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Multiplicity

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MULTIPLICITY

By

Marianne Leslie Chan

Bachelor of Arts – English
Michigan State University
2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts – Creative Writing

Department of English
College of Liberal Arts
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2015



We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Marianne Chan

entitled

Multiplicity

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

Master of Fine Arts - Creative Writing
Department of English

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May 2015

ABSTRACT

This manuscript, *Multiplicity*, is a collection of poems that addresses the varying dimensions within human interactions and the multiple nature of the self. The speakers in these poems confront the “arbitrary constraints” and the categories that define our identities, as well as how these categories are almost always blurred by the complexities of the self and the differences between people. These categories include gender, sexuality, ethnicity, siblinghood, daughterhood, and religion. Two of these poems— “Really, It is All Arbitrary Constraint” and “Other Stories,” which appear in the second section—attempt to dismantle these constraints and/or categories by breaking from traditional poetic conventions and experimenting with the placement of the texts on the page. Many of these poems also explore the ways in which, within relationships, individuals can thrive and multiply, as well as lose themselves and be divided. While these poems are not politically charged, they inevitably touch on issues of identity politics.

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“Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.”

-Genesis 25:22

“So it isn't I who am master of my life, I am just one of the threads to be woven into life's calico! Well then, even if I cannot spin, I can at least cut the thread in two.”

-Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*

[1]

REALLY, IT IS ALL ARBITRARY CONSTRAINT

(Here are the edges of life, now go—
and multiply seventy times seven equals
forgiveness that sometimes stops.
Liminal is a beautiful word, the stressed
lim- suggests an eagerness, the way
ea-ger-ness begins with eagerness,

dactyls are my favorite because of this.
(parable, notable, strawberry
here, passion does not build, it takes
charge (the way dreams seem to always
have us by the limb, now go—There
they are, the edges again, making them-

selves known, white with flashes of glass,
seventy-times-seventy-times-seven,
a wonder we're still here typing away
at night, as the desert seems to dry
what's been dry, or love one
already loved, a futility wanders with its
healthy teeth pulled, a nonsense
talks in its sleep and I can't help

but respond with pictures and symbols.
I drew a picture that said: how does
one become literally and then made another
that freed you and me into acres of lions,
golden ocean of manes, and there they've
laid down, docile, the dreams were upon
them, they swallowed them whole.

WITH

1.

The twins
Drink their mother
Through a rope

The words become

Bed after bed
Of daffodils gone wet

The night divides,
Over and over

Emptied into a glass

Figurines of St. Francis buried
beneath the house in little coffins

And when the world yawns

2.

The twins love their aunts and uncles,
While brothers
Grow out from houses with ironing boards,
The electric fan
Buzzes with the flies.

It is always morning, the rooster speaks
Solitary

They find themselves imagining angels
As if they could be

Swept in and out with a broom

The Angels are when
And much more carefully where

Sunlight

Car light

Open windows
The dried fish
Take the air

Love smells like drowning but isn't
Mother

Discovering us
Beneath the floorboards

3.

The twins want to be alone
But are always with,

To each other,
They are a smell
that cannot be

removed by washing
or leaving—

to be singled out,
to be disappeared

Still their hands had a twin
Their eyes, a double

Quadrupled

How strange to be blind
With a twin,

After death, does one feel
The image

Of the self, repeating
Over and over

4.

In their sleep,

They dream of mother

In multiple
Her breasts always

Repeating themselves
In having. Halving.

Her legs
Always

Boys and boys and boys
With candle-wick lips

To be lit

FORGETTING

The wreckage message comes, listen for it.
There is no self afterward.
The world eats our country and spits on the ground
Before us, and the voyeurs forget.

We love you, we love you!
In hearts of snow.
The bananas rot in the sea among dead, broken whale sharks
And journeymen with nothing more to seek.

There is no self, only we: wee, the boy swings
And falls from the cracked branches of the tree.
His stomach is full of bone and old kitchens.

DEAR INTERNET

A big book is useful
For breaking house windows,
As a daughter, I played
With trees and jack rabbits
Alone most of the time
With my thinking not right,
Nature is natural
But I like to hear trains
Smother the ting of rails.
Let me not hear myself
Breathing, my mother did
The dishes when she was
Full of it, sun sharpens
Our eyes into pencils.
Our ears, whistle, I hone
The negligence,
We embrace, and part
-icipate. When love is
The answer, we love you,
Forever, our hearts
Murder our ambitions.

OTHER STORIES

“Memory sometimes makes hours run side by side for us,
or pile one on another.”

-Yukio Mishima, “Death in Midsummer”

Imagination piles too,
It bathes in the rain, when it really rains,
As memories of former rains emerge,

So that our days become
layered with the mind’s tricks.

