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A Journal of Those Times

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts / Science in Department from
William & Mary

by

Alexander Lazarus Wolff

Accepted for Honors
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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A Journal of Those Times

by

Alexander Lazarus Wolff

for David Lehman, Marya Hornbacher, and Henry Hart

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Prologue:

Lines Written in an Empty Room

Tell me about that night in November when we sat huddled by the James River
and watched people jump into the water.

How it was dark, and no one could see, the gulls diving into the river
before soaring away, dissipating into night.

We are not like the moon, whose presence we expect each night,
we are more like a theatre where we act our best parts,
you and I. We rolled out our mats so we could lie together, and the night
sky was a violet tapestry pricked with stars.

Now, look at the flower's stillness
in its glass of water. That means you're alone, that means
you're a memory, that nobody will cause air to buffet its petals.

—After Richard Siken

Part I: A Journal of Those Times

A Journal of Those Times

1.

At one point, I said that love was not worth it,
for it would be lost. Those were the years when I

took to cutting my skin with a razor-
blade as if I was trying to tally up the many days

spent waiting for a better time, each cut made with surgical
precision, trying to excise the memories of my childhood:
the hours spent locked in my closet; the nights spent watching beer bottles break

as they fell from my parents' hands, shattering on the linoleum.

As a child, I collected each glass fragment, attempting to paste them together
as if doing so would assemble the childhood I never had. It did not work.

With those shards, I cut myself too.

2.

There is a special way / that trauma allows you / to blur your life away.
I curled into myself / like a crab in a shell / and began to drown in my own mind.

3.

In high school, I took to starving myself; each empty plate
stared back at me with satisfaction.

Was anything worth living for?
Or should I fill myself with emptiness?

4.

These were also the years when I took to fucking everyone.
It was the year of the plaster corridors of motel halls,
of rushing into a Florida evening, the air thick with a humidity
that slicked sweat to my skin, and driving off into the night.

As the high beams of my car traced the black tarmac, I drove
past the rows of trees stripped of leaves, entering the city
where each apartment block pricked the night's black tapestry
with sights of a soft white light. It did not matter

whether I drove to Pimlico Park or a Motel 6. The goal was

to run from myself into the arms of another.
Chase, Brian, Nick, Michael, Jacob... The names blend, each man
a phantom that faded away as early morning rose over the horizon.

5.

An artist's job is to take suffering,
chiseling away at it, and reconstructing it
into something worth viewing. Art is a means
to make order out of disorder. At least, then,
you will have something of worth
that came from your agony.

6.

Tears are words that need to be written.
— Paulo Coelho

7.

For a long while, I watched the sun's
slow descent, its rays disbanding and recessing
as night descended from the firmament.
As the sun sank below the horizon, I sank
into my own mind, attentive to my desire
for obliteration. I wished to destroy my old self
and rise out of my body like a phoenix.
As the sky turned to ochre before fading
to mauve, and the mauve thickened to night, I concluded
there are many things in this world that are irreconcilable,
things—like the scars on my legs—that would never wane.
They would stand as the sole testament to the times
when I found fulfillment in the razor's blade or in the ribcage wrapped taut
by flesh, bones that were a witness to suffering from an earlier age.

8.

It was after my breakup that I decided
love was not worth it,
the same day that I was institutionalized.
The recent cuts on my legs mottled the white
hospital gown with blood.
Under the hygienic flare
of the ward's fluorescence, I paced the halls.
This is what love gets you, I thought.

9.

Had I not suffered, how would I make art?
It's the question all artists ask themselves.
To confront experience, that is art in itself!

10.

Five years later, I look back. The experiences
have left their residue, but they no longer grip me.

Still, there is time to go before I can rest...
I walk over to my bookcase, taking a memoir from the shelf,
hoping to fill the pages of the book of my life.

The Hookup Hunt

It would happen like this: night would flood the streets, and I would get into my car, driving to the other side of the city where prostitutes were pent up in motel rooms and men were selling dime bags of crack. But I was after a different drug. I rolled up into the dirt driveway of Chase's place and walked to his duplex. The place was a shabby grey, the eaves sagged, and moths stirred around a flickering porch light. The moon glazed the windows. Inside, roaches scuttle back into the corners. We pretend to be interested in each other, but we know we are both blow-up dolls made of meat. Always the world with its cardinal sins... We rushed toward his bedroom. I pushed him down onto his bed with its dirty sheets and pinned his arms above his head. Grinding into him—it was like pistons pumping in a machine. The world slipped from me and—for once—a current of pleasure flowed through my veins. By morning, it all dissolved in sunlight.

