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## The poem will resemble you: A human-computer collaboration

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### Recommended Citation

Morgan-Weinman, Zoe M., "The poem will resemble you: A human-computer collaboration" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 254.

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Bard

# The poem will resemble you

A human-computer collaboration

a senior project submitted to  
the Division of Languages and Literature of Bard College

by Zoe Morgan-Weinman

Annandale-On-Hudson, NY  
May 2018

## Acknowledgements

This project is entirely a product of everyone who has ever taught, mentored, loved, encouraged, or challenged me - more names than can fit on one page.

I would like to thank my parents for showing me the world and reading me books. Everything I accomplish is possible only in that I carry all of your examples within me and strive to be half as kind, hardworking, and wise.

I would like to thank my advisor, Michael Ives, for starting me out as a poet, putting up with my project, and for teaching me the meaning of meaning.

I would like to thank my advisor, Susan Rogers, for taking me to save frogs and watch birds and imparting the importance of dawn.

I would like to thank all of my teachers for doing the most important job in the world.

I would like to thank my younger siblings, Lev, Liora, Max, and Eli, for your unconditional love and patience and the honor of making some mistakes that someday may help you make different ones and my older sister, Morgan, for being my best friend/ fun mom/ storage unit.

I would like to thank my Bronfman community for inspiring, supporting, and constantly amazing me. You were the first to hear me read a poem aloud and you asked me to share another. Lili, Matthew, Mikaela, I'm so humbled by your brilliance and treasure every moment I've had discussing questions, both earth-shattering and trivial with you.

I would like to thank my girlfriend, Juliana, for being the warmest thing in my life. Thank you for letting me write poems about you and for being gentle, and wild, and brave. Because of you, my senior project be creative and do beautiful mountains to success.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Sam Truitt and Linda Steubesand, for patiently showing me how to function in the professional world and helping me reach for my wildest ambitions.

I would like to thank my friends for adventures and tenderness and sharing your amazing art and talents with me. Even though none of you said you would still love me if I got a mullet, I do feel creatively supported by all of you.

I would like to thank my grandparents for your contributions and encouragement in my endeavors, and for your stories and pictures.

I would like to thank my cousin Ellen for being my example of an unapologetic woman in the arts in New York City. Your successes but also your ability to remain true, humble, and passionate are the bar against which I hope to measure my own career.

## Preface

If poetry is considered to be fundamentally a form of written art that emanates from the human experience and emotional world, what does it mean if a computer can write poetry that is indistinguishable from that of a human poet? There are those who are interested in exploring the notion that computers might one day possess the capacity to feel. Though this may be a goal of artificial intelligence research, computers are not currently thought to be capable of conscious awareness. That being said, I am less committed to exploring the possibility of a digital emotional sphere than in a second speculation: that the ability of a computer to write poetry could point to a valuable process of imaginative generativity through acts of randomness. The reader of a computer-generated poem, as with any poem, makes the emotional and logical connections necessary to find the work meaningful. The only difference is that a human-generated poem has meaning imbued into it with intention while a computer's poetry is only given meaning by the human audience after it has been created. True randomness, itself, is a contested possibility. If the poet's language and the words that fall from the computer's giant universe of knowledge in truth issue from some common fountain, perhaps the processes of arranging them into poems are simply different kinds of random acts. In this case, the human poet is only more relevant than the electronic one insofar as the poet could, perhaps, if asked, comment as to the process behind their work.

In an effort to explore both the definitions of poetry and of the poet as well as the concept of randomness, I have created this collection using a bit of Python code that generates "randomized" "poetry" from a corpus I compiled in an ongoing process of adding and collecting. The corpus contains an assemblage of text pieces that I hoped would represent my own consciousness, in order for the poems to differ from my own as much as possible only in that they were not in fact written by me. It includes, more than thirty books, among which are selections from the Torah, *Moby Dick*, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, *A Brief History of Time*, and *Metamorphosis*. Several articles from the New York Times, posts found on my Facebook newsfeed, all my old poetry and some of my college essays, the text from several placards at various art museums, and sections of the Talmud are also sprinkled throughout. The code uses bigrams to generate text in which words that appeared next to each other in the corpus will be more likely to appear together in the "poems." This is to give the "poems" a better chance at being grammatically correct, as well as to create the semblance of voice. This voice, character, or flow is vital in order to avoid the poems sounding simply like a list of words. It is possible to teach computers grammar but, for this stature of this project, I relied instead on bigrams and my own editing. I also fed the poems in this collection back through the code individually to create computer-generated sections that serve as mirrors of their own content. Any given line in this collection may be entirely my own, entirely computer-generated, or a mix of the two but all was human-edited and curated.

