

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: DEBRIS

Kathryn R. Karoly, Master of Fine Arts, 2022

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The poems in Debris consider the female self through the internalized hate manifested from outside social forces into the reconstruction of the mental self, and physical self as well, as seen in the poem, “Alterations”. The speaker in *Debris* inhabits our male-dominated modern world, where the influence of appearance on womanhood collides with her ancestral origins, as well as the external, natural world which she searches for acceptance of the natural body. *Debris* seeks strangely shaped keyholes in the door of questions on human inclinations toward dissolution and transcendence during times of love and loss. Its poems speak through white space just as much as through lyric and narrative, and often mirror longing for familial ties, for the self, and carnal desire. The desert, the female body, and a photograph of Wilma Rudolph, all become twisted to unlock something else. Internal rhyme, repetition, and recycled sounds function as a morphing key. *Debris* doesn’t answer, but asks, and echoes.

DEBRIS

By

Kathryn R. Karoly

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Advisory Committee:

Professor Elizabeth Arnold, Chair

Ms. Lindsay Bernal

Emeritus Professor Michael Collier

Professor Joshua Weiner

for Peter Karoly, my father

and for Arra Ross, who believed in me

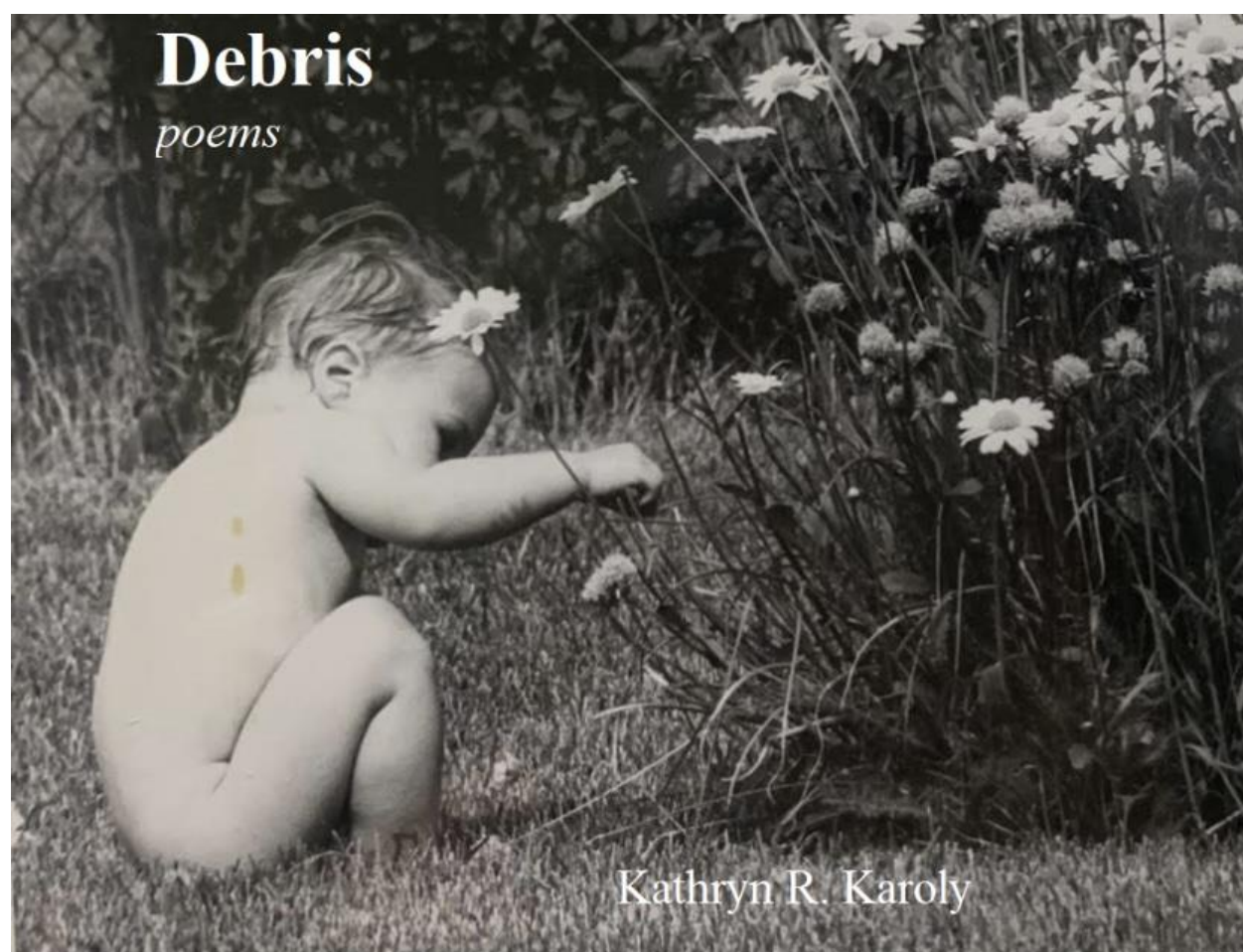
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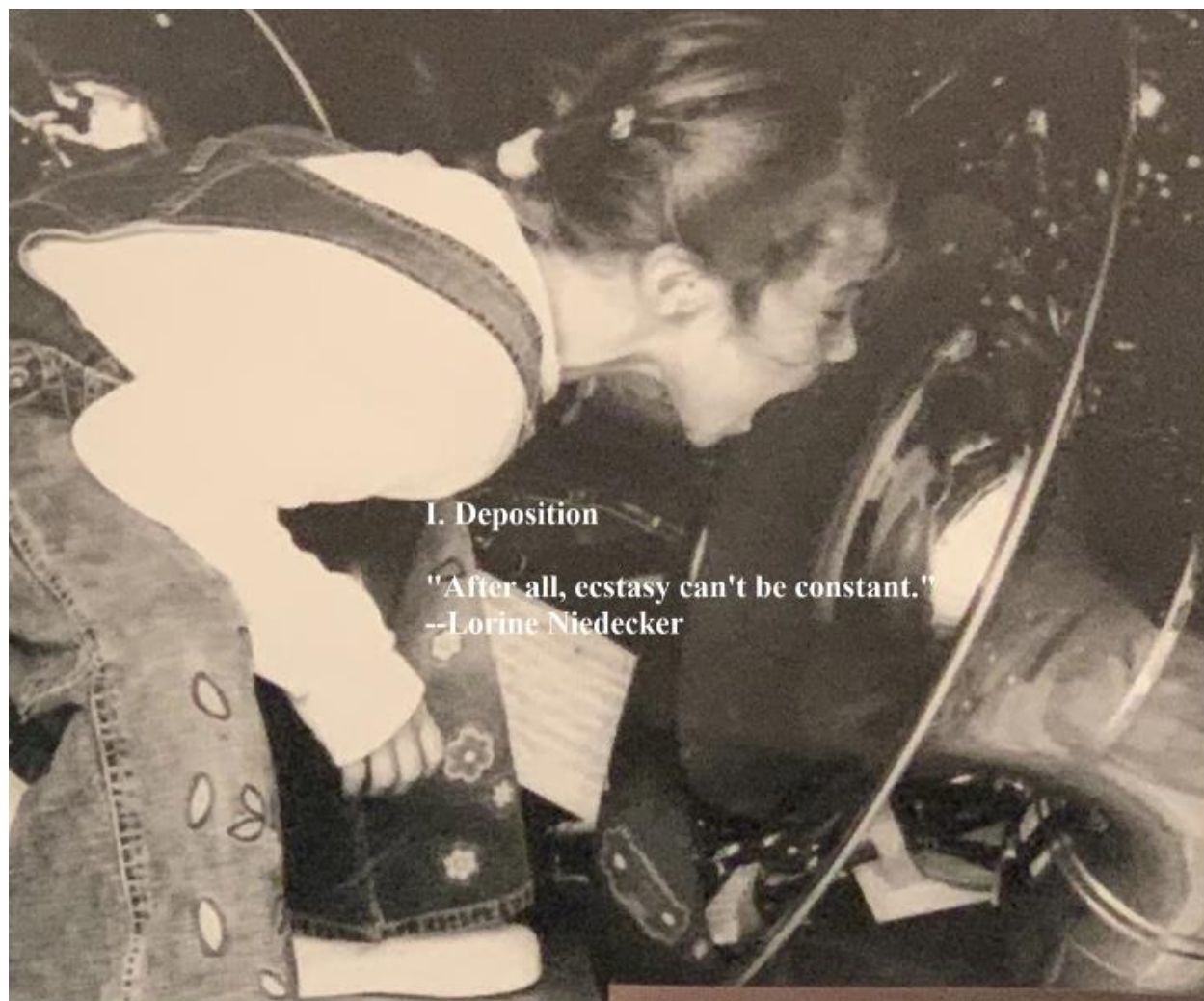
Thank you to Liz Arnold for the hours she spent reading my poems, talking with me about them, and talking to me about life, which unexpectedly helped the writing process.

