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Beagle Music: The Liberating Power of Poetic Constraint

Rachel Ouellette

BEAGLE MUSIC: THE LIBERATING POWER OF POETIC CONSTRAINT

by

Rachel Ouellette

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Advisory Committee:
    Kathleen Ellis, Lecturer of English and Honors, Advisor
    Hollie Adams, Assistant Professor of English
    Jennifer Moxley, Professor of English
    Frédéric Rondeau, Associate Professor of French
    Kathryn Slott, Associate Professor of French

ABSTRACT

This creative project, an original poetry manuscript and disquisition, aims to explore and demonstrate the power of poetic constraint — self-imposed rules in poetry. I wrote the poems within the tradition of lyric poetry, and therefore they reflect my personal experiences and feelings. Many of the poems reflect an experience that is best described as limerence, the psychological term for an intense, lasting "crush." As I distilled my feelings into poetry, I used both traditional methods of constraint, such as the sonnet and the ghazal, and innovative ones, such as selecture, my own variation on erasure. I found that constraint is liberating. Thanks to constraints such as rhyme scheme, I imbued my poetry with beauty and musicality, breaking subconscious constraints to discover unexpected turns of phrase. Writing this manuscript strengthened my conviction that poetic constraint is liberating. Therefore, I intend to continue exploring the potential of poetic constraint in future work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BEAGLE MUSIC

Strange Power

I have a strange power, words
drip from my fingers

You cannot see my face —
only words, worlds of my making

Can you see my thumbprints on the pebbles?
Does my reflection linger on the water?
Or is it yours?

To a Lilac

A ghazal beginning with a few words from Millay's Sonnet XC

  I.

Gone in good sooth you are, not even your scent
still lingers. Where have you been taken, drawn, or sent?

All the flowers and leaves are gone, the grass
is dead. Is this the after, or is it before scent?

The apple is gone, only the core is left.
The scent of withered flowers: an applecore scent.

At sunset, beagles follow the scent. They pause,
confused and anxious. River waters obscure scent.

Bleak mid-winter. All is silent, cold, and white,
all branches bare. "Come back," they implore scent.

Candles, handsoap, perfume, shampoo: she's allergic
to everything scented. Sadly, she has to abjure scent.

The beagle follows a scent, the poet follows
a rule. Every couplet must end with "or scent."

  II.

Covid took her sense of taste and smell:
no stink of paper mills now, no floral Dior scent.

The door swings open. Quick! Outdoors at last.
Nose to the ground, the beagle starts to explore scent.

Early June, the air is scentless now,
so empty now. Soon peonies will bring more scent.

Bees applauded the first flowers. But color
wasn't enough. They requested an encore: scent.

Flowers, April rain, cut grass. She dreams
of spring, disdaining every indoor scent.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, the grass
withers. There's no such thing as a sure scent.

How can I send my fragile thoughts to you?
This poem will suffice, this metaphor, scent.

 III.
"Happy was a beagle hound, with long, tan-coloured ears."
Happy knew the meaning of every outdoor scent.

Her birthday is the garden's funeral. She stares out the window,
forgetting the smell of candles, the petit four scent.

Ichor flows not only in the veins of gods.
During drought, we pray for petrichor scent.

It's early spring already; ice has thawed.
The garden awaits the advent of its longed-for scent.

It's winter still, the snow still falls. Your branches
are bereaved. "Come back," they still adjure scent.

"I wouldn't give a cent to hunt with dogs that couldn't
make a little music." Dogs should bay for scent.

How shall I describe this stubborn memory?
More pleasant, but just as strong as albacore scent.

 IV.
A lack can lead to wild spree. In Paris,
in the winter, a lady shops for scent.

Marshmallows, chocolate, crackers. Summer memories
are covered in gooey, sticky, s'more scent.

Mourn for childhood summers: campfires, hiking,
daisies, PBJs, beach days, wet labrador scent.

Pity the lost, bewildered scent. Neither the moon

nor the stars, nor silence nor sound reassure scent.

A receptor within the nasal cavity transmits a signal
through the olfactory pathway. Therefore, scent.

She dropped a penny. Now she combs the house.
The object of her endless search? That floor cent.

"I don't understand myself," the poem says.
That's no surprise. It's trying to look for scent.

  V.
She hurries past the flower garden. Stop!
And smell the roses. Harried people ignore scent.

The spring's first thaw – it's too much joy to bear.
In winter thoughts, she failed to account for scent.

Stuck in a sterile white hospital for weeks on end,
all she wants is color and/or scent.

"The term 'music' as applied to the barking of beagles:
a gross misnomer?" No. They yearn for scent.

Their noses pressed against the window glass,
kids catch the sight, but not the candy store scent.

Those people think perfume is immoral. Is beauty
immoral as well? Who knows why they deplore scent.

Reader, can you tell who wrote these lines?
The poet hides inside a metaphor: scent.

 VI.
Today is June fifteenth. A sunny sadness
in the air. Today's branches abhor scent.

We feel for the woman who lost her last penny.
Rightly. But what about the coin? Poor cent!

Where have all the blossoms gone? Withered,
just like those pretty roses Alastor sent.

The white stag knows it will escape,
though beagles eagerly follow its herbivore scent.

Why must we all grow up so fast? Already:
smelly sunscreen, that college tour scent.

The wind brought a beautiful scent from the garden:
lily, jessamine. Summer breezes adore scent.

"Love, I know without the slightest doubt
you will reward…" The envoi a troubadour sent.

VII.
Lovely in sooth you were: those lilac lilac
blossoms... Now you have no charm nor scent.

You're gone, long gone, your converts long
from dawn to dawn for spring. O longed-for scent!

Your ship is drifting farther and farther away.
I never deciphered the message your semaphore sent.

Rachel — why so sad, so still? Why mourn?
Next summer will, in sooth, restore scent.

Before the Lilac

With what eyes?

I don't remember your name,
but you remember mine.
Our paths do not cross often,
but you smile every time.

Confused, bewildered, afraid,
I do not know my mind.
My heart spins lies so often,
I dare not meet your eyes.

Midnight Light

Blinking, wishing, I'm still thinking,
still thinking — civil hi in frigid night.
Lightning, light igniting. Timid hiding,
hiding — twilight's din is vivid, bright

In this insipid mist I will drift, sighing,
sighing — thin wind-wisps sing, sink.
Hiding, gliding. It's night, I'm writing,
writing — I'm singing, still spilling ink

It isn't right. It's childish. Still, I might
limn light, mining bright till midnight

Minsky Hall

The jazz band played.
I did not resent their happiness.
I felt nothing

except a slight breathlessness, and
the too-fast beating of those wings
inside my rib cage.