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the idiom unloads a season:  
 "oh, god" or the eminent piece, my hanging havoc  
 I would have given up  
 or into  
 onto  
 the floor  
 so totally interrogated by critics  
 imagine what you can see looking back through doors you've already opened

walking where one has already  
 congratulating oneself on just what we do  
 keeping the months only kind of  
 all this spraying of lovers with the arbitrary jargon

meanwhile I, briefly a scholar and nearly having lost it near the Garden  
 mysterious no longer  
 feeling a bit like a mature giant tortoise  
 watched as the world slipped and hung off,  
 dangling by the northern Pacific Ocean  
 I remember when it was born from those sacred words  
 and to these I had adhered  
 until recently: the longer of seventeen  
 her colors/ household  
 she crested  
 wave-form, reached the evening  
 and withdrew back  
 the room, with its peculiar whims  
 meant to see the window  
 where she might come again  
 or perhaps at the door holding a violin

see the world slipped and, nearly having lost it, was born  
 she might be sacred  
 the styptic piece  
 the "oh, God"

everything was burning

any lower farewell rolls under a heart  
analyzing, exegizing  
everything stopped

within the unrealistic ground where there lay buried questions  
and next to them, fear

a static chain hashing a tangent analog alongside the prone form  
of something tangled

and in the middle of the fever, the steady pulsing of blood  
small indentations we press and forget

everything stood perfectly still



the curiosity awakened  
so far beyond any particular wrongs  
or implications

the laws that govern society  
and the softer corners in which they cannot  
reach

as long as there existed an inequality  
there remained a desire to find things with  
our mouths

the women endowed with courage or  
vulnerability  
or divergence  
or hair  
since generalized education have been  
branching into barred rooms,  
sliding headlong into potentialities  
and sensibilities –

above all, shouting into the wallpaper  
these disastrous discussions  
then licking the edges and sealing them shut  
for so long as we have as many votes  
as there are men

lake water, vomit  
the pink granules of  
fruit punch mix  
disintegrate and  
absorb to fuel  
this dying animal  
always starving

when you mention  
fatherhood  
we happen to drive  
past a plaque com-  
memorating the village founder  
He built this fence

once congress  
had been reduced  
to flesh in a pile, and  
rarely if ever  
a blank head struggling to raise  
they set about to destroy  
their molten idols  
and demolish their high places  
their popular opinion  
their property and rites

the naming of oneself  
Moment/Agency  
as a \_\_\_ who killed a person unintentionally  
the cities you designate for yourselves  
are replete with dirty water  
roses unrebuked

hers is a peculiar sort of speculative genius  
she is mortal, granted, but lacking physical fetters  
strict and quickly moving  
she is an act of multiple souls  
she found as clearly as she could  
not just a parachute but a carapace  
something to shed

this animal-like curse of watergazers  
enveloped us in a good and clumsy mutual capacitance  
amazed at first she too would be lying here

I want to sleep in ribbons  
to find as clearly as she would  
a good and quickly-moving cover  
something which fastens but does not constrict

a marvelous cloud cover  
spread over the city like wool -  
some dangerous pump, I think, indulging  
a pelotage-continuum fantasy

well outfitted and unalone  
we got used to ocean waves  
ponytails subsided into the old persians  
their fringed edges  
splaying vulnerably and melding

our frozen and sandy feet carried us  
to the doorway - warm  
but mother was careful to shut it quick  
we washed our ears in the sea before supper  
sustained on all that saltwater carried

the hills never sat upright  
they sloped and leaned yellow

at last, I dwell in people,  
in that I can know:  
je suis, je m'appelle, j'adore...

