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# A Bird Flies Into a Pane of Glass Again and Again and Again

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### Artist Statement

This project began as a burst of enthusiasm for the possibilities of the prose poem, and ended as a search for a means to move beyond the tired (and tiring) American tradition. Upon reading my first pieces within the genre, I recall a feeling of limitlessness, as though removing enjambment from the work had the effect of compressing experience itself into a stream of images. The more I wrote for the project, the more I felt an overwhelming awareness of sameness. As I began to research the history of the American prose poem, from Russel Edson and James Tate, to anthologies and journals of contemporary work, I began to sense a pattern. The further the genre developed, the more it appeared formulaic. It felt as if the truly successful prose poem operated as if someone took a handful of their most personal items (a letter to a dying mother, an ape, a piece of yellow string, the landscape of a dream), put them in a box together, and shook them like dice in a cup. A prose poem, then, was the resulting mess that spills across the page.

I want a kind of writing that brings back temporal linearity and a speaking subject to the forefront of the work, while still retaining a playfulness and willingness to experiment that (by my definition) characterizes the poetic genre. Rather than moving in the direction of flash fiction, I was interested in finding ways to make everything smaller than before. I wanted these poems to capture the kind of sparseness and lucidity that was historically invoked by haiku and haibun forms, but today might be best exemplified by the still emerging stylistic quirks seen on [twitter.com](https://twitter.com). Twitter forces the writer into concision, rewarding those who can

create tiny worlds through the suggestibility of disparate words and ideas. Some living writers, such as Melissa Broder, have found immense success beyond their published poetic works in this medium, while other dead authors, such as Richard Brautigan, have found new life as their work is excerpted and presented in entirely new contexts.

For me, the challenge was in finding a middle ground between these two tendencies. Perhaps I am still very much indebted to the american prose poem, but the dream is to move beyond it. I try to embrace the minimalism, the temporality, and the speaking subject of contemporary internet writing and place it within the memory of what the prose poem once was.

**a bird flies into a pane of glass  
again and again and  
again**

**by**

**Zachary Cosby**

**An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the**

**requirements for the degree of**

**Bachelor of Arts**

**in**

**University Honors**

**and**

**Philosophy & English**

**Thesis Adviser**

**Zachary Schomburg**

**Portland State University**

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The role of the kiss is to never swallow what it craves

— Michele Glazer

A kiss is the beginning of cannibalism

— Georges Bataille

**cave**

i wake up in  
caverns with no one around

to excavate your  
ghost and flood this poem with

tar a photograph or ten  
thousand dots of

ink  
that i call a name

is this poem a self-understanding or a truce

my arms are yellow paper folded

when my arms dip in water

they transform to something limp and disappointing

it rained through the funeral

everything felt incredible and large

a cup of coffee with the wreckage of lipstick

the smell from wet piles of clothes

so like swallowing a bird in flight



a feeling tunnels through my body

a quiet landscape

a stillness like the space between wings

a stillness like the flooded cave

in this dream, my mouth filled with sand

my teeth bleed we wait for night

i ask for some kind of fire

you touch me like sleeping birds

it feels like the shadows below clouds

below our skin hide lakes of blood

i am trying to remember how to escape

a place without sound or trees

i make a canoe from stone and sail it

i lay in the dark and cover my face with sheets

the lack of air hangs wet and crushing

why do memory pucker and bloom

i don't really know

don't really want to know

the front door is locked at night  
i lay in the yard a dead pale moth  
winter parachutes from the sky  
in this dream even icicles feel  
the snow an endless plain of bones  
i wanted someone to be with  
so i held a picture of some strange face  
and nailed it to my chest  
somewhere an alarm was ringing

our death friends are all hiding  
i leave the house to look for them  
they become statues partially hidden in fog  
like a memory you told me  
slipping in the rain while climbing the roof  
to watch your dogs teeth the forest  
our hands like wood grain in sun  
we were not inside those bodies  
we were those bodies

imagine a number  
that's how many dead deer  
a forest could hold  
we could walk hand in hand  
through the trees  
dumping our memory  
like a landfill between branches  
we could dig new landfills  
into everything we touch  
there is a phantom limb  
growing through my mouth

