

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**How to Draw a Self-Portrait of Wallace Stevens: How Terrance Hayes Uses the Figure
to Confront Anxiety and *The Museum of Masculine Beauty*.**

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Creative Writing

In

Poetry

At Massey University, Manawatu

New Zealand

Abstract

This thesis consists of my research into the poetry of Terrance Hayes and poetic manuscript based on my research. In my research “How to Draw a Self-Portrait of Wallace Stevens: How Terrance Hayes Uses the Figure to Confront Anxiety” I argue that Hayes uses the figure in his work as a means of representing, confronting and overcoming his speaker’s anxiety of identity. By analysing the Hayes poems “SHAFRO”, “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” and “SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS” I will show the role of speaker possessor of African, broader American and poetic identities in depicting and confronting anxiety, the role of racial issues in inciting anxiety, and how the figure – a presence in the poem based on an historic, cultural or pop-cultural figure – has been developed from a representation of a particular type of identity to a confrontation of identity anxiety. In my poetic manuscript *At the Museum of Masculine Beauty* I use the conclusions drawn from my research into Hayes’ use of figure and anxiety and attempt to apply them to my own poetry concerning masculine identity.

Table of Contents

How to Draw a Self-Portrait of Wallace Stevens: How Terrance Hayes Uses the Figure to Confront Anxiety

Introduction..... 1
“SHAFRO”..... 5
“FOR ROBERT HAYDEN”..... 10
“SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS” 15
CONCLUSION..... 22
BIBLIOGRPAHY..... 26

At the Museum of Masculine Beauty

At the Museum 31
1.
The New Confessionalism 33
Partimen for Louis C.K 35
How to Make your Own Woody Allen Halloween Costume..... 36
Partimen for Charlie Sheen..... 37
The Dead 38
How to Make Your Own Ghost Costume 39
Partimen for Caravaggio 41
Whit-man..... 42
2.
Partimen for Picasso..... 51

Thérèse Dreaming Balthus, 1938.....	53
Music.....	55
Western Motel, 1957.....	56
3.	
Six Endings Without a Poem	58
Apple.....	59
The Entomology of “You”.....	61
2018 Department of Lands and Survey Mihi Template.....	64
The Isle of Goats.....	66
4.	
Hercules and the Hydra.....	70
The Dead Organism.....	71
Hospital.....	7
Watching Films with Prometheus.....	75
The Year of the Rabbit.....	73
Notes.....	79

How to Draw a Self-Portrait of Wallace Stevens: How Terrance Hayes Uses the Figure to Confront Anxiety

In his book *Democracy, Culture and the Voice of Poetry* poet and critic Robert Pinsky writes: “For an American poet, the fear of lost differentiation and the fear of excessive differentiation do indeed employ a single, in fact familiar, anxiety: that of being cut off from memory – forgotten” (Pinsky 6). The idea then of the American poet being “cut off from memory” is one that is both discomfiting and perplexing. If memory is so intrinsic to poetry then how does the American poet find themselves cut off from it, and why is being “cut off” or “forgotten” an “anxiety”? When Pinsky refers to memory he is not referring to individual memory, but rather *democratic memory*: “[u]nlike memory in a pre-democratic national saga or myth, memory in our high and low cultures contains an element of self-negation, a release not into meanings or destinies but into fantasy... the fantastic element in democratic memory exaggerates the anxieties of uniformity and fragmentation” (Pinsky 7-9). Pinsky’s use of democratic memory evokes a collective system of memories held by a community or nationhood. Jan Assmann defines this memory system as “cultural memory” in his essay “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”:

... cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday. Distance from the every day (transcendence) marks the temporal horizon. Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these “figures of memory” (Assmann and Czaplicka 129)