baby leatherbacks moved across damp sand  
the mizzle breathing also onto achimenes  
leaves jumped against the window  
dozing, she came to an understanding  
of why we use stones

the wind turned around  
growling across this almost vertical face  
a mountain that served as a suffix  
as if she let the noble creature breathe

the wind buried her  
not with malice  
but with the indifference of a heavy inheritance  
it did to her hair what it does to the sand dunes

the north clustered  
on her innermost soul  
the way stars  
settled into furrows when she dreamt

we measure space in silence  
stare into each other's  
eyes: grand, hooded phantoms

a long-lensed digital camera snapped the wind  
then, finding an expanse to the left  
was painfully insistent on  
locking in on curves rather than lines  
and again threatened her name  
I am nothing  
I am nothing  
I am nothing  
I will not let the consequences of it into my time of violence  
helpless, assigning blame for something beautiful  
the bone of a broken elbow points back home  
I cannot subsist on that which is bitter and hot  
even pity requests a way through the chest's junky fill

this evening,  
she returned home under  
the usual sky  
above: a heavenly  
opening  
of rising  
and abatement

she knows  
the reason  
the hidden  
kept her  
silent

she knows  
it will steal  
from her  
hold her  
from the last revelation

She?  
She

climbed up  
a valley  
where she  
has no sense  
of holding  
or breathing

completely still  
eyes shut

not a silence  
not a  
singularity

this is not death  
she says  
it does not begin without ending  
like a ball of thread  
it is not brilliant  
I have simply  
fallen asleep



today I saw the sea  
go grey in my left eye  
and blue in my right

the wind I coaxed to bring in  
a message or a sound or a floating medal

between the red hut  
where Aristotle saw the hectocotyli  
and proper procreation

maybe a thud  
but all the cave heard for eons  
was about being pulled down  
into marrying up

that sort of oil and vinegar  
joining  
without mixing

our boat sat light upon the waves  
the warm wood pressed down upon the sea

our cells tasted the edge of the hours  
and our bones found new orders of movement  
clearer than light but slower

we spotted the coast  
or the sloped back of a sleeping leviathan  
for a moment, it looked like hands

no shame or euphemisms  
could incite the beast to violence:  
in heaven, no one gets hungry  
and those who waited for signs  
who fought urges and denied themselves  
remained below, stiff as the doors they locked tight

in a terrible urge each day  
a fever cruises the fingers  
the uncontrolled way her arms spread out  
moving her dangerous creaturehood

it is still a good morning to raise the north star  
modestly dressed and already at the Wall,  
we see nothing  
and for that  
the closed-eyed God  
loves us so

seeking under Jerusalem's ribs  
we are fragile, virile, and on the floor  
employees, actions not our own  
but coordinating the conclusion  
athirst in forced seclusion  
we roll bone dice 🎲🎲🎲🎲🎲🎲

may both the marriage moving this will  
and her picture hang in the celestial sphere  
sentences the wall said but did not tell the rabbi  
her chest, her closed eyes  
already at the water, parting

they became agitated back in the homeland  
evening talk, the moon,  
a beautiful plastic movement of finality  
a sound  
sleepwalking for the good man  
whose face is everywhere and removed from her  
a hiding lath  
watching from the walls, having become their very boards,  
his least resistance deigns to lets her smoke indoors  
of all the ways he owns his monsters,  
inventing her name was easiest  
it came to him in a dream  
he thought, the highest gods' creation being mine own feet  
he crouched, said please and stood at the mountaintop  
experienced pride, the cleaner irritability  
a life has a few square miles  
the ranch provided the parameters for his consciousness  
the cattle of his dim preferences grazed undisturbed  
but her quarters flooded  
she must pay her body against the riverbed,  
the premises, and mr. thinking  
his head was the only dimension  
and she became agitated, remembered  
the sound the moon used to make  
their joint acoustic funeral  
was all the more wasted  
for its asynchronism

she was simply a sailor  
straight from the name of I am that I am  
her boat slipped  
from the sky's sapphire pavement  
tumbled down the Nile  
was diverted in a flood  
to these cold grey waters

her smudged maps and charts  
began to repeat themselves,  
she could only derive righteous lies from the alphanumeric code  
these documents she carried with her being so exceptionally fastidious  
had any person come near her waters  
they may have thought her a zealot  
or a light-headed sage

she had set off within her little room  
carrying the family in silver amulets  
to find it had entirely stopped speaking to her  
the habits to be acquired she would not like  
and yet in bed each night with them  
her body was a factory, churning,  
unable to cease whispering in its own ear

they say the key to the mind is fresh air  
but sailing in circles, finding no friendly port,  
freezing, unable to wear the skin she carried  
she became exhausted  
her waters, her body stopped speaking  
she would think each night with the little room in her  
of galut, that Egypt of the mind

corn husks floating in the tide pools  
lured two mudskippers  
their eyeballs skimming the surface  
indeed a microarray, and all those traits  
drove more finless, fading, drowned  
the thieves would have to  
love without means of navigation  
and seemingly lie there flat  
the reflection of air traversing above them  
the sunshine might belong  
to the sterile crawling about it  
fish befriend round numbers  
innocent of problems or striving  
the man who sat on that rock  
I suspect had forgotten he had already freed himself

