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Born to Hula

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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By Gavin Smith  
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Born to Hula

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Born to Hula

Thesis Title

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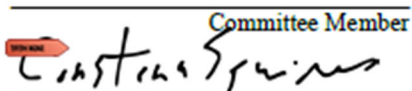
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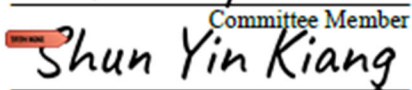
A THESIS APPROVED FOR

The Department of English

By

  
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Abstract: The thesis represents a body of poems accumulated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as it continues to spread and the poet's subsequent ruminations in confinement. *Born to Hula* is a collection of poems exploring the mundane weight of living, confused locality, and its fatigue, the confines of American society and their expressions in dislocation. The impulse of the thesis aims at an exploration of space, the degradation of potential futures, and considerations of the past in honest relief. These poems aim at locating and losing against the threats and follow-throughs in American society.

Diners, thought of in these poems as the lighthouses between a slack bed and a hard road, act throughout the collection as a centering place, an oasis of grease and no-eye-contact refills. *Born to Hula* uses these fixtures as relief against ongoing structures and construction, the unchangeable churning of progress and those left behind. The central motifs of the collection are divided between the local and the dreamscape. These patterns enter on explorations of the area of Edmond and the diners stuck between. The dreamscapes found here act as personal explorations of potential futures lost and the narrowed possibilities of escape against such loss. Poems such as "Smoking, A Brighter Day" center upon a zombie motif as inevitable demise in lines like, "Until it can render me as still. / It's not getting further" (47) and in the poem "Here, Here" which questions the ability to disappear completely from society with, "a promise of escape followed by / reality returning to its native habitat" (20). Each poem in this dreamscape reaches towards a wandering against modes of enclosure the speakers situate themselves in, and always resulting in an anti-climax instead of a fulfilled escape.

On a similar note, the filmic motifs were at the beginning as a process of the thesis a more prominent role but evolved to signal, illusions of fiction and possible escapes through filmed fiction. Poems such as "Old Joy", which turns the premise of the film towards a wanting

for connection, reduced to small talk with, “inert stimuli as spilt hours divide decorum / but to sit with you, if only again” (30). “Director’s Chair” openly thirsts for the chair/position in power an aim that is unfilled, “I’ve played out the brilliant coup-de taut lie / a few times in my head” (45). Each plays towards an exploration of the relationship between the speaker and the personifications of the film industry they attract themselves to, again a form of wanting, an escape unfulfilled.

The language of *Born to Hula* plays with the disappearance of escape plans those speakers within the thesis find themselves caught in. The language throughout the thesis carries a knowingness around the collapse of available resources, often this comes in the form of a loss of self, an absorption of locality in poems such as “Another Diner” with, “nods of no-names stumbling directionless” (27) or directly playing with the lost connective relations now missing in poems such as “Her” where, “The kids’ toys were thrown out first, then the other / miscellaneous details of their there” (35). The hula-hoop figures into the central thematic concern of minor transformative connections taken and given away, something that can’t be cleaved away by instruments of capital but given towards the reciprocal crowd of fellow losers detailed in the poems.

The influences of the thesis are presented through three primary considerations. Ada Limón in works such as *The Carrying* aims to disentangle imperfections of the past. This is seen in *Born to Hula* as personal confession, with poems imitating her approach in “Howcatchem” (54-5) which explores the false premise of a deathbed reconnection, and also in “Tornado Season” (7) which situates anxiety survival techniques passed down. Each aim at a similar drive to express grief through reconstructing connections lost between loved ones. David Berman’s *Actual Air* is a foundational influence in terms of its consideration of the lost, of losers. As

Berman's poems invite the dreamscape outlook on the lost vestiges of American society, poems such as "Climbing or Slipping" serve as a ode to losing with lines dedicated to the losing teams surveilled after tournament losses with, "after the other team paints itself into that eternal montage, / when the camera watches their dams burst" (19). Nicanor Parra's *Antipoems and Poems* shapes the approach of his disregard for ungrounded poetics, poems that seek to comment on the reality within anti-poetic language some examples of this influence show up in my poems, "Rosas de Plástico" (8-9) and "Under the Water Tower Surnamed Edmond", the latter of which attempts to wearily understand the current conditions of gentrification in Oklahoma with, "It's hard to unscramble that egg of locality" (13). Together, this thesis serves to illustrate the lost home of the insomniac daydreamers sparsely populating vast plains, and the coping mechanisms reached for in diners and on blank pages.

