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Ooliths

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

OOLITHS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Estelle Mazor

2015

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Estelle Mazor, and entitled Ooliths, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Meri-Jane Rochelson

Campbell McGrath

Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

Date of Defense: November 3, 2015

The thesis of Estelle Mazor is approved.

Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts and Sciences

Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2015

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I would also like to add the following acknowledgments with respect to the text. The title of the poem “OPEN THE POD BAY DOORS, PLEASE, HAL” is taken from a bit of dialogue in Stanley Kubrick’s film, *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*. The poem *GUSTAV THIBON AND ESTELLE MAZOR: HOW SIMONE WEIL APPEARED TO US* incorporates an entire poem by Stephanie Strickland: “Gustav Thibon, ‘How Simone Weil Appeared to Us.’” Lines from Ms. Strickland’s poem appear italicized in my own work.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

OOLITHS

by

Estelle Mazor

Florida International University, 2015

Miami, Florida

Professor Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

OOLITHS is a poetry collection that challenges commonly held American values such as the sanctity of the family, the American Dream, the nobility of parenthood, and faith in God. Divided into eight sections, the collection follows the arc of childhood, adolescence, maturity and decline. Images of birds, crickets, the beach, the moon, and rainstorms anchor the poems to Miami's natural habitat and to each other, while images involving music, sleep, raisins, coffee beans and eggs unite them in the realm of the domestic.

OOLITHS includes traditional forms such as sonnets, as well as nonce forms, prose poems, free verse and newer forms. "Art History for Breast Cancer Survivors"—a twenty-stanza pecha kucha inspired by Terrence Hayes that deals with the narrator's battle with breast cancer—marks the middle of the collection. Having scratched the varnish off our illusions, OOLITHS concludes by acknowledging the inevitability of loss with a bittersweet smile.

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I. AN INTRODUCTION TO OOLITHS

Ooliths are everywhere. The Port of Miami stands on their round shoulders. Head-to-head they make the Gothic walls of Siena and the nine gates of Jerusalem. The Great Pyramid of Giza would lose its geometry without their steady support. And Arizona wouldn't have any red to paint the lips of its grand canyons. Yet ooliths are rarely thanked for their service.

*

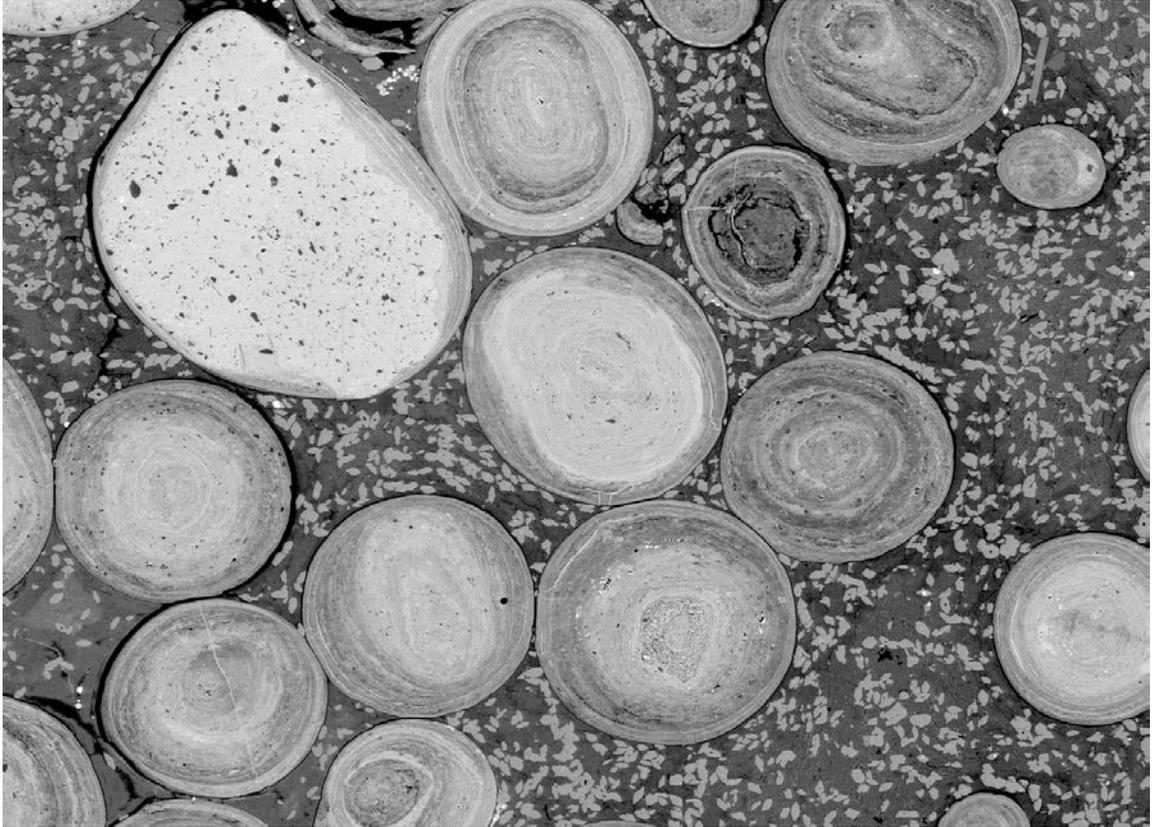
Ooliths will consume anything. Some things that geologists have found lodged inside their mineral bellies include: coffee beans, olive pits, raisin stems, snail shells, cricket wings, stiletto tips, beer tabs, marijuana seeds, plastic buttons, a set of jacks, the red ball that came with it, BBs and bullets. Also, countless unidentifiable particles, perhaps inseparable from the waves that brought them.

