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Spring 2022

An Exploration of My Undergraduate Poetry Works

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Recommended Citation

O'Mordha, Clover, "An Exploration of My Undergraduate Poetry Works" (2022). *Williams Honors College, Honors Research Projects*. 1484.

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An Exploration of My Undergraduate Poetry Works

Clover O'Mordha

The University of Akron Williams Honors College

Clover O'Mordha
Undergraduate Poetry Portfolio

botanical memories of nightmares and glimmering things.

shadows shake and glimmer
the light sparkles like golden roses
petals fluorescent, teal-green
magnificently beaming, trembling

remembering a time when the days were dark
a gloom-ridden hell-scape
full of hate and filth
dark fires tore through the memory

beautiful little birds sing
tweeting with glee
no gloom or glum could dull that hum
of boundless bodies in the sky

remembering a time when you knew my name
that one you know so well
ancient, withering bones in catacombs
slither, slip of a grime ridden tongue

time is illusionary to bushels of flowers
lavender, petunia, teal-rose bunch
a sage in the woods, soaring
shake, glimmer, tremble

remembering a time when blood ran thick
the water of a shivering womb was no match
for the coagulated iron rot
twisting placental vines on the willow tree

_

*the branches sprung forth and grasped
arms limp, my throat rasped
tongue fiery, ice-hot
vagrant memory, finally caught*

famished ocean in metropolis

video vacancy, radio static, flickering street lamps
scattered pieces of broken blue eyes
on asphalt roads

centennial maple, painted sidewalks, turquoise bus benches
bones hiding in sewer drains
slithering home

dusted furs, rocky grey lakes, rainbow oak leaf beds
seafoam in lavender streets
cement crumble

hiss

Anthophobia

fear of flowers

whistling ropes of wind
bind these delicate stems
sinking in crowns
emerald encrusted

belladonna and adonis
swinging in claws
hiding in sheets
of frozen sunlight

bountiful, bold
flower shards
surf the sky
turquoise-red

poinsettia,
wisteria,
blackened nightshade
dripping silken drops

poison clings
to sunken, ancient veins
latching then detaching
from existence

Angelite.

feathered wings
pearlescent; crystalline
glittering with sunken promise
fluttering with sullen desire
burst through to the distant sky
scalloped with clouds of ember smoke
in a smog of harbored memories
celestial beings with terrestrial feelings
shed the last trace of grace
collide with sleepy surfaces
cracked and placid in place

stained glass ouranos

iridescent reflections of rainbow hues--purple, green, and pale sky
blue. micro-crystalline, eerie, yet decadent too. warp, swelter, and
sway in the evening starlight; blazing for creatures unheard,
unseen. an ecosystem, woodbound organisms skittering,
squeaking, leaping from tree to blinking tree

thunder-clapping in jaded skies. cumulonimbus lining the
stratosphere--a bleak square of emptiness on the scorpion red
earth

showered in shaking fears--shadowed in hibiscus tea

snap-dragon

glittering rocket-flame

bursts from the sky

candytuft clouds

full of butane

your petals curl round my fingers

like a child

desperate, alone

snap, not now, later

let out the color of your soul

splatter paint my corneas

your lips pour on the counter-tops

filling the room with spring

the hues of your clipped wings

between the peaks.

the lilies of youth
sparkle in the golden sun
shining bright pastel
in the field of whims and dreams
before anxious spectators

*

the pines of wisdom
shrouded in the ghastly dark
swaying to and fro
in the forest of near-death
with no one to bear witness

ether real

when we sink in the dirt
tap into the azure of the root
the daises sing like stars
bursting at the twist of stems

slither your aorta around my nails
the atmosphere swirls here, almost visible
almost like a daydream

the vivid red of your irises blare open
the sound of earth echoes in my teeth
blister open, chitter, clang
pus drips like ice melting the bark

sharp icicles pelt down
frozen prison at my feet
do we exist? truly?
in the dead heat of winter?

my lungs don't work, not anymore
not when you sing like that

Osiris called me tuesday morning

The Nile flooded again
rolling fertile water coated the silt
capturing the divine in the mundane

I need him to send me my shroud
and ask him a question:
can you desecrate me, please?

