

When It All Comes Together, I Want It To Be Purple

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Hamilton", written over a horizontal line.

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Introduction

It is very difficult for me to write an introduction to something that I cannot, myself, explain. Poetry has been an important part of my life for many years. I wrote my first poem in the tenth grade and then took off running. When I came to college I discovered something that I often refer to as my nemesis: revision.

This thesis became my ultimate exercise in revision. Through it, I learned that as I grow as a writer, revision becomes the key to understanding which poems work and which do not. My strongest poems, the ones I am closest to, are those which require the least revision. My favorites, the poems I could never get quite right, come alive with help from revision. My thesis has been years in the making. I'm almost sad to think that it is finished. But then I remember what my creative writing instructors have told me throughout the years. Poems are never really done.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge Mark Hamilton for trudging through this mess with me for the past few months. He has helped me more than he will know. Thanks also goes to the Jaguars, my lovely poetry buddies, who not only are revision machines, but know and accept a part of me that is rarely shown. I would also like to thank all of my friends and family, a list too large to name, for giving me support, love, and plenteous material.

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I hear the sounds outside
Cars pass, trains bellow
The sounds frighten me
Keep me awake-alive
I hear the rain set to music
Many overtures
Each thunderclap
Poetry for the soul

The Dance

When I first saw you,
I laughed.
You were standing on the sidewalk,
soaking wet,
turning cartwheels in the downpour.
As I laughed,
you stopped,
grabbed me,
pulled me out into the rain,
wrapped your arms around
and danced with me.

I could feel the warmth of your soul
rushing through my body.
You had no idea
that I had already
fallen in love with you.
When the dance was over,
you kissed me
with raindrops hitting our faces --
and our lips.
I knew that there would be
no one else
who I could ever
love more
than I loved you in that
milli-second of time.
I prayed to God right then
that you would never let me go --
And you didn't.
You held me for so long
In the downpour in the street.
That is when I will love you the most.

Even now, when you're leaving,
and I don't know what to say,
I'm just going to kiss you.

And when it rains,
I'm going to go dance.

I know that you'll be there
with your arms around me --
And I'll be laughing.

My Storm

Alone in a field of wheat,
I see dark thundering.
My eyes close,
I float into the storm.
Rain pelts my face,
it cleanses me,
strips away fears,
greet me with smiles.
Beating, thumping
deep in my soul,
I hear its pain

The storm and I
feel each other's
hearts and minds.
With every flash,
every rumble,
my storm conquers
sorrow and guilt.
Takes everything that has
hurt me in the sky,
defeats it
and turns it --
replenishing the field.
Giving the earth wheat,
as rain drops
kiss the earth.
Unaware that pain
was there.

Swinging

Swings slide back and forth
The little girl screams with
Fear and ecstasy in the same breath
She begs her father to push her higher
And he does
She thinks that there is no tomorrow or today
No time at all
There is nothing but that moment
On the swing with her daddy

I sit on the bench
Peering into their world
I am so separate from them
Staring at the little girl's face
The perfect pinkness of her face

I too used to be the little girl
On the swing

She does not know what is
Waiting for her in the world
She doesn't know that her daddy
Won't always be there
She is not aware that
One day she will cry
And one day she will be in pain
So throbbing she thinks
She may go insane
Perhaps she will

But there is nothing for her now
Only the swing and her daddy
The air running through her crisp hair
Begging her daddy to push her
Higher and higher

Puddle Jumping

When it rains, I go puddle jumping
To remind myself of the child
That's inside me.
I run through the streets,
Listening to the water beneath my feet.
I am amazed at the elegance of the rain.
I run through streets,
Not over fields,
Not in the grass,
Not through a forest,
But on concrete
Man-made streets.
So grotesque, unnatural,
And yet, when it rains
So magnificent.
Rain makes everything new.
It cleans the world,
And even the streets
Become beautiful.

In the Rain

The night you left me
standing in the rain,
you never saw my tears.
I stood there stunned and silent,
like a dripping deer in headlights.