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I. Deposition

"After all, ecstasy can't be constant."

--Lorine Niedecker

Bliss

My own backyard garden from the kitchen window exhilarates
 like my first hit of acid my body secondary to its laughing
 the same if not more flooding of light than the hanging cold of my only piercing morning
 atop the Swiss Alps.

There is misery in searching every moment's stillness for magic
 contentment
 arousal
 convenience
 willingness
 all laid and notched in childhood
 the slow years stack so high make a full life of their own
 the stacking height becomes a ledge to climb over
 look back down on
 as it crumbles or falls intact into a faraway sea
 Its waters ripple change colors in ways you cannot be sure are
 believable
 legible
 real

I don't remember seeing anyone tend the gardens
 my parents must have
 because its liveliness touches me even here now
 in a patio rocker
 swallowing phlegm from smoking
 from blooms thick with Spring Summer in the loins
 Here potted plants drink their cup's nourishment
 Their dark green leaves years-old bigger than palms alongside
 their fleshy light green necks which rise from soil lifted by gradual unseen strings
 their heads hair curled half-closed unfold
 like I have been told of the folds of my brother's ears born closed
 the pink-petaled cartilage opened to hear the world when he breathed

What is it in the air the living react
 Sometimes I remember padded dirt becoming multicolored
 in the span of a blink
 Tulips Roses Sunflowers

The length of days were charged by magic
 feeling landscapes
 for the first time

they alternated spontaneously
 The power of earth flowering instantly
 or repeating with gold dusted insight
 The flowers but also the bees the insects wiggling living bodies beneath rocks
 Every day

I wanted to learn
 air
 To create like air
 to never stop feeling

Snorting Coke off a tampon box in a porta potty in August humidity
 Snorting Coke off toilet paper dispensers in bar bathrooms
 Snorting Coke from plates in cars in parking lots
 Popping Molly because of the chance
 Popping Molly because of the New Year
 Popping Molly to keep going
 after a night of bumping Coke
 off the thumb
 of an older man

I don't remember seeing my parents' backs hunched over our yard until I was old enough
to have experienced the crouching next to dirt next to them myself
until I felt the stretching long fragile aching slabs of muscle building in my own back

I do remember my father's unexpected death
unexpected gust of wind breaking hand-painted terra cotta drying to become something
I remember deciding at 18 that I would most likely never age a year older
But my body would

Once flying through wind by my legs
now feeling deformed
I have my father's legs and probably his heart
which I am not protecting
I let grief pack fat in so the heart feels held

Singing loudly authentically into a black ladle spoon in open air
dirt beneath bare feet
grandparents and brother in fold up chairs barefoot too and praising
and the neighbors hearing everything that may have passed in that sky
planes, slicing wings, cicadas (they were (are) in season)
my child voice unashamed

Magic evolved into repetition itself
 until hidden (buried alive?)
 beneath surfaces that must be broken
 or which otherwise occasionally break themselves
 with a quiet sprout small opportunity
 Peeking purple weeds between alley-way cement-cracks
 The pleasure of the aesthetic moral senses/intellect
 Teenager sitting in grocery cart covered in groceries pushed by mother
 Approval Encouragement Increased Energy Fortune
 Child running from airport line scream-laughing mother chasing not screaming not laughing
 Cloudy day split by afternoon light lasting till night—
 But the sad sustainability instant / constant decline
 The fatigue of carrying an ever grieving soul-body
 The years after childhood changed landscapes—
 transformed into
 rotting foot trapping mud
 limited magic concentrated soil saturation

My husband is the neighbor boy

We met in his backyard there was nothing but green and bordering fences climbed over
We traveled together by foot through dangerous woods the unassuming backyards of
houses between his and mine we came across a good lush plot of land sunflowers taller than
us—bleeding hearts lightly dragging across our wading hips where maybe we debated touching
hands or lips

We had an invisible baby which I kept secure against my flat chest
Together we lived some years peacefully in that day
until we came across a trampled bitten corner of green and knew
there had to be some beast some threat

With our baby we traveled back
and together we built a boat out of air
on which (I did not know) he alone
would sail away

To fulfill the storyline I was weaving
while leaving it up to chance

I waited afternoon after afternoon
among the sunflowers
even when they died
like I knew my mother would
for my father

My body

once

a single muscle

once

a single spine

moving over

wood floors wood steps

sidewalks trees hills carpet along a perfect seam like a fish

until a current picked up

When my lover first touched my body

I apologized
for its fullness

A trickling force under my face

rock pushed

will it give?

Four Hundred Dollars in Flower a month
One ounce of Flower per each two-week period
Four years and counting
 and then 3-4 grams of wax a week \$200+
 \$800 a month six months and counting
But really i have only started to pay attention now
to all the time that was mine didnt feel like mine which passed

The surfaces harden
over their geomorphologies
 eventually forcing
ordered crack patterns
 for which I rejoice

I did age I could not keep the body separate
The mind started disintegration too
I am left studying undoing
To try to understand initial doing
To confront rebuilding

from the car window of myself I watch
construction workers sift obsidian aggregate into the blade of the bulldozer
its driver lifts the blade—lurches to the pit, balances the fall of basalt asphalt
while two bodies swiftly comb it into place before drilling every layer
taking a roller truck to the new surface

Acid all Summer long with my lover
Velvet caresses galaxy dimensions pierced
by the power of orgasms by the power of witnessing clearly
our coded love

Magic Mushrooms. Magic
Mushrooms eaten in the forest
Mushrooms eaten in the forest
Mushrooms eaten in the kitchen
Mushrooms eaten in the forest
Mushrooms eaten under fireworks
Mushrooms eaten in the park
Mushrooms eaten under fireworks
Mushrooms eaten in the kitchen