In the same way that individual memory is integral to individual identity so too is cultural memory to cultural identity. It is the preserving of historic events, or “figures of memory”, through cultural formation that allows the present-day community member access to experiences beyond their own. This what Pinsky refers to by democratic and pre-democratic memory. What distinguishes the two memory sets (democratic and pre-democratic) is the presence of a national identity. Using the definition of nation given by Anthony D. Smith in his book *National Identity* we can define national identity as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and a common legal rights and duties for all members.” (A. D. Smith 14) Where the pre-democratic society, primarily racial or ethnic orientated, abided to a singular cultural memory based on “saga or myth”, in the multicultural, polyglot, cosmopolitan and racially diverse democratic nation the notion of collective identity and cultural memory is multifaceted. And it is amid numerous, sometimes separate and sometimes contradictory collective identities that we find Pinsky’s anxiety. Anxiety, in my argument, is then the uncertainty of belonging. This uncertainty arises from the schism between the collective identity, e.g. as an American poet, and numerous other potential identities of a poet inhabiting American society, identities of race, culture, gender and sexuality.

In this way, Pinsky’s argument about identity and anxiety offers a lens through which to examine the poetry of Terrance Hayes. Hayes is a contemporary African-American poet who has published five collections poetry since 1999 – including his National Book Award winning collection *Lighthouse* (2010) – with his sixth to be released in late 2018. His work can range from contemporary issues of race, masculinity and media culture, to metaphysical musings on temporality,

language and the fluidity of language in any given collection. Hayes is a poet who is interested in both history and memory, and its relation to the individual, as he sates in an interview with *Callaloo* literary journal: "... I'd like to think of myself as an apprentice of history, the history of poetry, of Black folk. I walk in the footsteps of public and personal history." (Rowell and Hayes 1081). But his is a history approached eclectically. Writing in a myriad of differing forms, from the confessional to the imitative and prosaic Hayes has shaped his poetic career around eclecticism, or as he defines it, his "schizophrenic aesthetic" (Casper 180). This is a term which, I believe, evokes the two most important characteristics of Hayes poetry, and the characteristics which form the basis of my argument: his conflicting sense of identity and his multifarious use of cultural figures as central to his poem. Identity in Hayes' work refers to the collective identity to which his speakers belong. Hayes writes: "I don't think anybody is just a poet with no adjectives. I wouldn't limit it there: I would say, yes, I'm African-American; yes, I'm Southern; yes, I'm male; yes, I'm hip-hop; yes, I'm neurotic; yes I'm a bastard poet" (Williams 173). As Hayes' states, every poet subscribes to a multitude of identities whether national, gendered, sexual, or otherwise. Hayes' work is embedded in three distinct identities: African-American, American and poetic. African-American identity is the most prevalent of these three identities as Hayes will often write from a distinctly African-American perspective. Hayes will often make use of African-American cultural memory, write in African American diction and address topics relevant to his African-American identity, and more narrowly to his identity as an African-American poet. His broader American, particularly American poetic, identity is often used in contention with his African-American and poetic identities (predominantly his African-American identity). American identity, in Hayes' work, consists of his

national identity as an American, and is often depicted or used in association with white American identity. His poetic identity can be defined as his obligation as a poet to the craft of poetry. Separate from any external racial, societal, national, or ethnic forces, it is concerned primarily with the internal; the lyric. It can also be defined as being the culmination of his artistic influences. In that sense, it will often overlap or contradict either his African-American or American identities. It is the tension created between these three identities in the presence of an inciting topic, such as race, which create anxiety. Hayes' unwillingness to abandon nor adhere to any single identity – the “fear of lost differentiation and the fear of excessive differentiation” – creates, in his speakers, a confliction between these three identities. I will show that anxiety in his work and argue that Hayes examines and confronts the confliction among identities through the use of what I will refer to as the “figure.” The figure, as I will use for this argument, is the explicit evoking of a specific individual within a poem. Like allusion, the figure is an intertextual technique. What differentiates figure from allusion more broadly conceived, though, is that the figure is not concerned with a specific text, but rather with the particular cultural or historical individual and his or her connotations. These connotations can consist of events in which the individual participated, actions they took, bodies of work they produced, or cultural, societal, or political sentiments which they are associated. The figure then operates as a kind of metaphor or synecdoche of the evoked individual's connotations. The purpose of using the figure is to utilise these connotations to represent or, at times, confront a particular anxiety around identity. In Hayes' work, the figure can be the source, the presentation of, and the confronting of identity anxiety. The figure operates in poetry as a stand in for cultural memory. Through the figure, Hayes is able to access experiences beyond his own, and is able