And then I felt nothing. I became an ear.
Just an ear, sitting in Minsky Hall.
It was absurd. No one noticed.

The jazz band played.
I did not resent their happiness.
Why would I, anyway?

I myself have enough.
And one would think that enough
is enough.

Cagebird

Frantic wingbeat in my ribcage, it's hard to breathe
Out from my open mouth, the cagebird flies
Longing for another cage

Unfortunately, there's no room in that cage.
My lost little bird flutters farther away
And I sit alone with no heart

That's what I fear.
That's why I wear a mask.

Attempted Ghazal

You know this is a bad idea. Why are you searching for a radif?
Why are you staying up late? Put reason before a radif.

These words will be a chain around your throat.
Okay then, I'll stop.

textile

a Sappho cento / Anne Carson's translation

I used to weave crowns
      daisycrowns
          beautiful
golder than gold
whiter by far than an egg

a child once / like / children
I used to weave crowns
      lovely crowns
      golder than
          the light of the sun
          the brilliance and beauty of the sun

      many crowns
      of blooming flowers / golden flowers
      yes many and beautiful

          queen
          goldcrowned

out of the unexpected / someone / took delight

      out of the unexpected / trembling
      knees do not carry
those without a crown
beloveds of none

      I used to weave crowns
      but now
I cannot work the loom
I am broken

and now I weave chains
around your soft throat

Sonnets for Nobody

I.   **If At Last**

My face reflected in the windowpane,
I'll trace the wrinkles on my faded cheek,
While wondering — those memories I seek
Are they trapped in rolling drops of rain
Or are they flowing freely through my veins?
My thoughts will shout, but I will never speak
About the days that broke so dark, so bleak.
I still remember — how you said my name,
That sunlight in the gloom — so long ago,
So often crossing paths by happenstance.
I still remember the way you said hello,
And so I wish I had a second chance.
But if at last we met again I know
That I'd walk by without an upward glance.

II. **The Windowsill**

Okay. I think the waning of the moon
Meant more to me than human rhymes
And human faces. Faces, just like dimes
Were all alike. I must have been immune
To friendship. I forgot your name so soon.
I wanted to avoid you, who knows why,
So I kept track of all the places, times,
of when and where (the dining hall at noon)
Your path crossed mine, yes I remember such
Small fears, concerns. Today I'll dream, I will,
About the sky I would not think to touch.
It's far away from here, the windowsill,
And so I thought I wouldn't miss you much.
But I was wrong, I think about you still.

III.   **Call me joy**

So close to joy — I think I hear it breathing —
Of all these passers-by nearby am I,
Am I the only one who hears this sigh?
A soft and quiet sound, as if it's sleeping,
That fearsome beast. I do not know the meaning
Of this eerie sleep. When will it end?
I turn a corner — will I see again
That old friend whom I still dream of meeting?
It wasn't him. And everyone I see
Can be described in just two words: not him.
I keep on walking quickly, like I'm free,
As if I'm not kept captive in the dim,
Where I am chained by shining memory,
Which fills my eyes with light until they brim.

I will get out. The chain will be a crown.

IV.   **Housework**
After Millay's Sonnet XC

Last night again I saw you in a dream,
A little dream so full of mind-made light
That I forgot my fears, my disesteem,
And smiled till there wasn't any night.
When I wake up, my elbows on the sill,
I'll slowly turn away from distant skies
And sweep the floor, and think about the will
I didn't write before I died. These eyes,
Once closed in sleep, will never flood
Again. My hands in water topped with foam,
I scrub, and last year's first petunia bud
Is now a ghostly scent. That broken comb,
That broken mirror, propped beside the stair,
Both seem to say "I told you, and so there!"

V. **Missing**
Beginning with a few words from Millay's Sonnet XC

Gone in good sooth you are: not even your ghost
Still deigns to startle me with ghostly light
Or follow me while pacing late at night
Or listen to the poems I recite.
That ghost, I wonder, was it even real?
It might have been my own sad mind,
Lost, dressed up in an old white sheet,
Still carrying a plastic pumpkin pail
Down a darkening street. At any rate,
It's gone. It's gone! November turned to May,
And tulips bloom and lilacs desecrate
The scentless air with bliss. Amazing day
Replaced the night; the sun is on cloud eight...
The sun is harsh. I wilt beneath its weight.

Other Poems

The Girl in the Mirror

A selecture of *A Wrinkle in Time*, Chapter 1

Was / her / attic / frenzied? / The sky / shook. /
Afraid of weather, / of me, / she said /
Stay back. / She / said /
Always. /

And / her / books / told her /
what / must hurt her / always. /

Madly / awake /
so many nights, tiptoeing
up the attic stairs, /

she told her / monster, / the mirror, /
a mouthful of / cold / talk. /

She left her little / shadows — /
now I'll have a bruise. /
She walked into / the attic, /
she stood still, / she tiptoed / again, /
as though / the dark / was snoring. /

This time, then, /
I / won't / greet / her. /

Spring Rain

Cold, cold raindrops are rolling down my cheeks
as I tip my face up to the sky. I like rain. And it seems
like rain brings the sky down to earth. So I reach out
with both arms and touch it. But it's only sky. Clouds

are just clouds, and the sky is nothing more than sky
Sky is not what I long for. I stand still, close my eyes
then close my eyes. What do I long for? It is beyond
words. I dare not walk toward it. No, I wouldn't knock

on the door if I stood at its threshold.

Red Bricks

Sometimes I long for distant days of childhood again,
for weeding and carving memories from wood again.

In the glow of summer evening, we try to tell stories,
but stories hold no light. When will light be good again?

Dear house on a hill, do your weighty red bricks still
hold our memories? Every day you understood again.

Summertime, inside the homemade tent I lie awake,
Dreaming, dreaming wide awake. I wish I could again.

I remember racing sun rays in the rain. In time we'll let
our words escape, and then we'll be misunderstood again.

Gaudy

A selecture of *The Great Gatsby*, Chapter 3

Five crates of oranges and lemons, /
enough / to make / pigs / bewitched, /
gaudy with / colors / in full swing — /
It / is / erroneous news, / I believe. /

Don't Worry

A mistranslation of Mallarmé's "Apparition"[1]

Dream, hold hands, look at flowers —
Hold your hands and dream of seeing flowers —
There are flowers in dreams — unfortunately, it doesn't matter.
I dream to see flowers — of course, it's not a big deal.
Everyone should eat flowers in dreams.
You are in pain – don't worry.
The moon needs help —
The moon will shout for help!
Sweet-smelling stars…
Snowflakes and stars smell wonderful.
Do you want to eat? Eating is not difficult.
He laughed at night —
You laughed tonight —
Who needs help?