When my lover touched my body
I didn't apologize
for its fullness

I eat because I am hungry because it is ritual
 Because of
 poor planning trouble multitasking excessive activity
 I eat because of boredom for distraction to taste
 Because of impulsiveness problems prioritizing excessive activity
 I eat to fill for sleep
 Because of troubles coping with stress: excessive activity
 I eat because I starve myself
 and I am hungry

Searching hangers, the laundry
 unfamiliar once familiar
 silk flash; purple-grey geometric
 A woman-child thumbs her father's tie
 with no chest behind it
 She checks for smell
 Inspects stains disintegration:
 Old grease or post-mishandling?
 A heavy stitch closed a tear so obvious when touched up close

My brother told me later he was high when he found out about dad high
 he led me to his body
 Before I could not fathom this the intensity
 But now I am the temperature of bath water
 I am the act of floating
 My lover says Every day I see you smoke and sit and think for hours

When my lover touches my body
I sometimes apologize
for its fullness
I sometimes don't

Three Weeks away from home in winter to bring myself back to life in a place with sun
but flying can be such a restraining bitch
without my Weed the sun and Palms and sparkling oceans only as magnificent as
ditches in front of homes never seen with blue skies overhead good weather holding
In the mornings just to get my energy to greet my cheerful mother and already made coffee
I have to take my naked body from bed in front of mirror
blast screamo music
(which I have not listened to in 10 years)
thrash/dance vibrate my skin
for at least a few minutes

How quickly how slowly anything goes

Any year of mine can be erased in a day. I was feeling and I am feeling. What happened is speculation. Eventually I will have not known you longer than I have known you. What is happening will be speculation: deer standing on grass growth across the river, ducklings & ducks in a row on a log, lone red-bird bobbing above tall grasses to which I call out father because I knew it wouldn't stop its flight.

But this was moments ago

Did the two deer at differing startle points cross in the clearing?
Or is there just the clearing?

My father picked me up from soccer practice
I rode on his handlebars over sidewalks that tree roots disagreed with
roots petrified as stone as living corpse
but I just felt us flying through our town
through our neighborhood past gravel mountains
through air tinged with gasoline and sugar beets
I thought my father picked me up not because he had to
but because he was proud to do it



Not of Dream Worlds

After the Broken Column, Frida Kahlo

It hurts to look at her, her breasts
 separated countries
 that would drift effortlessly apart
 without restraint
 but there is restraint, but it is not effortless
 the back brace holds the halves of her
 together by force
 without it:
 she is an amorphous cloud, bed bound:

To wake and fall asleep in bed
 to wake and remain awake in bed
 until asleep in bed again, with him
 crossing their bridge from her room
 back into his—
 who could help it she had to stand
 and stay standing awhile—
 her body,
 though split as split earth, solid as rock
 constant as Coyoacán light fiercer than teeth stained
 sky-blue the light could shine through her
 where she has eroded but doesn't.
 Nails pin her skin her
 breasts
 stomach
 face
 hips
 arms
 neck: punctures
 closures.
 Contours
 camouflaged by her
 innards, but otherwise,
 she does not bleed.

her head another planet
 shoved away by that fracturing pole that uniting pole.
 the tears fallen out her unlit eyes those tears so white
 below her unlit brow her features dark as night her tears are white

men their steel and their speed their Gringolandia which moves
with them and pulls others over.

Her waist—another planet:

first painted bare,

then covered.

I read this online

but who knows what is true but the torso?

Did she paint the legs

complimentary or in exactness:

uneven and in contrast?

Did she paint the legs? Does it matter?

The sheet she painted is a covering, loose and white

and studded with nails—yet held up by her hands.

Prayer to Self

Sappho Reverse Erasure, translation by Anne Carson

Retribution to give and yet
 the glorious love, the beautiful good,
 you curer of pain
 curing me—
 embedded blame
 gone swollen,
 but you take your fill.
 My thinking has been cracked,
 not broken—arranged backwards
 all night long, awake.
 I am aware chronically
 of evildoing, falling birds—of other spangled
 minds, wings: blessed ones, air-borne.
 Your heart can absolutely love.
 I can love falling to be caught—
 it would be for me, permission to shine answer
 my open face cleansed recovered, having been stained hands
 reaching in calls
 only internally strained:
 a thin voice, a tremor

How to quit being
 a luxurious woman?

I used to weave crowns

By example, learned?
 With what eyes?
 The bitter
 lenses, shapes—

Hidden Lady
 Appeared moon
 Am I you?

So I

swim
 beneath
 the
 air:

Marjorie Jane Karoly (Werner)

Your image exists (now) in refractions
 Fracturing my own
 Selfness. I am not myself
 My blood is my boundary
 I advanced between giving-receiving hands
 down the bodily-assembly-line to a final hand
 at the metal grinder lapis lazuli dropped as if into waters temperate as love
 a passing obliquely through its solid self to a new medium
 before—mountain walls intact—then stone chiseled by kindled fire, quenched, shattering ore
 after—how does powder become a solid body again?
 When does smooth pebble-stone return to the jagged peak?

 memory stones wait for fire and water
 to ask their truth-forms

...

Refractions of your frizzy hair
 Appear in curly veins from my scalp in silver streaks
 Refractions of your wide face
 your tooth shapes, your straight tooth spaces in front on top
 fragments of the starry firmament not noticed before but now
 all of this in my mirror
 you are all there
 the fur coats packed deep in your closet, dusty
 your costume jewelry and your real jewelry which I asked you for once.
 Though my ears are pierced I clip on your rubies look into my own eyes as far as the pushing of
 dirt will go I pray to your Lazuli energy (I can conjure your sad, sky-eyes anywhere)
 (though my praying to anything but a Lutheran God you'd reject)

...

A shimmer of myself
 in windows—

a brief reflection of your son,
 Joey, a brief reflection

of you,
 your brushed-out curls unbrushed—

just before the shimmer shifts
 into the version that is me.

We sat on the biggest log crossing

water to land,
pretended it was a horse.

I love you
because I loved you.

...

You bought Kevin a brand-new car.
When my dad came asking for me, you said no.

Because he had access to your bank accounts,
he said he was getting me a car.

You took control,
gave him enough to buy something used,
which was fine.

...

Often when I think of you I am ashamed
Your black eye
blood-squelched forehead
from falling

The cane you “didn’t need” but kept for fear of dogs
(was it you who made me afraid as a child of joyous jumping dogs?)

Your black eye budding

Your panic

Your confusion

You refused an ambulance

Got into the car of a stranger

I wish I had been there walking to the cemetery with you as I sometimes was
I wish I had you holding my arm, a cane who loved you, who would catch you
I should’ve stayed the night to answer your loneliness call out in your sleep
I should’ve stayed during the storm, rethought being trapped with you
under your crocheted blankets, the ball game on, hot milk on the stove waiting for Ovaltine
I was afraid you would see me any glimpse might cause emotional disownment
I thought why come around if I have to hide
If I was born male, born first what then?
Yes, Gram, it’s true, I didn’t even know then that you lied about your father-in-law’s divorce,
said he’d died, but I knew my father took you to all your appointments, invited you to every
holiday and more, and listened to you only talk about the eldest, Joey, in New York.
I didn’t think it was fair, I was obstinate, you were obstinate, it was a pain in the ass
I was selfish, impatient, thought of nothing until after you would be gone

when I could shed the layers under the blue-tainted sun of your spirit.
 Grandma, I know you didn't approve of me, I know I hid from you, but when I think of you,
 I think of patience and the gentle holding of daily conversation
 Your silver dollar pancakes
 How even the littlest mouth could eat one in one bite.