I once read
That vision
Is not what our eyes see
But what our minds
Construct.
And that is why some blind
men and women
Have vision.
And that is why two people
With healthy eyes
See the same thing differently.

He saw the sky and did not think of death.
We flew his plane, and imagination flew beside us.
It flies with me now,
as the hours pass at my desk, as the desert light
Rises and recedes. Robert let go of the sky and fell. No, that’s not it.
That is something I imagine. What happened:
His machine failed him, like Icarus—

I wonder what stories
Flew with him then,
As he fell,
As sky grew above him
As he found land.

Did pain sweep
Memory out of the mind
Like a broom?

I remember—
The funeral. All the woman wore big shoes that penetrated the moist
Southern ground.

LANSING

1.

Nostalgia's body is a car, and it takes me

To you and your green shoes when I am not looking.
It all lands in the hands

Of indulgence. The road ascends. Speeds forward, my heart

Functions like a pill—though even that is a motif
Which no longer thrills me. The act of seeing
history. What was it again, I ask my symbols of you.

How I hate my body in daylight, my windows left open.
You said you liked my smell, and this recognition

Of my attributes made me
Want to fade
In trickles.

The forest, I love you again

2.

I garden,

And jealousy slows me down forever.

Not a barbaric ache,
But an awareness of potential.

The refusal to accept chaos.
Idealism. A fear

Of matte darkness. A fear
Of losing oneself in one's great fears. Love
Transubstantial
Must be taken

With wine. Why
Have I grown to be such
A material absurdity?

I dream of furniture,
as I dream death,
Here, death is an arrival
—a muddy runway on which my heels
sink and where I no longer
love you—with neither fear
Nor wetness.

3.

It's and its, I wrote as a reminder.

The missing apostrophe: existence confused
With having—possessing—

The symbols
of you

Appear and repeat, as the car plunges
Past tree after tree

Why do I love
To pretend you are dead?

If ghosts exist, they look like this,
On 127 North,
the trucks broken down.

LOOKING AT A PHOTOGRAPH OF MY MOTHER

All things you've made—sing—

Now I have learned to say: Be careful
while driving in snow,
The blizzards wear you as slippers. Your hearts
adjust to weather—Can I admit? I do not
always pray for my life:
And yet I look
at this photograph—you, young and wholly
separate from me. There you are another skin
—another posture that neither sings to
Nor prays for.

[2]

REALLY, IT IS ALL ARBITRARY CONSTRAINT

Go where the strawberries are being
 Eaten by lions
 And find me in glass teeth.

There I am ^{teeth}
^{teeth}
 Chained as she wanders^{teeth}

Through the locomotives
 And aggressions,
 I was once a giant with cornflakes in my hair.

We're still the ~~giant~~ bodies of the buildings reaching
 For moons.

I am not the same person you once knew

~~I am~~ not the same person you once knew

(They swallowed
 them whole
 Here life, now edges
 are of the go.

Note: the stressed selves
 Note: the lily seventy times.
 Note: the stressed selves
~~Note: the lily seventy times~~
 Note: the lily words light up

Note: dreams always
 seem to flash again—
 Only now does my eagerness seem notable.
 Note: the riflebirds and the rifles nearby

—	rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle	rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle rifle
---	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

FORGETTING

Eye loved you,	there has been
another	me, holding your
body, you	hand over
the window	the window,
I see	my twin
On its glass	she finds me
my sister	thru the glass
Has there been	something I've forgotten
a miracle	these past few years,
that has allowed me	to forget
Home which	is a darkness,
has always been	in our future.
You	never knew
my love	couldn't
see the ghosts	my twin sees you
in windows	another

DEAR INTERNET

In the forest
Of the night.
There is no reason

To be vulgar.
On a plantation of hands, flowers
And children bring gifts to the party

Here too, the silence ruptures. The prayer
Drunkenly stammers through the door,

Then again, in bed:
Home is us watching you when no one
Is watching, bright and foaming
From the mouth.

WITH

1.

The beetle swings
on a string

held by children. Their mothers

laugh at their fear.
The children are put to bed early

and the mothers wake
at dawn to cook, they feed

their daughters first,
then their sons.

Today we awaken to the lighting
of stoves. This is a community

of kitchens;
sons and cousins,

downpours.

C. and I hike up the muddy hill
during a rain,

A man sleeps in the corn,

I walk speedily past,
in need of exercise, I feel

my body heavy.

This is how I worry:
my body, my body—

C. says I am preoccupied,
that I am homesick

and tired of her.

We reach the top

where the city
is new and one color
behind the fog.

2.

C. hangs our wet clothing
outside and takes them down
before dusk. She is afraid

the ghosts nearby will wear
our shirts and shoes.
A man in his home

just the other day
collapsed
and died, his body

is behind his house in a box
beneath the grotto.