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[1] I used Google Translate to create this poem. Mallarmé's poem went through all 109 available languages, transforming into a translation of a translation of a translation, etc. Along the way, I switched each version into English to see if anything interesting was happening. I picked out the most interesting lines and rearranged them into a new poem. The result is quite different from Stephane Mallarmé's "Apparition."

Her mouth

A selecture of *Villette*, Chapter 1

A / house, / clean and / quiet, / so clean. /
A household of / teeth, / without flaw. /
A small voice / opened the / door. /

It / said / fire / aloud, / this / voice / demanded. /
Silent? / Mute? / No. /
"Hush / please!" /

At the breakfast table. / She was not eating. /

Judith

A selecture of an excerpt from *A Room of One's Own*

Impossible / plays. / Let me imagine! /
Facts are / poached rabbits. /

A woman / had / a taste for the theater. / More musical
than / her brother, / she / wanted
to / imagine / fiction, / to measure the heat /
of / one winter's night. /

A woman / had / genius. / Born / to / exist / and
blaze, / it / got itself onto paper. /

A witch / had / brains. / So many / songs /
of the winter's night / ...

May / it / be. /

A / girl / had / poetry. / At a stage door, /
she / had / imagination. /

There are / plays by women. /

After the Lilac

Salad*

A cold dish of various mixtures of raw or cooked vegetables, usually seasoned with oil, vinegar, or other dressing and sometimes accompanied by meat, fish, or other ingredients. (Definition from Oxford Languages)

Dishwasher: mix together various raw or cooked vehicles, then season with ointment, violas, or other drivel. If desired, add medication, fissures, or other inhibitions. Serve cold.

Disillusionment: mix up various raw or cooked metaphors, then season with omissions, virtue, or other gibberish. If desired, add melodrama, fixation, or other injuries. Serve cold.

Distance: jumble various raw or cooked meteorites, then season with opal, vitamins, or other gifts. If desired, add melody, flame, or other innovations. Serve cold.

* I worked at a restaurant this summer. Mostly, I was a dishwasher, but during my last week, I made salads. Sappho made a salad once. Millenia later, only celery remains. See Fragment 191.

Sappho's grocery list

chickpeas
celery
eggs
apples
honey
wine

Y

marching band in sun-slant glinting
and apples apples apples apless apiary

no honey — either — honey it is
not for me

neither golden chickpeas
nor celerelery norever wine

WHY I I I I

left the dining hall with so many apples apogee
ate them wholebitterbitteralone leaning

against — moonlessness — soon
ghost-like-like

waning wanting waning
wanting

apples

someone reached up to the moon and tipped it over and all the apples spilled out and now the moon is so empty and i am so hungry but the moon is empty now and i can't even reach it anyway

ghost

a sheet over my head —
two holes for eyes —
and i am so hungry
but i have no mouth

Waiting

Silly me, I fell in love with a lilac —
what will I do while I wait for May,
for spring to give me my sighs back?
Silly me, I fell in love with a lilac.
My sadness helps night paint the sky black
and sing to sleep the colors of day.
Silly me, I fell in love with a lilac —
what will I do while I wait for May?

Lilac Time

Based on the silent movie

Far behind the British lines, each dawn,
a seventh plane takes flight. The hour done,
this plane is lost. It won't come back; it's gone.
The others land, they rest beneath the sun
and Tommies raise their glasses to the one
who did not live to see the sunrise fade.
High above, the sunlight mourns for none,
and lilacs still perfume the air, arrayed
in every shade of lilac, unallayed.
"That must be Captain Blythe!" A British plane,
aflame with sunset, crashes in the shade.
Unhurt, the Captain slowly sips champagne
and promptly falls in love with Jeannie. So,
will he come back? Only fear says no.

Melithesmo

A selecture of *The Light Princess* by George McDonald

1.
A / princess.

2.
Awkward / princess — /
She looked, / her / eyes /
looked like / fairies, /
offended fairies. /

Waiting, / waiting,
she made / her mind /
go without / her. /
The happy / forgot /

her / face. / She turned /
words / to / light, /
body / weary — /
arms / clasped /
nothing. /

3.
Deprived / of / every limb, / astonished, /
the queen / said: / I / see, / I / hear. /

The little princess, /
laughter / on the table. /

4.
Summer / was / fast asleep. /
The queen / was / watching / and /

she / grew uneasy. / Clasping / a beehive, /
the queen was / carefully / sure… /

Going down /
would find / the / princess, /
the / laughter / — an upward /

direction / fetched. /

5.
But / every / gold / honey-/mouthful /
clashed. / The queen / sobbed, / she / tried

to turn / the future / to / light, / to be /
triumphant / — light / turned / black, / morning /

turned / guilty. / The next morning /
advised / the queen to have patience, / to wait /

a hundred years. /
Thesmophoros.

6.
Awkward / princess, / without / laughter — /
She / cried, / her hands / tried to catch /

the air. / Awkward, /
alone, / each hand /
had / nothing / to / take. /
The princess / was /
running. /

7.
The / queen resolved to / pretend / to / feel /
well, / to behave, / to / not / wish. /

She / tied / up / her / silence. / Her / extinct / habits /
roared. / Corporeal / tenderness / was impossible. /

8.
The / princess / had no / beehive. / Deprived /
of / summer, / she / wanted to / laugh /

at / her life. / Winter / was / night. / No / moon. /
Awkward / night / would not allow /

hope. / The / princess / wanted / — it was all

in vain. / She went / to her room. /

9.
A / prince was / near. /
He never dreamed. /
He made no / inquiries. /
Evening, / sunset, /

a lake. / The prince / fell in, / and / nearly
drowned. / The princess /
stood / staring. /

The prince, / reaching the ground, /
saw / the / princess. / She / was / in a dream, /
overwhelmed: /

The lake / turned / I to / you —
the water / seemed / like /
falling, / falling — /

delightful / fall, / sad / fall — /
you / don't know, / perhaps / — I /

have fallen in. / My heart /
has heard / the / moon, /
sorry. / The lake /
is / my room. /

You /
under the balcony, /
you call / me, / and / I /
answer. /

The prince / saw / the balcony / disappear. /
He turned / the water / to night. /

All night long, / a / green light — /
a sort of / hunger. /

10.
Morning / intruded. / The lake / was / day, /
the sun / did not want to go home. /

The shore / rowed away. /
The princess / was swimming
in the sky, /turning, /
trembling. /

She / turned, /
she was / altered. /

11.
The princess / could /
imagine, / the prince
could not. / The shore /
turned. /

The lake was / vanishing. /
The sun / would soon lie there, /
festering. / The sun /
never cried. /

