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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
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Apotheosis

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in English

by

Megan Grant

Thesis Committee:
Director of the MFA Program in Poetry, Michael Ryan, Chair
Professor of English, Amy Gerstler
Professor of English, Patricia Seyburn-Little

2018

DEDICATION

To

The coolest folks around,
Mom, Dad, Josh, Jordan, Dani, and Chrissy:
thanks for the material!

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Apotheosis

By

Megan Grant

Master of Fine Arts in English

University of California, Irvine, 2018

Director of the MFA Program in Poetry, Michael Ryan, Chair

This thesis is an exploration of spiritual, familial, and pastoral poetry. It was written to deeply consider and reflect on truths that become evident in the physical and spiritual world. Many of the poems are an intersection of these three themes as they attempt to make various connections through tension, lineation, and musicality. These poems attempt to undertake this endeavor in ineffable and surprising ways.

SELF PORTRAIT IN THE TARDIS WITH CRYSTAL, THE ART MAJOR

I have two lungs, no gills,
and a toxic conviction: Inspired
tears are the same as breathing
under water.
I pull on my snorkel and dive
into a starry night, Orion's gold belt leaps
like truth.
Perhaps time isn't fixed?
Yet the effect of my features blends into a mosaic
that God broke His back on as Michelangelo
colored in His chapel,
like a toddler filling the lines of a paint-
by-number.
As I, the label maker,
the presence of lambent ambience,
staple my lashes
to the edge of my eyebrows, the depths
and the deep reflect
the green in my irises.

7.15.17

I set my thumb
on the stem of the flower

to feel the taught hum
of the water climbing

up from the roots. It is July.
It is hot. And the green

skin is just dry enough
that I am worried

about this little life
fighting the good

fight. I thrust my
fingers in its dirt

to reassure myself
with the damp

promise of another
day of breathing.

7.21.17

I am pulling these laces
up on my boots

so that they tighten.
I want my boots to tighten.

I want the dead flesh on my
feet, this soft, soft brown,
to wrap around my own
live skin. I want it to wrap

and hold to my feet
so that when I walk
the cow also walks,

so that when I stop
and scrape my boot
against the asphalt,

I do not bleed, but the leather
splits itself open for me.

LIFEGUARD TOWER

- i. ghost pedestal
- ii. throne of Poseidon
- iii. beach hut – no kitsch
- iv. crappy diving board
- v. stairway to heaven
- vi. stage for the observer
- vii. dignified tanning bed
- viii. Hero Purgatory
- ix. monk of the seas
- x. bonfire beacon
- xi. modern sentinel

ODE TO MY HAND

there's an asteroid
on my middle finger
that I will soon clip
off which makes me wonder
about the sky's
permanence.
do you have fingers,
or do you merely
borrow mine?
(a thought of pride,
to be sure.)
yet the soft side looks
like a desert,
a climate You have
already proven to favor.
I peer at each nail
and observe a constant
warm dead snowfall –
the pointer finger
houses a triangle
of snowflakes.
indeed, the weather
often suggests
direction.
the space where my fingers
bend looks like
eyelids. (they
only open
in the dark.)

ZENIT

Clinging to the smiles of violins, we danced around St. Pete with Swan Lake in our shoes. Regret colored the tones of thousands sharing visions of memorials rising from the slumber of Perestroika. I waltzed to the rhythm of Russian sorrow and asked its teenagers how to thrive off of cabbage and potatoes. They told me the metro was not quite state of the art (but close) as we boarded the metal beetle from Pushkin. Elena's camera blinked and time became more beautiful in hindsight. Now, our grins are more vibrant than the grey of the St. Petersburg Times, and our developed honesty fingers journalists promoting elections that fiddle with fate like cheap comic books. Last June: when high school students, lawless as snowflakes, read War and Peace and put a little of each into my pockets. Those souls, like empowered water pumps, had eyes of prairie grass, sifting the wind for its whispers. Perhaps Chekhov, renown for wide-angles and short focus, simply clutched a photograph, using letters in lieu of darkrooms.

PACAYA VOLCANO: ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

I left the canopy of emerald foliage as the bay plodded
along heading to the inky precipice of
sizzling basalt. My eyes went up the staccato
crag, hailing their welcome of ash.

I slid down and strode towards the trailhead,
a bamboo stick clutched in my clammy hand.

I wove my way up the incline by the dim light of 6 am-
stepping next to Cara by a flat black slate, a little mountain
man began to scream at me in Spanish.
I shot up my palms in bewildered surrender.

“He said that spot is hollow so y’all were ‘bout to fall through.”
I sidled away from the eschaton preview-
The speaker, in his “Everything’s Bigger N’ Texas” tee,
offered me a Ball Park Frank he’d been roasting.

My soles began to melt with my resolve as
a spark licked the top of my sneaker.

Three years from then it would erupt,
and me, on my couch, reading the *New York Times*,
would look down and see the hole in my shoe-
its brooding potential fulfilled.

THE WOES OF ARK-LORE

My family of
carpenters-

We pitched our boat as
they pitched their tents.

Even the well mocked me -
the sky an empty cobalt.
Brow furrowed, I scuffled forward,

trudging through the muck-like laughter
of other women drawing water.

Our husbands possessing one thing:
a hope for this drought to end.

An olive grove provided cover from
the scorching sun and prying
eyes, a seedy consolation.

Hot droplets fell from my face,
goaded my dread.

Then-
A sudden shock of cold
splattered on the crown
of my head-
a raindrop.

Japheth whooped as Shem
hoisted the hatch,
the dust slipping away with my qualms.