My body not unmarked by the mumification
stripes of blackened bandages on my eyelids
take away the rigor of my mortality
sprawled on the concrete

How exquisite can a ghost-encrusted,
lily-coated, acid-ridden, forbiddingly
hideous iteration of a carcass even be?

Impure and drenched in embalming fluid
smelling of clove and cardamom

I've dismembered again
just like last Tuesday, and the one before
take communion on my ligaments
tender and supple and ripe

A sweet liquid pours from parted lips
flows to the river Lethe
primordial, the essence of heresy

The eternal inferno of chaos roars
my bones shiver under the crushing weight

The Last Lover

お露

My love, my wilderness--I'll join you when night falls, lie with you when the moon rises, leave as the first signs of light peak between the trees. Interlace your body, lovely branches, with my bones, peony lantern, gravestone cracked and moldering with age. Hang your charms. Banish me if you must. Curse me, keep me from you. Cover your ears and hear not my ghastly voice. But it will not last. Stumble, meet me at the cemetery, vague dew upon the sighing grass. Join your corpse with my lovely bones and rest here. Intwine your corpse with mine among the wistful dead longing for touch.

お菊

He loves me, I love him not. A soldier, Valiant Samurai, cannot catch my eye. You like tricks, mean tricks. Humble servant girl at the will of her master. "One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine...no Ten." Where is Ten? Where have you hidden our precious, priceless, prudent prize? Forgive me, cast away my mistake, at the price of being a flower. Golden chrysanthemum blooming from the earth. Twinkling in the moon's light. I am a flower, but not for you. Never for you. Beat me, drown me, cast me down the well, and I will return each night to torment you. A shriek, blood-curdling screams, and an endless search for Ten.

お岩

It is not for me, for you, this union of disparate souls. We gathered, created, and ended many times. I am sick now, of so much. Hurt me, curse me, cheat me, Violent Samurai. Cast aside you're beloved whom you never beloved. It was mutual--promise. Scar me, hate me, poison me, Violent Samurai. My reflection, it haunts me, a reminder of you who taunts me. I might have to die--promise. My ruined face, my terrible voice, croaking and creaking and breaking down your new life. Your new wife lay dead and your old one, nightmarish, is with you forever.

capital city.

it bears down on our backs
a shimmering vacancy on asphalt roads
glistening with a light mist of acid rain

it shows us what it means to be alive through that neon glow:
to be a nothing-something,
to have a body, no stream of consciousness,
no stream of symphony through veins

to exist as a twilight peeking between the rustle of leaves
and the shadow of heavy fog—or is that smoke?
I guess *you* will never know

but to know how these rows of concrete
crack and crumble; watching them sink
awaiting their delirious downfall
grinning

and you are always *so* bright
in the pitch-dark of night

that spark of engine revving
that lights the palace on fire

gild my ivory-tinted bones in script jasper

etch, until a hint of hyacinth peeks through
elongate tendons like rubber bands
play a song on my teeth
your voice echoes in my empty vessel

isn't it nostalgic? how desolate can a corpse be?
this liminal space between reality and me
salmon-pink, sapphire-blue, ivory-white
a ripe, heavenly visage on the concrete

a flicker of blue-green flame in my eyelids
the keeper of dandelion stems
line my hems with the proverbial mud of my youth
wormwood casket, the celestial coursing through veins

i want to sway on an ocean of petrolatum
make me shine again like I never did
heels chaffed, palms calloused, temples bruised
shattered cranium in my cereal bowl

slither away to a cascading desert
dry patches in the marrow, hollow cacti on the sand
that dead thing over there peers
eye sockets covered in decayed flesh—hungry

i wonder what it's like to be a starving corpse
clinging to that last semblance of life:
the unmistakable gnaw of hunger

it involves a fire.

the chill of the steel bench
metal cold with night

shooting through my spine
rippling and bending

arching, singed black
feet tapping

crafting small earthquakes
at the tips of these toes

tiny and tremendous
cracking earth

tearing through magma
the manticorean beast

furious fangs piercing through bedrock
it never came, but it never went

no flame on flesh
no lava on leather

it involves a fire
yes, a raging one

hidden deep, carefully careless
maybe flames exist

even within these toes that tap
or these hands that write

or this mind that guides me
unseen, unheard

imperceptible, possible
but painfully hot.