Anxiety

Anxiety is an icicle sharpened to a knife's
tip. And midnight is a black current
tracing the limbs of the trees stripped to skeletons
as the wind-whipped lashes of frigidity thrash
the snow drifting to the ground. The torn night rages.

Suicidality

He eyes November when the umber leaves
unhinge from the branches of trees.
Rain trickles through the fault lines
of the charcoal-colored sky, obscuring the window
from which he looks. There is no safety
in his mind. Yet, in frenzied hope,
he turns inward, searching his psyche for some solace.
*Living is a roulette wheel spun, he thinks, a gun
with loaded chambers. By luck, the happy are happy;
by misfortune, the miserable are miserable. I've won
nothing: my life is a bad hand, the cards
unplayable, leaving me to hoard whatever shards
of pleasure I can scrounge. All that makes a man glad
must eventually end. The days drag by,
the hours crumble, and we all die alone.
There is no reason why
we exist. We love only to lose,
and all that pursues
loss is total emptiness: all I have is to mutter
to myself. I've come to the end
with no one on whom I can depend.*
Over
his house, the rain continues to seep,
cascades of water flowing from his roof,
as he readies himself for unceasing sleep.
A thunderclap splits the sky. He turns once more
to look outside. As the rain thickens,
he downs the pills, sinking into a cold slumber.

Abecedarian: Cutting

A drop of
blood
carries itself
down my arm, to the
edge of my
finger.

Gradually, the
harm from which
it sprung weakens;
just the trail across my
knuckle is all that is
left to
mark its existence.

Night spreads
over the city like a
pool of oil; a
quiescence sets in as I blot at the
runnel
streaked across my skin,
the tissue blotched with red once
used. The
vein from
which it sprang
existentially
yields to
zero.

Part II: [A Certain Sense of Order]

For My Mother, Who Begs Me Not to Enquire Further

“Not that it was beautiful, but that, in the end there was a certain sense of order.” —Anne Sexton

What I weave into these sentences is not meant to unveil that which you don't want others to see, to divulge a family secret or to snipe you for some forgotten failure. I merely hope to collect the fractured memories from the life I had before, smoothing and removing their grit, and polishing them so they shine as does the sea when the sun is setting. I recall, from when I was eight years old, the stained-glass windows of Blessed Sacrament Church. Bored by the priest's monotonous incantations, I took interest in how those panes could catch the light of late morning and turn them into beams of sapphire, gold, and emerald, colors in stark contrast to the well-worn gray carpet and off-white walls. Like that stained glass, I want to filter the light of my past and make it effulgent, turning my prior pains into prismatic rays that could be of interest to someone and, perhaps, a source of solace for another. Isn't that the purpose of art?

Alcoholism

A spot of spilled Merlot
on a white tablecloth. Carmine:

the blood in our veins
is not so pure. We are not like Christ,

our blood a sacrament.
We have no reason to be crucified, no

passion that would merit
an ultimate sacrifice. We are not holy.

Our purpose is to live
for ourselves, gulping from the crystal

cup with its delicate stem
of fluted glass.

But this wine cannot cleanse.
Sin is our only escape:

obliteration of the self
that is drunkenness. Let the haze

seep in
from your peripheral vision.

Watch as the world fades
like a photograph in the sun;

drink up and let
the hours dissolve.

Success

Plummeting to the floor,
a switchblade might resemble
an Olympic diver, who enters
the water as seamlessly
as a pocketknife cutting
into a piece of satin. There is much to be said
in favor of competition, the results
of which could be as arbitrary
as a Powerball number.

There is also much to say
in favor of success. We could equate it
with precision, like that of the switch-
blade's edge. It is an act of exactitude.

Consider balancing on a razor
or walking along a tightrope:
it requires the perfection of a vertex
like those in Euclidean geometry. So let us delight.

Let us delight in the symmetry of the rhombus
to remind ourselves that the virtuosity
of our violinist, who runs through the chromatic scale,
is proof of success.

Failure

You'd never held a gun before,
the percussion ricocheting
throughout the bones in your skull.
And the sag of your smile, the dismay, as you realize
you will never attain that level of proficiency. Even a single bull's-
eye would astonish you.

But never mind all of that. Return
to your tenement, lean back in your recliner,
stare at the water stain spreading
on your ceiling, and see the constellation materializing in the sky.

Having It Out with Anorexia

1 The Disordered Senses

The delusion is of purity:
a promise to purge
the self of its contaminates,

flaying the body
of fat and flesh, carving
it down to each sinew.