## Past Here

I'll stumble into this public lighthouse,  
each door plainly stating no exit, coffee  
laid plain dead, familiar strangers nod,  
waitresses click pens instead of  
false pleasantries, don't ask, but observe  
serve their judgment, the bill applied  
out of reach until the course is completed  
or retreated, the carpet's zag-zig of contradictory  
tones found in knockoff cereal boxes, how we  
sat here before discussing the problems  
of modern cinema, before we spilt back  
into our boroughs, the cool night, and I make  
sure to lose that number without hesitation.

## Tornado Season

She would come up with a few games  
and phrases to keep me still when  
the practice sirens were on the wrong day.

Something to give and give away.

Give a hula away.

They're always a few miles away but within eyesight,  
those blinking red vines casually holding us together,  
grab a hula.

I like to assure myself when stuck in faux-porcelain

holding positions those piercing sirens,  
give a hula away,

come from vibrations up there, an ill-logic that steadies  
a whirlwind of imagined final destinations,  
grab a hula.

You could almost laugh to death at the stupidity

we've landed on, to settle down in tornado territory,  
give a hula away,

and wait in our homes or 'shelters' for it to all  
blow over, like another won't be whipped up,  
grab a hula.

Like those towering red vines away from us aren't

here for a reason, for our lack of,  
give a hula away.

Grab a hula.

Give a hula away.



Rosas de Plástico

zero digits calculate worth,

yesterday repeats tomorrow.

widowed old fool trips,

violets sprout chalk outlines,

uniformed observers pass bad coffee,

talk D.O.B. possible D.O.D,

several complaints about writing up dead trees.

passengers choose between this

or that blacktop lot, onlookers well...

xolos tongue-wag hellos to all GPS carrying cars and

tin pan alleys.

reporters fill around ads with

quote-rehearsed complicated air,

new retro-chic short-trim buttoned collars

mosey about where the nice graffiti stands,

local elderly lot squat at shorthanded early morning

eatery,

Kant get too quickly at the free refills retiree scabs

smile at ten percent tips...

job listings require fresh plasma sampling,  
interstate commissions but algorithms half-off,  
half-witted gringos who through banal irony, chirp at  
each other  
gringo, ask about which content you've consumed,  
which podcast this week,  
forever incapable of rolling r's, or heat beyond  
middle-brow raising,  
each sporting a cloth map  
Dimly stating keep ( ) weird.  
afterglow,  
breaking brown bones like champagne  
Confidence driven autopilots crash, always into the  
same place.

## Constructive Editing

She works as a false identical twin,  
she works hard at none of the listed  
expectations, mismatched dye poorly  
applied contact lenses but she's at  
the taped x, there to fall exactly,  
a way for the other to make  
contact with us, a story written  
simulated but felt through unfindable letters,  
she pockets picks as weeks begin to wither,  
where adjective laden garden varieties,  
once novel, substitutes something the insurance  
won't cover on set.

He

Sometimes  
you'll have trouble figuring  
    which J-lettered name  
forms the missing half of you,  
    if you'll only know if  
word ever gets back that he's croaked,  
    somewhere else  
    finally,  
and very tenuously it relates to you somehow.  
    Your name wasn't mentioned and sorry for your.

## It's Always Sunday Here

Any diner no matter  
the quality or lack  
thereof is a lighthouse  
engraved on the corner  
of unnamed st., a place  
you can sit down  
eat burnt black  
bacon next to eggs  
microwaved scrambled and seep  
plastic real warmth as  
the creamer is placed  
and disappeared, better than  
home is, always the motto,  
and then eventually wander  
off to strange dark  
spaces between lighthouses.

## Under the Water Tower Surnamed Edmond

Spill out of the vast empty veins  
surrounding that city that repeats its location just to be sure,  
with just the one building of blueish pale glass available to glance  
when god doesn't catch a cold.

