

Morning Light Today

Preface

This collection of poems is the culmination of two major personal goals: to explore form's impact on meaning and to use poetry as a means of revealing that which occurs alongside experience. The beginning poems illustrate a series of mistakes resulting from an underlying personal struggle with image, depression, and substance abuse. I organized the following works to reflect my personal journey out of that darkness into light, as reflected by the title of my collection. In writing poetry inspired by the unpleasant reality of my past, I was able to capture that which I might have otherwise chosen to forget, thus granting myself the opportunity to continue to learn from the experience in a new, intimate way.

I decided to construct many of my poems with a more traditional notion of form in mind to observe its effects on content. With limited word choice, I had to think more creatively, venture outside of my unintentional vocabulary, and spend more time with poems that required close attention to detail.

During the revision stage of my formal poems, I found that form operated on three levels at different points in my creative process. At the outset, it provided a mold into which I could fit my ideas. Implementing meter and rhyme scheme in combination with tight phrasing strengthened my foundation at the second level, contributing more than could be derived from content and ideas alone. The final stage was the point at which I deliberately broke the rules I put into place at the beginning as a means of challenging the form in a way that furthered my creative vision. I took the most useful parts of form and left what didn't work; creating an original by complicating formal constraints to augment meaning, thus enhancing the reader's interpretation of the poem and the series as a whole.

I found the confessional poets helpful in creating a series of poems that demonstrate my experience. For guidance, I looked to such poets as Sharon Olds and Robert Lowell. I read "Twenty-One Love Poems" by Adrienne Rich to assist me in creating a cohesive series. *The Book of Forms*, by Lewis Turco played an essential part in laying the groundwork for my formal poems.

To accompany me on my creative journey, I started a blog that I used as a platform for sharing what I learned about various poets, documenting my process, and publishing a few of my original poems for interested followers. I also participated in two public readings at the “Poetry Unplugged” open mic events at Ritual Cafe. These outlets helped me remain focused, and my audiences kept me motivated about creating and sharing poetry.

Ultimately, this project helped produce a voice and encouraged me to take creative writing more seriously. I developed an attitude toward writing poetry that I hope carries me far into the future.

This collection is dedicated to my family and girlfriend.

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Cue

Poets toss rotting
books from knotted shelves to rouse
a population.

Ballpoint pen-saber, truth flees
pages. For art: wage new wars.

Reflect the light that formed your binding when at night your mind unravels

I am a net
made of holes
eaten through pages of battered books.

Throw me
into current consciousness.

Drag me
through the scum of the floor
'till I reach rocky shore
where I arrive
now widened.

You cross your eyes at my dotted t's,
trying to read between my lines.

Mineral-rich silt
reeking of life
lived on the bottom will fall,
painting pictures of every time
I dove deep
for what was lying overhead.

I carve out
L-O-V-E
in big letters
for my liberators to see
I send them home
with signal fire
and lie on my back

to feel the earth harden along my spine
as I pull new limbs from the banks.

Stand up!

Stand up!

And walk along the shore.

Feel these corners impress upon what I once was.

I leave my mark

for the rising tide

and fill these pages with the name

of those who loved me

long before I came up for air.

My foe, the line**03/14/2014**

Lights, astringent red and blue in the rear view.

I can't remember what I did that night but I

Can remember looking down to see my heart punching through my shirt.

Each person who decides to break rules will lie at the bitter depth;

No one tells us what it's going to look like.

Some halt at handcuffs and break the chains to the anchor of an old life and some

Even recognize disaster before it strikes, faster than any personal record of mine.

Reverse, reverse, I command the stick shift in my palm, willing it the control of time.

Every second counts, they say. I try to count those that ticked between my drinks

Volumes of voices in my head won't let me. "How

Old are you, son?" "I'm eighteen" and my blood is <0.08 , which is still >0.0

Kill the rhythm of my broken mind, officer, please.

Expect no less than the best from me.

"Dad, I know what time it is. Can you come and get me?"

03/31/2014

Devil in the detail of the dance.

Remember your rock bottom: It was sold to you in a six-pack

Infused with the third state of matter whispered from hot wax. The house

Vinaigrette: your homebrew to quench the heat of this hell.

Ingest inhale ingest inhale ingest the pain in your chest;

Now disparage and divest from all that should sustain and

Get behind the wheel again.

Wait for me, I tell the lost

Highway flying past my window.

I can do anything without rules, that's what true freedom is, now just

Let me go and fade back into home's

Early sun through the crack in the curtains of my bedroom window.