Anorexia
was my anesthetic.
What pain could penetrate

that cage of half-
truths and self-denials
in which I locked myself?

Fat was heretic.
Now, there is skin
stretched taut over razor-

like clavicles, the empty
bowls of my hip bones.
I am starved and sinless.

I have given myself
to the enemy, eaten the enemy,
have swallowed its mantra:

it feels good not to need.
To be thin
was to transcend.

2 Binging and Purging

But the body, out of starvation, betrays the mind:
three packets of cookies, a cake, a large pizza,
cereal, brownies, two sandwiches,
a dozen doughnuts, fried chicken, candy bars.

I would tear off the cellophane wrapping,
and shove handfuls of food into my mouth
only to vomit it into a garbage bag seconds later.

3 Advice from a Friend

“Why can’t you just eat?
One day won’t cause you to gain weight.”

4 Walking

I would walk miles of tarmac, passing
each dim streetlight in the decaying dusk.
Though my muscles were atrophying—
a pain pulling at each leg— I didn’t care.
At least I was losing weight.

5 At One Point

At one point, only a few years ago, I saw
suicide and self-destruction as something chic,
an ornament for the self.

I was 95 pounds, mired in depression
and the hospital, shivering under a paper-thin blanket.

The orderly would rattle up the hallway
with her metal cart, the plate, with its 600 calories
of Salisbury steak, shuddering next to the scalpels and forceps.

How long I was in that hospital room and its sterility —
the fluorescent lights stinging my eyes
with their flare; the telemetry clinging
to my ribcage; the IV bag pumping

electrolytes into me. I still recall
the weightiness of the magnesium
rushing into my veins, flooding my blood
like a viscous metal.

6 In the Morning

My mother would hover over me as I slept
to make sure I was still alive.

I wonder how many hours she spent
attentive to each twitch, attuned
to the risings and fallings of my chest
that signified life.

7 *A Ripple*

A skeleton wore my clothes,
the XS-sized shirt hanging
from clavicle and collar bones
as if from a clothes rack.
It is tired of trying.
It wants to be left alone,
left out in a charnel ground
so the sun dissolve it to ash.

We move on to my twentieth
therapist. And I feel
relieved of myself, the buzzing
of my psyche quieted,
and inside me the stillness
a pool of water possesses
just after a rock was tossed into it.
The ripples disbanded, fading
out to leave a surface as placid as glass.

Gradually, I came back to friends,
to books and poetry; came back
to the taste of an orange's zest.

8 *Three Years On*

Anorexia and bulimia, your masochism
will lie latent, waiting in the space
between each synapse.

Neurotic and self-sabotaging, you'll whisper
to my psyche, seizing me with your onslaught
of numbers, and turn me into someone obsessed
with the calories in my coffee's creamer.

Three years and twenty-five pounds removed,
I finish my breakfast and step outside,
into midmorning's mild gold. September's mist
settles on my skin, and I sense

a quiescence of mind.
How remarkable is this morning:
the bronze of dawn on the horizon.

— *for (and after) Jane Kenyon (1947-1995)*

Self-Portrait as Ariel from *The Tempest*

I have returned from the wreck, from that ship
 you tossed with your tempest. The crew lay
 unharm'd, as you would know,
 and they rest on the shore

where kaleidoscopic shells are scattered about
 and where the sea slides up only to recede.
 I serenaded them with my song, which,
 like my essence, belongs entirely to you:

*Full fathom five thy father lies;
 Of his bones are coral made;
 Those are pearls that were his eyes:
 Nothing of him that doth fade...*

By nature, my body belongs to the four winds,
 and to them, one day, it will return.
 But, for now, I am an extension of your mind,
 and I attend to your bidding

as the sun comes out of hiding. The crew
 has awoken and daylight spreads across
 our island. I will return to my tree
 until I'm to sing again.