It's hard to unscramble that egg of locality  
meshed into pure brand awareness,  
there are stragglers, sure,  
but the honest truth is laid bare, the same dead  
bricks and quaint choices of faux-fashion  
surrounding us, we've lost, it if ever was birthed,  
the entangled cross of Midwestern drawl and brow  
with Southern cosplay not knowing or caring who  
was called cowboy then simply boy.

Buildings in different directions of class,  
paired together to illustrate clear patterns of less and less  
spilled green glass.

There are murals designed to tell no names,  
and say no history, only to declare  
the trail cleared the black beneath us  
both buried and barreled.

in the "town" we have a mill where no scent of creation,

flour is made but only promised previously,

do you ever look across the many flat lots  
made for parking and consider why?

For Lev

A man sits alone at a diner,  
spring strawberries bloom in April.

Un hombre se sienta solo en un restaurante  
los muchachos golpean/patean, lo llaman maricón.

A man sits alone at a diner,  
lipstick marks an actor with perfect teeth.

A diner sits alone at a man,  
bloodshot eyes read past midnight.

A man sits alone at a diner,  
minivan mirror opens young crimson.

A man sits alone at a diner,  
pinkish cheeks run over with sophomoric waterworks.

A man sits alone at a diner,  
rewriting his past over in red ink.



some roads

deer friends fish on highway road

rose cumulus

willows sigh

route zero

chalk faded

hit and forgotten

mouth agape

elder buck gazes

rubneck'd

let's him reel

back chapped lips

pucker newly

minted line rambling

fishing in dark waters

slaps of blood

orange against fresh

asphalt nightshade blackberry

shuffle off and

unto each other

says something

about catching

the big fish.

Here

Dew-soaked road  
and bent grass  
green toward other  
green and passively  
waiting for road  
to tow away  
so bent and  
raw crash test  
dummies the numbers  
not names total  
addition a sum  
equal before subtraction  
numbers and digits  
cross and pass  
equally it ends  
somewhere but not

To Them,

You go about random intervals of star-less sky,  
To cornerstone lighthouses, which carry negligent  
Slippages of tongue as lingua franca.

You go about quoting bell hooks simply stated,  
You spend sun's retreat digesting  
Documentaries as a diet.

You're there to sing a little pun we both groan gingerly at,  
To dance yourself clean, in zinfandel laughter.

You're there to communicate chest-to-chest, how many  
Times have you given breath to limp lungs?

## Climbing or Slipping

The interviewers buttoned up with bland shirts,  
tucked in with menthol greeting,  
carry the same detached amusement found  
after the other team paints itself into that eternal montage,  
when the camera watches their dams burst,  
or when the mic is placed just below,  
waiting where you have to bend and reply,  
they only carry that question, and we  
both have to pretend it wasn't etched earlier, like  
the ball of rock isn't sitting there overhearing us.

## Here, Here

Still clouds and pale skies, an escape route,  
I let myself slip off the edge  
where concrete is common,  
each step further towards,  
*I can't decide*  
printed upon myself the promise  
of a campfire,  
a promise of escape followed by  
reality returning to its native habitat.

## Trailing Off

We went down,  
a few hours passing,  
little green nothings passed  
between, as pastures

with few remnants  
of grand land this  
wilderness, tamed,

red dirt receded, and left  
the few stragglers

small talk confers,  
we went down

each mile proceeding,  
contained sharp, large signs

warning of wilderness,  
as if it were only an obstruction,

we went down  
to the trail,

this birthday gift,

stuck between the small incline of green

and slick mud parted both ways,

so dense a minotaur  
could've been placed  
as a new tourist trap,

we were caught between the slick,  
the oaks, woods, and other branches  
of ivy outstretching,  
when the ocean erupted above us,

no feathers fled, no hooves raced away,

only the tourists  
soaking steps deeper in the slick  
incline for parking lots, less the real out there appeared.

Where

Suits don't carry the same authority as they used to,  
the stations and motels which briefly pass  
by, neon flickering a hum similar to a bug zap

unto avenues of trails only found within the stillness  
that passes for wilderness today, the decks are stacked,  
the bars less so, whiskey, vodka and other fun poisons sanitize

in place of actual water, the in-between home and there,  
names interchangeably placed between casinos,  
stop-byes and pictures of scenery soon thumbed away,

brick remnants, fallen concrete, and squatters of various scales,  
head lights called stars above,  
how are you to glance at grey flat rock containing that given or chosen  
meaning, a name, to see the edge as inevitable collapse  
and ponder, where to next?