*

WARNING: Ooliths can easily be mistaken for barnacles, bonbons and breast cancer.

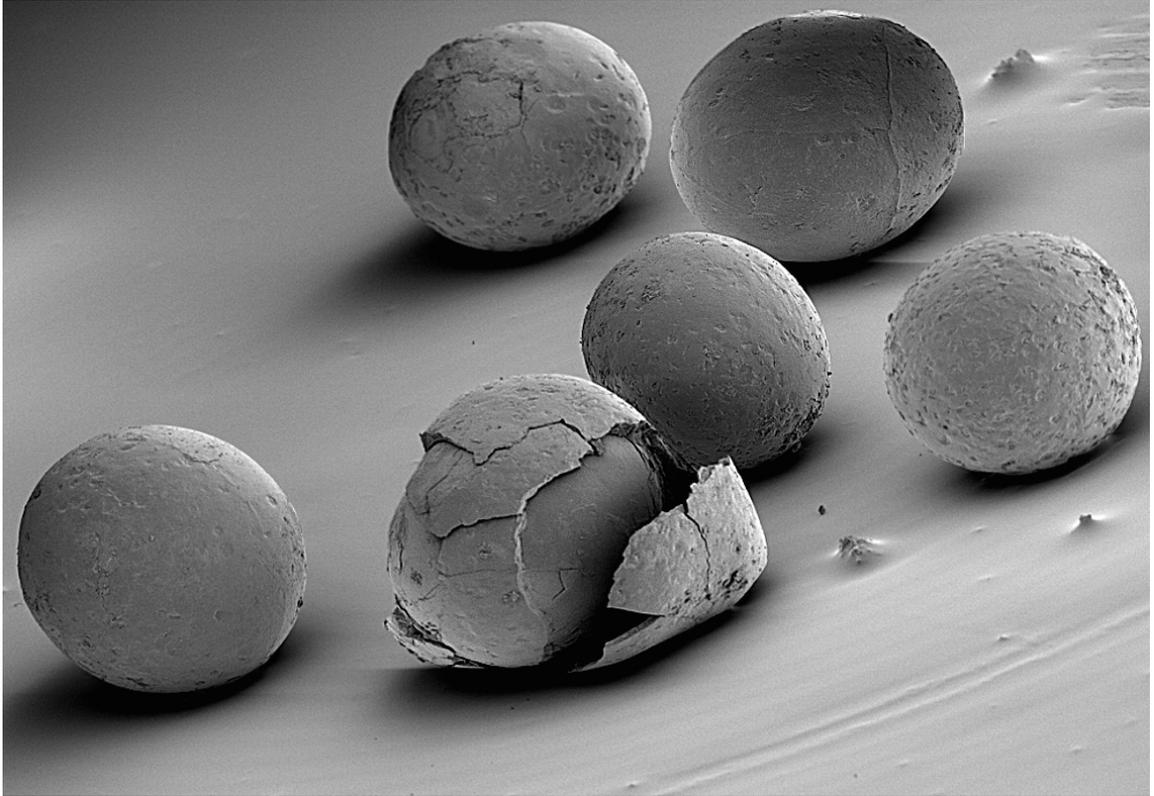
*

INTERESTING FACT: The oolith's common name of "egg stone" is perhaps undeserved: ooliths are known to withstand everything except the ordinary bad luck of men.



Oolitic ironstone. Photo courtesy of Eric Condliffe, School of Earth & Environment, Leeds University, UK

Ooliths can easily be mistaken for barnacles, bonbons and breast cancer.



Oolites from oolitic ironstone. Photo courtesy of Eric Condliffe, School of Earth & Environment, Leeds University, UK

The oolith's common name of "egg stone" may be undeserved: oolites are known to withstand everything except the ordinary bad luck of men.

II.

MIAMI LIMESTONE

The bedrock that lies beneath.

ST. ZERO

If emptiness is holiness, as the Buddhists say,
every vacancy, rightly, should be called a saint.
Let's canonize my wallet "St. Trompe l'oeil"
to honor *all* illusions, not only those we paint.
And venerate my refrigerator shelf—
martyr to my All-American desire
for the kneecaps of a pelican and the waist-width of an elf—
from which I've withheld food until it's only bony wire.
Come Friday night, we'll anoint the mailbox interior
"St. No-More-Saturday-Delivery-By-The-P.O.,"
and the "placeholder" number that always feels inferior
to the others, one through nine, we'll beatify St. Zero.
And why not consecrate the wind tunnel I find
perimenopause has swapped me for what used to be my mind: bless
my stalled memory so that it kicks into rewind
then sanctify the palimpsest
my tongue makes of speech these days.
And let's not forget to praise that side of the bed
where strangers once slept beside me. Help me raise
up and gospelize each sweet nothing they've said.