I fell to my knees, which were
bare. As I wept, damaged and wet,
I watched my thick blood
spin and swirl
with the rain droplets.

My chest expanded and deflated
in a desperate attempt,
that night you left me dazed,
grotesque, without you.

Wondering what made this
crazy woman place herself
on the sidewalk, bawling,
forgotten.

I thought I would melt,
that the rain would wash me into
the gutter -- out of sight, mind.

Mostly, I wanted you to see me.
The disheveled, bleeding
mess crying in the rain.



Night Calls

At night I can think.

Permitted to let my mind go.

Undisturbed.

Let my conscious touch the dark
part of my mind that haunts -- lives off the night.
Feeding on the animosity of the dark.

Night is mother's milk -- my necessity.

Sounds of the night hold the most comfort for me.

Hum of the crickets.

Flicker of a candle.

There is sanctity in the night.

The way the darkness

wraps its arms around you.

A blanket of midnight keeping you from civilization.

The almost primitive nature of dark bewilders me.

How can one condition be so powerful,

at the same time

so mystical, yet

so dangerous?

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Night and day arrive, and day after day goes by,
and what is old remains old, and what is young remains young, and grows old.

-- "For My Son Noah, Ten Years Old"

Robert Bly

Last night the neighbors were arguing and history came to me.

In my room I could hear the banging shouting and throwing of various objects unseen to me. Fourteen again, I run to the top of the stairs and plop down on the step. *Get out! Get out of my LIFE!* she screams. I grab onto the hand rail and hang on for the wave of anger I will soon feel. In the next room I hear my sisters stir in their slumber. Don't let them wake up God, please don't let them wake up. The muffled conflict between my mother and her chosen mate scales the stairway, much like heat rises ... or was that hate? I slam my eyelids shut letting my mind take me to my happy place, the one the teacher taught me to find. I'm playing frisbee-fetch with my dog in the sun when a plate flies past my head lopping the tops off of three daisies in the field. Yanked out of the grassland, I hear the glass splinter downstairs. My first sister, half my age, plods into the hallway wearing that pink Sleeping Beauty nightie that I can't seem to ever get clean. Her brown hair is sleep-stuck to her pink face and she's carrying her Sparky dog. Another dish perhaps a bowl smashes my eardrums. I watch the fear climb into my sister's eyes as she drops her stuffed animal and runs down the steps. I rush after her, feeling my sweaty feet pick up the sand and dirt left on the harsh wooden steps. She makes it to the living room where she sees Mother crying and holding her flower vase like a mallet. *Get her out of here!* I'm told. I grab my sibling, who upon my touch transforms into a garbled mass of fleshy limbs all trying to get free. I lift her from the ground, exposing her panties and legs, while she cries out with a child's fury. *Get her back to bed dammit!* Mother commands as I scurry towards my stairway-haven. I push the imp up the steps into the dark of her room. *What's happening?* asks my mother's third child. *Go back to sleep sweetie,* I say in my mother-voice *Go back to sleep.* Trying my fourteen year old best to comfort them, I cover the fugitive and kiss them both. I shut their door, locking out the aggression floating towards their room. I cross the hall to enter my sanctuary. Sister's disruption has calmed the demons below us. I slide down the back of the door covering my face with tremulous hands and begin to sob.

Six seconds-years later, the words pop into my head. That which does not kill us...

Upon Viewing a Photo of Myself and My Mother

How long can you hold that smile
after the camera goes click?

A day? An hour? A minute?

You realize you can protect
her for only so long;
she'll eventually catch on.

Sure, you can smile
keep your teeth straight
hair neat and eye lined.

But you can't fool her.
She can see the dead look
just behind the smile.

So why do you try?
For her,
for you?

Are you trying to pull that
proverbial sheep skin over you?
Yank. Pull. Twist.
It will never cover you.
It cannot hide that look.

So how long will you let the camera
see your shining smile?

You can hold it as long as possible,
but she'll always know what's underneath.

Crazy Rooster Girl

My sister, Jill,
once threw up a
single Prince
spaghetti noodle.
A complete
unbroken noodle.