Part III: In the Realm of the Devas

In the Realm of the Devas

The devas are discontent, we must not say otherwise.
They are replete with desire and riddled
with agitation, just as I'm agitated
when the woman in Apartment 309
offers me money to stroke my hair.
As the years sweep by in the crescent
above the devas, the taste of ambrosia
and the flute's delicate partita deafens them
to their impending rebirth. Their existence is as fragile
as the wine bottles I take out of the dumpster
in the parking lot and smash with a sledgehammer.
These devas are not worthy of reverence. They are sick
of the Buddha, that *goodfellow* Siddhartha Gautama,
who never stops meditating, sitting there in a lotus position
oblivious to the monks and postulants who, kneeling
in front of him, desire dance and drink.
The devas care little for the Buddha's marble calm,
viewing it instead as aloofness
like that of the homeless man's at the corner of Fourth and Main —
the one that stands outside of Market Liquors —
who daily tells me that I have a weird way of walking.
One night the devas will transcend heavenly pleasures. One night,
when their desires have evaporated like a puddle,
and the full moon's luminosity ripples
across the reflecting pool, they will finally shed
their forms and develop a mind that shines
as effulgent as the polished floors of the meditation hall.
They will leave this monastery, traverse the mountains,
and rise into the faint streaks of ochre in the pre-dawn sky.

—*for (and after) Brigit Pegeen Kelly (1965-2016)*

On a Sidewalk

The people rush around me as they head to work.

People with some place to go pass me by,
entering the embassy.

And I...

these clothes I inhabit,

this flesh of mine, this serviceable body that the world
goes by but never sees... A businessman peers
from the Chrysler Center skyscraper, split off
from the world by a tinted shade of glass, concealed
by that which allows him to see. Each window possesses
a life, all these deep-dyed windowpanes. And, behind them,
a man who types away at his desk; two others bantering
around a watercooler. Inattentively, passively, and far-
off, dozens of pale faces stare, watching
the day glide by like old newsreel.

The people and traffic increase around me
like floodwater flowing over a dam. A woman
bumps my arm; car horns blare like warning sirens.
And I stand still, letting the onslaught rush around me.

The Blue and the Black

The sky a sea of black liquor.
The stars regarding me sadly.
The cars shining their headlights of artificial amber.
The people walking about, engaged with each other's presence.
The cacophony of the crowd's voice turning into a whirl.
The stars piercing through the night's carbon paper.
The sky morphing into a mauve, swallowing
each dot of light, before thinning to blue-grey.
The tatters of clouds are frayed like threadbare clothes.
The sun a scorching orb, burning grey from the sky.
The blue flattening and flattening.
The speck that is me recessing into the cityscape:
a light drowned out and as forgotten
as a box in the attic.

Consider the Fly

Cars fly by buildings sprayed with neon
helices of graffiti, intricate loops

that bend and weave together
as if they were cursive letters.

I stand up and come out of the alley, leaving
behind the gutted building on which I leaned

while smoking my cigarette. I take a seat
on the curb, shielded from the sun

by a 1978 Mercury Capri infected by rust. Nearby,
a homeless man rattles his cup of change.

The people rush through the steam
floating upward from the grates in the sidewalk.

For two weeks now, I've come here daily to smoke,
watching as throngs of people sweep down the streets.

There is something that is both pleasing
and disconcerting at being unnoticed.

Consider, for instance, being a fly
like one of those buzzing around the homeless

man's head. Your existence is not even recognized,
just a mere swat of the hand is all that you'll get

before flying off to some distant place.
All that you were was a minor annoyance,

if you're even noticed at all. In that case,
is gaining the attention of another worthwhile?

I toss my cigarette butt into one of the garbage bins
before heading home. The sun glares at me,

my sole spectator, as it glazes me with heat.
In the distance, between the steel girders

and beyond the train tracks, the James River
rushes and roars as light spangles the water.

Night Thoughts

The last light of the day drained away
like the residue of water in a bath,
the sky declining from cobalt
to an obsidian hue. I look

out of my window at the empty streets,
my eyes sweeping over the lifeless
landscape for a minute or two.
What could possibly enliven this place?

After all, the day fades away, and night
robs the streets of life — yard after yard
of weathered tarmac, extending to the skyline.
This is merely another night:

the moon wanes, the seconds press forward,
marching off with each tick of the clock,
and midnight hovers overhead. Moonlight leaks
through my window, before settling

to a subtle luminescence, an inconspicuous
strand of light, lying across my study's floor.
The night confronts me with a quietude,
and I wait, hoping for something to break this silence.

—*For Gabe*

Belle Isle

When you first saw the man, you remembered walking
with Jonathan on Belle Isle, remembered the derelict hydro-
electric plant and how the ear shut like a clam, resisting
the river's roar and the rustling of the wind-
ripped trees. You watched the combers
break on the fragmentation of rocks
running alongside the trail as the frenzied man
darted down the path only to rebound back to the start
like a bullet in a chamber.