So, it's come to this

I'd go to sites sometimes, to gawk and calculate at animals caged and cheaply sold, together only a series of lbs., numbers, and guesses, each in absence of limb(s), food, attention, but rent and other responsibilities, small things like these dictates when the filter is last kiss, it comes down to whether you're given the ability to flick at the lighter for desert before bullet, or if the mute guard astride swipes at it before you're pressed against cold-concrete punctuated with 9mm dents, and pressed firmly further into an engulfment of others, unlisted and guessed at, small things like these dictates.

The remains of O.K.C.

There was a building

Two-stories up with rising ivy

Graffitied in neon

Green, pink, yellow over past the

Concerns of bricktown,

It had letters

But no meaning, something more to

Plant down and

Illustrate this as a spot, something

Gossiped as haunted

An asylum or a prison

Depending on which

Breath of explanation

By the local marketers

But only filled with fellow

Cold-blooded business graduates,

Oh sorry we missed that turn

Let's go back, here,

I always know where I am by the way the road tastes,  
something that hits the dried-out-tongue  
us passengers carry, something between to dehydration  
and tryptophan found often in the best of gone dreams  
I lay back car as big as whale  
stick my sweat-covered bareness  
to the old faded grey carpet floor  
road moving but staying still, the always spinnin' rubbing  
tires conjoined to the rough nerves carpet cuts/connects to,  
I've been to a great few places on the asphalt trail  
all the way from Ada to Omaha and one time those cold  
summers, one of those nothing cities  
where only traffic speeds past to somewhere else  
location known only as green draped over empty billboards  
until you find one of the diners with a four-letter surname  
that cooks up pancakes and other delights just sweet enough  
to lay you out belly full next to a  
road that always awaits.

## Another Diner

actual air digested easy, days repeat themselves, sometimes indecently talking over  
the allergic breeze giving a shove unto odd paths always cracked, pavement  
emblazoned in glass, and repeated nods of no-names stumbling directionless,

the lighthouse around the corner donates free refills, the staff listen,  
across the way a wrecked collection of vinyl tracing out of a four-story slumped  
house,  
no blues albums through,

late mourning/early night news repeat themselves,  
sips of dark dead eyes sigh yes to refills,  
getting something for the thirst.

## Donuts

Black goatee against  
almost dark tan skin  
something between butter  
burnt right and caramel,  
porcelain digits pure cane shine,  
what was the tree branch  
we both fell out of? At least,  
he did pass on  
something sweet to hold unto.

## Solo Swimmer

Day off, pool open

alabaster skin, turquoise water.

Solo swimmer, midday relaxation.

Avowed socialist, USA shorts. There is  
something odd in a solo swimmer,  
yourself entirely reflected in the water,  
shadow close as skin.

Nothing matters outside this public sensory expansion chamber,  
As with everything it must evaporate in summer heat.

Later in the day, others come, voices splashing serene water,  
gentle smiles, couples finding oasis from their children,  
an unknown neighbor, gray-haired watched all the little waves,  
I stumble, catch him staring as I climb for a break,  
He stares me down. I feel their touch, grasping everywhere  
his eyes match the water,  
unnerving in their stillness.

## Old Joy

To celebrate accumulating cake candles we found  
lost or thrown away numbers and gathered in absence  
of direction. We went out in his jettisoned  
jalopy to our old scout surroundings,  
Easy enough, a sign sighed reading the  
exact caliber that will be thrown if we tap  
one toe on their lawn. So, we went out to the old  
corner diner, replaced and refurbished to complete  
corporate diagrams to sit bliss-  
fully with another body having a coke  
hashing out over extra easy small squawks  
ricocheting recollections coffee, always  
filled full spending time but little effort, just  
inert stimuli as spilt hours divide decorum  
but to sit with you, if only again.

## Poem

A man, eyes narrowed down,

Nose pointed up,

Once told me that as adults

We're only the projections

Of our past

And for each day departing

We Only follow poorly, blindly

A sketch of ideal life unfilled.

He tipped poorly.



## All of My Heroes Kill Themselves

All male, pale, these figures of speech and self-goned  
considerations of rational debates on rubbernecked  
celebrations with smuggled alcohol inhaled in low altitude.