Let me fold under cover of my quilt

In bed until I'm free to wake,

Carefree and equally as free to surely

Ease my way back here

Next weekend.

Sunday is the Lord's day, said the sheep leading

Evening worship when I was looking for something,

Religion? I reflect:

Easter baskets, picnics, potlucks and the omnipresent

Void of spirit looking to consume. I recall torn

Out pages of my journal, obscured by dissatisfaction with being

Kept in the dark about something they promised would give me light.

Every morning is a chance at redemption.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," -James 4:8.

One night in March I said a prayer hope
Neglected.

When does a sinner learn
Righteous from corrupt if always he has
Options to beg forgiveness?
Not everyone has
Gifts for you.

So said my mother who cursed
Idle hands,
Dutiful in maternal task.
Exonerate me one last time.

Outside the road unrolls behind me,
Forgiving and forgetful.

Twice my headlights flash,
Warning this empty highway
Of my turning point.

Watchful guardians
Advance from shrouded station.
You again, I think.

How is it this asphalt doubled in size?
I was looking down a stranger's street.
God, take the reins of this forsaken
Hijacked train and fill me again with holy
Wonderment,

Awe.

Your path is long overgrown.

Mary of Magdala, the young disciple

Is twelve times

Named in the Gospels.

Once filled with seven angry demons,

Repents and is renewed.

I sit and count my blessings as

Night grows cold and dark outside.

Practice what you preach is the expression

Of the reformist priests renouncing

Sinful affluence.

Silver and Gold blind with a delicate gleam.

Each man of God,

Servant to his congregation,

Surrounds himself with godly work;

Instead they only dream

Of man's creations.

No triumph in a carnal bundle.

Orchards in the celestial garden

Flower, bearing redemptive fruits.

Aged branches of eternal burden

Lean into a hardy

Curative,

Older than

Holy spirit.

O drink from the grail of life,
 Life, be lush with living liquor.

Parson Brown, whoever you are, I took the proffered
 Overflowing cup and drank deep a soulful reparation.
 Seasons have come,
 Seasons have gone,
 Each one as spent as the one before.
 Seeking a greater elevation to
 See what's right below me, I fall
 Into the Valley
 Of Death,
 Nearer to my damnation.

Owning ourselves over anything else is our great desire,
 Forfeiting nothing in the quest to find it.

Commander in Chief of third-world morals:
 Onlookers travel onward leaving us
 Naked and hungry and sick and
 Tired—I shake at the touch of cold bulleted
 Raindrops striking my unsheltered face.
 Orderly and oppressed fill these ditches,
 Lawmakers drive this death machine,
 Lawless fuel the fire,
 Enter the void
 Devoid of deliverance.

Sunlight cannot touch it.
 Underneath my skin, it lives
 Between the layers of truth,

Slithering through the garden to that

Taboo fruit tree once again:

Addiction.

Nobody has the map of its path,

Cut by the holy hand of God:

Elysium.

09/27/2014

Prostrate

Under

Blooming

Lilacs

I

Coalesce.

In the morning

Nauseating daylight

Turns the light switch

Off and on and off and on, takes

X-actos to my throbbing mind and all its ware.

I remember

Calling my mother

Alerting her,

Telling her

I would be

Over this soon,

Noon, yesterday.

Mom

I've got great news,

No more will I bear this burden.

Opportunity has knocked;

Remember your son.

Invisible barriers are built, we tell ourselves we'll never cross them.

Nobody feels the fortitude of time in the battle between the old and new, like me.

Probation is kind of like a promise.
Only when broken,
Someone comes
Signing off
Everything you love,
Singeing them at the corners, ensuring
Survival, but sealing your fate with a shameful stamp.
Indifferent, I
Overcome to
Numbness,

Cauterize confusion's ends.
Opalescent understanding
Nudges me,
Tapping the well of truth, feigned
External forces, no.
My humming core
Persisting, passing post-realization,
Tells me this is all I am.

Anamnesis

I dip my toes in
a pool of palatable
broken promises

My pipe organ pumps
toxins through dark veins rousing
today's dissonance

The morning sunlight
Illuminates a crucial
Time of day: today

Tomorrow will be...
Another twenty-four hours
That is all I know

Autumn leaves trees nude
A cool breeze, a dry dead rain
I—alive—fall too

Love teeters on the
edge of your bathroom sink where
mirrors hold my heart

*Let's exist outside
Of this fluorescent nonsense
We'll share the fresh air*

her viewfinder eyes
 shutter-finger takes a pulse
 enslaved by the light

*Why don't you ever
 Write about me? she asks me*

I respond: But how?