She was in a pair of pink
tights, no more,
resembling a
fair potato wrapped
in candy nylons.

I burst out of the
Aqua Net soused
bathroom to find
Erica, my best friend,
cowering from the noodle
limp in the carpet.

It lay among the tan
yellow-orange threads
of my mother's cheap shag.
I fancied it slithering
around the strands --
a sort of starchy ninja.

Jill's eyes gleamed with a
lunatic joy, those frightening,
gagging tears.
My crazy spaghetti
sister cackled like a hag
at her gift to the carpet.

I still think about Jill's noodle --
how it may have came forth.
I imagine her
standing on awkward
nine year-old legs,
shoving her arms

back, sticking her
neck out, shooting that
noodle from her lips.

Rooster like.

To She Who I Loved Best (for 12 years)

Six months since you left
And life went on
But it was mine that felt the pause --
The ripple left in the world when you took leave of
That earthly form I so loved to hug
Now no more.

It was my room you claimed as a youth --
Running under my dresser to make your mark
(only to be scolded later)
Munching stealthily on my favorite
Little girl -- Slaughtered plastic --
And yet I loved you
Now no more.

In our adolescence -- jolting and jumping in the yard
Playing Star Wars, I, in my purple ear muffs
And crisp white sheet, Leia
You, in your mangled brown coat and intelligent growl, Chewbacca
My only friend then -- you trouncing me
Your chocolate mammoth paws pushing me down
Soft pink tongue -- showing love -- wetting my face
Now no more.

Later as we aged, my teen aches
Let known to only you
Burying my tears into your smooth body
Your eyes say they understand
Falling asleep on the floor with pink eyes
Listening to your bottomless heart
Now no more.

Then I left you to be "on my own"
Returning occasionally -- each time you
Hobble a bit slower -- Jump a bit lower
But your mute voice whines how much you missed our time
You lay next to me permanently
Sensing my stay is a mere visit
Resting your head on my lap -- broken breathing
Now no more.

The call, the words: "She is no more"
Struck every nerve in my body like electricity to water
No goodbye or time -- all was gone
Hand on the cordless shaking wishing you were with me
To comfort the grief I fell -- for you
It was then the ripple hit -- and here I sit
Six months later watching the ripple spread larger
Knowing I shall see you, whom I loved best,
No more.

Gramma

I can still see your hands
Crocheted veins
I could pull on the skin
And it would stay
How we laughed at your hands

I remember blueberries
Picked from your garden
Frozen in tupperware
Hidden in the freezer
Behind vanilla ice cream
Perfect for shakes -- if I were good

You let me pick snapdragons
Pink, yellow, purple, white
But only one of each
I'd trap them in baggies
Come running into the house
Boasting them to you

You worked on bridges
Welding metal to metal
Raised three sons
Built a life, a home

And now, after you've gone
I can see the freezer
I see the flowers
I see myself
But your kind face
It eludes me

The Song

Wind moves the curtains slowly above us;
she reaches her hand up to touch them.
I grasp at her wrist in an attempt to distract her.
It's late and I'm tired,
but she doesn't want to sleep.
She's curled herself against me,
the rayon of her pajamas slips along the cotton of mine.
She asks me to sing the song -- I tell her to sleep.
She reaches up to touch the curtains again,
but before reaching them changes her mind.
She returns her thumb to her mouth,
it's own little night-time hangout.
Her feet rub against my calves; she gives a slight kick,
mumbles through her thumb for me to sing the song.

I oblige: *You are my...*
I pause waiting for her to take her part
she sings *sunshine*
but it comes out *shunshyne*.
Her voice is tiny.
My only... shunshyne.
She rolls over and looks at me.
Her eyes seem so large tonight;
I wonder if they have always been that way.
You make me... happy.
I smile slightly and touch her hair as I sing.
When skies are... grey.
She brushes her fingers across my eyelids as she sings.
The breeze has died down,
but the curtains can still let in some moonlight.
It makes her skin glow angelic,
the irony of it makes me laugh.
You'll never know... dear.
I think how I'll be leaving her soon,
and no one will sing her the song.
How much...
We sing *I love you* together.
I smile because I love her.
She smiles because she loves the song.
Her thumb is still in her mouth as we sing,

Please don't take my sunshine away.
Her blinking has almost reversed now,
she fights to keep her eyes open.
I pull her to me and think,
this song is so terribly sad.