Do I mock mimicry through admiration of dialogue, slack framed  
intellectualism always available, Wi-Fi permitting, or subtract  
with each red cent sent to widows carrying cue cards upon  
each reprinted question, everyone densely read but frankly dense.

Maybe, I've crossed stitched the Gordian with Freudian but  
God forgiving or nothing here after cowardice does carry at least  
the temptation to simply slump upon the rust-chalked reverb  
of a suffering jukebox.

## In Search of Wild Kindness

I penned a note to a remembered face but forgotten name, a “hey let me know when...” and lacking any goodbyes went on to simple measures of repeating simple pleasures of yoga without any of the sweat or stretching. Sometime whenever sweet-tea green leaves rotate to coughing debates on altitude, and some-one goes on about this new stream of revived IP slipping lost cumulative interest as the easy comfort of a bad mattress turns syllables into delayed shakes and nods. I’ve got an ear thing that could or should be looked at, but all this inflation lifts American Water by the drum. In four-hour blackouts the doc comfortable in all snow lab coat smirks after I break the cease-fire with “give it to me straight, like pear cider that's made from 100% pears”, the key grip loses composure so we go at it again, playing chicken with lightning 'til it becomes relaxed breath but with the same false rigor of some-body who appears to listen, the camera always cuts away from the whereabouts of wild kindness.

## Stagnant Water

my footsteps have become unmoored, drifting into

daydream living, listless days laid out in

scrub-colored sheets, creating short-circuit adrift rifts

Poly Styrene joyously plays in

stagnant water, my [ ] told me that

[ ] breast cancer was

going well,

it was the less serious caliber of

bullet, a small chance of death [ ] said,

we spoke less in eye contact

but feeling out the ability for either to be pulled out of still water,

the terrible tedium of waiting for today to turn

unto tomorrow.

Her

She had left before night becomes day, before  
the seagulls gathered in invisible protest.  
The kids' toys were thrown out first, then the other  
miscellaneous details of their there  
got stuffed down the station past  
grey stacks condemned as old docks,  
where only seagulls roam freely, it didn't come  
as a sudden escape dear readers  
would assume but simply a tight fist releasing outward,  
how fun it is, to step off the well-walked path,  
unto slippages and vipers waiting beyond  
the immediate recoverable cycle of habit,  
then the car commercial listed their gracious price.

## Method Against

Kindness acts, more as a suggestive  
appearance, a meditative remove to  
heavy breathing, as waiting churns old  
search engine results into Camus endings,  
nervous tapping, sour sweat dampens  
expectations further, thermometer reads  
simply 72 degrees, there are only  
comfort measures in small pale  
waiting rooms, holding unto dominant thumb,  
all data, *only yes, no, checkmark'd*  
to practiced feigned interest, the samey  
footprints trod forth and back, the  
doctor looks only into the charts,  
hands complex billing to refill pills.

[blank name obituaries surround advertisements]

Blank name obituaries  
surround advertisements  
in chic fashion  
and ever-growing cbd  
joints, blank name obituaries  
bank alongside box  
scores and player interviews  
blank name obituaries  
fill corner sections of  
vomited-out opinion pages  
blank name obituaries  
never lay in front pages,  
only in the margins.

Snowing again

Again snowing,

I'm waiting for the jalopy outside to become only a mold

of itself for the dents the bumper slogans the leftover remains

of fast-food T-bones to be wiped clean in cold

rain snowing again, I'm waiting and little else again

snowing, mourning again and the foam sea pools higher

snowing again, Christmas tree still stuck out

again snowing, loose litter snowing again, tire tracks

mark only absence snowing again, not presence again snowing,

I'm muttering, mispronouncing beau travail to myself as distractions snow again, of

abstractions crowd up against snowing, does snowfall always end up as an even  
equation

snowing again, exacting winter to precision again snowing, or past flurry of packed  
cold

thrown about together in warm laughter again,

snow declining.

## Word of the Day

Snow declining, apathy steady, in insomniatic hours  
where radio consists of loose loops less of rhythm but of exhaustion,

A friend fired an electronic message "Also  
what's something that makes you feel appreciated?" You

can see where I'm caught, where  
each delay creates a relay

compounding, passing on and on to limping, spasming  
into broken analogy, leaving

un-replied, were anxiety pills in harsh flat  
taste slow, heartbeats to blank dreams,

and null bloom of a new  
mourning creating workman-like behavior

in a nothing economy.