Red Moss on The Carcass

On Fear Street: 1994

slender palms caress tender muscle drawn taut
heartstrings plucked strumming a somber lullaby

through skittering blades we fly through the moon core
nails screech on exposed flesh lungs blister in the exploding heat

neat rows of hopes collapsing in violent thunderclaps
washing over the forest in rays of golden blood

ichor dripping languid feasting on swollen fingers
ambrosia for the gods desolate worm food

stumble while you tread grasping wicked skeletal hands
plunge through the earth hold close the hidden realm

caught in the trap secret order of the world
buzzing in the trees hissing of the rat

soul unspared wrath unhindered on moonlit nights
leaves lie dead on forest floors violets unfurled

Proserpina.

as she lays in the gardens of pluto
slipping between rising grass blades
pomegranate seeds slip from supple lips
dripping the sweet nectar of innocence
it smells of flowers and crisp cool air
rocks form structures beautiful and unseen
white linen hems gracing the warm ground
the girl dances and sways to the sound
his heart beats for that precious golden hair
the sparkle of sweat on her smooth thighs
inhales the lovely, languid scent
of sacred roses laid upon the chest

those gardens of bodies
dead, decaying
bruised and broken
that nectar, that curse
rotting, burning flesh
corpses piled high
fire, and more fire
agonizing screams
ropes and ropes
set the flesh alight
sizzle, pop, hiss
charred bone-white

blood on the altar

silken stones
and shining beams, moonlight sheets
on rusty chains

a glowing orb of red in blackened
gloomy skies
ripe and shimmering

trickle, splash
flowing deeply, sultry scales
snake the barren throat

flashing silver glints
hits a crawling moonbeam
splintering

in sight, iridescence
trapezoidal archangel
fluttering alight

inhale that earthly scent
ropes of velvet draped
upon the altar

The Fire Of Chaos.

in the beginning, there was a path.

my bare feet scratch against fallen rose thorns, blood littering the ground below—stained brown-red. dead leaves fall like boomerangs around my wandering eyes and branches pierce my fiercely barren flesh. I can not see anything other than green and the indigo-black of the empty, silent, sensuous skies. my rapidly emptying veins still pulsate, and mahogany blood drips, coagulates on bruised nail beds. they form pearls of cherry red, shining, blistering, in glistening shapes on precious lavender bushels, sheared and speared with bone.

somewhere in the middle, there was a thought.

this labyrinth, bend and twist of endless corridors, bursting through open moors, wade in marshes—yellow-blue. foresee all that one can in this ceremonious and sanguis land. hold memorial for the ragged and ruthlessly dead upon the forsaken earth. rest your weary head, close those sullen eyes, there upon the quaking earth, stones shivering, crack. wolves howl, sonorous and bleak, these trees bowing under cosmic weight. in rising pandemonium, all souls shout—a swirling of smoke and shrinking sanity collide in rhythmic beats. the dead lie still, the living pause too, organs paralyzed, sanctified, in the frozen, vacuous fire of chaos.

in the end, there was a pit.

Roadkill.

a swarm of warm hands
buzzing at the parting of pores
sinking into flesh
decaying, rotting
and slipping from bones

an off-white cage of branches
creeping and creaking
pulsating green veins and putrid
blood, pumping through
the pitiful organism

it writhes and wails
jaundiced eyes peering through
a trampled and lonely skull
aches for the dreadful release
of death

Spine.

it ripples and bends, cracks and rips open
the door flies away on owl wings
and I see the stars

bursting and catching flame
sparks trickling down and
burning the stony flesh

the moon swivels and turns
a pearlescent lily flower
smelling of smoke and fire

a stark white surface
severed and singed black
to reveal a chamber within

thousands of pumping vessels
living in a damp cage
encased in calcium wire

vertebrae crashing
red with blood--white with bone
falling deep into the ravine

verdant scenes of hell paradise.