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Tragedy of Ages

Hobby horse rusted broken toy top
Swings swaying empty -- slowing -- then stop
Train tracks unfastened matted doll hair
Red crayon melted dingy brown bear

And off in the distance the lonesome child sighs

Corsage wilted pink dusty prom glasses
Class ring band tarnished tattered hall passes
Parking lot spaces squeaky gym lockers
Cold public restrooms fountain drain hockers

And off in the distance the lonesome child cries

Coffee pot perking grey daily paper
Traffic jam music tone body shaper
Briefcase black leather telephone bills
Dry shook martini birth control pills

And off in the distance the lonesome child dies

Time

The time has come my humble friend
To talk of other things
Of chocolate hearts and the red rose
Of songs and loves and rings

The time is near my simple friend
To cherish those you love
Because the ones who you hold dear
Leave on the wings of doves

The time is now my foolish friend
To take your small soft hand
And touch the hearts of those you trust
To stop time's endless sand

The time is past my sightless friend
To speak your words of love
The one whom you'd like to hear
Has joined the stars above

The time has come my humble friend
To live your life alone
Try not to let your mind digress
Nor your heart turn to stone

In my underwear drawer
there are cotton panties
and a Purple Prince Bra

there is no fancy
thing
to make my dainties
smell good

there is no Mother
saying "that is a whore bra"
or Father
asking "why does underwear
need to be colored anyway"

No Sister
stealing stretched out
brown nylons
or Brother reading through
sex in my diary

there is no gawking Girl
envying my red knee socks
with the Santa heads
or lusty Boy tripping over
the front bra clasp

there are no people at all
I tell you
only my underwear
twisting themselves
into cotton and satin
pull-puzzles

As a sophomore, I was introduced to one of the most interesting individuals I've ever met -- Dr. Richard Brown. He taught me British Literature for two semesters, humanities literature for two semesters, and that all poetry doesn't necessarily have to be deep or morose. I wrote this next poem, **Ode to the Chipmunk Which Lies in the Road**, as an extra credit assignment for him. Needless to say, it got quite a reaction from him. I believe his actual words were: "Excellent comment on those dastardly pests, Jennifer." To this day I think that he's the only man who could pull off using the word dastardly in a sentence.

Ode to the Chipmunk Which Lies in the Road

Woe to my chipmunk which sits in the street,
Whose entrails lie for all the world to see.
What has turned my chipmunk into this meat?
And why, oh why, did the furball not flee?
No more are his sun filled days of glory,
Running and darting -- alive with such pep.
Now his corpse tells a much sadder story,
As I'm walking home, over it I step.
My guess is a car with increasing speed,
Came down the road -- Hell's proverbial bat --
Paying that chipmunk not the slightest heed,
Smashed its plump, brown, little body down flat.
How saddening it was to view blood and gore --
But I shed no tears -- here live millions more.



Touch of the lily on my lips
brings a dew-like tear
thoughts of yesterdays
flood back to my mind
sun drenched days of smiles
grass tickling my back
the grey of your eye
much like a cat you hate

Let's Go to Venus and Live in Love

Tell me your happy story
Tell me your sad life
When it all comes together
I want it to be purple

I want you to remember
My innocent in your arms
My virgin tears burnt onto your lips

Then see me in pansies
Slipping under your eyelids at night

I'll press you into my arms
Squeezing you
As daisies wrap round your back

I want melted into your mind
The memory of my kiss
Minutes, hours, days after we part

Dream dreams of me that wake you
In sticky sheets -- dying to return

See me as the siren
See me as the harpy
Make me your Madonna

Dance the atmosphere with me
Come with me to Venus
Live with me in love

Raging Affirmations

Eyes alive --
I see your smile.

