

Intercessions: A Poetic Exploration of Mental Illness and Christianity

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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July 2018

Expected Date of Graduation

July 2018

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Abstract

How does mental illness interact with Christianity? What is it like to lose your faith as a mentally ill person? My thesis explores these questions and more through poetry and the lives of St. Christina the Astonishing—a medieval saint and the patron saint of mental illness—and myself. I juxtapose my experiences with St. Christina's as a way to discuss the differences between a mentally ill life with and without Christianity. Throughout the chapbook, I argue that St. Christina and my experiences are more similar than they first appear, that Christianity is not always compatible with mental illness (but can be), and that breaking out of what is expected of me (Christianity, straightness, neurotypicality) has been the most healing part of my life. I do this through pantoums, free verse, and prose poetry, as well as hymn and liturgical forms. The vocabulary I use also connects my work to the Church and tries to pull away from it.

Acknowledgements

This chapbook owes its life to so many people, first among them Dr. Katy Didden and Dr. Jason Powell. Without you two, my idea would have stayed an idea. Thank you to all of my advisors—Dr. Yaron Ayalon, Sarah Haley, Dr. Barb Stedman, and Dr. Jim Ruebel—for listening to my rants and ideas and for helping shape both me and my college career. I'm also incredibly grateful for my friend-editors: Kathryn Powell, Levi Todd, and Eliza "Ziggy" Sandlin. Thank you all for validating, copy-editing, and pushing me to do and be better. I've been blessed with an amazing family. Thank you to my parents, Dave and Becky, and my sister, Katie, for your endless love and acceptance (even when I'm talking your ear off about a medieval saint you've never heard of). Finally, thank you to everyone who has helped keep me alive, many of whom have already been listed and others who know who they are (and especially Matt Stark).