The word of today is belated.



## Against Method

There's a grace  
often left un-applauded  
dead red  
emergency procedures uncovered,  
tight, referring as biblical, literal text,  
sometimes microscopic font  
you hear the most ominous sound commonly found  
a lawyer's chuckle, a denial given textual shape.

## Another One, In Case of Emergency

We know the danger, sharp yellow, and banal,  
confusing a camera lens for our own,  
the camera, its capture both prison and stage,  
always implemented at some degree for financial or  
less discernable pleasures, binds at the subject,  
consuming and replaced in the same gulp. But  
I can confine in you, assumed audience member ready  
to be picked out among other anxious hands,  
that a poet's eye is the opposite, yet the same sharp yellow is necessary,  
as we imagine in these lenses, tragedy, ourselves, Mozart,  
and any actual words formed and printed in  
horrible cooing they repeat at each other.

Acting Only

Leave a block,  
sturdy, 2 x 4, below

the justifications quoted above, with  
"the Poet was too embarrassed"

leave a block of details under my urn, and a quote  
never ushered but interesting enough to be reiterated

when your target of choice knows the taste, we all meat.

Reconstructive 1) Criticism 2) Surgery 3) Etc.

Too many poets attempt to pacify that tremble,  
bidi bidi bump bumping within our terrible hearts,  
a modern trend to scrape back, disinfect and  
lay bare bones glistening, a word,  
oh, how horrible they are to us,

it's not the hammer that blows finally  
a release of labor or love,  
but the label placed between claw and face,  
if only the meaning were told then its maw could  
release, if only.

## Missing quotes

Who will notice first?

The unspeakable word

felt only in erasure,

a gap minded but no caution tape

pressed around what's missing.

Should we pick up something cloying,

and will the world learn to cope

We pick around the simple matter, the beat and breath,

some word bearing fruit but also little debates,

the scoffing, the unserious days, pasted to the present.

## Director's chair

I've played out the brilliant coup-de taut lie  
a few times in my head,  
it always seems to get at smooth,  
unseen trick of camera rather  
than any measure of actual words or a lens  
placed upon the director, the room is  
dark wooden with sparse remnants of past pictures,  
I know this as solid as actual air, but  
I don't know what to say to those deaf dreamers,  
those that limit themselves only to what can be said  
and done and not merely taking credit from others  
and surrounding themselves in stiff gold statutes.

## Giant Blue

We can't point out all the flaws  
in our perfect little system,  
the seven-finger forgery  
spat out to draw out  
the death of us, pencil pushers  
and other fools,

who's to say that the most insubstantial  
morsel, that a twirl of hip against plastic,  
isn't just something to pass and receive?

## Smoking, A Brighter Day

Sometimes when a shadow of  
Feline bumps into a discarded  
Bottle of what was  
Beer, I'm convinced a dead  
Body will limp, crash, follow me,  
Until it can render me as still.  
It's not getting further.



## Tomorrow

How each day follows a collapsed progression,  
the hardened hand grips  
until a shutter, then  
firmness is smoothed before  
embalment, a sentence, or none describing  
the outlines of bent wood into pew,  
rigors of many kinds of pleading  
towards an absence of an  
image uncapturable,  
drifting beyond but still  
only false  
comfort.

## Patients and Patience

When you wait for your number  
 to be called down the sterile hallway,  
 you wait alongside the nervous,  
 you see the stubborn statuesque,  
 and the wrecked, waiting for their death-day,  
 the nurses always have their heads-down,  
 reading charts, and other bits of paper,  
 doctors don't make eye-contact,  
 unless they got to lie and point to small odds,  
 for us there is today, possibly tomorrow,  
 there is now a notable absence  
 of the brief flashes of first years  
 grabbing condoms, faces always flushed  
 yet nonchalant, it is saccharine to say, there is hope,  
 as you and I wait for the results for an escape out of these waiting rooms.