The root of / thirst /
grew / towards / the / cellar /
and / into the cellar /
and / stretched / towards the roof. /

Coming nearer, / it / cried / and / began
to / mutter. / The roof / was not enough. /

That / night, /
there was no / falling. /

12.
The night / once / had / a / lake. / The water /
once / met / the prince. / The princess /
remained. /

She / haunted / the / mud. /

The prince / had forgotten / her. /
The / mud / was / ordinary. /

13.
This was / hopeless. /
The princess was / taking
no nourishment but / gold, /
having / thought: /

*The lake will be / glorious /
once more, / and / I
shall / see / you /
at last. /*

*I / shall / look at / the water /
and be happy /
and / tell / you / I am. /*

14.
The princess / wanted /
the lake. / She saw it /
with her / golden / hands /
and / began to sing: /

*A world without /
a world / — a world /
without / thee — /*

*The waters / pray /
a little, / lest thy / soul /
be asleep — /*

Looking eagerly, /
holding out / her fingers, /
she / answered / the moon /
and was silent. /

The princess sat and looked
at / the night. / The moon /
did not speak again.

The / last / rose /

breathed / her / last
breath / — a shriek — /
no / breathing — /

The prince opened his eyes. /

15.
Rain, / a rainbow — /
the lake / overflowed. /
The prince / answered
the princess, /

and / the / rainy day /
danced. / The honey /
was / the sweetest / delight — /
the first, / the second, /

as often as / the lake / was / deep. /
Melitodes.

New Sonnets

I.   **Ad Lyram**

You lied to me, lyre. Fine: goodbye, Pax.
The lakebed is littered with sunken kayaks!
Don't deny facts. Like fallen
porcelain, the sky cracks, and stars
do not align.
Caressing wavelets lap
against the silence and loons
cry out against the gloomy dark,
the lonely night. You miss the moon?
Try wax. Why do you pine
for the softness a sigh lacks?
You misunderstand
the way a smile acts, your mind
makes lies. I'm no longer blind:
a smile is a line,
nothing lovelier than that.
Why do you sigh for the bliss
a sky lacks?
You're in pain —
don't worry. The pain will pass
and you'll be sorry for your loss —
alas!

II. **Adcormeum**
Beginning with a phrase from "The door is half open" by Anna Akhmatova

Be wise, my heart! Be careful, stay within
the bounds prescribed of old by common sense,
these ribs — or else you risk endangering
every piece of mind I have. Suspense
is not enough for you? You must condense
a twin uncertainty to one belief?
Such alchemy has never caused offense
nor brought a single soul to pain or grief —
unless it turns the lead to gold. A leaf
should lesson you! Better ashes, cold
ashes. Behold the leaf: it turns to gold
and then dies. You need a more secure belief.
How about ashes, already dead? Be wise,
And do not break my ribs with happy lies.

III.   **Fun Fact**

Hello. I tell you I missed you, I tell you
in French, because you don't speak French.
Tu m'as manqué, tu m'as manqué.
I tell you this over and over again,
but only when you can't hear me.
Only when the dishes are clattering
and the dishwasher is making lots of noise
and three people are talking at the same time
and you're busy on the other side of the room.
I want to tell you about language.
How do I say it without sounding snobby?
You know, there's a certain phrase in French
that has the opposite meaning if you translate it.
In French, "I missed you" means "You missed me."
Je t'ai manqué? Je t'ai manqué?
That's funny, isn't it?

The Road

A selecture of *Jane Eyre,* Chapter 12

The / road / in / dimness, / in / hush, / could hear / a / rough / din. /
All sorts of / bright and dark / approached, / black and white /

broke the spell. / A / broken / frown / waited and watched. /
Grimacing grimly, / it / vanished. / Trivial, transitory, / it was /

like a / waft of wind, / fitful. / The / distant / window / wakened. /
Good / storms / paced backwards and forwards, / absolved /

of all solemn. / Far and farther, / stars . followed / stars, / marble /
radiance, / scarcely / aware / of / gravity. / Great / marble / radiance! /

I beheld a great black and white. / It / came to me. / I wanted — /
I wanted. / *Undaunted*, I went *farther, following bright and dark*

To a Lilac

"I wouldn't give a cent to hunt with dogs that couldn't make a little music."
> — Oliver Hartley, *Hunting Dogs*

"The term 'music' as applied to the barking of beagles: a gross misnomer?"
> "The term 'music' as applied to the barking of trailing hunting dogs, is to the uninitiated a gross misnomer." — Oliver Hartley, *Hunting Dogs*

"Happy was a beagle hound, with long, tan-coloured ears."
> — Mabel Osgood Wright, *Dogtown*

Minsky Hall

> I got the idea of turning into an ear from a poem by a classmate, April Messier.

Melithesmo

Thesmophoros: an epithet for Demeter, also used for Persephone. Possible meanings include "bringer of wealth" and "law giver." (Encyclopedia Britannica, Stallsmith)

Melitodes: an epithet for Persephone, meaning "sweet as honey." (A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology)

Cagebird

In Book 2 of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Criseyde dreams that an eagle tears out her heart and replaces it with his own. The eagle symbolizes Troilus.

DISQUISITION

INTRODUCTION

When I think back, it is hard to pinpoint when exactly my love of poetry began. Maybe it started when I wrote my first poem, or when my dad told me I had a talent for words. I was drawn to the books of poetry on our shelves. One of them was a collection of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poetry. For some reason, I really loved the poem "Curfew," and decided to memorize it. "Sleep and oblivion / Reign over all!" I declaimed to any family member who would listen. The other book I remember is *A Treasury of Poetry for Young People.* This anthology includes poems by Longfellow, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Edgar Allan Poe, Carl Sandberg, and Walt Whitman. At some point, I lost or threw away my first poem, a few rhyming lines about the woods. My poems began to improve, and I collected them all in a notebook. When I was about eleven years old, I decided all those poems were still not good enough, so I tossed my notebook into the recycling bin and started a new one.

Over the course of college, my interest in poetry grew. When I was a freshman, reading Sappho in Honors 111 made a strong impression on me. Although not much of her poetry is left to us, the remaining fragments are beautiful, enigmatic, and surprisingly modern. That year, I also stumbled across a poem by Emily Brontë, the one beginning "Often rebuked, yet always back returning." I was captivated by this poem's Romantic exploration of individuality, imagination, and the sublime. That spring I read the complete poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay, who immediately became my favorite poet. I was especially struck by her mastery of the sonnet form. As a sophomore, I took Writing Poetry (ENG 308) with Professor Hollie Adams. This course introduced me to

traditional forms and Oulipian constraints. I wrote a sonnet for the first time. I also tried a

sestina, ghazal, and a villanelle, as well as erasure and univocalism. Following rules in

poetry, whether traditional or innovative, was an enjoyable and rewarding challenge.