*Your essence is a
 part of everything I know
 and I know nothing*

*Tear the answer from
 The back of the book you've bound
 In your sleepless nights*

*Write ambiguous
 melodies—I will listen
 and sing harmony*

the silence surrounds:
 swallowing sound, now louder
 than my heart expounds

impossible, yes
 the silence cannot listen:
 what is there to say?

the beads of sweat roll
 like pearls across mirrored plates:
 severed heads of fear

*I am not mindless:
I left awareness at home
for you to sustain*

a phosphorescent
glow throws shadows to corner
familiar warmth

memory is grace
a glimmer in my mind's eye
reflecting your life

Identity theft

My personality:

Hide your purse from me
for fear that I may take mine
and replace it with yours

I have a list to no end
of hello-in-the-hallway friends
who exchange the handshake and half-hug
when liquor lubricates the friction of emotion

I'm an office computer screensaver
projecting a photoshopped island scene
in a windowless room

I'm uncomfortable in crowds
Longing for elsewhere
I'm not alone

The voice telling me who I am
is quieted by cacophony
of group mindset

The ones who want to know me
really know me
get lost
as this wandering Virgil
guides them down a path just as foreign to me

I need to move

and install that new exhibit
on the walls of my self,
make it a place
genuinely curated

where I'm not likely
to make someone else's stroke
my own

One moment froze forgiveness

One moment froze forgiveness and the weight
of words felt “like a fat girl on my chest”
as my father would say—I can’t relate.
My mind abandons its old place of rest.

You try to read my face but this is not
the lighting in a room, no meter here
for you to use. This isn’t film you bought,
but harsh light on old negatives of fear.

I wish that one apology could be
enough to void a year’s exposure time,
but I’m afraid it’s just too dark to see
the light of countless sorrys’ clouded shine.

A lover at new loss for words conceives
the broken trust in lifeless lips you grieve.

Parts

I fear this brokenness will be my fate,
discrepant pieces drastically contrasting.
You have had to bear the undue weight.

I've watched my chance go rolling towards the grate;
I'll accommodate or flout the mold's miscasting.
I fear that breaking out won't be my fate.

You cling to me for hope that dissipates
in portraits on the pond where pain goes splashing,
where you have been a ferry on the wake.

This year has been a sequel of mistakes.
I could fill a bookshelf everlasting.
I fear its broken shelves will house my fate.

For in another life without this trait,
you'd catch my eye or touch my hand in passing.
Our hearts would never bear such undue weight.

Erase my name once more from cloudy slates,
the chalk dust on your fearful mind amassing.
Don't let the brokenness decide our fate;
and we won't live to bear an undue weight.

I don't wake up to morning light today

I don't wake up to morning light today.
The clouds break up the sky and silhouetted
blinds cast rivers on these weathered sheets,
ten thousand formless poems restless, waking.
The outside dimness leaks through drafty windows
And "rain will be here soon," I say aloud
into the foggy dawning of today.
The world decants its thunderous accord.

There's unbrewed coffee waiting on the counter.
I take it black, no sugar, commonly,
and heightened by incessant obligation:
Anxiety Americana, please.
I know the earthy cure is carried on
the breeze—I step outside to drench myself.

Awaken

Everyone learns differently and that's okay.

And so the past isn't always behind me,
the present isn't always a precious gift,
that's not why it's called the present,
and still they ask how I can rip it open every time.

And I have learned
the future lies always
just out of reach.
I never witness my predictions.

Memories of misjudgment aren't
as easily lost
as my wallet or my keys,
tucked between the cushions
of a living room couch.

They don't fade away
like sunlight
sinking past its darkest marker.

They aren't as easily forgiven
as the first person
to poke fun.
In times like those my mother was there
to explain where I fit in.

For a time, my life felt empty and so I filled it.

I poured myself a concrete slab
so I could watch the gray
turn grayer.

I sank into it 'till I no longer stood
to look at my creation:
an ugly imprint
on endless earth.

But my mistakes taught me that what I do
soon becomes what I've done,
that I carry that weight
with the strength of my name
all the way to my grave:
I learned to cultivate myself with them.

This morning I woke up to gaze
into the eyes of a consequence so real.
I watched a false reality
fall to its knees
and shatter the shadow box
in which I kept my past.

I kissed the lips of an opportunity
at a life of happiness
and ran my fingers through her hair.

Do I perpetuate this fruitless dreamscape?
Do I finally take this chance to wake up?

Today I am awake.

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