in valleys deep
 the elderberry slips
 through tender throats
 tangled in mucus ropes
 encased in the body decayed

 bone exposed on volcanic rock
 boysenberry bushes prick
 gleaming streams of red
 gushing out the geyser
sprouting violently

 a leaf so green on sunlit nights
it sparks in observers sudden delights

 there are so many shades of red
dancing on the dead flower bed

 snowdrops and tree stumps
 engraved in ivory stones
 homed in catacombs

listen the end is nigh in paradise
wait for the light shines down on you
see that figure over there
hate that feeling of deja vu

In the arms of Samael we swing. Come forth with the fortunes you
bring. Sweetly, sigh in the orange midnight air. Sing not a tune of
despair. The beginning has just begun. Think not of the outcast
sun.

why cry in the blistering cold

be happy for the sake of glass

dripping crystal clear on chipped bone

sing like a bird electrocuted

volcanic ash on treetops

verdant rose of old

steamed in ropes of gold

thy hellish heart stops

the shifting eyes of jupiter

I feel sound on my skin
hear static filtering in
mind like a blossom
shivering, bloom
melt, die
swim to vacant shores
in the dead of coffins
the heat of sweltering ice
the dirt scattering
my bones and flesh
upon my static chest
lavender, wisteria, nightshade
lighting fade in
beams of shattering fire
in the end of veins
dead be desire

Automatonophobia

fear of human-like figures

borrow soul essence
oil the rusted machine
light vibrance awake
A.I. mind no longer keen
oxidized bone, grime ridden

*shaken and beating
heart fluttering out cages
escaping, fleeting*

no breath, no blinking
no rapid eyelid movements
no voice, no thinking
no ringing, pale, dead-looking
and distinctly humanoid

Ghoul

A pallor, sunken cheeks and dull eyes. Morbidity and ferocity and felicity all in one captivating being. Swirling around in aromatic clouds, glittering, breaking free from those chains of silver, hexing all that wander and wonder through the night.

Might I become like thee, a corpse run wild, run free?

Chanting through skulls, decaying and frayed, glistening with fresh rain, sinking to the dirt. A body, just that, ripened and almost juicy, almost delicious enough to eat. Mouths will water, and they will sway in the presence of such a being, twinkling and bewitching-- twitching--and blissfully vacant.

But will thee dance with me, and sink and shatter on the count of three?

Eyes flooded with bloodlust, cursed, howling a whistling kind of shriek that rings through the sky. It came from the catacombs, lithe figure, shining in the moonlight. It might stalk the vacant cities. It might hide from stronger beasts. And it might consume at midnight.

Yurei.

Transparent hands wrap around the branches;
oak wood auburn in the lamplight
splintering ghastrly palms, wood trails spiraling.
Crisp autumnal air glides in through the cracks
carrying the rustle of leaves and smell of earth with it—
tasting sweet, feeling sweeter.

I look like music; light, airy, fluttering
Tchaikovsky in the Russian winter, with snowflakes all around
I fall through the surface, incorporeal, invisible.
It's raining now, a light drizzle and
petrichor soon to come.
Because it is raining, I am gone;
a distant nothing, ceased to exist.

“Looks like ten miles of dirt road.”
The bleak core of sacrifice wove into my listless body
a calm and wonderful kind of fire.
I spoke, shrieked, a thousand tongues spilling from bodies
frozen in the vacuum of water.
“Hey, sweetness, what are you doing down there?”
I will come up soon, promise.

My hair crackles like dying leaves,
skin bleak like winter skies.
I need to sleep to know I'm alive.
“しょうがない, しょうがない, しょうがない,”
the trees whisper to me—
echoing sweet, dying sweeter.

