

**FAUXPLAY INTO FLUENCY:  
QUEER MUSINGS OF A NASCENT BILINGUIST**

**Honors Thesis**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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## Artist's Note

This project is a chapbook-size composition of original poems primarily in English, but additionally in Spanish. It aims to link poetry between distinct lingual and literary traditions in a novel way without the use of translation. Among the themes treated are queer identities, the feminine and masculine, gay culture and sexual development, aspects of love, bilingualism effects, and linguistic interpretation. As well, my poetic discourse deals with the dualism of realistic depiction and metaphorical allusion. The narrative weaves between two journeys. The first is of my struggle through abuse and resilience, and the necessity to create order and contextualize my experiences. The second emerges from the need for definition, my story and I, through the affectation and modulation of my native language, English, and my second language, Spanish. As these interweave, the narrative becomes a testament to the catharsis of art, the mutual nature of language and identity, and what it means to be a queer kid in life.

*Peel the bottom of my foot  
Like a navel over-ripened*

**Welcome. This is the beginning**

Sometimes

I

feel

like

When you left me

I was chopping an onion

And I started to slice

the tips of my fingers

And most

of

my

nail

**#1**

there are few phrases  
like “fucking christ”  
which can quench my thirst  
and stave off a hunger  
you weren’t the worst.  
you couldn’t be  
and yet.  
yet.  
what the fuck were you?

fucking christ.

## Babel

Seven teen sisters stuffed seventeen cisterns  
With sacrificial water against an  
artificial calamity  
I was plussed, I was nerved, overcome,  
full of Ruth and feck  
and grasped a concept of fin-i-ty that left  
my patriots smartfound.  
Or is it dumblost? Who knew? (*I knew*)

They set their globulars on a man who had the **body**  
Of a lion with the **breasts** of a lamb.  
He made them feel like the cran of the cob  
Of a half-rotten **berry** and third-mottled web.

J'avais l'idée  
qu'ici-dedans je mettrais  
une strophe française  
*I am so tired of dealing with you, sir.*  
I hope all a matter of ill and vile and rotten things on you.  
Fuck ya and ya fucking soif.  
mais oui. Je ne parle pas français, vous me sentez?

As for the ladies, seven of them, as  
afivementioned.  
Who leapt in love at the citation of this man.  
He was their two days with more "E"  
Their Sunday in the Park with Jorge.  
Their... translation lost in space.  
And *I*. *I* was their butler.

#2

There's not enough space in your mouth for me when there's  
a murmur or mumble  
soft lips make not pillows when pursed for me.

there's so much room in room,  
too much.  
and each O is an ocean  
that I must swim in  
my arms grow tired of holding onto the rim

I thought a lagoon would be the right size  
but I fell out when you gutted the G

But when you say genre  
I can sleep in the back of your throat  
as your n curls into the r.

### #3, 4, 5

#### III

Perhaps it was when a whisper tickled my earlobe  
as you said some three-word phrase.  
Perhaps it was when a hand was held  
on a too warm winter day.

Perhaps it was when marks appeared  
across my alabaster.  
Perhaps it was when dinner was shared  
and you indulged in my confections.

Perhaps it was when our Lenten affair  
ended with the crucifixion in a text:  
“I need to be honest... it would be better if we took a step back,  
I just need to take a step back... don't hate me.”

#### IV

“I only cum in holes: mouth or ass,”  
He said. To me. And I, ever the contrarian  
replied “I only cum when the moon is low,  
and the stars align; When the radio is set to  
the thirteenth notch; When the month is  
divisible by two and the day by three;  
I cum when the whales live in lakes  
and dolphins sing the blues; When  
lilies are in my ears; When God has deemed it so.

That's nice, he replied. But I paid for two hours.

#### V

He used to write  
The silliest typos  
“I'm so gorny”  
“Sack my cork”  
&c.  
the best was when he misspelled  
“I love you”  
as  
“I'm leaving you.”

#6

late at night  
as young Jesus  
cried on his bed

did his mother hold him?  
and rub his back  
and try to make him forget  
the sins of others' flesh?  
the world on his shoulders?

Mary's miracle wasn't his birth  
it was her comfort.