to address the historical grievances such as slavery and segregation through individual perspective as to avoid condemning the white American community a whole. For a poet interested in history and memory and, interested in maintaining a multifaceted identity, the figure offers Hayes a means of exploring both interests. Looking at examples from Hayes' oeuvre overtime, we can see the figure's relationship with anxiety over identity shift from being simply a source or representation of anxiety, to a means confrontation with this anxiety, to in more recent work a means of overcoming that anxiety. To illustrate this, I will analyse three poems from three different collections. Each of these three poems, I believe, are emblematic of their collections and the use of the figure in that collection. The first poem is "SHAfRO" from his first collection *Muscular Music* (1999). In this poem we see Hayes' initial exploration of the figure as a source of anxiety, but in that the distance between the speaker and the figure, and the mainly inward focus on the speaker, prevent confrontation with the overcoming of the poem's central anxiety around African-American identity. The second poem is "FOR ROBERT HAYDEN" from his second collections *Hip-Logic*. In the poem the speaker is able to confront the figure, but ambiguity and the lack of a clearly situated "I" prevent that confrontation from resulting in overcoming anxiety – that is, as I will show, in that case the attention is too diverted from the inner life of the speaker to that of the figure. In the third poem "SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS" from his fourth collection *Lighthouse* (2010) we see the figure used to overcome the anxiety of the poem. In the analysing of each of these poems, I will also discuss how the anxieties of the poems are developed through Hayes career and how they are formed through the confictions of Hayes identities. The aim of my argument is to show how Hayes develops his use of cultural figure into a means of overcoming anxiety.

“SHAFRO”

In his first collection *Muscular Music* (1999), we see Hayes' initial exploration into the relationship between the figure and anxiety. Where in latter collections we find the figure developed into the confrontation and overcoming of anxiety of identity, here we find the figure established as a representation of identity. The central anxiety of the collection revolves around the speaker's African-American and American identities, as Shara McCallum explains: “While these poems [*Muscular Music*] are very tightly crafted, perhaps the most compelling aspect of Hayes' work is how he navigates the many extremes presented to him as a black/ American poet.” (McCallum 694). We can see these “extremes” represented in the figure as a singular African-American or American identity. In “SHAFRO”, Shaft is present as a model of a particular kind of African-American identity that the speaker is attempting to achieve. However, the speaker's inability to abandon either his American or poetic identities (in this chapter I am focusing predominantly on his American and African-American identities) which creates anxiety. It is more accurate then to state the figure is not, necessarily, the representation of anxiety, but that it is the speaker's inability to attain that state of African-American identity which Shaft represents that incites anxiety. The figure of Shaft is drawn from the fictional protagonist of the 1971 film of the same name. Critic Matthew Henry describes Shaft in pop-culture as a representation of “[a] particular type of black masculinity – one defined mainly by an urban aesthetic, a nihilistic attitude, and an aggressive posturing” (Henry 119). Shaft has since become emblematic of the promotion of the African-American male in media as violent, promiscuous and hypermasculine, as Henry goes on to write:

This “tough guise” – which the mainstream media have been content to exploit in television, video, and film, and to align with black male identity – is increasingly defined within popular culture by urban life, rampant materialism, fatalistic attitudes, physical strength, and the acquisition of respect through violence or the implicit threat of violence. (Henry 121)

The anxiety of “SHAFRO” is then the speaker’s African-American (and in this case African-American man) longing to attain this black masculinity to overcome his own insecurities, but being unable to do so because of its inherent impracticality and unattainability.