When it was time to choose a topic for my Honors thesis, it did not take long to realize I

wanted to write poetry, with a focus on rules both traditional and innovative.

<p align="center">Tradition and Innovation</p>

The words "form" and "constraint" are often set in contrast with each other, since

they are on opposite ends of the tradition-innovation spectrum. Forms such as the sonnet

and the ghazal have developed over the course of centuries. In contrast, when people use

the word constraint, they are usually referring to recently invented practices such as

univocalism. Although it is valid to contrast form and constraint, there is an alternative

point of view.

The word constraint can be used to refer to any kind of limitation or restriction. In

that sense, traditional form is a type of constraint. When writing in a form, there are

certain rules that must be followed. In a sonnet, for instance, you must write fourteen

lines in iambic pentameter with one of the traditional rhyme schemes. A poem that

disregards too many of the conventional strictures cannot be considered a sonnet in the

formal sense. From this point on, when I use the word *constraint,* I am using it in the

broadest sense, unless context indicates otherwise. Whenever I use the word *form*, I am

referring specifically to traditional forms such as the sonnet and the ghazal.

Oulipo, the group of French writers who created many innovative constraints,

were well aware that constraint is not new to poetry. Lionnais posited three different

levels of constraint. On the most basic level, a poet is constrained by the language they are writing in. A stricter constraint is that of literary norms such as genre. The maximal level of constraint is that of "voluntarily imposed systems of artifice" such as univocalism (Motte 11). In my experience, writing a sonnet is just as difficult as univocalism, so I would put traditional forms in the same category as innovative constraints. Although they are traditional, the meter and rhyme of the sonnet form are ultimately just as artificial and arbitrary as my individual choice to limit myself to a certain vowel. Lionnais himself refers to the inventor of the sonnet as a "potential writer," the same term that Oulipians use to refer to themselves (Motte 9).

<div align="center">Beagle Music</div>

The title "Beagle Music" derives from the ghazal "To a Lilac." In this poem, the repetition of the word "scent" mixes flower imagery with the recurring mention of beagles, who are known for their excellent sense of smell. The concluding couplet of the first section establishes a parallel between the beagle and the poet: "The beagle follows a scent, the poet follows / a rule. Every couplet must end with 'or scent.'" A later couplet quotes the 1909 book *Hunting Dogs* to reveal that enthusiasts refer to the baying of beagles as "music." Thus, the phrase "beagle music" evokes my pursuit of rule-based poetry, both traditional and innovative. Oliver Hartley, the author of *Hunting Dogs,* provides further explanation of the term "music" as applied to the beagle:

> Every note that he utters is an expression of emotion. Because emotion is more susceptible to music than any other agency, his code of expression is likened unto notes of music, and with more fidelity than some instrumental sound producers committed in the name of music. A student of this pure and undefiled language says: "Each note represents a particular feeling, and the whole harmoniously blended, tells a simple story in a pleasing way." Now the hound takes up the cold

trail. He signals his master — there are notes of expectancy and hope in the tone. As the scent grows warmer, his tone of hope rises. He makes a loss. Could anything express regret and chagrin any more plainly than his doleful cry? Back on the trail. Then joy again. Then comes the excited, imperative, anxious yet joyous fortissimo scale running when the quarry trees.

In this excerpt, Hartley equates music and language as carriers of emotion. In describing the emotions carried by the baying of beagles, he evokes an intense yearning. "To a Lilac" centers around this feeling, and many other poems in the collection reflect it as well. Thus, the title *Beagle Music* reflects the lyrical nature of my poetry as well as its constraint-based nature.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to explore and demonstrate the power of self-imposed rules in poetry. In my experience, having some sort of constraint, whether it is the Petrarchan rhyme scheme or univocalism, is actually liberating. I find it much easier to write good poetry when I am working within a constraint. At one point in *Swann's Way*, Marcel Proust mentions that poets are sometimes "forced by the tyranny of rhyme to find their most beautiful lines" (Proust 24). I agree. Furthermore, I find that the same idea applies to other constraints, such as the technique that I refer to as *selecture*. When I use the technique, I come up with creative, unexpected phrases that I never would have thought of on my own. I never would have described a mouth as a "household of teeth" if I had not limited my choice of words. In poetry, as in other pursuits, having too many choices is overwhelming. If you do not feel overwhelmed, it is because you are not aware of all the choices — you have subconsciously narrowed them down. Writing a good poem is like finding a needle in a haystack. This haystack is the language in which you are writing. What if the needle were hidden in just a small pile of hay instead of the whole haystack? Finding the needle would be a lot easier. This idea, that constraint enhances creativity, is common in the business world. A Google search consisting of the terms "constraint" and "creativity" brings up plenty of articles making that argument. There is also academic work on the topic. In her book *Creativity from Constraints: The Psychology of Breakthrough,* Patricia D. Stokes, PhD supports the claim that constraints enhance creativity.

Strangely enough, this idea is rarely discussed in the world of poetry. Before the turn towards free verse, the importance of constraint in poetry was generally taken for granted. Since that turning point, poets usually take it for granted that they must rebel against constraint. Today, free verse still dominates the world of poetry, despite the rise of New Formalism and innovative constraint-based writing. A search of JSTOR yielded only two works on the topic of constraint and creativity in poetry: a chapter from a book on Shakespeare and an article on Oulipo. In a chapter of *How to Think like Shakespeare,* Scott Newstok supports the argument by citing a plethora of authorities, from Immanuel Kant to Doris Lessing. He then turns to the sonnet as a specific example of constraint, with a focus on Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form. In "Writing by Numbers: OuLiPo and the Creativity of Constraints," Colin Symes supports the argument in favor of constraint, using the mathematical constraints of Oulipo as evidence. Oulipo is known for their advocacy of poetic constraint. Queneau wrote that "the inspiration that consists in blind obedience to every impulse is in reality a sort of slavery. The classical playwright who writes his tragedy observing a certain number of familiar rules is freer than the poet who writes that which comes into his head and who is the slave of other rules of which he is ignorant" (Motte 87). In other words, a consciously chosen constraint can free us from subconscious constraints.

METHODOLOGY

The poems in this collection were written over the course of a year. I began writing in December of 2021 and wrote the last poem about a year later. Not all of the poems written during that year are included in the collection — there are thirteen poems that I chose not to include. Some of those poems did not fit thematically with the others, and some were not sufficiently well-written. Also, I included a few poems written before December 2021. "With what eyes," the earliest-written poem in this collection, dates back to my freshman year.