Touch my
mind in a deep
wave.

Many times I've seen that look.
I've tried to cry.
Yet it is all done in vain --
Tears. Love. Thought.
All done with the feeble
hope that one
may find you.

Your name rests
on my lips. Waiting
to leap forth and
conquer the world.
Or my heart --
which ever comes first.

The I love my sappy love poem

Blood rushes through my ears, beats in my eyes. I know how you see, what you feel -- your blood rushes through my face. I have hundreds of hearts -- all beat in sync, but out of time. I close my mind to your absurdity and your heart's pink flow. How many times have you come to me -- with your name on my lips to touch that place in my heart that no one sees? I feel your pain course through my fingertips, yet I cannot touch. When I see tomorrow, there is no sun but I feel the warmth of its feet on my back. When I hear the music, my mind crosses into that unknown madness and I feel the pain of the world touching my soul. Tarnishing it, making it rot like apples in the sun or the corpse in the dark or my mind in your head. Oh yes I know how you fear me wild-eyed scratching your back expecting nothing less than every last drop of you who can barely say my name. And yet still I feel your touch. I laugh at the sun and dance with the moon. And we laugh and we sing and we dine and we drink. But it is all alone. We kiss the stars and still I can feel your touch. Why when near do you not see me? Do not touch my mind? While I caress your smile you do not hear my words. Why are you so far away? Oceans and miles and minutes and planets. When will you have me inside your mind? I feel you near -- dangerously near. I have the stars and the moon and the sun. And finally you. Finally, finally. Finally you.

A Wispy Exploration

Glistening, melting
in your arms
pulling me up
to you. Lips touch lightly,
your tongue flicking my
teeth, a strange morse code.
My hands explore your
back, slick and soft.
You smile, eyes dance
arching up, out.
Bodies touch,
I feel the heat
of your breath in
my ear as you
gently feast.
Your hands find
the small of my back,
pressing lightly,
relieving the tension
floating through my body.
Eyes shut, I guide the tip
of my tongue over your
Adam's apple, tickling the
cleft in your chin,
changing course to
kiss your lips.
Pulling tighter,
every element melded.

Powerless

I.

I weep
as your fervent
teeth electrocute
my static body
into a sloping statue.

long suffering
clay -- gently
twisting rigid.
Your teeth, under-
standing, become
my guide.

Leaning over the
edge, I see the freckled
carpet below.
Keep me
submerged in you --
don't let me wake up.

II.

Turn of your head
sends my body coursing
with rhythmic primal energy.

You make me forget
My name --
soul --
my very breath.

Your scent
on my body moves
fire through my lungs to
my loins, which ache
for your accuracy.

Rational me burns screaming

carnal thoughts at
the sunrise of you.

I fear you because
you own me.

Argument with Myself

“The mind cannot masquerade as the heart for any length of time.”
-- Duc de La Rochefoucauld

**He looks at us with ice eyes
We peer into his mirror and see nothing**

**We've moved beyond his heart that cries
To be free or loose -- wild like horses**

*But we're screaming crying
Trying to make him stay
"We MUST hold onto the free spirit"*

**We need MORE than his tired, clammy mind
Gagging on memories which distort themselves**

*Oh can't we just be prisoner to the dripping
bars that are locking us behind the light of his soul*

*We're not strong enough to bend
Let alone break them*

**We should toss our head back -- cackle at his glare
"I'm beyond your poisonous games, little boy"**

*Still -- we stand and stare, silently self-destruct
While he spins out of our world forever*

It Knew All Along

I can't think
about you without remembering
the feeling my stomach felt
as though it were going
to eat itself.
More fitting
if my heart ate itself.
You know, like when a fox
in a trap chews
off its leg --
for the good of the rest of the body.

I feel so sour.
Sometimes I wonder
if you were to
kiss me again,
if I'd taste
like a Lemonhead.
But then I laugh because
you'll never
kiss me again.
My stomach swirls.