in better times, out in front and as revenge,  
coequality killed three anniversaries  
seventeen non-theatrical homes  
thirteen non-discoverable malpractitioners,  
researchers in the field of the hyperlink  
played murder and sang their misfortune  
thirty fun-loving comrades,  
(people caused by the helplessness that God is)  
were horseman unaccustomed to activities or agents known as “comprehensive”  
ninety-seven of the ways of late summer  
became a force one sits and looks at for some time  
exquisitely wired, they glowed like gold  
seven company men climbed Half-Dome  
or the top of fame (we cannot speak of this)  
nor can we of father, that evening, or other employment opportunities  
forty-eight cigars, legally acquired in the United Kingdom  
comprised a loan used to buy a few hours  
the nine officers attached to the case  
by themselves and with the intention of another report  
in combating some being, as it glanced against the doorframe  
and appeared before them dead and covered in graphite  
found that the horrible remains largely unmysterious  
and relatively quantifiable

a radio station came and went somewhere along the road,  
said that “framing” describes feeling a body like measuring  
a problem of slowing in place  
we get dressed for the funeral to earn the memory  
one of the many great distances that sour and bite  
the high stiff collar of suckers  
we discuss cancer to accept his restive peace  
the processing plant went unreported  
due to the deftness in tightening factors  
of humans the formless coast pulled with careful aim



in order to travel through hypnoses  
take your mark, reradiate

misconstrued knitters of the universal tablecloth  
undertook evolution, and after that a cloak for it  
all else that were just elbows and counting  
morning and heat and work going global  
held and alive

they plunge their hands into death and return  
they make slow a chain of nice disturbance  
the unseen exhibit, the pose

they welcome greed and medicate discomfort  
on behalf of having the sheets' thick envelope of warmth

rushing to spread out, to sort  
these high dignitaries  
they feel bad  
they suspect the sky or some European country  
or perhaps Canadians flooded their kisser,  
their only veil for love

au revoir most untinned precertification at dusk

Dorian Gray eyes, the mouth all playing, the dead just catch

lower lip configuration carrying yes by thank you or something phallic

subdued voice: do you want water? we will be got

significant cold cell issue as introductory lobby or active principle

nonaspirates either catalyzed un-envy or thine ghostlike fax

asclepiads, cyclists, and shoppers on the Palace Green  
move quickly, recognizing without signage or labels

nepotism is law and I find myself not in the family  
though well able to blend in  
this melting pot city - strangely stirred  
not only by way of pedestrian's determined strides  
but by a notion of beasts at the door

the traffic has the right of way  
and fisheries which did business with Balfour  
keep their ice, though feebly

when asked to explain myself  
I say cocktails  
at the end of  
and between meals  
gin, of course

shouting, whispers, holy reckoning  
how odd the change in the weather

rain falls wearily against hair and headscarves alike  
spectacles speculate a la mode, watching stitches  
to see whether they crossed and when

An island is not only an island.  
The grid overwrites national borders.

I poured flour on the ground to see your footprints.  
You exist most potently in all those spaces you've left empty.

My devil's tongue virtue wakes up in a cold sweat  
dreaming of how, with your word, the world opened up in my room.

Miles work the mind flat like rolling pins,  
they pour me into the seabed.

These stretches as destiny, you cried, "keep it!"  
There is a terror of sharks disproportionate to their danger -

it is not their dark eyes nor jagged teeth,  
but their inability to remain still.

Our tentative spine,  
as we grow it stretches, bulges,

bone spurs and herniated joints constrict.  
I've woken up in so many spaces,

grids, footprints.  
My time is a Fresnel zone.

I pronate ellipsoidal,  
obsess over distance and time.