## **Witch Hunt**

You're violin strings  
That I've plucked, made from my sinew

And empty film canisters.  
Of memories that I'm no longer allowed to cherish

Green glass bottles crushed  
In to eyelids and kneecaps and solemnity

It is- our bodies that sin.  
Why do we punish our souls?

If I am to be scourged  
Why are you the pillar I'm tied to?

#7

the small town shops.  
their storefronts, illuminated.

Shoes On Sale.

how we looked in the glass  
we'd make funny faces  
and laugh.

now I pass them  
and only see my reflection.

## #8

We talk about that moment when we wake up  
and find ourselves to be different people.  
That “someday” when our mangled collection of traumas  
will sublimate into our future identity.  
That maybe our entire life that has been  
    spent as one crisis  
causing another will someday blend  
    together  
so that the pain of surviving conforms into  
    the monotony of existence.

And yet we fear that. We are terrified by  
    the reality of growing up.  
Because when we look at it, growing up is  
    just the amalgamation  
of heartbreaks and miseries until we either  
    learn to cope with them  
    or die.

Sharp pangs of despair morph into a dull  
    soreness of reality.

**#10**

A child's chalk on still-wet tar  
melting as it's etched in semi-solid stone

a much-sought rain washed the dry with  
an acrid stench of hot sauce: Tobasco.

Copper?

Rock walls, like Frost's, are barely visible against  
the late post meridian moon.

I saw her. A stretched, reaching limb,  
bonelessly.

My car waited on a half-lane road  
Mortal stretch marks tread in her center as I leered over  
her small frame. She looked like the Mary.

Or Marie.

Like the child's chalk on still-wet tar  
She melted into the road.  
Mewling past all nine lives.

## #11

As your extended metaphor,  
I come to you. Unveiling a  
simile unlike any other  
I'm your poetic license  
an understated hyperbole.  
You're my candy apple crisp  
cusp. Close to my symbolic sole.  
When I step on you, and fling back  
with a hissing sibilance shuffle ball change.  
Your hand on my assonance,  
and my tongue in your cheek.

**#12**

I saw you broken sparrow,  
    when you had a crooked wing  
I met you broken sparrow,  
    when you had no song to sing  
I loved you broken sparrow,  
    when I learned to love myself  
and I left you little sparrow,  
    with the other lovers,  
        on the Other-Lover Shelf

**#13**

Patched hair across goose-roughed flesh  
    more goblin than man.  
crunching on animal bones and child smiles  
a Troglodyte, slimes up to devour a soul

What a sad nuisance of a creature  
consumed by loathing and self-ignorance  
    more goblin than man.  
biting and scratching at nits, real and imagined.

Such a sight for me to see.  
Glad she is a mother to Grendel,  
    and not one for me.

## **I Don't Believe in Toenails**

I don't believe in sweatpants or toenails or chocolate or hairclips,

So I haven't a pair of any.

I find birthday parties superfluous,

and hugs a bit extreme.

I've sucked a lot of dick, in that:

I've processed more meat than a

Sinclair novel;

I've handled more packages than a

UPS truck;

I've swallowed more wieners than a

competitive hot-dog eater

from Japan whose only

hope of bringing her family

to America is by winning this

stupid game.

You said loving me was like. Was like loving

a stone.

So—like a diamond? Because I shine?

Or like a monument because I stand strong?

I stand strong.

**#14**

I'm just the blowjob men remember when  
they leave  
Or forget, I suppose.

No.

I'm just the baggage your next lover will  
have to sift through  
And wonder where he fits in.

**#15**

Sometimes I stay up late  
writing poetry not meant to be read  
and I think to myself  
"My God, this is what your life is  
There is no consolation  
there is no meaning  
there is no satisfaction  
it's just one sleepless night  
melting into the next."

## #16

My mother warned me about men like you  
Who breathe fire  
And tear off scabs with their teeth

As you yell out an open window  
“Dad?”  
In the stillness of an urban night,  
I notice nothing but a heart  
racing to match yours

A hoarse grunt caught in your throat  
That I will tear out in a feral bite  
How did you describe my smile? Virile?

I'm going to leave you at the bottom of my stairs  
In a heap of dirty clothes and false promises  
And you can wait for another man to collect you.