Now that my afro’s as big as Shaft’s
I feel a little better about myself.
How it warms my bullet-head in Winter,

Black halo, frizzy hat of hair.
Shaft knew what a crown his was,
An orb compared to the bush

On the woman sleeping next to him.
(There was always a woman
Sleeping next to him. I keep thinking,

If I’d only talk to strangers ...
Grow a more perfect head of hair.)
His afro was a crown.

Bullet after barrelling bullet,
Fist-fights & car chases,
Three movies & a brief TV series,

Never one muffled strand,
Never dampened by sweat –
I sweat in even the least heroic of situations.

I'm sure you won't believe this,
But if a policeman walks behind me, I tremble:
What would Shaft do? What would Shaft do?

Bits of my courage flake away like dandruff.
I'm sweating even as I tell you this,
I'm not cool,

I keep the real me tucked beneath a wig,
I'm a small American frog.

I grow beautiful as the theatre dims. (Hayes Muscular Music 11-12)

At the beginning of the poem, the speaker comforts himself in having attained black masculinity by emulating Shaft's afro ("now that my hair afro's as big as Shaft's/ I feel a little better about myself"). But as the poem progresses the imagery around Shaft becomes more fantastical and more unattainable ("Bullet after barrelling bullet, / fist-fights & car chases,/ three movies & a brief TV series,"), and the speaker's insecurities become equally more prevalent ("I Sweat even in even the least heroic

situations”). The fantastic imagery depicts the unattainability of this black masculinity, and the violent and misogynistic overtones of the imagery depict the impracticality of this black masculinity in the contemporary age. This unattainability and impracticality is fully realised when the speaker is confronted by a policeman: “Bits of my courage flake away like dandruff. / I’m sweating even as I tell you this.” Despite there being indication as to why the speaker should be afraid of the policeman, his retreat from this authoritative figure goes against the fatalistic notions of attaining authority through violence. The use of the afro as the symbolic representation of Shaft also holds cultural significance. African-American hair, and the afro in particular, has been closely associated with African-American identity and African-American empowerment, as Paul Dash writes: “Hair conking and straightening were perceived to be emblematic of internalized self-hatred. The Afro, on the other hand, by its celebration of the materiality of African hair, emerged as a marker of black pride.” (Dash 31) The depiction of Shaft’s afro as a “crown” is representative of his definitiveness his black masculinity. Despite Shaft being emblematic of the exploitation of black masculinity as being violent and fatalistic, he also represents a certainty of African-American identity. Shaft is depicted without insecurities and without anxiety regarding his identity. The association with the speaker’s insecurity and his hair (“Grow a more perfect head of hair”, “bits of my courage flake away like dandruff”, “I keep the real me tucked beneath a wig”), imply the source of the speaker’s insecurities, and the anxiety of the poem, come from the speaker’s feelings of inadequacy as an African-American male (“I’m a small African frog”). Yet, there is also a sense of irony present in the speaker believing he will be able to achieve this overtly fantastical hypermasculinity by simply growing out his afro. The speaker acknowledges this irony through his constant juxtaposing of his

insecurities and sense of emasculation with Shaft's fantastical hypermasculinity, and in the final line of the poem. The speaker "growing beautiful" inside of cinema implies that it is through fantasy, not through his afro, in which he is able to achieve, if only briefly, this black masculinity. The afro, which does hold cultural significance, is relegated to a superficiality, a wig, and the cinema, specifically the film *Shaft* (a blaxploitation B-movie), is elevated to reverence. Despite acknowledging this black masculinity as unattainable fantasy, it is in the final lines we see that it is through that fantasy, not cultural significance, that the speaker is able to attain beauty. Returning to Henry's comments on the "tough guise" and Shaft being emblematic of the exploitative and damaging depiction of African-American men within media, "SHAFRO" could then be read as a reversal of that sentiment in which African-American males, such as the speaker, seek a source of pride in the Shaft fantasy despite its apparent exploitiveness. Though the poem ends on an accomplishment, with the speaker becoming "beautiful", the source anxiety of the poem remains un-confronted. He never questions the values delivered to him in the form of Shaft – he simply experiences the anxiety in relationship to it, finding value in himself only when indulging in cinematic fantasy – or at least suggesting that society will only find him valuable in relation to that fantasy. The poem is focused, then, on the speaker's anxieties, rather than on confronting and resisting their source.