His ghost kicks down doors,
knocks on neighbor windows
during rainfall.

His ghost wears neighbor raincoats,
raising discarded
newspapers over his head,
a posed, human gesture.

We keep mangos
outside our door
for him to eat.

C. cleans my room
though I ask her to stop.
She sweeps out the dust.

When my
parents die,
what will I
owe her?

When she dies,
what will she take
of mine to wear?

She is my cousin,
one of many cousins.

My body, I fret. My body.

3.

We speak
to each other in multiple,

her words are seeds
and seeds and seeds.

Inside me, I can't find
the materials that make this
language, and yet

Binisaya

digs a part of me
out of the ground.

Binisaya turns the mud
of her and grows
out of her after rain

and what becomes
is something

stony and bitter;
holy and with—

My cousin, call me
long-distance,
and I will not answer.

She was once asked
to come,
and she did not come.

DEAR INTERNET

Loneliness is

A spike hammered
In me, I change all

My passwords and
forget what to.

In here, home is blue
Space and windows,

Animals in doorways,
Frontal nudity, store

Awnings, everything
And everyone prying

The world open

OTHER STORIES (THE BURIAL)

[One brother uttered to the other

["hand me a hundred
grains of sand"]

The brother began
counting]

I cannot test

The waters

I

will drown

This is where

lakes of soft edges

In

I've drowned
a hundred times

wave wave goodbye
wave goodbye

anchor

anchor
anchor
anchor
anchor
anchor
anchor
anchor

The brother buried

In a castle in the sand

so many grains of sand
The brother buried

his brother in the sand

[3]

ON NBC

My brother
is on TV

in a fake coma
looking thinner.

That's what show
business does

to brothers,
thins them

out. He plays a
sixteen-year-old

(someone else's
Chinese son)

while Dermot
Mulroney

is the villain
with a gun.

'That one's
not my brother,'

I say as I
point to

Mulroney, who
looks very

someone else's
brother inside

his button-
down shirt

and upper
lip scar. You

and I walk

home

from the bar
which is someone

else's bar
in some other

brother's city.
Someone else's

someone else
flickers

in the window
of some Elsie's

big brown pupils.
You have once

been some Elsie's
lover sharing

an ice cold glass
some night

that was someone
else's year ago.

It's not that
we were

all someone
else, and if

we were all just
the same—it

would be just
the same. Perhaps

there was a name
and perhaps

I called it
and it was: you,

in your big
straw hat.

THE UGLY

we watch the good the bad and the ugly
as we eat spaghetti in the southwest

corner of my bedroom it is three hours
long you say so we stop it half way through

because we lack patience and Clint Eastwood
is too much of a thing to take serious

your and my smell together is male
deodorant and baseball we had dinner tonight

at Cash Field the hot dogs were to die for
but the cups of beer were sixteen dollars

we stayed incredibly sober you said
if Vegas were not Vegas it would have

gotten away with such madness indeed
we have our minds set straight

GUILT STRUCK ME

All I wanted was to go
to the movies

All I wanted really
was to see something flicker

Alive

And all

I wanted is a
contemporaneous summer

orchid to bloom in my face
or in our hands

Spring sprung
Night nighted

Thursday wished to outlive us
but we drank our tea
and ate our carrots

so much that our eyes could
see Thursday's Death without

a telescope.

*

I think I remember
being zero once

that ocean-feeling
of nothingness with everything

The stores
stay open late and I stay

closed
until the early
morning when I pour

my yellow swollen eyelids
into your sober hands

the day is not dandelion
either it is woolen
or made of alpaca

*

And tonight we will order
farfella and sneak

meatballs into the movies

I will whisper oh my heart
you oh my bladder
you and your thin neck
you and your
wayward ankles

they will dance as you drink
from a fountain

the movie will be shit

talk about it until
tomorrow at the doorway

of Blueberry Hill

where the sun seems to rise
in the west and set

in your shoes at the door.

YOU WERE NOT OFFENDED THE SECOND TIME I LEFT WITHOUT YOU

for Clancy

Before an Indian dinner date, I was not offended when you didn't answer your phone. I went home.

My ex-boyfriend was not offended when I broke things off with him.
But when he stopped calling me, I took offense. We haven't spoken since.

In September, you were offended
because I called you the B word,
so you pushed me into a bush, which is also a B word, but is only offensive
on occasion.

In October, you were somewhat offended because you were sick,
and in November, you were offended because you were hungry.

You were never offended in January. You were a precious plum.

I only try to be offended during the first
and third Monday of every month.
The rest of the days I let hurt feelings plop into my lap.
Winter offends me but only because I want it to.