The mind does strange things.
And the imagination transfixes with thousands of images.
You walk down Reserve Road, and you fear
someone will rob you, you peer into the mirror
and see someone else. The man watched his wife
fall into the river. Her foot slipped on the rocks,
and she toppled, cracking her skull on the way down,
and the waves rose to swallow her, sweeping
her away as the man screamed and screamed.
There was September's mist clinging to your skin
and the scent of the moist mulch at the roots of trees
as darkness dropped down from the sky like a damnation
because you couldn't comfort the man
when he threatened to kill himself, and because
his eyes were widened to a whiteness,
and because he ripped off his shirt out of distress,
as he leaped off the edge into that dark water
full of unnamable things.

The next morning,
two park rangers found their bodies on the shore
to the south of the island.

Aubade

A night at the beach. The stars pierce the sky's carbon paper.

The sound of the combers crashes on the white shores and the scent of salt,
the fine sand sticks to our legs. We are thinking of loss,

thinking of how the sun
will burn away the darkness, and dawn will stroke the sky with a pale blue.

Slowly light strengthens, and our bodies dissolve as morning crests over the horizon.

Today, alone in my room, I try to craft you with words, to recreate that night.

But any likeness of you I conjure crumbles like the sands of the dunes.

Part IV: The Seed

The Seed

I planted the seed under the magnolia tree. For a while, it did not bloom. The seed was tan, like untouched sand in a desert, and of a greenish hue, like a faded street sign; and the seedling was bursting out of the shell, begging to be planted, so my mother gave it to me. I knew what I needed to do with it, so I dug up the wet, black dirt near the root of the magnolia tree and dropped the seed in. And though nothing has come of it, I still look out my window, as I am doing right now, waiting for something to break through the earth.

The Temple in the Jungle

The viper is mine, the pit viper with the scales
speckled by black, and I am the boy in the ochre robes

contemplating as intently as any monk in any monastery
has ever contemplated, but I have no insights, nor have I tamed

my viper. Now, there are only the lotuses and the koi clustering
together to be fed, and the luster of the beige floorboards

on which postulants congregate to chant, on which the light
of a setting sun shimmers like the polished amber in a pendant.

I have thought enough of death, of entering the black tunnel,
of shedding this body and swimming in the circumfluent darkness

where all is stasis and where time slows to a standing chill. Let us unfetter
ourselves and allow our minds to be like a mother-of-pearl dish, as radiant

as the disk of the full moon whose luminescence ripples
across the surface of the reflecting pool. And though my robes

are too loose, and though the nightingales will never
stop dropping their calls, there is only *Goodnight* in all this,

and *Life is suffering*. I have learned tolerance,
learned to take the blade from my wrist and hoard whatever

shrapnel of pleasure the day tosses at me. Now my mind
coasts alongside the chanting, my fellow monks opening

their mouths in perfect halos of sound, the pitch undulates,
rising and diving like a plane attempting to correct itself. And my mind

does the same, though it can no longer sink into the sounds
they sing. That goodfellow Siddhartha Gautama. *Oh, have faith,*

force your desires away. Meditate. Meditate. The laity
do not know I am a product of fantasy. I am the illusion

that you can jettison the sufferings that make a life a life,
jettison it just as I have done to these robes. I have still

not touched the tip of peace unless it is in the scales
of my pit viper who is as still as a weathered stone. And though

there is no nirvana, no insight or mind of white silk brocade, there is also no reason to blame myself — no reason to desire to end desires.

— *for (and after) Brigit Pegeen Kelly (1951-2016)*

The Mind

The mind is a cocked gun, a fire-work near its wick's end, a roulette wheel spun with all six chambers loaded, the cryptic codes from a numbers station. What can possibly decode the messages from these synapses that implode? The mind's mode is to mess the mood and measure the distance between madness and pleasure. It's the medium through which we witness the fading gold haloing the clouds at evening and the call of the lark that streams through the cypresses' branches in early morning. Mentality works clock-like with intricate ribbons of copper wire, pendulums that swing like inverted cattails, filigree gear work forged from a fire. The mind is a committee filled with both saboteurs and saints: thoughts that duplicate, triplicate, and seize the entire psyche for whatever is the caprice of the hour. The mind may be great, but, just remember, you can't think your way to peace.

Hourglass

Alone, one watches as the hourglass
drips its fine red sand. Time streams forth —
the orange streaks in the sky
melt away, unveiling a mauve dotted with stars:

this is the end of a tedium.
I look at the stillness of the sand in its glass.
It rests in the drop-clear crystal bulb.
I turn to the left to watch that river

whose waters sweep us to the end,
when all that is left to attest to our existence
is an epitaph etched in slab, the words
left unread as the wind wears away at the headstone.