XV. The Devil

scales glimmer in shades of
blue, purple, green
along the slithering body

hissing low, climbing branches
tangled ivy vine brushing
along the grooves

blackened eyes peer at trembling skin
delicate, delectable human meat
begging for consumption

a rattling feast this shivering night
stars hidden by tall grasses
moon cowering in fear

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Williams Honors College

Critical Reflection

20 April 2022

A Critical Reflection on My Poetry Influences

Introduction

Through my many years of writing, what shaped my style the most was the writing of other authors. Many of these authors are ones I have studied in classes and come to understand their work deeper than what is simply on the page. The poets which have influenced my work, in terms of style and content, are Emily Corwin, Jamaal May, Aannah Browning, and Ocean Vuong.

Emily Corwin

The work of Emily Corwin includes many examples of the ekphrastic. An ekphrastic, in the context of poetry, is any poem written as a retelling of, or inspired by, another work. The ekphrastic works by Emily Corwin, which are best showcased in her poetry collection *Sensorium*, retell the stories of women in horror movies, providing them with agency in stories that often take that away from them.

In my own writing, I have used both in separate ways: the ekphrastic and horror-inspired poetry. I have written an ekphrastic on the Roman myth of Proserpina and Pluto (Persephone and Hades in Greek myth), and another ekphrastic on the movie *Fear Street: 1994*. Both of these works are horrific in their own respects, with one being a horror movie and the other an abduction story.

Corwin focuses on the experiences of women in pop culture, specifically horror movies. She brings new light to the stories of women who are often looked down upon through the lens of horror. One example of an ekphrastic I have written after a horror movie is titled “Red Moss on the Carcass.” This was written about the movie *Fear Street: 1994*. The poem explores the supernatural aspects of the movie, especially in terms of ghost possession and the consequences of it. This was inspired by Corwin’s use of horror films and the ekphrastic to shine a new light on the original source work.

Outside of the ekphrastic, I have also written poems that express a general horror aspect. These include body horror, necropastoral, and apocalyptic scenes. Emily Corwin primarily uses, out of this list, body horror. Before reading her works, I had an image of poetry as a romantic and beautiful art form, devoid of evil, horror, and hatred. However, reading Corwin's works introduced me to a type of poetry that embraces the darker aspects of life, and makes them beautiful, rather than their beauty being innate, as with flowers and love.

Corwin also writes using the Gurlisque, a gurdy, burlesque, and grotesque style of writing. It is hyper-feminine, campy, and visceral in its descriptions of the female body and mental health. An article published by The Odyssey defines the Gurlisque as:

“...that which is written by women who overtly perform and react to their femininity. The poems push the boundaries of what is typically seen as acceptable female behavior and language. Their speakers are honest and precise in unique ways and represent many facets of what it means to be female and to be “woman.” Taking a page out of Burlesque performers’ playbook, speakers work to reclaim their bodies to subvert institutions and people who once laid claim to them” (Oliva).

Another aspect of Corwin’s writing that has influenced my own has to do with formatting. Corwin regularly utilizes the prose poem format, especially for her “Outburst” series. Exposure to this kind of formatting revealed a new way to write a poem that combines elements of poetry and prose. I have written several prose poems, whose topics are supernatural and gory. These poems include “Ghoul”, “The Fire of Chaos”, and “The Last Lover”.

Corwin also uses vivid descriptions of the senses in her poems, hence the title of her collection *Sensorium*. The descriptions tend to be unexpected and a bit gruesome, utilizing aspects of body horror and disgust to generate an effect in readers typical of the Gurlisque writing aesthetic. The ways I have used this in my own writing tend to focus on ultra-vivid

descriptions touching upon each of the five senses (though not always). These descriptions include shocking and unusual descriptions.

Emily Corwin is a poet that has influenced my poetry in several ways. She has written poems that explore visual imagery in a written art form, and a creative and non-traditional presentation of feminism in literature. These ideas and themes have bled into my own writing and transformed my poetry in the process.

Jamaal May

Jamaal May published the poetry collection *Hum* in 2013. Reading this poetry collection has influenced my writing in several ways. May makes use of ecopoetics by having humans and nature interacting in his poetry. He also writes about post-industrial landscapes and phobias, as well as bringing his poems alive by using sound.