"FOR ROBERT HAYDEN"

In Hayes' second collection *Hip-Logic* (2002), we see Hayes able to overcome the limitations of the figure found in "SHAFRO" by developing the figure into a representation of anxiety. As I have stated, the two biggest restraints on confronting anxiety in "SHAFRO" were the figure being too distanced from the speaker's own life, his self-perceived failure to live up to that unattainable state,

being the central focus of the poem: the poem focused its emotional energies inward. In *Hip-Logic* we find both these factors abandoned with the emphasis being placed on the figure itself and Hayes allowing for more fluidity in the figure's depiction. In narrative poems such as "SQWARK" and "SHAFT AND THE ENCHANTED SHOE FACTORY OR ARS POETICA: THE EPIC QUEST FOR LANGUAGE", the poems are set in the world of the figure (Big Bird and Shaft) and not in the world of a confessional speaker. For example, where in the previous collection the figure was introduced to the poem through an object (CD's, books, films) or memory, in "SAWARK" and "SHOE FACTORY", the poem opens with the world of the figure established and central: "Shoebboxes line the walls like books./ Shaft sits alone untying his boots" (Hayes *Hip Logic* 15) "Under the spell/ Of the doctor's blue polka-dot sweater,/ Big-bird revealed the horrors of his life" (Hayes *Hip Logic* 17). Because of this, it is the figure, rather than the speaker, who is confronted by anxiety. In "SHOE FACTORY" the figure of Shaft represents the same particular type of black masculinity ("He's tossed them like a pair of guns/ by the beds of countless women/ he's kicked down the doors of villains"). But we find the formative elements of anxiety with the opposing presence of the "wizard," representative of American identity more broadly ("The wizard raises his arms to cast a spell/ Called Hocus Pocus Jim Crow"). There is even, or at-least what seems to be, a confrontation and an overcoming at the end of the poem by Shaft:

Shaft returns his feet to his old boots

And his soles and ankles thank him.

The dazed wizard groans beneath a yellow halo of canaries.

Theme music blasts as Shaft walks out into a ticker tape of snow.

(Hayes *Hip Logic* 15)

Still, in this and some of the other poems in this collection, the speaker is positioned as a passive observer of the figure. With the absence of the “I,” the speaker is only present within the poem as an objective narrator. If anxiety is the uncertainty of belonging, then the two figures, to refer back to McCallum, are “extremes” of identity. Without the “I” as a possessor of all three identities – the hyper masculine African-American identity, the broader American identity and the speaker as poet – there is no uncertainty created and, by extension, no way to bridge the speaker’s anxiety to that of the figure. The poem is then a conflict of identities and not anxieties. In the poem “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” we see the same absence of the “I” and the same elusive speaker’s (though not quite as elusive) limit the poem’s ability to confront anxiety. The poem centres on the figure of Robert Hayden (1913-1980), an influential American poet of the 20th century, Hayden was appointed as the first African-American consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress (now called the Poet Laureate) in 1976. Though Hayden wrote prolifically on the African-American experience and on African-American history he was critiqued by the younger African-American of the Black Arts movement during the mid-1960’s for his political and ideological sentiments, as Derick Smith explains:

Hayden’s artistic and political dispositions – his rejection of the label “black poet” and his paradoxically deep engagement with “black” materials, his commitment to a religiously inflected universalism, his sometimes opaque modernist form – complexly interact with the ideologies and poetry most often associated with the Black Arts movement in a manner that has muted the poet’s legacy as it appears in the work of recent literary scholarship. (D. Smith 449-50)

Considering Hayden's interests and aesthetics as a poet conflicting with the Black Arts movement, we can see that the anxiety in the poem revolves around the extent to which a poet's African-American identity should be present within their work:

Did your father come home after fighting
through the week at work? Did the sweat change
to salt in his ears? Was that bitter white

grain the only music he'd hear? Is this why
you were quiet when other poets sang
of the black man's beauty? Is this why

you choked on the tonsil of Negro Duty?
Were there as many offices for pain
as love? Should a black man never be shy?

