make couples

out of them so i can feel

the whole world less alone

(ligament taut)

i hear you inside

my brain

inverted

like a V,
laughter
soft high pitch

across a slit opens up
i mean a slat

everybody
can see you now

Curriculum Vitae

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Education

MFA, Poetry, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV, 2023
BA, English, Hampshire College, South Amherst, MA, 2017

Dissertations

Sight Words: Poems, 2023
Shadowboxing: A Poetics of Doubt, 2017