Kien was secretly offended when I wrote the list poem
about things that are and are not Korean,
which I didn't mean to be offensive, but to each his own.
And I was secretly offended
because he didn't seem to like it.
Then he was offended
because I said something weird about his dad,
and I was offended when Korey said that thing about my uncle
And I was offended that time Korey told me
to schmooze, and Kien was offended that time I called him the "T" word.
Sometimes Korey offends me simply because he speaks

too loudly. Honking cars offend
Austin most of the time, and Austin and I are offended when people say things like:
"You look just like your younger brother," or
"Don't these mint leaves taste a lot like gum?"

Always know what came first,
and never praise the imitator before the original, or risk causing offense.
Give credit where credit is due: Mr. Koch, we love you. Get up.

I thought Brock was offended when I wanted to write a poem
about Keifer, but yesterday, he said the opposite.
Denise never offends and is never offended by anything, except wasted food.
I don't know what offends Amy, probably exploding
beverages because those offend most people, and Brian is hardly
offended by anything, other than people & ampersands.
& nothing ever offends Don, except the B word.
But, nevertheless, he is a good friend.

Rosemary is a good friend and was offended when I told people
about the lobsters, which I forgot was a secret, and Derek, I assume,
would be offended by a poorly cooked meal.
Joleen only ever offends people
when she takes off all of her clothes and she, herself, was
offended when I called her cute, though it was a compliment.
It's okay. Some people just take things differently.
I get offended when people have to remind me that some people
take things differently.

The Offense in suspenders;
Offense in the uncomfortable fashion decision;
Offense in suspended disbelief;
Offense in a Rembrandt self-portrait;
At the door, Offense in the neighbor who is trying to sleep, taking
 Offense at the volume of your industrial metal which Offends all
 working individuals at certain times of the evening;
In the classroom, Offense at experimental poetry;
Offense with the best friend who is Offended by animal cruelty;
Offense with the poodle;
Offense of the Doodle;
Offense of the Offense;
Offense of bad cinematography;
The Offense of the bad title;
The Offense of the spam sandwich;
In the bedroom, the Offense of the incorporation of other people's names.
The Offense of the spank, the Offense of the overcooked plantain,
The Offense of the sleep-eater, bringing sandwiches to bed while

another sleeps.
The Offense of the unexpected alarm;
The Offense of the unaccepted invitation to the birthday party, which is no longer
happening because no one can come;
The Offense of the unaccepted proposition of marriage
The Offense of civil union;
The Offense of the love affair; the Offense of the mistress;
The Offense of being confused with another person of the same race and
gender;
The Offense of the fender bender;
The Offense of chinese food and oriental rugs;
The Offense of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, a masterpiece up until the chapter "Clara";
The pelvic thrust Offense; the Offense of the line dance;
The vegetarian Offense; Offense of green lawns in the desert;
Offense! Offense!

And he, the man of the hour,
Mr. Fuck Off, Mr. Mom,
Mr. Cockroach, Mr. Hair-In-My-Soup
appears to me now
in a Hummer, that gas
guzzler, its name,
a euphemism for something
that hums. He is, of course,
loquacious, gets out
of his automobile with a cane
and his genitals appear to be
mistletoe in a doorway. He is
chewing with his mouth full,
resembles the devil from
The Master and Margarita, or
was it the devil from *Brothers
Karamazov*? Doesn't matter—
All Russian novels
are offensive because they are
too long. Either way,
we chatted for a little
while, me and O.
We spoke in broken
Russian, a mockery!
He told me that he was

with the devil and fully
present during the temptation
of Christ. Jesus was
hungry, he said. (That is
offensive in and of itself,
I thought, but did not say
for fear of hurting O's
feelings.) He also said
that he was the 8th Deadly
Sin, a runner up for 7th,
but Gluttony – the “fat
fuck,” I quote – pushed him
out of the lead
with his enormous
personality. Then, O smacks
my ass, takes
us by the hand into my
bedroom.

Reader, I love you 90% of the time. The rest of the time, I'm offended,
but even then, I still love you a little bit, maybe I wouldn't die
for you, but people lie when they say things like that anyway.

And anyway, why am I saying such nice things?
Why aren't you taking me to breakfast?
Why won't you take me to Blueberry Hill?
Their french toast never offends me, though the sausages sometimes
sicken me, the stiffness, the audacity!
Don't you agree? It does not offend me if you do not agree,
I am after all the youngest sibling.

Oldest siblings and only children are more likely
to be offended when others do not agree with them.
It does not offend me when they are offended. In fact, I pity them.
Readers who are oldest siblings and only children, I speak
the truth and you know it. Do not be afraid or offended
that I've blown your cover. (I am speaking
through the amaryllis microphone of poetry, which does not amplify
the loudest scream, let alone the quiet conversation
we are having now.) Please, do not disagree or be offended
by my saying that you are more likely to be

offended if others disagree with you. Your defensiveness would only reinforce my claim, and my claim is true.