Inspired by his work with the phobia poems, I have written two of my own: Anthophobia and Automatonophobia. Anthophobia is defined as the fear of flowers, and I use this poem to explore a fear of something most would consider beautiful and attempt to make it frightful. Automatonophobia, on the other hand, is almost like an opposite of Athophobia. Automatonophobia is the fear of human-like figures, such as mannequins, dolls, puppets, and automatronics. This poem explores a common fear and explores the concept of uncanny valley—where something looks almost human, but not quite.

Poems in the collection *Hum* that I enjoyed are “Macrophobia *Fear of Waiting*” and “The Hum of Zug Island.” “Macrophobia” focuses on relationships and the complicated nature of them. This theme is explored in my poem titled “proserpina.” This poem is contrapuntal, and on each side explores the different opinions of the same relationship. The myth of Proserpina is Roman in origin, and is the same as Persephone in Greek myth. The story is described as Persephone being kidnapped by Hades and forced into marriage. However, it is also sometimes written that Proserpina chose to run away with Hades to the Underworld to get away from her mother. These two very different tellings of the same story often reflect the ways a relationship is internally complicated and sometimes contradictory.

“The Hum of Zug Island” focuses on an industrial landscape. The presentation of an industrial landscape needs to be vivid as most people don’t encounter this kind of environment. This industrial wasteland, Zug Island, is made to be inhabitable. No one lives on this island, but many people work here. This island was made of unnatural, unliving material for the sole purpose of capital gain. This interaction with something inhuman, whose nature is unknown, is the potential origin of one of the fears explored within this collection, Mechanophobia.

An example of this in action within my poetry is the poem titled “capital city.” This poem describes a scene of an empty and semi-abandoned motel. This compares to May’s

work with half-abandoned industrial landscapes. The poem I wrote explores the idea of being without a body

Annah Browning

Annah Browning makes use of ghosts and witches as reflections of different aspects of femininity. When I read her collection *Witch Doctrine*, I viewed the ghosts as a weakened and dejected figure, and the witches as empowered and bold.

Inspired by her work with ghosts in poems, I wrote a few ghost poems of my own. One such poem, *yurei*, follows a ghost figure as they tell how they died. Another ghost poem I have written is *The Last Lover*. This poem, as mentioned before, is a prose poem written in three parts, telling the tale of three different female ghosts in Japanese folklore. In that sense, this poem was inspired by both *Sensorium* by Emily Corwin by using the prose format and ekphrastic, and *Witch Doctrine* by Annah Browning for its use of ghosts as a protagonist and vivid descriptions of plants (mainly flowers in this case).

An example of a ghost poem by Browning that influenced my work is “Ghost in Dessert Dish.” This poem tells the story of a ghost inside of a dessert dish, observing a scene of a man and woman. The ghost in this scene is seemingly powerless, unable to move, and simply observing the scene before them. This poem stood out to me while reading *Witch Doctrine* because of its use of a unique perspective. The observer is outside of the scene, watching from a distance. I have used a similar technique regarding death and dead

characters within my poetry. The dead are neutral beings telling their stories, such as the ghost in “yurei.”

Browning also introduces the concept of spirituality in her poetry through a non-Christian lens. The spiritualism presented leans more towards a neo-pagan ideology. This concept is expressed in my writing as well. I focus on themes surrounding old religions not typically followed anymore, like Greek and Roman mythology, as well as pagan religions from around the world, like Japanese Shinto. Examples of this are my poems “The Last Lover,” “proserpina,” and “stained glass ouranos.”

Annah Browning is yet another poet who has greatly influenced my writing in many ways, but especially in terms of themes, content, and approach.

Ocean Vuong

Ocean Vuong is another poet who has influenced my writing, although not as much as others. His writing often focuses on his personal feelings, especially regarding his family and his past.

An example of one of Vuong’s poems from his collection *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* that inspired my own writing is his poem *Telemachus*. This poem tells the story of Ocean and his father through the metaphor of his being shot at sea. He pulls him out of the water to hold him, even though he is gone.