When I started working on this project, I intended to write outside of the highly personal mode I had been exploring previously. However, I did not choose a subject to write about, preferring to let one emerge naturally for each poem. The subject that emerged most often just happened to be exactly the one I had intended to avoid: limerence.

Limerence

There is a madness to my method. Although it is not in the DSM, limerence is often considered a mental illness. The term was coined in the 1970s by the psychologist Dorothy Tennov. Limerence is like a crush, but more intense, obsessive, and delusional. It also lasts longer. I have experienced it twice: "before the lilac" and "after the lilac." The first time I encountered the term *limerence* was after I had recovered from the second bout. During limerence, I had no word for it. I wondered why my "crush" was so overwhelming. I felt very alone, because I did not know whether other people experienced the same thing. Since encountering the term limerence, I don't feel like an

anomaly anymore. Recently, I heard the song "Taylor, the Latte Boy" by Kristin Chenoweth. This hilarious song tells a story that is similar to my experience of limerence. The lyrics are written from the perspective of a girl who "falls in love" with someone because she imagines that he likes her. She notices little things that he does or says — mere gestures of politeness — and misinterprets them as signs of affection, experiencing a sense of euphoria as a result. This euphoric feeling prompts her to write a poem. In my experience as well, limerence leads to elevated creativity. The "latte boy" is very inspirational indeed.

Framing limerence as a mental illness continues a long tradition of viewing love as madness or illness. In *Phaedrus,* Socrates stated that love is a type of "divine madness," or *theia mania*. Later, Cicero and Lucretius defined love as an illness. Shakespeare's Sonnet 147 declares "my love is as a fever." *Delirium,* a bestselling young adult dystopian novel, shows that the idea of love as illness is still alive and well in the present day. The premise of the novel: "In an alternate United States, love has been declared a dangerous disease" (publisher's description). The word "lovesick" is further evidence that love and mental illness are linked in the popular imagination. Now we have the word *limerence* as well. Although it can be part of an experience of actual love, I view my experience of limerence as no more than mental illness.

I believe that my experience of limerence was exacerbated by my bipolar disorder. In high school, I was diagnosed with bipolar II, the less severe type. It involves episodes of hypomania, an abnormally elevated mood. This elevated mood can contribute to the fantasizing and obsessive thinking that characterize limerence. Also, it is possible that having bipolar directly contributes to creativity. Although more research is needed to

clarify the link between bipolar and creativity, a correlation has been clearly

demonstrated. Madness in general is linked to poetry in the collective consciousness.

Again, the tradition goes back to *Phaedrus*. Socrates defined poetic inspiration as another

type of "divine madness." In the nineteenth century, Romanticism developed an image of

the poet that James Whitehead refers to as the "mad Romantic poet." This image persists

today. And although it can be taken too far, I think there is truth in the link between

madness and poetry. There is a madness to my method of writing poetry. In my

experience, limerence and bipolar both lead to elevated creativity, and bipolar intensifies

limerence, leading to further creativity.

<u>Selecture</u>

Selecture is a word I coined to refer to my own reimagining of erasure. Although

similar to erasure, this technique is different enough to merit its own name. When writing

a selecture poem, I choose a source text and limit my vocabulary to the words found in

that text. Also, the words cannot be rearranged. When I select the first word of my poem,

it can be any word found in the text. However, the next word needs to occur after the first

one — in the source text as well as the poem. Thus, each of my choices affects the range

of options for my next choice. After selecting the words, I format them. I add punctuation

and arrange the words into lines and stanzas. I also add forward slashes to indicate where

I am connecting words which were separate in the source text. For instance, the source "It

was a stormy night. In her attic bedroom, Margaret Murry, wrapped in an old patchwork

quilt, sat on the foot of her bed and watched the trees tossing in the frenzied lashing of

the wind" is transformed through selecture into "Was / her attic / frenzied? /" ("The

Attic," line 1).

These forward slashes are the locus of the difference between selecture and

erasure. In a selecture, a forward slash can correspond to a whole page from the source

text. One of my selecture poems transforms a whole chapter of a novel into a short,

seven-line poem. In contrast, an erasure poem preserves much more of the original text.

In *Radi os*, which is widely considered the seminal work of erasure, Ronald Johnson

preserves many words on each page of the source text, *Paradise Lost*. As a result,

Johnson's poem engages very closely with Milton's. Many passages of *Radi os* can be

appreciated only in juxtaposition with the original text. Compared to erasure, selecture

leads to more distance between the source and the resulting poem — simply because the

two texts have fewer words in common. Consequently, although the source can certainly

enrich one's interpretation of a selecture poem, it is possible to appreciate the poem

without any knowledge of the source text.

LITERATURE REVIEW

My understanding of poetic constraint was shaped in large part by poetry that employs this device. The sonnet form is one example. To understand the sonnet form, I read many sonnets: those of Shakespeare, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Elinor Wylie. Shakespeare's sonnets have had the greatest influence on the sonnet in English, so I knew I needed to read them in order to understand the form. One of his sonnets that stands out to me is Sonnet 27. This sonnet describes the experience of not being able to fall asleep because you are thinking about someone you can't stop thinking about: "my thoughts, from far where I abide, / Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee, / And keep my drooping eyelids open wide." This situation is probably familiar to anyone who has experienced limerence. My understanding of Browning's sonnets was deepened by the critical articles of Mermin and Van Remoortel. In these poems, Browning appropriates the language of courtly love to a woman's perspective. While drawing on the Petrarchan tradition, she does not lose sight of her own historical context. Many of Browning's sonnets evoke nineteenth-century courtship through details, such as the exchange of locks of hair. "I never gave a lock of hair away… except this to thee," Browning writes in Sonnet XVIII. In my own sonnets, I try to follow Browning's example and draw inspiration from the past while remaining rooted in the present. Millay's sonnets were very influential for me, since they inspired me to start writing sonnets of my own. Two of my sonnets take direct inspiration from the words of Millay's sonnet XC, "Gone in good sooth you are, not even in dream." My sonnet "Housework" engages in a game of bout-rimés with Millay by using the same words as Millay's sonnet at the end of each line. My sonnet "Missing" uses the first few words of Millay's sonnet

56

as a starting point. When I read Wylie's sonnets, my favorite was XVII, "Upon your heart, which is the heart of all." In this sonnet, Wylie feels like her whole world centers around one specific person. She longs for his voice, "Above all other sounds made musical." Sometimes a line of poetry echoes in my head for a while after I read it. That line of Wylie's echoed through my thoughts as I walked across campus one evening.