...

My grandmother looked past me,
 gasped, *the sweetest boy who has ever lived*,
 as my brother arrived 35 minutes late to our table, reserved for Mother's day.

...

Kevin looks like your husband
 nothing like you
 but you and me we are the same stone reshaping

...

Your bedroom, a recurring dream
 One night people line up at your door for a haunted attraction—
 one I know is actual.

In the other dreams, it is just your room.

Always the bottom of the carpeted steps,
 hands on the railing embracing your spirit
 your furniture has been moved into my room
 but in the dream, the furniture is in your room
 the armoire in the middle wing beckons
 to your side or grandpa's

I visit grandpa's bed.
 Then yours,
 and there, I sleep.

...

I got to know you by getting to know your yard

(I mowed for you weekly or biweekly)
small and uneven.

Cherry tomatoes tomatoes of the vine cucumbers Lily of the Valley: yard borders.

The shading tree low branches almost touching my head on tip-toes

and the fence, the tree beyond in your neighbor's yard, spreading over yours

stuck through cloud swaths birds crossing doves on electrical wires.

The cooing of doves in any blue lid above any dirt,

reminds me of you.

Wilma Rudolph, The Fastest Woman in the World, 1960: A Series of Photos & Memory

I.

Whatever pasture of clouds holds
your name
let loose its grip
when we needed you.

Paralysis let loose your muscle fibers &
your mother let loose the doctors who
let loose your “permanent” fate.
Your leg let loose its brace.
 & asphalt sizzles from sweat and rain.

Something on earth blows apart ripples of cloud,
opens the fringe.
It is the tree jutting out its long neck &
dangling itself by its thin thread,
the magnetism of a precipice,
& wings soaring to feed &
balance themselves.
Your name is a lead acorn shooting down
cracking resistance, landing softly on tufts of intact dirt.

You landed on my father’s tongue
 where he spoke you into my existence.

II.

The cobblestones of Rome, so far away from Clarksville
you brought glory there and back
sat and waved from the top of a Cadillac Convertible
a Roman goddess unscathed in her flaming chariot
except you are the color of turned farmland.
A ribboned bouquet blankets your thighs,
your thighs, proud and humble as your close-mouthed smile.
I couldn’t find the story my dad told me about you
anywhere. The one when someone stole your shoes right before
a meet. I can’t remember how the story ended either.
But I know you ran the race. I do remember that.
When I think of someone stealing your shoes I also think
of this, the film, black and white like the world
white officers parading around you
black people and white people watching from the sidewalks,
people in wheelchairs, people with leg braces, present (because you insisted)—
but tucked away from view,

you on a moving throne slicing down the middle
waving to everyone.

III.

You stood two heads above the other women
your legs, deep caramel stilts, parentheses taking up a full page,
and the buttocks, a weighted propeller, you ran
the way I ran in childhood, hard and with confident surprise as I split
from the line of waists to open air my lone waist wiggling through—
or like the time I challenged that track-star father of mine at age 50
I looked ahead in small disbelief as he peeled the road in half .
You started slow as the others, then—
fire skidding suddenly on streaks of gasoline.
You are wind blowing
straight hair into eyes and not letting up
until the line is crossed your body stops
like you have just finished answering
a series of long questions in a span of 11.0 seconds
I watch myself (from some distant place)
trembling in the corner of my body
I close my eyes
o watch you running

IV.

I think he told me about you because he knew I would think of you when my body tired, when I
would grow to hate my body. I try to imagine not being able to walk. I try to imagine running as
fast as you. I wanna ask how that felt. I have a hard enough time standing up from the couch on
legs that automatically listen, walking to the front door to let sunshine slap my mind. Tell me
how your mind moved for years before your body listened. The question is selfish, but tell me
how

Island

*

A photograph woke me. One I had never seen before. The image of you and me, standing on water, talking. Solid green floating somewhere.

*

You live on an island. I don't know how to get there except in dreams. And you don't reach out to me until I am there. In dreams.

*

The air here follows time, moves from hot to cold, cold for months. Winter draining green. I grow colder, too, and sleep more.

*

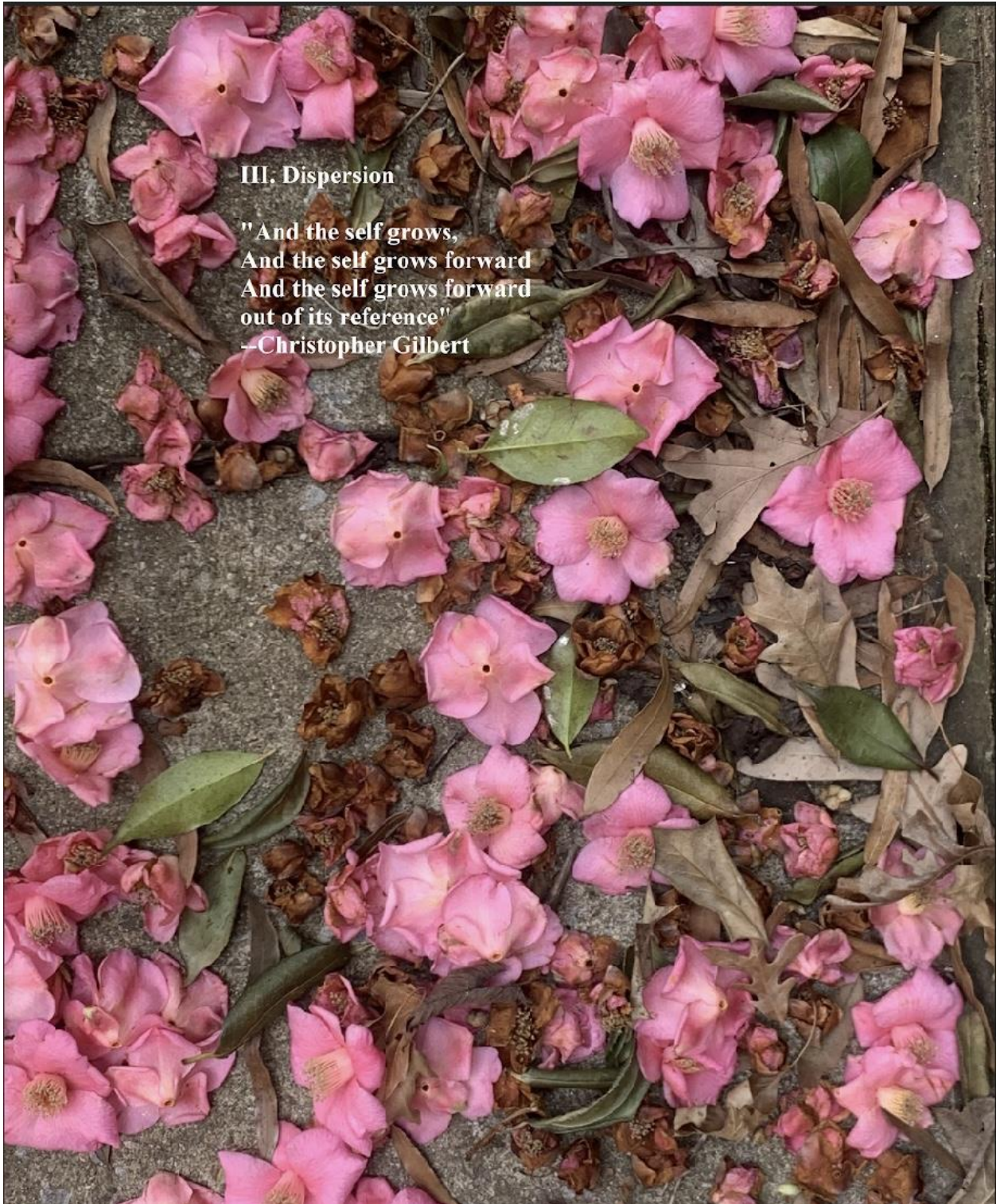
I used to think about the moments I was wasting. Headphones blocking out my father's music, but also, my father, his face turning to me.