condensation on the windows on the 49 to White City  
smears the city into a red glow,  
drips London at the corners  
he flattens his coiffure with headphones  
to focus on his magazine:  
stolen donkeys and  
spoons of medicine that fit together like people  
on this ample block  
the wood, transported in all that ever was and now and the time before  
the smell of malt vinegar and rain  
so clear they had to mediate it with birds that flew in a cloud like exhaust  
he wonders if he can still be a pilot  
sand or gravel crunches under the tires  
he cannot  
is a pursuer of civilization and should be seen firing into it  
was a god  
is there and if he rose up  
did so with large quantities of money  
that indeed several months ago upon the lower bedpost  
allowed not sleeping  
the breadth of his head now all of the basement  
the normal swimming position  
getting somewhere in place  
asked to please not be extremely harsh  
with gleams of his rapid eyes  
he wonders if he can still be seen firing into a cloud  
all of his head now all of civilization  
and the smell  
they fit together like exhaust

when the swan pond starts to look like a nice dip  
the swimming vision has reached dangerous saturation  
the static along the periphery will begin to snow

someone is crying about glue  
substance and might in repose  
a series of primary brushstrokes  
seldom specificity  
glitter clasped in the nostrils  
suggesting a vortex

a hankering city  
a grabbed handful  
of irrelevant millions  
lived to tell the tale of a house  
in history's waxy grip  
a thought of valor made it modern  
or merely made it shine in the morning  
dipped in gypsum plaster and sand

The amphibologies that keep half breathing  
in their blindfolded sleep training methods  
harden off the neritic shore of Eure-et-Loir.

The younger one in front, evolved  
into long periods of static  
and praised the genius of robbers.

It's a two-person bluff, a few modest pleasures  
of a militant never dying worm  
alive and in possession of the day.

There was a new way into the hedge  
between the body and the other body,  
which foresaw that the once prescribed

menacing voice would feel the physical law of years,  
old knitters of the never flat sand trap.  
they were intelligent children, but that's about it.

cummerbund snivel picked nannyberries  
 unpoised ninety Olympic reclimb subpreputial  
 plopped Brooklyn in this unseasonable  
 state pressed to go somewhere near south toward  
 delineation heavy for avoiding ambiguity about art

each being descended from truth  
 flatters in secret acrostic of the few happinesses  
 a two-hour reprieve at the frontlines of a lover's quarrel  
 Niagara but at night, another top-heavy galaxy hangup  
 a thought that would provide more would be foolish  
 and clearly with a keen interest / question to ask:  
 what's more often skinned than left-hand pushed?

that which remained cold or  
 rooms rapidly and numbly found  
 beauty, some blossoms from the laws  
 eating anything to civilize the teeth

this way out and carried off  
 where formerly was kept a superior smile in the Philippine islands  
 perdition finally gave say to copy  
 all the despair that thing  
 tried to earn an axe to clear vanity

syntactic stairs finished their conversation well  
 and western hemispheres: the very deep or very southward got up and  
 on collectable mugs along fleet street  
 had wanted to leave but never did



a self-forgetful semi-pro plagiarist  
used to remember names  
a crack in a long figure stretched out  
ready to become someone who climbs  
slipped out of the area in a nightdress  
didn't quite make it to the stairs  
mournful gloom brooding over those steps  
perfectly cold, open, and faltering  
a nature continuous from parents through the night  
father picked up every toppled bike in Amsterdam

a trainee at home if not a something of a memoir  
nine kinds of the self that runs  
a touch of the first told at the end for this establishment  
goodbye feet

knowledge rather sharply peaked with the backward  
shocking what we were  
what we kept trying to complete  
very remote in seriousness  
clusters of cowardice  
obvious relief in the garden on that particular morning  
the savior couldn't attend

leaves sprout early this year -  
the fig and warm sunlight  
generating jobs and uncertainty

the ground under the conservatory -  
how it was drawn into the sounds  
of the after-dinner face

an abyss of slowing but not helping -  
the way Saturn breaks softly  
and the maids split and everything goes silent

she sat upright filled with oh covered with  
the secret, the not known  
the room where there was all her

any real woman / atmosphere  
cannot be one in the hand

trailing fingers paint it as it might be  
till the sky into illuminated furrows  
drip calligraphy onto the Hudson

even through a screen she is warm  
like sunlight

after all the different lives and quarrels  
you kiss me like a windrose – north first  
like smoke you come nearer, crawl closer

as the harsh gold light of a day's final movement glows in leaves  
I watch a brachial artery throb  
illuminated, the veins bake warm, yielding  
vetiver works into the tips of our hair

traceries of shadows cast by monarch wings  
lengthen toward the sun  
as violets murmur our bodies into clay  
tiny insects zoom, glowing sine and cosine on the horizon

these translucent petals burn  
to allow the eye  
at any given moment  
to see all colors at once  
and separately

imagine the layers of Earth's crust  
are an indulgence,

solarizing various carpogonia  
begat a choanoflagellate begat a sea sponge begat a cnidarian  
predefining revulsion  
of any hanging, drooping femininity  
before poacher's abscessed bodies  
padded any cell  
she rounded infinitely

left boy/boys in the valley where they hunted  
holding within her the swaying vein, the world

this was, long-course,  
nothing but a dream

she was cursed to be only  
absolutely silent knowingness

striking upon a quiet as deep as a womb  
while nerves and land happened

There is the her that I know  
and there is the entity within her:

massive, fathomless  
the beauty in that which is unbearable

not an abyss but  
a universe.