In my own poems, I explore using extended metaphors throughout each piece. Some of the metaphors are easy to decipher, while others are a bit more complex. An example of this is in the poem “between the peaks.” This poem provides a straightforward metaphor by comparing youth to lilies and old age to pine trees. An example of a more complex metaphor in my poems is within the previously discussed poem “proserpina.”

Conclusion

Throughout my time as an undergraduate at The University of Akron, I have read and studied many poets. The three main influences—Emily Corwin, Jamaal May, and Annah Browning—have shaped my poetry in many ways. Throughout the next step in my academic career at graduate school, I hope to expand upon my current poetry style, honing it with the study of many other poets.

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Williams Honors College

Poetry Self-Analysis

20 April 2022

Analyzing Undergraduate Poetry Works

Introduction

Throughout my undergraduate career at the University of Akron, I have written many poems, all following similar themes. These themes have shifted and evolved over the years to create a cohesive style in my work. The poems I will discuss in this essay follow the main themes of mortality, corporeality, and mythology, as well as poetry styles like Ecopoetics and the Necropastoral.

Death, Ghosts, and Mortality

Mortality can be described as someone being subjected to death (“Mortality Definition & Meaning”), solidifying their reality as impermanent and temporary, as opposed to an immortal whose reality is permanent. This is the contrasting realities of human beings and divine beings--those whose existence is permanent, and those who are subjected to mortality.

On a similar note, corporeality, which presents itself within my work through ghosts, ghost-like creatures, the undead, and human bodies on the verge of near-death, is anything that is of, or relating to, the body. It is a state of having or being a body (“Corporeality Definition & Meaning”).

Imagery related to death and decaying can also be observed, with some of the subjects dead, some alive. They might also be spirits or some other kind of entity. And sometimes, I challenge mortality by presenting death as a neutral and emotionless circumstance.

In the poem “between the peaks”, the narrator is reflecting on two distinct eras of their life: youth and near-death. This is achieved through characterizing youth as lilies that “sparkle in the golden sun”, and pines as near-death “shrouded in the ghastly dark”. The use of contrast in these stanzas highlights the differing perceptions of youth and old-age—youth being bright and hopeful and old-age as being wise and somewhat lonely. This is a poem that focuses on near-death—the subject is not dead just yet.

The poem “ghoul” tells the story of a ghou, an undead being who eats the dead to stay alive. This being is not exactly dead, nor is it a ghost. This complicated space in which the ghou inhabits provides a commentary on mortality for the readers. A ghou is created when an evil spirit possesses the body of a corpse, reanimating what was once dead. This fits into the broader narrative of challenging death within my poetry.

In the ekphrastic poem “Red Moss on the Carcass”, written after the film *Fear Street: 1994*, the narrator is interacting with someone who is already, some sort of vengeful ghost who seeks to kill. This poem combines elements of mythology and body imagery. The lines “rays of golden blood / ichor dripping languid” is speaking on the golden blood of the Greek Gods: Ichor. Ichor is not technically blood when compared to what flows through the veins of humans; it is the force that keeps gods alive, as well as Titans and other immortals and only flows when harmed by specific materials. This exposes that the narrator has harmed this spirit and thus incurred their wrath.

Christianity, Mythology, and Self-Mythologizing

Different elements of various mythologies, including Christianity, Greek myth, Roman myth, Japanese Shinto, and modern American myth can be observed in my work. I mainly focus on the darker aspects of religion, like tragic myths, ghost stories, and damnation. I also work with self-mythologizing, creating my own sort of mythology through poetry.

Self-mythologizing is when you take something mundane about your own life and turn it into something epic and larger than life. This can be something about your past, your present, or speculation about your future. It can be therapeutic for some, taking your own experiences and putting them into a place of unreality (Vinnati, et al.).