but you can't see it

we found a cave  
no one had explored

you shined a light  
but the cave swallowed light

you put your head in  
but the cave swallowed you

i look to the sky  
and try to find an outside

but there is no outside  
and we are very small

when i think about it

thick black fog

flows out of my mouth

thirty two teeth

looking for a way out

each of their cavities filled

with familiar sounds

my lower half

a stomach cramp

a roadside bomb

spraying flesh confetti

maybe my body speaks

in strange languages

it's scared

to reproduce



maybe gloom sunflowers

swallowed us whole

after three days

we woke in the belly

with hands and face smeared

in seed and pollen

please don't look away

o' book of walt whitman's

infinite teeming womb

o' ebook of robert duncan gray's

abattoir of dreams

the webcam model

we spent weeks watching

touch himself

on my computer screen

he was a giant beetle

i thought mothheads

were my head

chewing through

your head

i thought your teeth  
were soft white linen

paper wings on fire  
a slowly bleeding lamp

tiny parasites

riot in my stomach

they gather in kerosene crowds

and hunger

they want to burn their home

just as their home wants to burn them

how do you make a person

stop living inside you

it's hard to talk about

without losing a face

youth

i am outside looking in

the spinning particles

shaped like people

does everyone think about lips

pressing against skin

find me

behind the human

i dream of the mole  
just below your belly button

when i wake up  
my lips are dry

the window is open  
and a voice flows through

it is humming a song  
in a minor key

there are patterns everywhere  
that exist



you can draw faces  
from memory

it must be nice  
to never feel alone

what does a phone call mean

magnolia trees

and the sunfucked dream

cemeteries are forests

radiating white noise

we stand like tall grass

in june

make dead deer of us

when photograph collections

are broken time machines

the wind is not peaceful

when you blow on my arm

when do spinning particles

turn to chemicals

of people

i wanted to drown

in waves of light

i planted flowers

in my skin

a tiny boy

became a tiny garden

and a tiny garden

became a tiny mouth

swallowing

when you lose that body

a never fake death

take your time

and tweet something beautiful

i try to swallow  
every beautiful thing

but beauty disappears  
inside a cave

bodies eat themselves  
when starving

is cannibalism  
beautiful too

everything i touch  
feels like oil black hair.

everything i write  
sweats that first time we met.

all things  
are made of skin.



the carpets

a toothbrush

red candy

*skin.*

chat rooms

an erection

guilt smell

*skin.*

grocery stores

your best friends

the ocean

*skin.*

windows

despite their transparency

are a different kind of skin.

that immense feeling  
of you on top

one hand on my hip  
the other in my mouth.

that feeling  
was always skin.

we will evaporate  
in the air as clouds

heavy with cum  
and bile

and blood

i can see  
my neighbor

he's raking  
brown leaves

horse

i write your name

in ink

and hope it never becomes

like the wallpaper

in the kitchen

of grandmother evelyn

that would fade

every summer heat

into pale ghosts

nobody could recognize

it was a beautiful name

for a grandmother

i watch a sailboat erase the horizon  
and finally understand enormity

the sun has stopped in the sky  
my phone a face in glass

my wrists in vases

of plastic flowers

they don't feel small

or beautiful

they feel like copies

of some dying thing

i wash my face

in the sink

i fall asleep

like wet ham

i use google to find you

give a new name

to something on the left

give a new name

to this book of poems



sometimes i call my mother  
and say *everything will not be okay*

i always hang up before she responds  
but one time i said something different

i said *death is the final horse*  
and laughed

it sounded like a swarm of bees  
as thick as fog

i have a nightmare about a horse  
and all my friends as beautiful marble statues

one of my friends is on her phone  
one of my friends is eating grapes  
one of my friends is laughing and laughing  
and all are beautiful marble statues

thirty seven beautiful marble statues  
frozen in thirty seven beautiful marble ways