While playing chess, my older brother was the poorest sport, always offended, weeping into his own arms when he did not win. And me, the youngest? I was far too stupid. I would rather lose to end the game more quickly, and spend the rest of the night marrying the chess piece pawn to the queen and enacting their honeymoon, because even back then, I was a sexual deviant, and I am less so now, since I am an adult, and it is less deviant for an adult to be a sexual deviant. Strange sex is

never something to be offended by.

If a person's mind is wired one way, he or she has little choice what he or she enjoys. Sex exists outside the realm of politics and social justice. One should never molest or violate another person's sense of worth or destroy their sense of self, but do not be offended when your partner prefers abasement and pain over courtesy while performing intercourse. On occasion, offensive names (like the B word or the S word) can serve to extend or shift levels of arousal, as does pinching and biting. Try to acquire a taste for agony or absurdity, the way one acquires a taste for hops or falafel sandwiches. Pain often contains levels of joy. Try to avoid being too much of a Republican or Democrat or Episcopalian or Feminist or Vegetarian during sex. Sex is not a tea party. It is not an election. Do not try to win votes.

Also, do not be too offended if your lover *does* try to win votes during sex. He or she may not know exactly how he or she feels or what exactly he or she is doing. The best things occur when you do not expect too much.

Do not be offended by things you do not expect just because you do not expect them.

Do not be offended by predictability. Complain when you get what you ordered at a restaurant. They will bring you something else. Do not be offended by this poem. All it wants is to make love to you. Do not be offended by people who want to make love to you. For people, even if they are elderly or afflicted with leprosy, their desire to have sex with you should still inflate your ego, and that feeling is sometimes as pleasurable as sex.

Do not be offended by the elderly.

Do not be offended by chilly mornings and lukewarm coffee.

Do not be offended by palm trees, unless on them, you see scorpions and/or racist words.

Do not be offended by Soul Music.

Instead, Try a Little Tenderness.

Do not be offended because I let your roses die, that is not my fault, that's life. I had a nightmare last night

that my parents died. I awoke covered in sweat and tears, though both of them, are alive and well. (Death out of all things offends me the most. Death, we live in the twenty-first century, do something different for a change!)

My mother told me today that my father was disappointed that I didn't go to church on Easter Sunday. (Disappointed is like offended only worse.) Do they not realize? Beneath a cynic's hair and make up, I am undeniably Catholic. And by Catholic, I mean, I eat lots of wafers and I am a fan of confessions and indulgences.

And by indulgences, I'm sure you know what I mean. O, bless me F word for I have sinned. I said the J word too many times, and the C word and the G word too. All the letters of the alphabet. All in vain.

And you? Your greatest sin is being offended in Chicago. (One should never be offended in Chicago. Then, one has the right to be offended even on the Moon, if one somehow ended up there.) You were never offended at Venice Beach.

You were never offended in Boston.
You were slightly offended on the drive back
to Las Vegas, when you asked me to play
Charles Mingus, and I screamed,
“Fuck jazz! Fuck jazz!”

Then, the dappled lights appeared on the highway,
and we forgot it all. Oh, Las Vegas! The love of my life,
the pyre in my loins! My sin, my soul! She offends
so many people, but one should not make assumptions
based on rumors. One should always get to know
cities before jumping to conclusions. Most of the time,
Las Vegas is my sweetest and most affectionate friend.

DEAR A.

The ice cream truck
plays Christmas music
in March, and in April,

girls find themselves
an overcast sky
to be with. You and I
are in Nevada,
and we want to read

Schuyler and cry.
In his letter poem,
he said "After
swimming, after sup-
per, a Tarzan movie,
dishes, a smoke. One
planet and I
wish." He wishes, I cry
as these letters
somehow sting. What
will happen
when we leave this
place, A.? Mornings
here are childhood
front lawns. I sleep
next to C. only to see
him get out of bed
and hear the faucet

running after
the ice cream truck
playing silent night,
the way we broke into
the apartment to sing
Christmas carols to D.,
all sleepy eyed
and pretty in her
retainer, shaking the door-
knob and singing along.

And now it is April,
soon it will be June,

and the sun,
the savage sun.

[4]

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 1]

It is all about mastering the formula.
Shampoo only twice a week,

And promise to leave
Onions and pickles behind.

There is
A cloud, occasionally.

There is
A tree. There is no good
machine. Start with conformity,
Start with head, toe, and C-

Sections of entrance.
Begin at the very beginning

And see
The arbitrary constraints

Arbors in white suits, latex gloves
Finding the door

And gore. Well, this is marriage.
With elements of surprise

And births and freedoms, and deaths,
And death.

ZENG FANZHI'S MASK NO. 1 SPEAKS SOFTLY

Wear your blue business suit.
I will describe you:
A dirigible
in the matte, mauve sky.