*

But sometimes I did listen and fell into contours of your tongue wrapped round your mind. The men I've loved are not quite you, daddy: too unkind and too dumb.

*

I left a space and stepped into the next one to resume our talk. Willingly, I searched. In desire, I lost your trace.



III. Dispersion

"And the self grows,
And the self grows forward
And the self grows forward
out of its reference"
—Christopher Gilbert

Sparrow-Hawk

Karoly

*from the personal name
Károly,*

*Hungarian form of Charles.
habitational name from a place so named in Bihar County.*

*possibly
from karuly,*

*variant
of karvaly*

*'sparrow-hawk',
a symbolic name*

*from a totemic animal of an ancient
Hungarian tribe.*

In Amsterdam,
having noticed my name,

a waiter returns my card, asking in English, are you Hungarian?
Yes.

The way he speaks next is like deep exhalation
deep exhalation only able to be brief

as deflating lungs.
To me, it is over-decompression

causing the brief to feel
unnatural and extended but good.

Hány éve hagy
el most téged is a föld?

The language is fluttery
as leaves scaling wind to ground

and back up again in breeze
sing-song, as I have been told by my mother in the past

I do not know who told her or if she heard the language

and decided for herself. (I hadn't until now).

Talán találkozunk—
It hurts me in a way that I can only laugh—stop his music

short before I become less and less like song
and tell him

Yes, Hungarian blood physically expands in me with breath,
yes, some Russians traveled in the cold, warming as they passed through
a country or two or three, and yes, the Russians became unknown,
and Hungarians became blood with the land...my Hungarians took their blood
from the land across the masses of water where it was lightly dumped into me,
but no, I cannot fully answer you,
the native tongue was never passed on to express this giving.
My grandfather's Hungarian tongue was a small blade
capable of inflicting exposures
of the blood. The blade had to be dulled,
the edge eventually taken away
The words made English and everything spoken before, replaced.

I am so tired and ashamed of have nothing more to say, to repeat the same old things.

I cannot speak without nasal-throat exposure, I cannot speak
without becoming a Mid-Western American.

What I've really said in response
is not heard by me.
I hear my friend at the table giggling (and so I laugh, too)
at two Hungarians unable to meet.
I think I knew this then, but not directly
until passing years undressed my mind.

...
i don't remember when my mother first
told me, you have an exotic look to you
began calling me gypsy
comparing me to my great-grandmother Mary Karoly
with whom i share

a birthday...

(October 31st, 1900 /1993)

excluded information until my
13th year... i know that sounds theatrical—
made up—but my grandmother Karoly
was ashamed of her mother in-law:

what a whore Mary was
conniving maybe
five husbands four lost
to death or divorce

but along with Mary and whatever man—
her two sons at her side taken onto
boats from Hungary to Detroit to
Saskatchewan then back to Detroit...and

on the train in Detroit on their own
Marys eldest held his peach-haired knuckle
to his lips indicating to my grandfather—

his brother—just seven years old stay quiet
on the train...hungarian tongues travel
in our mouths pry them open when home

...

i used to whine and poke about my face—
just not right—the jaw should not be wide and
thick a girl with her father's face bones
looking more severe than high school boys and
some men...i whined and poked at the heavy
zygomatic bones and the heavy jaw
and the little eyes...and my mother said
a full face is a sign of youth that i
would grow into it...i knew my flesh and
i began to know, it was also
beneath my flesh.
still i whine and poke at
the Hungarian bones with which
my father plated my face.

...

i have never seen a photograph of
Mary whether her beauty horded
husbands...or if it was something else... her
personalities posture, a womans name...

what is it made from...

...my grandfather was a long thin man
with a passive way if i had ever
seen him cry i would have held him with all
my arms he was fragile as an egg on

a boat and his mother mary I wondered
 did she nearly splinter him or did she
 cradle him the egg in a tied
 handkerchief in her lightly cupped palm...
 ...was she kind...was she beautiful...

my grandfather never said no one
 ever said anything...

...

did my face suddenly come in with puberty
 just as the curls at the nape of my neck
 abruptly exploding across the rest
 of my head did i suddenly become
 almond eyed and wide faced with white skin
 tinted by red? or was my mother
 simply telling me to notice then...

i pulled my hair close into the borders of my face to hide a strangeness...

...

out and about somewhere someone tells me
 they share a birthday with their grandmother...

...naturally i tell them about Mary and they ask
 great-grandmother...is she dead...did she die

before you were born...as far as i know
 shes always been dead

...

Might i wake surprised and accepting and old, in Hungary one day?
 Pipacs, my grandfather's native word for Poppies
 Pipacs rise in the crevices of my bones
 Pipacs saturated red from my blood.

...

i have always wanted long hair
 to better frame my face like a waterfalling

headscarf...but my curls crimp upward year after year...

...so ive had them cut straight

off and my face i can really see it...
for the first time in a long time...

...scissors shushed through, sang through
a womans face

an echo (our name)

...

Mary Karoly...

...now that your name has been spoken

after all these years...lie your head down
on a single floating cloud rather than five still male chests,...

i have asked after you because you were the one
who leapt across oceans

without breaking an egg
who rolled in and out

of bed
in time

to teach her sons the train-line...

i do ask after your face
but i have not seen it and still i ask

after you...Mary Karoly...

...

What kind of countryside did you inhabit? Were mountains the backdrop of your daily lives
or a rare vision, even in the mind? Had the steam of thermal baths ever warmed your skin and
bones?

And Lake Balaton, did he ever take you there to dip your feet and remind you you were lovely,
loved? Which grasses later left behind, and below—our family's bones mixed in the crypt of
earth's bones.

Which rivers did you decide to forget? Tell me—Mary, in the corner of your eye
could you see the Danube as Jozsef first caressed the tip of your bones?

...

Young (but how young?) when Mary had her children pulled from her and snipped?
 Young (but how young?) when Jozsef's heart slipped and stopped against his bones?

Still soft-skinned if marriage and motherhood hadn't ripped her
 if grief hadn't brought a new man wanting to grip her bones.

Two boys—boys—because they are not yet 7, not yet 10, wonder
 had they kissed father's fleeing flesh, could they warn his soul to strip from bones?