Was your father a mountain twenty
shovels couldn't bury? Was he a train
leaving a lone column of smoke? Was he

a black magnolia singing at your feet?
was he a blackjack smashed against your throat? (Hayes Hip Logic
42)

The poem opens with the speaker addressing the figure of Hayden and alludes to the opening stanza of Hayden's poem "Those Winter Sundays": "then with cracked

hands that ached/ from labor in the weekday weather made/ banked fires. No one ever thanked him.” (Hayden 41). A second allusion is made in the third stanza of Hayes’ poem (“Were there as many offices for pain/ as love?”) to the final line of Hayden’s poem: “What did I know, what did I know/of love’s austere and lonely offices.” Both lines from Hayden’s poem are addressed to the speaker’s father who is also present within the Hayes poem. However, there is an immediate distinction in the depiction of the father between the two poems. In Hayden’s poem, the father is sympathetic getting up early to warm the house and polishing the family’s shoes. While there is an underlying hostility implied by speaker surrounding his father (“... slowly I would rise and dress/ fearing the chronic angers of that house.”) the poem ends with the speaker forgiving his father (“What did I know, what did I know”). In the Hayes poem, this hostility is overtly stated (“was he the blackjack [police baton] smashed against your throat?”) and made the central focus of the poem. The father in the Hayes poem is an imposing figure over Hayden. The speaker suggests that it is the father, in the Hayes poem, is an inhibiting presence over Hayden:

Is this why

You were quiet when other poets sang

Of the black man’s beauty? Is this why

You choked on the tonsil of Negro Duty?

The use of “black man’s beauty” and “Negro Duty” allude to the agenda of the Black Arts movement to further African-American identity and aesthetics in American culture. Considering what Smith wrote on Hayden’s reservations towards the Black

Arts movements more radical sentiments we could then see the father to be representative of Hayden's differing ideologies. If so, the father is then operating in a similar manner to the figure of Shaft in "SHAFRO" as a representation of a particular type of African-American identity. Where Shaft was the unattainable state the speaker sought to achieve, the father is an inhibiting state from which Hayden is unable to escape ("Was you father a mountain twenty/ shovels couldn't bury?"). However, again the relevance of this anxiety to the speaker is not established concretely in the poem to work toward confrontation. Like "SHAFT & THE ENCHANTED SHOE FACTORY" the conflict occurs between two figures and not between the speaker and the figure. It is true that the use of direct address suggests the likelihood the speaker is projecting his own anxieties onto the figure of Hayden, and the direct address, creates the potential for confrontation, in contrast to "SHAFRO". And with the figure of Hayden being an African-American poet inciting conflict between all three indentures as opposed to Shaft being representative of only a singular identity and this inciting only the confliction between in two identities. Which allows for the anxiety a more substantial and urgent presence within the poem. The absence of the "I" create too much ambiguity over how much of the conflict belongs to Hayden and how much to the speaker for the poem to fully confront and overcome the anxiety. If in "SHAFRO" the constraint on confronting and overcoming anxiety was the speaker's inward focus, here there is too much emphasis placed on the figure. The final lines also indicate the speaker's uncertainty over the extent to which the father's presence influenced Hayden's reservations towards the bolstering of African-American identity according to the Black Arts movement agenda: "Was he// a black magnolia singing at your feet?/ was he a blackjack smashed against your throat?". In these, the speaker asks whether the

father was a source of poetic inspiration (“a black magnolia singing”) or an oppressive presence (“blackjack [police baton] smashed against your throat”). So, the ambiguity of the final lines also serve to limit the speaker’s ability to confront anxiety whether through projection or otherwise. Though the father and Hayden are depicted with more fluidity than in “SHAFRO” and are allowed to interact more directly, it is the distance of the speaker which prevents confrontation and overcoming. It is essential then in the confronting and overcoming of anxiety for the speaker as possessor of all three identities to be firmly established within the poem as the “I”.

“SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS”

In the poem “SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS” from Hayes’ fourth collection *Lighthouse* (2010) we find Hayes able to overcome the problems of distance found in “SHAFRO” and “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” in order to confront anxiety. The issues of the last two poems were the positioning of the speaker and the figure. We understand from “SHAFRO” the necessity of the figure as representative of a particular type of identity, and we understand from “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” the necessity of the speaker as possessor of all three identities. The problem is then of balance: how to emphasize either the figure or the speaker equally. In “SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS” we find the speaker again directly addressing the figure. However, in this instance the speaker is present as the “I” allowing for the conflict and anxiety to play out between the figure and the speaker. The figure of the poem is American poet Wallace Stevens (1879-1955). Stevens is prominently remembered as a key American modernist poet from the early to mid-twentieth century, one whom critic Harold Bloom referred to as “the best and most representative American poet of our time” (Bloom). But in recent years, Stevens’ has

also been criticised for his use of racial sentiment, specifically of racist language in his depiction of African-Americans, Lisa DuRose explains:

In a disturbing, almost maddening way, Stevens' representation of the African American Other, though steeped in historically racist language and imagery, is often aesthetically powerful and his characters so gorgeously rendered and compelling that it becomes too difficult to dismiss the poetry as simply a product of racial prejudice. (DuRose 4)

DuRose's conflicted response towards Stevens' ability as a poet and his use of racist sentiment ("racist language and imagery") echoes the speaker's anxiety in "SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS". When asked of Stevens' influence, his racist sentiments, and the poem "SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS" in a 2009 Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, Hayes stated:

In my poem, "Snow for Wallace Stevens," I write, "Thus, I have the capacity for love without/ forgiveness." That pretty much captures my feelings for Stevens. Most certainly he is an influence. Just as an alcoholic father can be an influence... Of course his racism is an issue – I don't believe he thought black folk could write poems, comprehend poems, care for poems. But that's not what both scares and influences me most about Stevens. It's the remoteness his brand of imagination engenders. He champions the kind of imagination that makes all else secondary. Source material. Even language is little more than a tool of the imagination. This interests me. This frightens me. This tempts me. But maybe it's all in my head. (Rader 30)

Like DuRose, Hayes acknowledges Stevens' aesthetic ability and racist sentiment, but unlike DuRose, Hayes is less concerned with the political and societal

ramifications of Stevens' influence than with his "brand of imagination."

Imagination is a term often used in scholarly work on Stevens' poetry. In her 1974 book *Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith* Adelaide Kirby Morris refers to Stevens' imagination as a "mystic theology" (Morris 82), and writes: "The imagination is the force which moves through chaos to order, through dissonance to harmony, through the evil which is for Stevens unassimilated reality to the good of imaginative integration." (Morris 84) The imagination that Hayes is both afraid of and infatuated by is this notion of an assimilating force applying order to the chaos of reality. What Hayes seems to take issue with is that this brand of imagination, its ordering of reality, is relative only to the self and not to any communal or societal identity. In this notion of imagination, according to Hayes, everything else is "secondary" including history and language. It is the egocentrism of Stevens' imagination that Hayes confronts in his poem:

No one living a snowed-in life
can sleep without a blindfold.
Light is the lion that comes down to drink.
I know *tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk*
holds nearly the same sound as a bottle.
Drink and drank and drunk-a-drunk-drunk,
light is the lion that comes down to drink.
this is song is for *the wise man who avenges*
by building his city in snow.
for his decorations in a nigger cemetery.
How, with pipes of winter
lining his cognition, does someone learn

to bring a sentence to its knees?
Who is not the more than his limitations?
Who is not the blood in a wine barrel
and the wine as well? I too, having lost faith
in language, have placed my faith in language.
Thus, I have the capacity to love without
forgiveness. This song is for my for my foe,
the clean-shaven, gray suited, gray patron
of Hartford, the emperor of whiteness
blue as a body made of snow. (Hayes Lighthouse 57)