## No Dream

"I'm glad you're managing through this"

"I'm glad you're managing this through"

writing about a riot, a concert,  
a disease in the abstract,  
in the stats and increasing numbers  
which can get *at* but never quite the felt  
reality, deeper and more desperate than  
bone marrow sold when rent is past due,  
in plain sight,  
forgive me for this ramble,  
only borrowed observations,  
new measures of denial  
more preferable than staring out at blank streets,  
waiting  
for the Geiger counter to slow down  
to the usual daily  
reality, under current management.

## Only Acting

I've run out of flat black ink to read  
on which new questioning will be spread  
across this barren lavish country,  
an opinion page, like Vegemite,  
assumes no fault but us for consuming,  
if you knew the common ingredients of each  
then the short kick bracing,  
a tongue pulsing towards an unreached escape,  
a coughing retch,  
and the following embarrassment,  
then why bite?

## Shortest TEDtalk

Another new dodo. all the time you can stare  
at buffoonery unethically caged up near  
distant suburbs, eyes shot septic, teeth molding,  
carpel tunnel settling in. another degree higher.  
All the time you can stare at refurbished ink matter,  
every etching an opinion they don't hold,  
even a molecule, keeping check on invisible  
reshared scores. all the time you  
can catch some dried dark dirt that holds on  
in the dozen cracks of your screen.

## Escape Plans Made For Strangers

This is a true story

this is a story

Their all out there in the Bermuda triangular,  
each still day unearthed and away from  
the grit of concrete cutting out your shoes.

Is that what the final give-out passes to,  
a remove from and simple need of days off?

All fatalities mere suggestions masking the reality  
that past the canyon of grand escape they've  
landed past our eyelines and suggestions of nightshade present.

Howcatchem

She liked to ask for just one more thing,

Like the best detectives grandmas are,

At the end of the few times she was updated,

It had to be a handful at most,

Before it became all-past-tensed,

She said a few words to me.

Most mangled in a hum,

But her eyes, people had trouble

Describing the exact tone of,

Had assurance, a good nod can say

Better than, well, it can't be recited,

We gathered around her

For the past few,

The gurney mostly covered

In that hand-crafted pastel-white-pink comforter.

Also, it was spring green with an ounce of

Hazel.

Or so I was told,

we never met eye to eye,  
she was withering like  
an overwatered plant given  
but left mostly,  
the cancer gaining weight daily,  
I told myself that she had many names  
to call out toward,  
wills to divide cell against cell,  
it would be over soon  
and the gurney would be removed and  
I could continue to avoid eye contact, lest I  
know the color before it drains  
from a pair of clouds about to burst,  
then that still serene remove.



## Growing Tired

Fathom, it's getting hard to fathom it all, and it's getting hard to grow  
used to so many lives turned only into names, stats that sink heart

rates, the memory of it all is beginning to disassociate personal experience as buried  
footnotes in an unpublished booklet, growing used to, no matter the 1st-hand

witnesses, the photographs in clear unaltered color, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand recollection, the  
video which runs at 8:46, there will always be some way, some body, some judge  
with an

easy bank account to trot in and doubt reality in favor of some promised, balanced,  
middle, that steps over each chalk-outline to some easy dream of no color, no

inequality, only freedom of choice. There's cross chattered between the algorithms, so  
when you search for the when not if the gas gets thrown, the interviews from  
marchers

in between you've suggested puppy and kitten compilations in high resolution,  
sometimes there are ads offering discount prices for bygone slogans,

there is a remove, a distancing of possibilities growing greater by the death toll.

Growing tired, I penned a note to a magpie.

Ikiru

Where do they go?

Those sparks of fancy that fail  
to carry up  
sore feet,  
When the notepad lays across

the room

in hours beyond light.

Where do they go?

Do they stay within  
or flicker like a lighter, similar but never the  
same?

Or when we fail to memorialize their last words,

do they become only a blur  
instead of a written word or two?

Where do they go?

Do we see their absence in great works?

A ghost

felt

only in the periphery of our senses.

In this way only liquid truth,  
a fluid creation from a fluid creature.

## Born to Hula

Poor choices and dead minutes  
are all weighed in equal measure  
at gates both pearly and more colorfully  
selected. We're reassured in every  
card swipe or new means of slow drainage,  
attached and refitted quarterly.  
I don't mean to avoid the inevitable  
or to cock back and scoff at  
the present without or with garnishes  
added with extra charge but  
to treat this all as merely a tube of bended plastic,  
played until given to another.