A silent, white skin,
the silence of the bathroom sink,
washed teacups,
the silence of the self,
a shelf of paperbacks.

The purpose slips into your coat pocket.
Where is it now, it unravels,
a spoken secret
in the grass near
bird beaks, rippling

in the water. Say something.
The night finds us
but does not insist. It stays
put, stays. Until the purpose
is in its mouth.

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 2]

The babies I carry carry me
to the kitchen and bathe me
in the sink. They were wiser
with stronger arms and soft
cotton clothing. The babies
I carry carry me. I have sex
on hard-wooden desks.
A part of me wants to create
a double, it must wear me
like a suit. I see double
enough in my sleep. When
The painter does not work,
she dreams of night at sunrise.
When the worker does not
dream, she paints sunrise
at work. It is the desire for
a refrain, something repeated
to feel again. It is our mode,
our tactic for holding.

ZENG FANZHI'S MASKS WORN BY WILD BOARS (YELLOW)

for Denise

That old story of the man who had a horse's head growing from his shoulder. Like him, we had wild boars in our stomachs, grunting, their hooves bruising our gall bladders with their kicks.

Born with them, without them we would die. Only seen them once in an ultrasound when we were very young, when they were docile, pink, snorting angels floating in gastric acid. Now, they want, they need—

So, one night, we snuck out of the house, and the 24-hour Waffle House took our money. There, we drank glass after glass of maple syrup, smacked our lips on the turkey bacon slices, sliding pieces of blueberry French toast down our throats.

But the boars inside kicked and growled, wanting and needing more.

At the Organic Supermarket we ate directly from the salad bar, forking arugula into our talking orifices, manically chewing on spoonfuls of kidney beans and hard-boiled eggs, gulping down Caesar dressing.

We went to the taco section of the store and ate sixteen tacos and thirty-seven enchiladas, swallowed them whole. Finally, my sister bought eighty-six pints of gelato and suffocated herself inside of them. Was it an accident? But I could not stop taking and needing; I could not look at her.

We eventually got thrown out of the store after thirty minutes of chaos—yellow cloth from our dresses, bloody knees, saliva, skin, paint, and tooth left behind on the store's tile.

I carried my sister's corpse home. She looked so peaceful, those blank x'ed-out eyes. But the boar inside her wept and wheezed. I could see its kicks through her dress. Before her funeral, my parents had her boar removed and set free. It was hideous. It didn't know how to walk, so it dragged its body with its snout in search for food, until it was eaten by a hawk.

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 3]

Wear me as a prosthesis.
You are bereft of me. I love

your mountains. They twinkle
in wintertime. 'Resemble

the sky.' Not a fragment,
but a command. 'Groom,' I say,

'Resemble the sky,
so that I may hang from you

And see the machines
from above.' Why do I feel

so sorry all the time? I slap
my forehead, as the rainforest

on television moves at warp-
speed, flowers that grow instantly,

world in which identities are
towns robbed of elephants

and leopards roam the streets.
There is no room for us

in the inn. There is no manger.
No natives or nativities,

only increments of development,
a waitress with no free hands.

AT THE MASK FACTORY, NEAR THE OCEAN

The expressions
on the porcelain speak:

'Hard times.' they say in unison.
'Hard to feel once,

only once.' One mask,
the purple one,

whispers, again: 'Hard.'
'Hard to always

feel—Before stays
unchanged. It is one

color: *purple*. How simple,
it is to be purple.'

'Green! Fuck *green*,'
the green mask mumbles,

self-loathing. The foreman
enters. He whips the backs

of the laborers (the mask
makers) with chains.

Pain whitens
their backs. They puss

and blister
and white tears weigh

down their cheeks, until the whole
factory is bleached,

a great white whale
on the beach.

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 4]

Wear me as a prosthesis.
My body is a clip-on tie
at the night market.
Find it. On sale. At the bottom

Of the ocean, the mermaids
Chant: Love thy neighbor
As thee would love a good bargain
Good-bye, good buy!

He screamed out the car window.
Everything is quickly replaced.
Things will never be the same:
So love thy changes as thyself,

The mermaids continue,
their fins are made of oil spills,
This Sunday is new
since we've outgrown the old.

Or perhaps Old outgrew us
Look closely at our skin. See:
all along, we have been Old's
tight blue jeans, handed down.

GENESIS BIRTHDAY PARTY

Forty-days together, goddamn.
The sun is only five years old

in sun-years. It sucks the flood
from a straw. More corpses

bob on the horizon.
They are gifts wrapped in pink

blue corral: dirty, fun-loving
daughters; sons who played

smack-the-ball barefooted
in the street. Lazy,

but People. At the flood's
start, the People

had slathered their mouths
with deer blood, since they

knew their world would end,
might as well spend it

like monsters bending
in the water. Shem throws

a cigarette into the flood. Its light
waned. The sky darkens into

an olive. Inside, everyone
sleeps, except Noah who dances

naked, drunk on flood. Ham
and Japheth awaken to find him,

and walk into the room
backward, shy for his nakedness,

they place a paper garment
over his body.