#17, 18, 19

XVII

A la pregunta:  
¿Dónde termina tu cuerpo  
Y mi soledad empieza?  
*quod erat demonstrandum*

XVIII

Tu almohada en mi cama, *albus et intacta*.  
Ven, siéntate a mi fuego  
Caliéntate tus manos en mi alma.

XIX

Cuando te fuiste, yo era *patiens*.  
*Alyawm, alyawm a alyawm*  
Mis gritos se tornaron en un silencio sordo.  
No soy más la que ronca ahora.

**#20**

If I could wrap my feelings for you  
around me like an old sweater  
I'd find comfort even when the wool of loneliness itched

if I could drink a cup of tea  
that was the warmth I had for you  
it'd be sweetened by the thought of our first kiss

if I could turn the pages of an oft-read book  
that was our relationship  
I'd find a bookmark that noted when you loved me

if I could hear from you  
those words I ached to know  
I'd find but a fleeting happiness

## **Circulation Desk**

If you go searching through the library  
to seek the stack I'm on  
I have a few suggestions.

First try mythology,  
as I'm known to be a hero.  
Maybe it's in Christianity,  
as I have been called a martyr.

Then try mystery,  
As I'm formulaic and easy to solve.  
Look at the children's section next,  
as I'm stuck in juvenilia.

Is there a section on disasters?  
I know there's one on grief.  
You can try those, of course.  
or maybe one on "exaggerated sorrow."

You won't find me with the heroes or the martyrs  
but look for me on the cart  
I've been returned already  
and not just sorted, yet.

#21

Recuerdo el sabor de tu piel,  
Tus besos en mi cuello,  
Tus dedos en mi alma.

El primer adiós.  
El segundo adiós.  
El tercero. Sin ti.

Entre tus brazos  
Y los versos que pido;  
Entre un corazón inconstante  
Y un ciclo dañino;  
Entre la alegría que me causas  
Y la distancia que me atormenta.

No eres mío, lo sé.  
Pero, aún así,  
Soy tuyo.

Con el amor que ha muerto  
Y tu cuerpo que me falta  
Amarte y perderte, sí,  
Y nunca tenerte.

**blanco. conjunto. mejor.**

Si yo te odiara, te querría más  
Si yo supiera como esto termina, dormiría fácilmente

Contigo, he encontrado sentido  
Contigo, me he perdido por algo más

Amor, como es, me deja contigo  
Amor, como es, me deja solo sin paz

“tan dramático” me dices.

Tú, sin un alma  
Me has dado el mío

¿Qué tipo de ironía infernal es esa?  
No hay furia en el infierno como la que tengo para ti.

Un católico caído y un protestante jovencito  
Separados por un hilo común.

“cállate” me dices.

¿Te quiero? Supongo que sí.  
¿Te odio? Como lo deseas.  
¿Te olvidaré? Jamás.

Mis sábanas huelen a ti.  
Ese olor dulce de un último adiós

Necesito afeitarme  
y quitar esa picazón  
el rastrojo de nuestra relación

“no me jodas” te susurro.

Me siento como los pelos de la nariz  
Arrancado.

#22

You're the eyelash on my cheek  
Waiting to be wished upon.  
You're also the used condom  
    stuck in its wrapper  
    hanging off the garbage can lid

You're the half used roll of toilet paper  
That I refuse to place on its holder  
Instead letting it sit on top  
    Of the old roll, half used itself.

You're the blister on the back of my foot  
That I scratch off with my toenails

You're the dirty bandage on some  
Half-dressed fetid wound  
That I let fester too long  
And can't decide whether the removal or rot will kill me first

I do believe it to be true  
that we fall out of love the same we fell into it  
and I started loving you the first day I hated you  
and now I hate you as I loved you

and the idea that we get our hearts broken in the same way our lovers' got theirs broken

makes me hope  
that the man you loved before me ripped your soul  
so that you could eviscerate mine.  
and when he acknowledged your existence  
your heart raced to teach mine to run at your beckon  
and that when he forgot you,  
you lost that selfsame meaning I did when we became strangers again.

For you, I was but a placeholder of convenience  
For you, I was but a broken man that needed repairing.  
For you, I was but only a man when you needed a fix.

#23

I have my mother's eyes and her fullest cheeks  
that tomato red when flushed  
and broadcast sunspots on summer drives

my father gave me my negative spaces:  
the inner curve of my menacing temporal bone  
the gnarled hair of the secrets of the American South.