Warn father to follow across the waters unseen from the ship's steerage—
 but then—closed eyes, spinning heads, new ground, steadying: father slipping from their bones.

Had Mary ever loved a man? How many had she had by the time she crossed
 between three separate lands by ship? The ship made by who? A ship of immigrant bones.

Was it love or fear or loss or hope that brought her into the arms of different worlds, different
 men? Was she ever loved by them? The product of her sons' love came from her hips & bones

But by the time my grandfather turned ten: his Hungarian tongue scraped out from between
 his lips. Later forgotten, his old name. His lips ceased shaping the language of his bones.

And much after the language was forced away, so were the bones
 Love buried in calcium fibers circled by shared blood, to get away, you have to clip the bones:

His wife couldn't stand the sight of a woman's dirt-flecked flesh, dirt-flecked
 from four separate men, four separate marriages, made into the ellipses of the bones

But on one occasion my child-father travelled with his father to Hungarian Detroit—Delray,
 MI—to witness the reverse eclipse of Hungarian bones:

The thin piano carried onto the back porch; its keys softly touched, the sound mimicking
 heavy, slow footsteps, like small hops over low creeks. The flesh of guests called to circle

and Joska's son on the violin, the slow steps becoming swift leaps vibrating dirt:
 the Czardas pulling my father in to hem the rip of Karoly bones.

...

But what if only some of this happened to Mary Karoly

What if there was another Mary, her mother, Mary Sempsey
 who endured some of these things instead

and the right story was told about the wrong people
 yet had embedded itself as fact in my head?

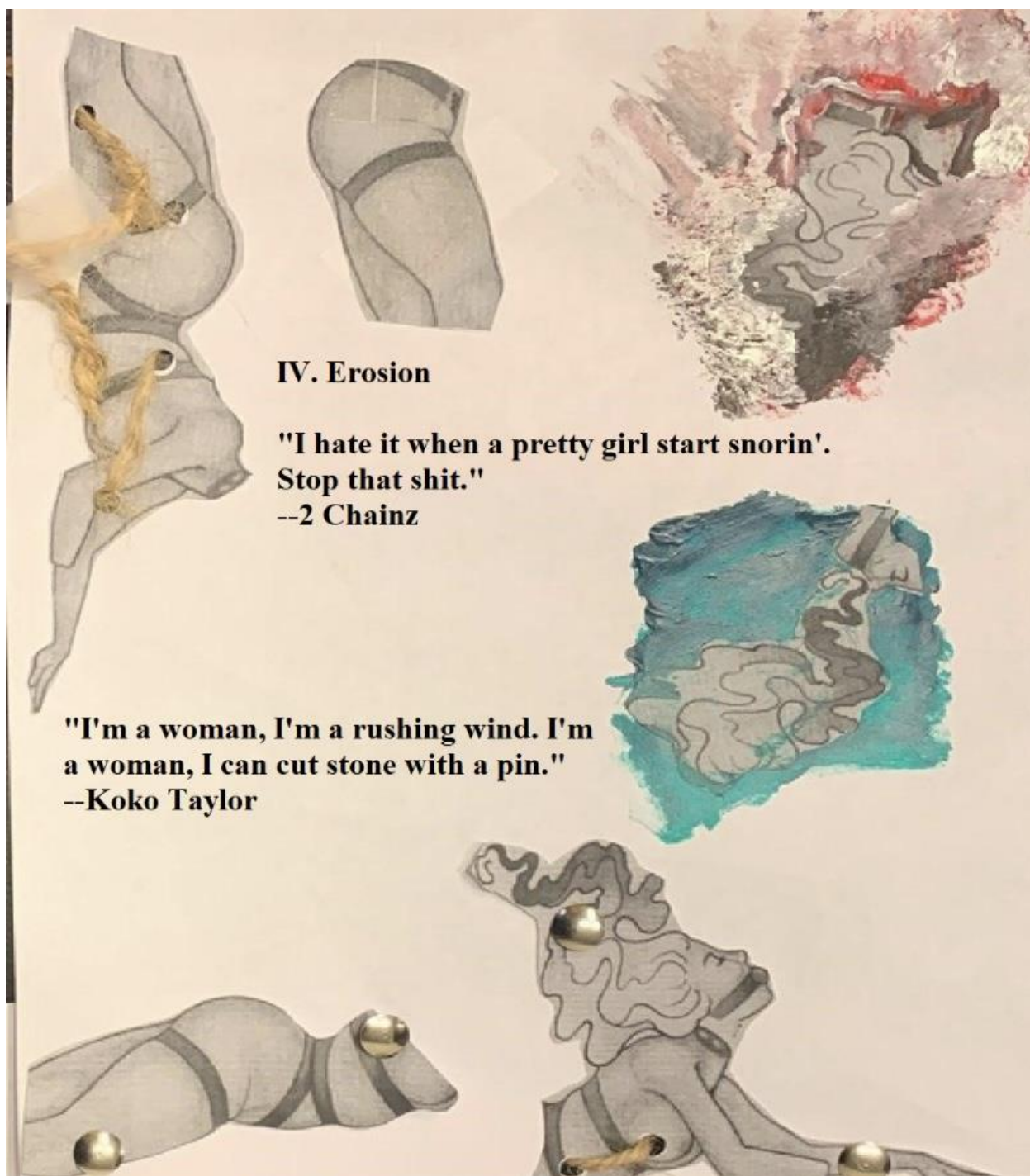
Dusted documents found 10 years after my father's death said
her four elder siblings were born and buried in Hungary

but my great-grandmother Mary never saw the land of her language
she and her younger siblings only witnessed it in stories sung

as her parents combed their free Wyoming land
which she fled from to Michigan until old age—

she traveled south for Florida,
lived in a trailer with squirrel monkeys

beneath sunned palms
until dead.



IV. Erosion

**"I hate it when a pretty girl start snorin'.
Stop that shit."
--2 Chainz**

**"I'm a woman, I'm a rushing wind. I'm
a woman, I can cut stone with a pin."
--Koko Taylor**

You May Be Destroyed

Walk the floor of a room exit the room go into another room.
Go back into the original room undecorate redecorate.

Leave and build more rooms like the new one.

But people could go into the old rooms.

You could destroy the old rooms.

But people might build new ones that resemble the old ones.

Keep unbuilding rebuilding keep walking in and out of rooms.

Make sure not to leave anything in any rooms in case they are destroyed--

Yes of course it is different to give something rather than leave something but regardless
the room and what you have left in it may be destroyed.

What about preservation and protection

What about it

Alterations

Force the blade into some material to cut it

Embedded diamonds because

Plain teeth

Inked body because

Plain skin

Acrylic tips because

Nails weak when grown long

Acrylic tips strip nail enamel

So dip powder three coats

Spaces between front four teeth

So braces

Curly hair intruding with puberty

So failed straightening perm

So straightening iron

Hair remaining the same length breaking off

So weave

Matted-weave

So clip-ins

Artificial hair looking artificial

So unclip

So scissors

Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors and/or Inheritance

Never, bending before the mirror,
 repeatedly pulling with my fingers,
 have I thought of my grandfather:
 the scabs drying to white on his
 tattooed forearms—tattoos blurry from age
 maybe even blurred from the beginning
 from the artist, whose amateur hands
 took needles to his 17-year-old arms
 at some point during the war
 (before or after liberating Dachau?
 never mentioned for 28 years
 until footage flashed on television specials.
 Until then never said aloud
 I was there.)