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 5]

I'd love to make love
but my mouth guard
is necessary
so I don't grind
my teeth. Understand

I love you but I'm
sorry. The night smells
like mushrooms and
some people are on
the microphone

in this dream I'm
falling into, calling
my name. Dreams
are somehow inferior
to waking, though
no one knows why

the elephants slide
in and out of the sky
and no one seems
to ask, because this
is realism, sir,

in the broadest sense
of the word. I wish
I were asleep most
of the time, though I
shouldn't tell people that

I love them
as much as I tell
you. You're so jealous
now and carrying
a baby that you

dribble like a ball
on a lifting wave.
There is no stop-
ping you now. You
murderer! You dirt-

bag! When they find
you standing naked
on the stage, I will
press my cheek
against your thigh
and find my mouth

-guard on your knee
in the morning wee.

GENESIS BIRTHDAY PARTY

Eve's thousandth birthday
she makes her request.

So Adam paints
his face white, shadows
cheeks— with cherry juice

darkened lips with goat—
blood, then

like Lillith,

he lays eggs

with the great owls
in their nests. Later, he finds Eve

in her bed of seedlings.

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 6]

(Why weren't there nine?
Why weren't there twenty?)

The river brings them.
No one can see them.

- Lorca, "Song of the Seven Maidens"

From hands, the sightless plunge.

Sensitivity plants itself in the garden,
Seeds listen to eyes,
And blossom.
Petals feel like human skin.

Where does one
Become
Maiden? Old kitchen.

Church of soap, Tupperware
Mouth, into which all things go
And are taken and contained.

We are all urns
Filled with burning
embers.

*

Should our definitions and distinctions
Be more precise than that

Of the city's skyline?
The pubescent question:

Where do I end
And where does mother begin

Where is the knife
That carved away my manhood

*

Man, maiden

Can be measured by a blend of positioning
And furnishing

The clothes in one's closet
The bedroom of sinks and sinking

Here comes the sexual interest,
Here comes the cowardice and revulsion,

And the ease with which one looks
At the other
Whether inside or out,

My manhood is a dog that wags her tail
When the door opens.

My manhood, constant.
I have myself,

My own twin brother,
And other
Invisible repetitions

*

But yes, but love
is mad, a monster,
multiplication.
And my gender,
a promise.

An endless trail of sequins,
among sequins,
among long twisting shoes
that grip my bones.

Find us carried
in rich, ritual wagons.

And when time
collapses, it is the blades
of grass to be mowed.

ZENG FANZHI'S MASK IS AMERICAN

I have a purple one.

I have two purple ones.
They're big guns.

I have three red ones,
different shades of red

to explain me. I have
three red guns. I

have six I never use,
three blues I use out

of habit, four that I
will donate to the Red Cross
after spring cleaning.

Take this one, no really,
Take it, wear it, wear it.

Where is your blue
business suit? Where is it?

Wear it. Oh. Well, I will
have one made for you.
We will see you
wearing it at the party.

ZENG FANZHONG'S MASK NO. 2 IS SILENT

*Enter Sky. She picks
up the megaphone.*

Sky: Now
does not exist. It is only before

that sings still and vibrant
from the self, on the shelf. Before left

its imprint on me and flowers,
too precocious, withered

rapidly. Tomorrow
is always late for the party

with the Chinese men in suits,
painted white cheeks
and chins in the park.

PERSONALIZED WEDDING VOWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY [NO. 7]

I never knew love could suck
The air out of the room. But now
You are beautiful, fading
Toward me in flashes. It all comes
To me in little quakes, the paint
flakes off the walls, revealing
the naked disasters that lie beneath.
Love enters, an interruption
Making a very compelling case.
Consequently, your pocket
Handkerchief is made of spoons.
Consequently, from the top of these
belvederes, we see the coyotes
Howling at the suns.

POVERTY

and I am happy as a bookshelf
full of magazines
of photographs of animals,

my poems, forget them.
Cattle on a highway field
I will cry for you; I read three new

authors today, their poems are rich
and tender; they made me
cry coffins of joy

inside which I would die
if I had to choose, leaving
my precious bones

and hair behind. I had a thought
yesterday: what if I
were to die in a car crash,

what a shame, I've been growing
out my hair! Then I thought
what a stupid thing to think—

Myths tell us my hair would grow
without me alive to see and be
able to comment on its sheen—

And why is this something I want?
Let's get off the subject
of death once and for all

Instead I will sleep the good sleep!
I have these dreams always rich
always partly forgotten.