i wonder what it's like to be invisible  
as i make a picnic for one

over there  
a horse eating a field of grass

there is a horse wandering through my home

i place my hands on the horse's face

and place my hands on the horse's neck

when the mouth opens

wood vibrates like ten thousand bees

or clouds

a man walks to the horse  
with a revolver in his hand

he presses the revolver  
to the head of the horse

and whispers *run*

my own fingers fold  
in the shape of a gun

the air is punctured  
by the screaming of horses

deer

nothing exists outside of experience

which is to say this poem

is the space outside of masks

a gun fired into open sky

reading missed connections

i tell myself to write poems but I don't even like poems

there is nothing in the act of poem

why cannibalize memory for the sake of nothing

to eat a clementine alone in the dark

i put on a shirt

something necessary



i think this face is not my own

i think this face is not my own

i think this face is not my own

i think this face is not my own

a bird flies into a pane of glass

again and again and

again

my neighbor

is holding a rake

like a mannequin

a dead deer crumpled

through the hood

of my car

the sun is black

in a sky of black

over a crayon

also black

something is moving

behind the cans

in the pantry

if you want

to know something

it helps to name it

helps to touch it

i am amazed

how antlers don't bleed

my neighbor is

raking a field of rakes

i ask what he is doing

he points to the stars and the satellites

the night is for sleeping

and the day is for staying alive

it goes back and forth like this

for a very long time

i make a mountain of meat  
that takes a lifetime to climb  
i can see my neighbor  
between two little houses  
that little house is mine  
that little house  
is not

i make friends with a child  
at the peak of the mountain  
we share a common enemy  
whose name we do not speak  
our story is a ghost story  
the kind a child  
tells another child

a child wears a deer head

like its own head

i wear my head

like my own head

my neighbor

is raking the rakes

a child asks

about my face

a face

is a face

is a face

is a face

except



dead deer fall from the sky  
and smack against our homes  
a body falls apart  
like a handful of flowers  
pushed against a face  
until it undoes

i see my neighbor  
with black shirt  
soaked in black fog  
i want to save him  
want to know  
his name

i walk down meat mountain

below a black cloud that spreads

from this horizon

to that horizon

and that horizon

and that horizon

i clutch an umbrella to my chest

wow says a child

*dead deer follow you everywhere*

and we laugh

it was true

there is a portal to hell

in the corner of my bedroom

everything smells

a man that looks nothing like my father

puts a hand on my shoulder

it was a very funny joke

you had a dream of hostile billboards  
we ran through new york in abstract fear  
the faces on magazine covers glaring  
we caught eyes like late spring pneumonia  
we were 900 channels of television and worshipping the sound  
of white noise breaking beyond our frame

i'm going to vancouver this afternoon

i wash deer blood off the hood of my car

i take a picture of me and my world

i like the thought of losing five, maybe ten pounds

consider replacing friends with plants

a change of surroundings would be nice

like opening a new tab

a tiny piece of glass cuts my right foot

it was shaped

almost nothing like the rays of the sun

passing through the window

i remember your name

i pour and pour away

the blood

feeling more like ghost

than the death that births it

slow

and incredibly far away

you would like it here

like how

alone it can feel



my body

no longer inside

this mannequin

hex

**citrus**

the  
name  
of  
this  
poem  
is  
citrus

i retire my lips  
in a gesture of goodwill  
towards those i fucked over

they live  
their final days

inside a cave  
with the memory

of red grapefruit  
tongues

the ghosts they birthed  
live on

as friction burns  
on the skin of horses

a name  
is a terrible thing

i hope a name  
never becomes true

this is a forest fire of  
paper cigarette ebooks dog  
feces coffee street litter cables  
reducing my head  
to charred neurons stumps  
and ash habitats.

once i found a moth  
in the glow of your cellycell's  
flashlight app

it flew inside my mouth  
and recited a poem

moth poem

blue screens of death

flash inside your eyes

digital flowers bloom

black between our thighs

even these things  
that i want  
i don't really want

i think  
i'm trying to say  
that i want  
to stop wanting

avoid  
like a void  
trying to swallow  
another void

he says

*i want to leave you with a virus*

*that doesn't scrape off*

he does

it won't