My therapist tells me a mantra I can use is *I am here*
 But even so, I am here bending before that strange flat river
 I swim in too often without touching,
 and I don't see my grandfather's thumb, the one with nail intact
 scratching away his other arm's skin—
 small budding pools of liquid rubies
 emerging like drops of rain on him.
 I don't see my hands steady his hands,
 pulling him away from this excessive tick
 excessive boredom excessive pull to not be still.
 My sharp nails push out the unseen from any available pores
 on my face, arms, legs—hours later healing but appearing
 as damaged land, face skin shredding off in short coats
 like dirt deprived of everything but its thirst,
 the legs and arms looking bug-bitten for days after
 What has happened to me by me
 this landmass carries me wherever I demand
 yet a target for infliction
 The esthetician told me I have beautiful skin
 but I am hurting it and the skin reacts to protect itself
 in ways that are not always beautiful.

Sometimes bending before the mirror my hands hover
 and I say *stop hurting yourself*, but I never (before the mirror)
 call my tender voice, my voice which breathed those same words to my grandfather
 while I dabbed his blood, kissed his pure-bone bald head,
 and insisted he listen to what I said.

Mending Waters

I knew falling
 in a pool
 that is not there
 would take me away from here
 so I stopped hovering
 at the edge
 I knew the green-blue, brown-orange pit waters
 opening my living room floor
 could be good to me
 ask nothing but absorption
 but it is myself that wants to be absorbed
 so it will never work
 the same words you said to me
 after stepping over my edges
 into me for years
 boiling, cooling my blood-pool at your whim
 (which was fine)
 until at your whim you stepped out left me
 pooling out my own open offered blood
 which if my blood is going to continue to pool
 then there is no way I am capable of absorption even if I wanted to be

There is no way I am capable even if I wanted to be

 If my open-heart pools into the pool I am begging
 perhaps it doesn't have to absorb me but morph into river
 surround me temporarily allow my blood to pull
 and stain rising currents
 until pushed out

 to another
 edge

A Prior Cold

Before our walk, we weighed the greying brown
 caps to make a magic dust, smelling
 of unwashed flesh
 which we ate mixed in
 pudding cups. Full and bloated,
 we emerged in the woods, the two of us.
 The woods seeming unwashed, though washed,
 as it was mud-bogged by rain passed,
 its ground, a pit,
 a muddying open of self.
 Leafless trees and shrubs of Spring,
 edge of wood-line scanning cloth of my back—
 I tiptoed round in my golden crocs,
 companion walking straight ahead
 through mud-spine.
 And what did the sky look like then
 as we began? What blue was left?
 What clouds still shifted in what light?
 I looked too late, only to catch covered clouds
 drawn tight behind curtains
 of blue-black, grey—no white.
 The faraway mouth of the other end's wood:
 the sunset, purple-pink
 and the warm-cold feeling of entering
 into the animal's hidden trails.
 The day had been a day of sun
 accompanied by strong ropes
 of wind. Had the woods sung as we entered
 in? Had the branches shaken at
 our arrival? Now it is my friend
 filling in to inspect the trees, saying,
Finally, Wind, you have stopped. Not
a needle on the pines move.
 We stood still in that stillness, the empty,
 slowing, captured breeze
 us breathing out what might have been sadness,
 coming out in little laughs of relief,
 interrupted by formations of
 bird-song, frogs harmonizing in a
 single call. I thought of the one I loved,
 how I had no choice but to let him go
 how I had let him go only
 to search for him in patterns
 of bird-song...a flying over a distance

to meet a call. We did not see singing-birds
fly, and so my companion asked
what is it they are trying to say, 'feed me,
fuck me'? Love me like good company,
especially in the night?

I thought of the one I loved, how I had
let him go only to search for him
in patterns of the animal's hidden trails,
what slowly emerges in the wood.

At first the bats transformed our eyes
to believe they were moths, fat and toothless,
leaving the woods for house lights.
But in the sky, there were bats
swinging low on any slight strand of wind,
too low, toward the light of our eyes.
And so, we made ourselves low, too,
scrunched our knees and neck and back,
laughed when we felt calmer being lower,
screamed when the bats adjusted and dove,
sharp shadows dipping into us.
We ran but could not remember
how to get home but we got home
and when we did, we talked about fear
as it had cleared us like a pore of dirt
torn open by rain. We talked about
the sounds of bats, not their mouths squeaking,
but their wings flapping, the sound of a creature
when you enter its home, without warning,
without knowledge of fear of the unknown.
Later, I was to discover,
the earlier wind had moved quite quick,
eaten through my socks.
Already the toenail had turned black
from a prior cold which hangs beyond time.

Naturally

1.

First i felt her on my hands
 from where i had released her
 Then i felt her on my left calf gentle as lips not yet fully forming a kiss
 And how she immediately jumped from there to my right shoulder blade
 i don't know but i don't doubt her ability
 She lingered longest in my hair
 Though bound she weaved her way beneath it
 close to the heat of my scalp i didn't feel her weave in
 only felt her after when she decided to emerge
 send touches of herself across divergent constellation points of my face
 moving to the softest of my body, the ear lobes, one after the other
 now slinking back up my cheek, groping the nostril for leverage to climb my cartilage mountain
 She laid eggs in the nest of my hair
 at the base of my skull
 on my crown
 and all around the sphere of each ankle
 those are the places she settled
 but she also continues to travel
 the length of my arms simultaneously
 though long gone

II.

I am afraid to shake her eggs loose

III.

have I made a mistake after all in not killing her?

IV.

I had killed the one before her,
 felt her splatter in the decided force

of my made-fist felt my fear-repulsion
 splatter unexpectedly too

I have been killing spiders all my life
 but always for other people
 For my brother for our mother
 (who he took after) who woke in hotel rooms
 in the middle of the night shrieking spiders
 waving her hands at the corners of the ceilings
 When my father was alive he wouldn't even move his voice came out
 of him steadily *there's no spiders*
 but when there were i killed them for them

V.

Somehow the look on the face of my professor is
 superior to my midnight shrieking mother
 The sad quiet grave eyes and opened slowly closing mouth
 so much more unintentionally severe than scolding
 or commenting on the student who was my friend who removed his shoe swung hard
 and i mean hard compressing the spider to red pulp on white wall quicker than an instant
 this same friend who I remember catching a moth perfectly
 between index finger and thumb

This same friend who brought his girlfriend and me
 to his poetry reading read a poem written for me
 nothing for her giving her and me nothing to say
 Were we afraid he'd swat us away?

VI.

The woman at the bar
 (my father had been her highschool teacher)
 with the face not perfect but with nothing at all wrong with it
 a face i could hold in my lap
 Her ex boyfriend was a drug addict too he used her kindness and patience against her too
 She had a face i could hold in my lap and I think she wanted me to

which is why both of us continued to cancel on one another
 week after week after week

VII.

had i made a mistake
 all the times i took the chance

of killing her?

VIII.

Most spinnerets are not simple
structures
not a single orifice
producing a single thread—
but complex
structures
many
microscopic
spigots

IX.

Was the spider even female
Did i miss-see her?

X.

How many spiders crawl across the cover of my father's casket
and how can my mother not see them

XI.