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Lorca, Federico. "Song of the Seven Maidens." *Collected Poems: Bilingual Edition*. Ed. Christopher Mauer. New York: Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 2002. 443. Print.

Mishima, Yukio. "Death in Midsummer." *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories*. New York: New Directions, 1966. 1. Print.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Summary of Qualifications

Motivated, creative writer with knowledge of multiple genres (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, essays, screenplays, plays), two years of university teaching experience, and one and a half years of university administrative experience, as the creative writing assistant.

Education

MFA, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2015. (*expected*)
Major: CREATIVE WRITING
Area of Emphasis: POETRY
GPA 4.0
THESIS TITLE: Multiplicity

BA, Michigan State University, 2011
Major: ENGLISH
Area of Emphasis: CREATIVE WRITING
GPA: 3.62

AA, Lansing Community College, 2009.
Major: THEATRE
GPA: 3.55

Awards

First Place. Outstanding Presentation. UNLV Graduate Professional & Student Association. (2014)

Arthur Athanason Scholarship for Creative Writing, Michigan State University. (Spring 2011)

Second Place. English Department's Creative Writing Contest, Michigan State University. (Spring 2011)

Richard Benvenuto Prize for Poetry, Michigan State University. Awarded by Diane Wakoski. (Spring 2011)

First Place. Red Cedar Review Poetry Contest, Michigan State University. (Fall 2011)

Teaching Experience

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

English Composition 101, 1 course

- Taught principles of writing in various genres (personal expression, analysis, evaluation, and persuasion)
- Developed students' critical thinking skills
- Addressed grammatical conventions

English Composition 102, 2 courses

- Taught course focused on writing, research, and environmental issues
- Further developed students' skills in critical thinking, reading comprehension, writing, and research

English Composition 101E-101F (Extended Course), 2 courses

- Taught principles for writing letters, reports, blogs, and persuasive essays
- Addressed grammatical conventions
- Gave further assistance to students struggling with reading comprehension

Introduction to Creative Writing, 2 classes

Guest Instructor

- Taught two classes to introduce students to the genre of poetry
- Addressed the principles of lineation in modernist to contemporary movements of poetry

Writing Center

- Taught up to four workshops per academic year on writing style, such as parallelism, sentence variation, passive and active voice, and conciseness
- Advised students in one-on-one consultations, regarding research papers, class assignments, resumes, and creative writing projects

Professional Experience

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Creative Writing Assistant, 2014-present

- Facilitate admissions process for UNLV Ph.D. with Creative Dissertation and MFA in Creative Writing programs
- Answer questions from applicants to the Creative Writing program
- Assist new students with their transition to UNLV
- Support students in their final year to fulfill the requirements of graduation (thesis defense, thesis submission, etc.)
- Assist with student sponsored events

- Attend Graduate Committee and Graduate College meetings
- Promote student readings, events, and creative writing student, alumni and faculty accomplishment on social media (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and UNLV Website)

Black Mountain Institute Graduate Assistant, 2015

- Assist Black Mountain Institute assistant director with book orders, budget, and proofreading
- Compile information to produce a monthly newsletter
- Transport BMI guests for events
- Prepare grant applications for the Black Mountain Institute Emerging Writers Series

Lansing, Michigan

MessageMakers Intern, 2010

- Completed Marketing/GSA Research
- Prepared grants for Lansing revitalization projects
- Facilitated MessageMakers events

Poetry Publications

Chan, Marianne. "Kholodnaya Voyna." Red Cedar Review 47.1 (2012): 67-68.

Chan, Marianne. "Personalized Wedding Vows for Twenty-First Century [No. 1]." Indiana Review (2015). Pending.

Other Activities

Witness Magazine

- Poetry reader, August 2012 – present
- Fiction reader, August 2014 – present
- Non-fiction reader, August 2014 – present

Neon Lit Committee, 2014 - 2015

- Facilitated Neon Lit reading series events
- Sent Neon Lit Reading Series announcements to Las Vegas and UNLV community
- Brought chairs to and from event
- Communicated and scheduled readings with venue directors

Black Mountain Institute Emerging Writers Series Committee, 2014-2015

- Organized and recruited for EWS committee
- Organized poems and stories of EWS nominees for committee review
- Nominated poets and fiction writers for the EWS readings

- Read and evaluated the work of ten poets

Typhoon Haiyan Fundraiser, 2013

- Organized fundraiser in response to the typhoon disaster in Tacloban, Philippines
- Raised up to \$1,600 for the Red Cross relief efforts

Skills

- Computer Literacy (Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, social networks such as Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram)
- Excellent verbal, written, and digital communication skills
- 4 years of local theater experience

Languages

- Studied Russian for 2 years
- Comprehend 2 Philippine Languages (Cebuano & Tagalog)

References furnished upon request.