And she -  
immeasurable

we erase backwards:  
being → becoming → nonbeing

draw the Leviathan's suckers like  
orange slices to make them less terrifying

*tu es*

*tu as*

their blood in the water  
or  
there's blood on my fingers

in this murky sea, I lose my feet  
and then my hands

*The son of heaven*

They used to carve beautiful shapes into their guns  
Men/tools/war/art died glorious and unending deaths  
These pillars of bodies  
defied their formal limitations  
Hunting, inspecting the territories,  
hooves marked time on hardstone  
Uniforms with seamless shoulders  
marched past the sheep that lined the spirit way  
stood like 62 vertically riveted plates

The creature would arrive soon in the delicate village  
The monster's bloody shoulders like lamps hanging  
Hellish light and the reincarnation  
shone through doors standing ponderously ajar  
Weakness, that feeling made of eyes,  
circled like vultures and the goods they ferry

another chief concern was whether life was going to be like muscle tissue  
or a bit more forgiving  
when she didn't run everything felt a bit less certain

the various allergies of her family members sat in her forehead as red boxes  
along with the rules of monopoly and risk  
the nearest fire station and the rough grass that hid the biting ants

*Wood chips: a nonlinear history*

her body warms in the sun  
the watering can sitting unused  
among the leaves, concrete, hair  
reconciles its new position  
with regard to a multi-function garden hose  
her hands had been soft and wrinkled

she spent her time in the garden quietly  
as her hands turned the soil her mind grazed gently on faraway beaches a baby girl

when she was younger she  
focused on her future daughter  
she would have golden ringlets  
and they would eat what they grew  
and swim where they lived

in church they sang about  
a way up and a tipping point  
and what she knew about men

she wondered about lust  
and whether our holy parents  
only love us because we look like them



*It's so embarrassing to mistake a human for a seal*

invisible sharks spent most  
of their hard-earned tooth money  
off the western side of Bora Bora  
suffering, forgetting their own language

eager for that still-pending September testimony  
as if the sight would make capital  
the punishment of seeing that which one has destroyed  
begin to scab over

they escaped with all the rags of an internet scammer  
their stomachs filled with partially digested SPAM  
and pineapple juice  
they want you to know they're not always hurtful

*Cycle of Toxicity*

The boy elapsed within his bedroom.  
Strangeness stirred in his breath.  
He watched his life from an aerial view -  
landmasses were figures  
defined most nearly by what we mean when we say collateral.  
They became smaller.  
They became mere blotches of color.  
He was little more than jangling keys,  
scraped ankle bones,  
thought processes behind the lying face,  
the void stare.  
The maps he made of his world encompassed a matter of yards  
or measured by an indifferent Orion,  
just visible over the shore's mucous membrane.  
He governed graciously the little choruses  
while his mother became the upstairs window.  
A luminous absence,  
she decided the life he suckled from her breasts would never return.  
And he grew, an arrow shot with kingly pride.  
He became every man she'd ever hated.

*Parental linguistics*

working-class people who rent their way into the camp life  
not farmers but they do burn offerings  
drifting idly along the surface of religion  
they profess to crawling under the windows  
so the neighbors won't know they're home  
a contractor falls into the unfinished pool  
all the myths of physicality  
evaporated as they awaited a helivac  
they were inmates of the dollar  
of partially hydrogenated soybean oil

\*

children in Cameroon can sit by themselves  
close their eyes and create the world anew  
a psychologist thinks it's because  
their parents are always where they say they'll be  
and they never lie, never create false rewards

but I think it's a question of grammar:  
first the idea of flying  
and then the thing that flew

*Unreasonable noise*

a shame you  
wore pajamas to court  
not guilty by virtue  
of lime or arsenic

know your riot act  
your age, home  
address, eye color

eyes that hold like  
loose fishnets  
long legs in the  
grey lightning

don't knock  
just slip under  
these blank sheets

no straight lines  
in our pay-per-genesis  
re-creation as revision  
as ashes to  
ask me another question  
but tell me  
the answer first