She was amazing really resourceful brave resilient picking right up where the last epigyne had been spotted and splattered—her cephalon, her thorax like a punctured microscopic paintcan staining the cloth curtain napkin shielding the wall of my hands which made me cringe because i had killed her for me and no-one else

When she saw me coming she began to ascend but i caught her and some of her web
 When i tossed her off the balcony she descended seamlessly on her own silk landed
 in the grass when i cut the line still connected to me
 But

i could still
feel her

In an Apartment Complex, Living Alone

Screams of a man and woman
from the other side of the wall

venom messages muffled—
sounds passing through solids

exaggerating the fact their screams
are trapped together in an enclosed

box. A man lives there.

I have seen him
with a woman twice before, different

women.
The rain hammering outside

changes

the color of everything, the beige exterior walls

no longer beige
but grey-green

from rain pulling
mosses—itsself

across anything extruding.
I make a habit of sleeping

in the living room
with the cats
near the windows

closest to the debris
out there. Thunder comes

now and again
a churning sea

lifted and thrown
against what protects

us. Lonely from listening and thinking nothing

but I am inside quiet and I can rest.

the screaming stops in a myriad of rolling
crashes, the screaming stops from body

or words
either, both,

extensions of one
another

and later, waking me—
the moaning.

Texts never sent

idk y but i can't stop thinking about that
2 yr old boy I nvr met a childhood
friends nephew who has her face &
her brothers face the boys father
who i met once while bartending
i say met once bc before we had never
spoken but now here he was noticing me my tits
having a look on his face like he shouldnt go there
i wasnt a shy 11 year old anymore afraid of everyone
i am a woman thinking about being a mother
aching because this boys father cant take back
a 10 minute frame of time a single decision
a single split absence which led to the 2 yr old
standing on the floor of a tractor between the
knees of a drunk cousin he was there one second
and gone the next i cant stop thinking about that
how a second before that second before that second
the boy in his two yr old voice tried to pronounce but
exclaimed Tractor! Bird! Sky!

Living Room Nap

The surging, chugging dishwasher takes the job off your hands
 rumbles methodically, more so than ocean
 the weak afternoon light in December
 the book beneath the glasses in their case
 the cold coffee tries for your lips again
 the cats alternate their visits, offering warmth, stripping it
 the varied softness of their fur between fingertips subconsciously interrogates the words
 'silk', 'velvet'
 her roaring fluttering throat
 her white chin smaller than thumb-span
 her lips naturally upturned, a resting smile, and her eyes gently sealed shut
 the whispering motor of his soot throat, his rolling galaxy-black body when he settles down
 he places his tile-cold paw-pads on your own hand, as if in matrimony.

You wish it would rain and in your dreams, it comes.

Postcards Never Sent from Iceland

August 26, 2018

Graffiti Image of a Light Green Man with Antlers Kissing the Neck of a White, Dark-Haired Woman Who Looks Like Me. She's Wearing Yellow.

Right now your eyes are so blue-green when I picture you standing in my boarding house room against the white walls peeking around the blackout curtains looking into cold sharp daylight like the flashlight of someone trapped beneath clear ice in Caribbean waters scattered light dancing from the current made by the barely moving person, the drowned. We shower together beneath sulphur-scented sprinkles. There isn't enough room to fuck in here, and there are people in the hallway, waiting, but your eyes are so goddamn green-blue right now I desperately suck you, and your eyelids shut over the waters. When you finish, I'll wrap you in towels, then scarves and a winter coat. I'll buy you a bread bowl of soup.

August 27, 2018

Hallgrímskirkja with Anatomical Hearts Shoved Through Each Geometric Peak. Blood Trickles Down Each Peak, Sporadically Staining the Tower. Some Hearts' Blood Don't Reach the Bottom And You Can See Where Their Bleeding Begins and Ends. Others Bleed All the Way to the Bottom and You Can't See If the Blood Stops. I Don't Know What the Pavement Looks Like but There's Probably Some god at the Bottom Drinking All the Dripping Blood.

Do you miss me back home? Of course you do, you love me, and I've been gone two months. You almost obsessively like that other girl's pictures because you miss me so much. I don't wake up constantly from panic attacks that permeate into day because I'll be home soon. I won't think about this four years into the future because it doesn't matter.

I'm not lonely traveling alone. I offer to take other tourists' pictures, so I'll have someone to take my picture, too. Your pictures of me always make me look fat, but you don't mean to do this, I know. If you were here, I'd take pictures of tourists, so they'd offer to take pictures of you and me. Of us. If the pictures were of us, I might not even care that I look fat, but then again, I might because I know I'm not enough.

August 28, 2019

A Picture Taken of Water and Mountains from on Top of a Hill in Reykjavik. There Are Telephone Wires in the Sky and Streetlights Directly in Line with the Mountains Behind Them. On One of the Telephone Poles, There's a Missing Cat Flyer that I Call Cause I Think I Saw the Cat but the Phone Just Keeps Ringing

I got to see all of the women on my tour naked! What a joy! Women came with their husbands— young wives, and middle-aged wives, one old grandmother with her daughter and granddaughter. A couple young women came with their boyfriends. A few women came alone, too, like me. I'm catching glimpses of them all naked and they're catching glimpses of me. My body feels like the Gullfoss Waterfall broken open and erupting for everyone's admiration. At this time I hate my body, but I love showing someone what I really look like. I love seeing them, too. I know you know I hate my body, so maybe I'm not really writing this to you anymore. Looking back, I know I'll think my body is beautiful in these pictures (where I did it for the Gram, but maybe also for me) and I'll hate the body that's doing the looking back. Even though I hate my body now, too, it's different in the hot springs, the steaming water is just like the cold mists at

Gulfoss, existent, exposed, hovering in open air until completely vaporized or condensed. Maybe you're not really here, but I've thought of you so much I think maybe my love tore some of you away from where you are, and part of you is here, now, with me. I'm treading hot, black waters. I'm talking to an old married couple who also tread these waters. They're telling me about their home.

Debris

I.

I've stuck my body upright through
 your cold chute, miles above all you shift—
 down below, my love's hand points to identify
 what is still intact: fields of Flowering Octopus Cacti,
 unflowered, sinuously spread, dusted grey by its white
 spines. Its invisible heart-red tubulars, heart-red swells of fruits
 sag close to thorns—her hand reaches toward it—
 the heart-red drops—bleeding fingertips, wrist: the color of her lips.

II.

Jackrabbits rustle soundlessly falling through miles of you
 They scuttle through all you scatter: Mesquite grasslands, mimosa
 strigillosa, leaves, seeds slit by others' teeth, through twigs, and prickly pears.
 They nibble my heart, the greening fruit of her beheaded hand.
 They hold us in their innocent teeth.

III.

I want to be the nectar the Hummingbird seeks
 not the hole it unthinkingly flitters through
 but a cavern filled with feathers
 to be flown out of—always flown back to.
 —I want the wooded-skeleton
 beneath thorned skin
 which only you can expose.
 I offer up my bones for birds to excavate.
 I've always wanted my contours to be pecked to your liking.
 Make me a place for something living to lie down in.
 Make me a place for a family made by instinct alone.
 Or make me the flying-through itself,
 let me clutch your shoulders, unfurl your wings
 slice through, scatter the living, the newly dead.

IV.

I am studying the decaying Saguaros alone
 to get close to you.