Teller of time, you who always remind us
of the minutes wasted, the hour torn off unused;
you who drag us across the expanse of weeks:
the day has passed but the night yet to come.

This is the border of past and present,
the liminal space where you straddle
all that has been done and all that you must do.
Look outside as the full moon rises in the sky.

Loss

Loss repeats itself. I know this.

Loss consumes light like a shadow, swallowing the stream
of the sun pouring through the window.

Loss is tendrils of smoke, obscuring
the light of the mind like the ashen wisps of clouds in the sky.

Meditation

When I first probed my mind
I discovered a light.

Hear me out: what I found was not
what I expected it to be.

Did I believe that my consciousness would contain
total darkness? Perhaps. But what I found
was a flicker far back in the recesses of my psyche,
a weak flame like that on a wick near its end.

Outside my apartment, boughs bent
in the evening breeze, the light of day coiled
back into itself, and a darkness bled
through the rows of scrub trees.

I returned to the diary of mind: exploring
the sight of synapses imploding. Each thought
a static charge, a jolt. They fired
faster and faster, each strike a bolt

tearing through the firmament,
before a brilliance exploded and the skull
was brimming with light.

Then there was a sudden darkness: that which you feared,
total mental absence, flooded
in through my eyes, drowning any light.

Yet one spark remained untouched in the corner
of my mind, and from that sprang another spark.

As one came to life, the others followed
like fire swallowing up a dried-out forest. One spark,
and then a thousand. A thousand thought-worlds
awaiting exploration. A thousand cognitions
begging to be spilled onto the page.

I opened my eyes and the world returned to me.
The bone-white moon absorbed the last light
falling on empty streets.

But in me was a stirring, something
begging to be attended, and in my mind

a nearly inconspicuous light
from which I could not turn away.

Coda

The Peaceable Prairie

Far out, on the precipice of perceptibility, where the hills rise to meet the horizon and the pines lean into the dying fire of dusk, lay a prairie in which Rose, in lace, braves the briars, the heat, to gather strawberries, returning to the group clustered under the poplar tree. Upon reconvening, the leader spoke of betrayal — the strawberries mildewed, and six people recoiled like an adder after striking; but I tell you what he said was nothing new to me, I have heard the words of others, the promises, implode and shatter like wine glasses — and so certain was I of the quietude that would come as the sun’s scorn receded, as the night froze the wind to a stillness, stopping the grass swaying, as the voice disbanded, and trailed towards the moon’s fragile crescent. It was only then that I realized I no longer heeded his sermon; nor did Rose need to turn towards the leader as amber crested over the horizon and say, “Thank you. I know now what you mean.”

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Across the Margins: “Alcoholism” and “Consider the Fly”;

As It Ought To Be Magazine: “Self Portrait as Ariel from *The Tempest*”

Black Fox Literary Magazine: “Belle Isle,” “The Blue and the Black,” and “Having It Out with Anorexia”;

The Broadkill Review: “Failure”

The Citron Review: “The Peaceable Prairie”;

Collected Winning Poems from The Poetry Society of Virginia: “On a Sidewalk”

Eunoia Review: “The Seed”;

Fresh Words: “Anxiety,” “The Mind,” and “Suicidality”;

Litbreak Magazine: “Success,” “Failure,” and “In the Realm of the Devas”;

Main Street Rag: “Abecedarian: Cutting” as “Abecedarium”;

North of Oxford: “Night Thoughts”;

Otoliths: “For My Mother, Who Begs Me Not to Enquire Further” and “The Hookup Hunt”;

Signal Mountain Review: “Hourglass” and “A Journal of Those Times”;

Willows Wept Review: “Meditation”

“On a Sidewalk” placed first in The Poetry Society of Virginia’s Undergraduate Award.

“Having It Out with Anorexia” placed second for the Academy of American Poets Prize (via College William & Mary) (2022).

“The Blue and the Black,” “On a Sidewalk,” “The Peaceable Prairie,” and “The Temple in the Jungle” were in a group of poems that placed third for the Goronwy Owen Poetry Prize (2022).

“The Temple in the Jungle,” “Self-Portrait as Ariel from *The Tempest*,” “Lines Written in an Empty Room,” “On a Sidewalk,” “Having It Out with Anorexia,” and “The Peaceable Prairie” were a group of poems that placed second in the Goronwy Owen Poetry Prize (2023).

“The Temple in the Jungle” won an Academy of American Poets prize.