I stole my mother's piercing wit,  
and could gut men with but one dagger's thrust.  
beating a hasty retreat lest they should parry and counter.

From Father I got the cool, pseudo-soothing anger  
slowly filling a room with pressing silence  
that when rubber-band-broke, snaps back a harsh cruelty

I got my father's dance moves,  
and my mother's ability to look as comfortable as a giraffe using chopsticks, when dancing.  
my mother's courage and determination, and spirit to survive,  
pair well with his arrogance, dissatisfaction and worldly thirst and lust.

I suppose, my mom taught me how to grieve and grow  
when Dad made me stall and seethe.  
but their greatest gift, I know now  
was that I didn't have to be them at all.

### **A Poem in Fifteen Words**

If my father is not in my life, why would he be in my poetry?

I would fall in love with you, but there are easier ways to kill myself.

The look of fear in one's eyes when they are tickled beyond all cruel intentions.

I thought I was the psycho ex. Best friends/boyfriends no more, I should think.

When you left you took the words like "thirst" and "yas." Not really my loss though.

You fucked me over, five times. I fucked five other guys. What's the problem again?

I've learned it's hard to love someone when they won't look you in the eye.

I was. Am. Will be. Perfect always. And you have just been a rubber doorstop.

Won't you die? No. I hope you stub your toe when you think of me.

**Sometimes I hear unwritten poems that belong to other people but I imagine an infinite path of opportunities I could take if they applied to me**

"Before you move out,  
please send any-slash-all of Mom's belongings  
to me  
because I do not want them at Carol's house"

And

bridge I was going to jump

“That's the off of. Canadian Thanksgiving 2010.”

## Reflection

I barely recognize my proposal for this project from a year ago. Originally, I had intended to write a chapbook of Spanish poetry, styled directly after Pablo Neruda's *Veinte poemas de amor*. Then it became mostly Spanish with some English. And then it was equal in English and Spanish. It's now mostly just English with the occasional spattering of Spanish. I justify that with "Most of my influences are from the Spanish literatures," but who knows how well that will hold up. Neruda is in a lot of my writing, but I picked up so many other people it is hard to distinguish who I am ripping off.

I am still not sure what the purpose of this project was, or is. I was writing incessantly, at every hour and place, regardless of circumstance, and I knew I had to point it towards something. By transforming it into a project, it put a definitive ending on it, a goal. However, I like every other "artist" have not the faintest idea when my obra is finished. It suffices and excels, and for me that will have to be enough.

I don't know if I fancy myself a poet after this endeavor. On the one hand, I know I cannot pretend to exceed the title of mimic for whatever it is that I have created. On the other hand, I believe there is a poet in us all, and what I have written can be either diamonds or the dirt under Neruda's fingernails. And for me, that will have to be enough.

A professor once told me that to succeed at a research project; your brain will have to hurt a lot. My brain hurt a lot during this. I thought a lot. I read a lot. A lot happened. And this onerous beast I birthed is only a physical manifestation of the marvelous things the journey taught me.

For this chapbook, I read some of the greatest words God ever gave us. For months, I quoted Neruda and Jorge Luis Borges: in bed, in the shower, at church, during movies and parties and baseball games. I would write their phrases on my arm and hope the ink would seep into me and leave a small trace of their genius. I shouted Carrie Rudzinski and Anne Sexton's poetry until my soul became hoarse, when I could convince myself that I was my own God and a luxury. I discovered poets renowned and unknown, and learned that I "will spend my whole life trying to recreate the first poem I ever loved," and for that I am truly grateful.

I could not have made this journey on my own. Grace Healy, the preeminent poet of my generation, listened to me recite all of my failed "musings," over wine and over phone lines, and then had the audacity to reply with golden prose. My adviser, Michele Dávila Gonçalves, waited patiently as I tried my best to give her my best, and when I faltered, she set me back on the right path. These living saints are heroines that I can only hope to emulate.

And you, dear reader. You have had the unique privilege of reading through this whole thing. I have experienced so many terrible things, and one joy I could take was that I might find a way to package it for consumption. That I could take degradation and hatred, tie bows of cute phrasing, stamp it with wicked wit, and leave it on your doorstep. And you, for a brief moment in your life, might go "Oh."