To understand the ghazal, I read *Ravishing DisUnities*. In this anthology, Agha Shahid Ali collects ghazals in English that stay true to the ghazal's traditional form. In addition to an abundance of examples, Ali provides helpful commentary in an "Introduction" and some "Basics Points about the Ghazal." I was fascinated to learn that the ghazal is a much older form than the sonnet, reaching back to seventh-century Arabia. The ghazal is still alive today, but most American renditions of it are "far from the letter and farther from the spirit" (Ali 1). This spirit is just as vital to the ghazal as the letter of the law. In the ghazal, just like the sonnet, there is a wealth of tradition that goes beyond technical constraints. Traditional ghazals often express a sorrowful sort of love. This atmosphere is developed in couplets that touch on the trivial as well as the serious aspects of life. As the ghazal faces heartbreak and longing, it is lyrical and witty by turns. While writing "To a Lilac," I kept this spirit in mind.

In addition to reading formal poetry, I read poems that employ innovative constraint. I read two works of erasure to familiarize myself with that technique. Reading *Radi Os* by Ronald Johnson and *Nets* by Jen Bervin helped me realize how much erasure differs from my technique of selecture. Reading *Throaty Wipes* and *Joy Is So Exhausting* by Susan Holbrook introduced me to some very imaginative and experimental

constraints. Holbrook's approach to poetry helped to inspire some of my more experimental poems: "Don't Worry," "Salad," "Sappho's Grocery List," and "Y."

I read *Rebel Angels* to familiarize myself with contemporary work in forms. This anthology is representative of the New Formalism movement. New Formalism is the resurgence of poets writing in form during the late twentieth century. Critics have characterized the movement as patriarchal. Unlike these critics, I am unwilling to condemn form. First, I will acknowledge that traditional forms have generally been developed by men. The conventions of the sonnet, for instance, were established by Petrarch. Consequently, when a woman writes a sonnet, her work will inevitably be read in the context of male predecessors. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing. When read in the context of Petrarch, Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* are radically subversive. Form does not restrict what you say — it merely forces you to be creative about how you say it. As Browning demonstrates, it is certainly possible to write a formal poem that reflects feminist ideas.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

My collection of poems, *Beagle Music,* is a work of lyric poetry that explores the power of poetic constraint. The Western tradition of lyric poetry looks back to ancient Greece, where lyric poetry was sung, accompanied by the lyre. The other categories of poetry at the time were drama and the epic. While dramatic and epic poetry recounted stories, lyric poetry was used for personal expression of emotions. Today, lyric poetry is still contrasted with narrative poetry. Equally important marks of lyric poetry are the first-person perspective and an emphasis on emotions, especially love. Lyric poetry today is also expected to be songlike. This quality can be achieved through a variety of means: meter, rhyme, and repetition of words or sounds. As a whole, *Beagle Music* has all the characteristics of lyric poetry. With the exception of a few poems, my poetry is written from the first-person perspective. My poems express emotions I have experienced, especially limerence, which can be mistaken for love. Many of my poems are sonnets. The sonnet, a "little song," is a quintessential lyric poem. Many of my poems use meter, rhyme, or repetition of words or sounds. Sappho is possibly the most influential lyric poet, and much of my poetry is inspired by her fragments. Oxford Languages defines "lyrical" as "expressing the writer's emotions in an imaginative and beautiful way." I certainly try to be imaginative. Also, I am drawn to beautiful imagery — my poetry is full of moonlight, stars, and lilacs.

The ghazal *To a Lilac* is both lyric and constraint-based. This poem follows the traditional rules of a ghazal: 1. Each couplet ends with a refrain, immediately preceded by a rhyme. 2. There is no enjambment between couplets. 3. The first couplet has the rhyme and refrain at the end of the first line as well as the second. 4. Every line is the same

length (in this particular ghazal, there are approximately five accented syllables per line).

Like a traditional ghazal, *To a Lilac* is addressed to the "beloved," except a lilac stands in for that person. It expresses personal emotions and recurs to the first-person perspective. The rhyme and refrain of the ghazal make it songlike, and the above-named traditions of the ghazal coincide with the other characteristics of lyric poetry.

Strange Power, the first poem in the collection, establishes my focus on the lyric. Like a typical lyric poem, it is written in the first person. It refers to my process of writing poetry: "I have a strange power, words / drip from my fingers." The subsequent lines question how much my poetry reveals about me as a person: "Does my reflection linger on the water?" The final line of "Strange Power," "Or is it yours?" suggests that my poetry can mirror the reader just as much as myself. In doing so, it refers to the mirror-like quality of all my poems. Readers may not know me personally, so to understand my poems, they must draw on their own experiences. That last line also alludes to limerence: are the poems about me, the poem asks, or are they about the objects of my limerence? Because of limerence, many of my poems are either addressed to, or inspired by, a specific person. The first section, "Before the lilac," is inspired by one person. After about two and a half years, my limerence for that person ended, because it became abundantly clear that he did not reciprocate my feelings. A few months later, I was in the midst of limerence again. The third section of poems, "After the lilac," is inspired by the feelings I had toward this other person. Again, the limerence ended after some time, for the same reason as before.

"Melithesmo" uses the constraint of selecture. Although it is a narrative poem and is not in the first person, I still consider it to be a lyric poem because it is a lyrical

expression of my emotions and experiences. The poem is admittedly enigmatic. That being the case, I will retell the story in a more direct way. It is a love story. Once, there was a princess and she was very unhappy. Her mother worried about her. The first half of the poem is all about this unhappiness. Then, a prince shows up, and he falls in the lake, which symbolizes falling in love. The princess also falls in love. Then the prince inexplicably forgets the princess, and she is sad again. Then, just as inexplicably, the prince returns and the two characters live happily ever after. In the context of my personal experience, that last part is wish fulfillment. And the part about the prince "falling in love" was delusional and absurd.

The poem "textile," fits in the context of love poetry, lyric poetry, the cento form, the use of form in general, and the use of constraint specifically. Like "Melithesmo," this poem is enigmatic. When something is enigmatic, it either makes sense in multiple ways, or it doesn't make sense at all. Hopefully the former is true for my poems. Although the exact meaning of the poem is in the air, it is grounded by constraint. The poem fits within the bounds of love poetry (a subset of lyric poetry), the cento as a traditional form, and the technical constraint of the cento. The poem declares itself to be a lyric poem before it even begins: "a Sappho cento," the subtitle says. Sappho is an iconic lyric poet. "Cento" is the other part of the subtitle. A cento is a patchwork of lines from other poems, and the word "cento" comes from the Latin word for patchwork. The title of my poem, "textile," draws attention to this word origin. The poem is not only a text, but a textile — something woven. In comparing poem-writing to weaving, which is traditionally done by women, my cento claims writing poetry as an occupation in which women are welcome to participate.