One such poem on a tragic Roman/Greek myth, is that of “proserpina”. This poem is an ekphrastic on the Roman myth of Pluto and Proserpina, equivalent to the Greek myth of Hades and Persephone, “The Rape of Persephone”. This poem is contrapuntal, with the left half being an idealized version of events as seen by the victim, Proserpina. The right half is an objective and more gruesome telling of events as seen by an onlooker. This poem can be read collectively as one, or as two distinct poems, further highlighting the contrast between the two sections. This juxtaposition of events acts as a commentary on the various interpretations of this story. Some believe Proserpina to be completely willing and consenting to the events that transpired between her and Pluto. While others interpret the story as Proserpina being victimized by a man in power. Some try to justify the actions of Pluto because he was lonely in the Underworld and wanted a companion. This sort of back and forth and disagreement on the story reflects how victims of assault are treated in modern times. When viewed by different people, the story is interpreted in different ways and different conclusions are met.

Another poem that focuses on mythology is a self-mythology called “The Fire of Chaos”. This poem follows the narrator through the path of death and the afterlife, adhering to themes not particular to any religion. In the first section, the narrator goes through the process of mortal death, and in the second the aftermath of such. The second portion of this poem blurs

the line between the afterlife and objective death. The narrator is dead, yet it is unclear if they are in a sort of afterlife or simply lying where they died.

Annihilationism, Eco-poetics, and Necropastoral

The concepts of annihilation, eco-poetics, and the necropastoral come together to form a kind of poem that centers on human experience with nature and the destruction of the natural world. Through descriptions of nature, both alive and dying, a metaphor for the human reality of life and death is—being and annihilation—is presented. The necropastoral, as relates to the modern urban world, presents itself as an apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic setting, in which not only nature is dying, but the artificially constructed world as well.

Annihilation, as understood through Christianity, is when God destroys the wicked, leaving only the righteous to live in immortality. In some denominations, hell is seen as a place of total non-being, where the unrighteous cease to exist (“Annihilationism”). This ties into the necropastoral, in the sense that it deals with a mutated and poisoned natural world—something subterranean where death lives (McSweeney). It presents non-human aspects of nature, usually unpleasant, like bugs, mold, viruses, etc. Eco-poetics is similar too in the sense that it has a strong ecological message of humans interacting with, and often tainting nature. It is an awareness of ecology and environmental disaster presented through poetry (“Eco-poetics”).

An example of annihilation in my poetry is the poem “ether real”. This poem details a surreal environment in which the narrator ponders reality: “do we exist? truly? / in the dead heat of winter?” This narrator is conflicted about the realness of the world, noting that something often seen as an objective truth, the atmosphere being real, is “almost like a daydream”. This tells the reader that this narrator may not be in a world that is like our own, possibly something divine, whether that be good or bad. The title itself is a statement that the

ether is real, but the poem is challenging that assertion. The title is also a word play on the “ethereal”, which means something that seems not of this world. The narrator has been annihilated, sent to a place unlike the one we are in. They are in a “frozen prison” where they must contemplate their life, and ultimately conclude that their lungs do not work anymore in this strange world.

The poem “anthophobia” deals with both eco-poetics and the necropastoral. This poem is titled after the fear of flowers, and contains images of “frozen sunlight”, “flower shards”, and poisonous flowers. These images showcase eco-poetics and the necropastoral through descriptions of nature as mutated, dangerous, and somewhat apocalyptic.

In the poem “famished ocean in metropolis”, a scene of a city overly saturated with color and modern technology is concluded with the lines “cement crumble / hiss”. This cues the reader that the artificial aspects of this city have begun to crumble, the beginning of an end--an apocalypse. The hiss signals something sinister and alive has caused this societal collapse. Alternatively, the hiss can signify the natural world taking over the land in an attempt to return it to its origins. This is another example of eco-poetics, showcasing human activity within nature and how we interact with that, and the apocalyptic, the city crumbling in a state of decay.

Conclusion

Over the years, my poetry has come together to create a commentary on death, the supernatural, and mythology. I have also developed a focus on Eco-poetics and the Necropastoral before I knew what these styles were. My focus lies on the unnatural and supernatural, and how that interacts with the objective world around us. It also questions whether that world is real or as objective as it may seem. Sometimes the natural world can seem so absurd or out of the ordinary that it feels supernatural, and the supernatural can seem

so real yet not be. This trail of thought lingers in my mind as I write and comes together to create a collection of poems challenging what we view as reality.

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