But my head -- it is content.
It knew you. Told me
over and over
that you were unsteady
and wicked.
Now that you're not here,
my head's not cocky.
Never once has it said
I told you so.

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Val

The gray-green flood
washes over my skin,
pierces my mind,
yet does not see me,
does not hear my words
or even play my game.
But I watch,
as a child watches a bee
on a flower
gathering nectar.
I watch --
with the amazement of a child.

As your gray-green flood
cleanses me,
I see inside,
the empty room,
musty air,
an attic
with the rocking chair.
On the hand-made throw rug,
and elderly woman
reads to the young boy
on the floor,
rocking,
as the tears run
down his face.

Angels

Did you ever hear the angels
scream on a cold, dark night?
Do you need to feel
hot and cold
to be alive?
Never-ending

Have you felt them eating
you alive? Like dogs
chasing rabbits --
Chasing and chasing and seeming
like the hunt is never over.
'Til finally they snatch the rabbit.
Rip it apart.
Gnash at the
sensitive flesh.
Do their screams split
apart your soul?

Have they ever called you?
Screaming your answers
as your lungs
burst, feeling only your
heart. Beating inside,
pulsating heat.

On a cold, dark night
can you hear their bleeding,
heartless screams
calling your name?
Can you hear the shallow
piercing sounds?

Do you know the infinite wisdom?
Will you when it calls you
or will you turn your back?
Will you be like the rest?
Or will you stand out?

Did you ever hear the
angels scream?

White Demon
on viewing Fontana's "Concetto Spaziale"

Jerked under the surface
My arms jump sporadically towards
A bright white haven

Scalpel-teeth pull me deeper down
Mauling my world a luminous pink
A whirling nautical murder

Suddenly thrust into the slithering mass
I grope at the beast
Fingers hunting each other in vain
The scaly flesh slips away

I yank at the smoothed gill lines
But cartilage knives slice my palms

Pink clouding

Sucking water into my mouth
Choking down a sour shriek

Six black cuts in leather
Sway before me
Those that lend a liquid life

Fading pink twists black
Under the shimmer of the water glazing sun

On Paladino's "Canto Guerriero"

Bloody, mother's womb
Holds the wolf
Suckling her
Dry -- long slender
Arms comfort and wrap around the
Void of scarlet darkness
The wolf feasts on a
Dripping corpse
As the four-legged dove
Turns her head to watch
Senses mute
Succumb to the sexuality
Of the dove
She transforms and flies
Resting below mother's arms
Limbs everywhere
Lie dull and naked in the angry pool
The blood is tarnished and burnt
Crisp onto the fur of the wolf
As mother looks on keeping watch
Longing
As they all spring from her womb

Smothering Motions

Wandering through the
vastness of illumination,
as a spider would
saunter to its trapped prey,
with a dripping
wet grin,
the would-be man
slinks into the room.
Fingers of marrow
and skin, no more,
with nails sharp as
the young one's wit.
A crooked spine
to match the crooked
grin. The black clad
demon rests on
her chest, hesitating
only an instant before
directing her artless face
with his lanky digit
to reveal his true
lust, the satin smoothness
of her flesh.
He caresses her
neck, running his nail
along her skin,
as the scarlet feast
begins seeping
from his trail.
His cracked lips
part, as curtains,
to unveil his forked
tongue which follows
the path of the nail,
tempting his soul with
her life's juice.
Unable to control
the hunger building
in his shell,
he ravenously feasts,

exhausting the last
morsel of life
remaining in her
tortured body.
Satiated, he stands.
A single blood-stained
tear drips from his eye.
As he turns to fade into
the sullen obscurity.

The Poem in Me

I am the native
girl sitting
on the beach
letting the sand
flow between her toes

I am the invisible
lady lying
on the bed
curled around the damp
pillow waiting
for the phone to ring

I am
sarcasm
and sensuality
rolled into one great big
fireball

One minute
I can drop to my knees
clutch at my insides
and wait for the world
to swallow me up

The next
I can shrink the world
into my palm
and spin it like a top

Everything all at once
nothing less
and all this time
you thought you knew me