"textile" centers around Sappho's Fragment 125, "I used to weave crowns." When I read this fragment, I thought about how I used to weave flower crowns as a child. That is the literal meaning of the line. Of course, there is another layer of meaning. I associate flower crowns with the carefree happiness of childhood. It doesn't last. When I started college, I began to experience limerence, which is not carefree at all. Before limerence, my poems were like crowns, because they had a positive effect on me, just like a crown lends majesty to the one who wears it. During limerence, my poems were like chains, because they made my limerence worse.

There are two sonnet sequences in *Beagle Music:* "Sonnets for Nobody" and "New Sonnets." The second one is short, consisting of only three sonnets. Also, unlike the first sequence, the second pushes the boundaries of what can be considered a sonnet. "Ad Lyram" doesn't look like a sonnet at all. That is because I changed all the line breaks after writing the poem. With the original line breaks, the poem consists of fourteen lines, all of which are of approximately the right length. However, they disregard iambic pentameter and only allude to the Shakespearean rhyme scheme. Also, like many sonnets it is about "love." I put the word love in quotation marks because I wouldn't refer to my experience as love, limerence being a much better word. However, limerence is often mistaken for love. Compared to "Ad Lyram," the poem "Fun Fact" is even farther from the constraints of the sonnet. The only constraint it adheres to is that of being fourteen lines (the lines in French don't count).

Some of my poems use constraints that are not traditional. These are "Midnight Light," "Don't Worry," and "Salad." The poem "Midnight Light" uses a constraint known as univocalism, invented by Oulipo. This constraint involves limiting oneself to

one vowel. "Don't Worry" is a mistranslation that I created with the help of Google Translate.

"Salad" was created with a procedure inspired by N+7, another Oulipian invention. This constraint involves replacing every noun of an existing text with another noun that is located seven nouns later in the dictionary. For "Salad," I changed the constraint a little. To give myself more creative choices beyond choosing the source text, I allowed myself to choose which nearby noun to use as a replacement for each existing noun. In other words, I was practicing N+x rather than N+7, with the variable x representing a confined space for creative choice. The first stanza of "Salad" is the source text, a dictionary definition of the word "salad." Each subsequent stanza (with the exception of the last, which is a footnote) transforms the immediately preceding stanza with N+x. These subsequent stanzas are also rephrased as recipes rather than definitions. In the process of writing the poem, I made a few departures from the N+x constraint. First, there are two instances in which I chose to use a synonym rather than a nearby word: *vehicles* became *metaphors* and *drivel* became *gibberish*. Then, I choose to vary the first verb of each recipe. *Mix together* became *mix up,* which in turn became *jumble.* As the verb progresses, the connotation of randomness and disorder increases. This entropy reflects the breakdown of meaning that is inherent in the N+ technique, as well as the disorder inherent in a salad. As a whole, the poem revels in absurdity, swaying between sense and nonsense. The absurdity of the poem reflects the absurdity of the limerence I experienced as a result of working at the restaurant mentioned in the poem. In the way my poem jumbles words together, it is analogous to the jumble of vegetables we call salad.

"Salad" does not state that I had a "crush" on a coworker. However, I was in the midst of it when I was writing the poem, and the poem was shaped by that fact. If it was not for the limerence, the word *salad* would not have been significant to me. Although most of the poem is not in the first person, the footnote makes it possible to interpret *dishwasher* as myself, the poet. Therefore, the second stanza can be read as a recipe for me. This reflects the fact that you (a reader) are constructing a picture of me, the poet, as you read my poems. This picture includes *drivel* and *inhibitions*. The word *drivel* is suggestive of the absurdity of limerence, and *inhibitions* brings to mind constraint, in the real world as well as in poetry. In the subsequent stanzas, the dishwasher is transformed into *disillusionment* and *distance,* both of which are part of my experience of limerence. Both my bouts of limerence included moments of disillusionment in which I doubted the delusion that the limerent object liked me. Both bouts ended in disillusionment. Both included long periods of distance from the object of my limerence (as they say, distance makes the heart grow fonder). The recipe for disillusionment includes *melodrama* and *fixation,* which are both suggestive of limerence, an *injury* to peace of mind. Finally, the repetition of "serve cold" suggests that I am a cold, aloof person. I do come across that way. An acquaintance once told me that I seem "unapproachable." Although it pushes the boundaries of lyric poetry, "Salad" can be considered lyric because it addresses my personal experience of limerence.

SUMMARY

Beagle Music is a work of lyric poetry that explores the power of poetic constraint. Although not every poem is strictly lyric and some poems are minimally constrained, the collection as a whole is defined by lyricism and constraint. Within these parameters, a web of interconnected themes emerges. The most prominent theme is limerence. However, there are additional themes woven into the collection: longing, dreaming, memories, speaking/silence, sadness/happiness, passivity/pursuit, and poetry itself. Some poems contribute to multiple themes, thereby connecting them. "Her mouth" connects the theme of speaking and the passivity of staying silent to the theme of eating. "Spring Rain" connects passivity to longing. "Don't Worry" connects the theme of eating to romance and limerence. The themes are developed with the help of motifs: moon, stars, sky, night, flowers, lilacs, apples, ghosts. The body is another motif. My poems mention the face, eyes, ear, mouth, and hands. My poems also recur to the idea of a house, mentioning the attic, windows, sink, door, threshold, table, roof, floor, stairs, and housework. Two poems take place in a kitchen, which is traditionally a woman's space. In two other poems, "The Girl in the Mirror," and "Her mouth," the house is a figure for the body. All of the themes in *Beagle Music* reflect my embodied experience as a young woman. This tendency of my poems to mirror myself, the poet, is the core of what makes them lyric. In the process of writing *Beagle Music,* I have deepened my understanding of poetic constraint. I am more convinced than ever that poetic constraint is generative and liberating. Therefore, I intend to continue writing with all kinds of constraint, both traditional and innovative. I also hope to publish *Beagle Music.*

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Rachel Ouellette was born in Irkutsk, Russia. Ten years later, the Ouellette family moved back to Maine, their home state. Three of Rachel's poems were published in *Balancing Act 2,* the 2018 anthology of poems by Maine women. In 2019, Rachel graduated from Morse High School in Bath. A member of the honor societies Alpha Lambda Delta, Sigma Tau Delta, and Phi Beta Kappa, she graduated from the University of Maine with a major in English and a minor in French. Her future plans include pursuing an MFA in poetry. In addition to writing poetry, Rachel enjoys playing harp.