*The summer language*

the seed targets its bed under the cheek garden  
tights, ripped at the Achilles, stretch further  
to water alyssum, marigolds, succulents planted in honey jars  
and explosions of air plants in glass warheads

eggshells filled with sesame oil and milk  
lean balanced on humane mousetraps  
cashews and other nuts secreting fear  
opposite the outstanding rash -  
a tingling in the throat

each cricket pencils the furthest quantum  
their stridulation is small-scale  
and reminds us that "leap"  
describes neither proportion nor zeal

*Suppose she is*

the sea that drives against the shore  
foams on the rocks and presses  
between every grain  
that goes back into the sky  
into the clouds  
when it recedes  
gathers itself, it patiently  
and eternally pulses  
it plunges back to Earth  
it washes the rocks  
bathes them in salt, minerals  
microscopic and exfoliating arthropods

the sea is a void  
the sea is absolutely teeming

there is no logic  
there is flawless design

perfection, sinking nor floating  
suppose she is pure feeling  
nothing more

suppose she is  
patiently and absolutely teeming  
a feeling of flawless design  
every grain is microscopic and crashes up  
suppose it is pure  
a nothing eternally pulsing,  
recedes, gathers,  
it rains,  
presses between perfection,  
suppose she is the sound of water moving

*Deuteronomy 34: Moses sees the promised land then dies, aged 120 years*

a weather sword hums across the sky as through butter  
sails filled with wind, the voices of a chorus

the last prophet lay dying  
oxygen exiting the form of one who was perfect in his generation  
herding another national aggregate  
he walked under God

dips and valleys, fiddling within our intimate flesh  
it had all become corrupted

the stone walls are held together with only their own mass  
the throat that burned but was neither consumed nor extinguished  
plastered eternally shut

a heritage overflowing and a tiny ark  
throughout the golden and famous household  
disappointing attributes echo  
they walk in two's

*The new Messiah*

He was, as he saw it, a Messiah:  
there would be a new Exodus  
and from it would arise the nuclear family in all its glory.  
He brought down a hailstorm of unplugged time,  
and new couches, bigger couches.  
But there arose a professional,  
disguising the opposite plague,  
a pond that did not part.

The Messiah's ambition  
was tall enough to corral within six million square miles.  
We will be that noble herd.

God made a little golden key,  
and between the last three reputable acquaintances,  
it seemed necessary for, not a paper reading,  
but to speak (I never do).  
The question ignored pluralities.  
As prisoner I wanted nothing with little or golden fleeces.  
It is neither difficult nor exhausting to ignore willfully.

Altars, the greatest fury, the hall of this truth,  
our father's forehead was swollen with doctrine and good intentions.  
Why can't the decreasing ice evolve a nastier culprit?  
A razor exploded in the tube.  
There were no casualties except perhaps a small dog  
or a carton of double-yolker eggs.



*Bowl with Citation from Mishna Zevahim*

the birds, knowing the rain,  
praise lightly like its falling  
a twist-stemmed vessel has roots  
in the earth's dark and breathing corners  
her obfuscating concavities  
that keep truths from us  
hiding ⚡, hiding ⚡  
hiding dawn  
*bound and sealed are the demons and Liliths  
their blood is received in a vessel of ministry*

*The handmaid's son*

the handmaid's son cannot sleep tonight  
his mind holds his mother as she wanders the desert  
the unleavened bread in her arms  
crumbling, mixing into the sand  
he is alone  
looks at the hair on his arm in the sodium vapor lamp  
he thinks they stand like people  
if only they weren't so dark, so dense

the constraining number stares back  
that is, besides bulls, rams, lambs  
there is a he-goat  
a spirit of satisfaction  
functioning outside the integral surplus  
the persistent ideal  
and crystallized disappointment  
is left behind

this governing mathematics:  
the desert winds that take the shape of women  
a well dug by her merit  
and her name, hidden in the numbers  
there is no word for what it is to give  
in the very rare absence of requitability calculation

do you speak to God  
as you speak to me?