My 600 year old bones clambered
into the cacophony
of barks, chirps, hisses, growls-

white stripes, brown spots, blue eyes,
black hooves, green skin-

the heavy plop plop of rain escalating-
a feral thunder storm.

I stood, 30 cubits high and rising,,

as the world sunk.

The ground swayed and undulated
at the rate of my pounding temples.

Noah fastened the latch-
streams of water gushed down
the gopher wood-

my heart emptied
with the clouds.

The baboons led the
vociferous out
cry of a thousand
different
species-

and they were met with silence.

beaten wood
clinking chains,
 swinging
me-now
nineteen

Remain.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

there is a keyboard wrapped
in saran wrap leaning against a bare
wall. the stand is in front of it.

two bicycles – one leaning against
the other because it doesn't have a kick
stand. the tv is on muttering

to itself - maybe the plants are
listening? letters made of maps
sit on the bookshelf. it's so

disorganized that even Harry Potter
is dispersed, a low point for me.
clicking beetles are turning leaves

brown and me green, and my neighbor
across the way is heading to bed
with her window open. Don't worry,

she's clothed. there's a prohibited
hook in the ceiling in an odd spot.
I wish I could hang from it on one

finger. I've never been that flexible.
Can't stand on my toes. (Although,
I took ballet, once.) Here I am,

fragmented and full, full
and fragmented. I haven't been
a person for at least six months.

CALL ME ISHMAEL

Call me by my middle
name. Taste syllables
that slap across my shame
like waves ripping

at hillsides. Call me Saul
and love me the way salt
owns the ocean, the way
clouds abandon their

nests - how the moon roosts
in June. Give me white nights
in Russia, no nights in Juno,
false nights in Tokyo. Love

me tenacious as light, fleeting
as shadows, eternal like mist
in the morning. Call me by
the tone of foreknown regret,

the pitch of amplified sighs,
by the epigraph of truth.
Search me, and know my
texture, my touch, my least.

*Call me Beloved as the sun
set you repaint each evening,
and may the waking of dusk
never slow just the same.*

APPOSITION

seconds that know how to dwell, how
to think between nodes.

shy sunshine –
collective mood

spaces between the rain on my skin.
my skin.

fertile red lines run
across my sighs like water.

JASMINE TEA POEM

over steeping keeps
you weeping
and leaves meager
time for sleeping
holding dearly
to your reaping
you will find
the flower reap
your tongue leaping

EMPTY VITAMIN BOTTLE

Pea green and lemon yellow
with a crooked cap and slick plastic.

It smells like Juicy Fruit.
but tastes of rotted peach.

Vegetarian.
Hypoallergenic.

Only animal activism
could be so cruel to man.

A bump on the bottom-
a break on the flush surface.

A quip in pink:
Best by July, 2013.

The Mayan Apocalypse
prevented by a bottle of B12.

Too bad we're plum out.

CONSIDER THE RAVENS

I tarried at the river
and was greeted by a scavenger-

winged bones
clad in black

with sun tinted feathers
hinting blue-

my glossy salvation.

Carrion clutched underneath
a chipped beak

begets
grudging acknowledgement.

Beady eyes entreat me-
train me to consider

my Provider.

The bird- striking
and nameless-

clothed in flight
and cloaked in faith-

clever for its kind
but not for mine-

the source of my welfare
and a pause for humility.

Thus I will consider,
wrestle, ponder the raven-

evermore.

LET THE BONES YOU HAVE BROKEN REJOICE

You have a heart of alabaster, a soul
of cool, ginseng, and whatever it is
that you vegans eat:

I perceive sorrow in your shoulders,
the fragility in your fondue –

teach me how He is in ballet,
how He bends your elbows in truth-
time. How He is in the blisters

on your toes, the burn
of your abdomen after a *grand*
allegro. Make Him your Pointe

work as well, and show me how
grace is a pirouette.

He joins you, limber
as a vine, in a pas de deux -

He times it with kinesthetic
awareness, with *kairos* unmatched.

I DO NOT LIKE THE CONE OF SHAME

The feeling of false successes that steeps
like sweet molasses.

Turn your face left and call “blue!”
Don’t be afraid of the rubbery yellow
of split banana peels, the luminescence

of pulled teeth light up my feet like child-
hood. Why is regret
the only portable accessory?

Sing “blue!” and smile at the empty
watering tin – dry up the wet sound
of cheeping apologies. Hey!

Get up or get out, I have no time
for typos on cuff sleeves,
the stutters of feigned eloquence.

IS THIS YOUR CARD?

If I met you, I'd forget your name
unless you told it to me twice.
I'd forget the way your arms
fold like paper airplanes,

or how they unfurl like
scrolls filled with tattoos of thought.
If I heard you, I'd forget
your voice, the sound of quiet

ascending like acrobats
at the circus. I didn't see
you there, but the colors
in your eyes appeared

as one-way mirrors.
Your smile must swing
at the sides like pendulums,
or maybe it's crooked

like the refraction of light across
still waters. Your laughter would crawl
across my sunburn as aloe
vera, or rather it would sidle

up close to my ear and bamboozle
the oddities of decibels.
I await this -
penitence of possibility.

You - whose name is written
on the corners of my dreams -
stranger of moments
and memories – I love you.

TIME IS OUR TEDIOUS SONG

I seek to believe that joy is more
than memory, That

that vanilla moon
melted in the heat of God's clap-on lamp
and trailed through the cotton
waves.

I want to ride a pinnacle down reflection's
white spine,
to trace liquid frosting to its Maker

and ask for a Baker's
Dozen. He once sent round flakes from the skies.
I can almost taste the honeyed
flavor

of favor. The sweetness that is pillars,
paper mache,
and Peter's wooden water skis.