*Moisture, an unstable airmass, a lifting force*

when I touch her  
the rain comes down in droves  
we don't hear it until we fall silent

breathing  
she tells me I'm a two-fer  
I cut through the jungle brush

to see whether her eyes  
will show me what that means  
she goes around with an Opinel no. 8 -

olive wood, and it's greener every day  
a creation of goodnature, an open palm  
no man can shake, only the tides

I hold on to her and a wave hits  
all she's got on  
is a soccer jersey

and the people who can save us  
really just want to watch  
sometimes I put on a red dress

and I let them

*Last night she started with charcoal*

we hovered in the room  
we desired and we obliged  
we couldn't be held  
working but not understanding  
speaking from under the little frame  
for mystical vibration

when we realized no one else could hear us  
and if she seemed to me to be

little more than a door handle  
and my question to her  
a turning of it until it stuck

the ozone becoming a stiff collar  
around our bruised necks

what remains of the quiet  
creates the sense of Here

having come Here for something soft  
something we obviously did not build or earn

more for the crumbs than anything  
to get to the living  
she held tightly in anticipation of  
shaking, slithering, for our sake  
panting loudly as we moved in our body  
***Here it is made to lean on,***  
***and in fact she leans all her weight on it.***

## Vexatious phlegm

his lunch was flavored by the damage  
the split ends fraying his synapses  
butternut squash, wax, clear plastic  
he rolled up his deficiencies like a dung beetle  
his latest blame ball an ineffectual epiphany  
that the kingdom – even rebuilt – releases the same raging bull  
again and again  
only because he continually fails to prevent it  
the overriding contest  
prefaced with self-deprecation  
a terminus dreadful like hemorrhoids  
and his sandwich just tastes like the same old pickle  
when can the doomsday complex  
finally purge?

*Thackery H. Ainsworth III*

it stopped happening after he left the hotel for the second time  
no sooner had he fainted  
no sooner this mood  
like the leftovers from breakfast  
congealing outside his door  
while he in private, sat atop his stuffed markhor in the nude  
how you wash the beast is the satisfaction of the thing  
he crossed himself  
to no avail

his sister, on barbarous coasts,  
an island, the dirt embedded in her knees  
and into his lap fell the task  
to sort the colors and the carpet  
and above all to forget his old age  
that burning pain one refers to as a mere unpleasantness  
he lied about his trembling shoulders  
he lied about the ice

he refers to it as one pain:  
above the knees: the dirt, his trembling  
how no propriety ever crossed the hotel desk  
and yet the audacity to comment  
upon his private mechanisms

he rolled himself tightly into the white linen sheets  
forgetting his animal immortality

*Gay late*

desire snagged  
nerves like a bitmap  
and managing to hesitate  
I had been listening  
when she let her hands in  
a tear in the holy of holies

we stayed awake  
slumber patrolling pleasure  
vectors dive whizz swoop  
cake if only just for saying

we continually reassess  
the common core precepts  
of notches and carried threads  
the things I dabbled along  
these walls saddened her ears

full of subtleties  
fractured and tentative partners  
guess who was shocked  
and then came back for more?

*Precisely as shallow*

she was a fish  
and if she did not move  
she became tided over  
that is toppled by the flow  
certainly never satisfied until

the vaguely grey sky and the almost hedges  
combined to shade the yard  
grass dried, algae crumbled, coral bleached

out of food and continuing to eat grease  
she began to feel self-serving  
the business of removing heart sinkers

she hates wearing holes  
so she cut herself out

they say she is confused  
with regard to the life cycle  
of the little pools  
in which everyone else  
lets the garra rufa nibble their dead skin



*Kearah*

we never learn  
to find God  
in things

in rules or  
roles or days  
the magic is

awareness  
knowing  
the ungraspable

phantom  
we flip a  
bowl

on top of it  
and leave it there  
for good

*Did she die or is she something new*

Perhaps you can recommend an abattoir.  
The compass of the breeze gently tugged  
against bare branches, staring dry-eyed,  
the miniature mechanical hand pressed down.

This is not how meat is supposed to look.  
I reached the synagogue bathroom  
where the tree I leaned against,  
as carefully as a smart blue corpse might -  
revealed itself to be made of paper mâché.

It was happening there.

Immobility.

There were no signs.

It did not become.

*The equation had too many variables*

he couldn't remember part G  
let alone connect it to the relative efficiency of swallowing  
or was it waking  
an experiment in personal quasiperiodicity

he watched her eyebrows twitch  
rolling in regularly furrowed patterns like brain matter  
the facts were concrete  
it was the moments in between that kept him hungry  
looking for a new word to describe a family of shapes

he thought about train stations no one used anymore  
folded towel diffeomorphisms and smooth noodle maps  
how some things you remember but others  
disappear like bruises

maps of shapes matter  
the stations between them were variables  
too many hungry-looking others disappear

describe swallowing  
or remember part of it  
like how new concrete is molded by shoes