We can see the critique of egocentrism in the opening line with the figure (presumably Stevens) being depicted as “living a snowed-in life”. The line is an allusion to the Stevens poem “The Snow Man” which opens with the line: “One must have a mind of winter/ To regard the frost and the boughs/ Of the pine-trees crusted with snow.” (Stevens 7). In his essay “Singing in Chaos: Wallace Stevens and Three or Four Ideas” David H. Hesla writes: “In order to view reality clearly one must have a “mind of winter” – that is, a mind which is free of feelings, prejudice, illusions; and with the acquisition of such a mind will come the realization that oneself is nothing, and that the world for all it’s apparent reality is also nothing.” (Hesla 242). In the opening line of Hayes’ poem, the speaker reverses this notion that the mind needing to be “free of feelings, prejudice, illusions” to see reality clearly. Instead, Hayes depicts the “mind of winter” as a “snowed in life”, and as a “blindfold” implying that this mode of thinking has walled Stevens off from reality rather than helping him to see it clearly. It is his disregard for feeling, prejudice, illusions, and language which causes the conflict within the speaker. Hayes also

notes in the passage above that Stevens is someone who both “scares” and “influences” him. What scares him is Stevens’ promotion of this “brand of imagination” which denotes feelings, prejudice, illusion and language as secondary, that this brand of imagination is Stevens’ justification for his use of racist language. What influences him is Stevens aesthetic ability as a poet, as Alex M. Frankle writes: “Hayes is a literary descendant of Stevens, and yet as a black man he must work though[sic] his complex feelings about one of our “whitest” poets.” (Frankel 391). Stevens is representative of both this brand of imagination and his influence as an American poet. The conflict then manifests Hayes’ identities as both an African-American and American poet. In the first half of the poem, we can see this confliction in the line: “This song is for *the wise man who avenges/ by building his city in snow*. For his decorations in a nigger cemetery.” The italicised line (Hayes’ italics) is a direct citation of the final line from the Stevens poem “Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery”, which Hayes then also cites. The two lines are juxtaposing. Where the italicised line reflects Stevens’ aesthetic ability the cited title is an example of Steven’s disregard for the insensitivity of use of language. Yet, Hayes dedicates “this song” to both lines. The speaker is then unable to condone Stevens’ indifference to racist language yet is also unable to forgo the aesthetic beauty of his poetry. We see this confliction further articulated in the succeeding passage:

How, with pipes of winter
lining his cognition, does someone learn
to bring a sentence to its knees?
Who is not more than his limitations?
Who is not the blood in a wine barrel
and the wine as well? I too, having lost faith

in language, have placed my faith in language.

Thus, I have the capacity for love without

forgiveness.

The speaker again alludes to the opening line of “The Snow Man” with his line “pipes of winter lining his cognition” and again reverses the sentiment of the “mind of winter” to mean a closing off from reality. Except, in this allusion he ends with the question “does someone learn to bring a sentence to its knees?” Here the speaker is questioning how someone closed off from reality within their egocentrism, who has made language secondary to his imagination, is still able to create aesthetic beauty within language. As with “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” the questions which follow this line contain an element of projection. One reading is that Stevens as being closed off from reality, as his “limitations”, yet he is able to exceed those limitations to create beauty; but the lines can also be read as the speaker’s own sense of limitation imposed by the figure of Stevens in the poem. As a “literary descendent of Stevens” it can be assumed that Hayes is striving in his own work to achieve the same level of aesthetic beauty achieved by Stevens. The speaker’s inability or unwillingness to make language secondary to imagination could then be seen as his limitations in achieving that same aesthetic beauty. The anxiety here is fully realised as it is Hayes’ poetic identity that strives to achieve the aesthetic beauty Stevens represents but his African-American identity is conflicted over the racist language produced by the brand of imagination Stevens’ also represents. The questions, then, are the speaker confronting his anxiety, culminating in the lines “I too, having lost my faith in language have placed my faith in language. Thus, I have the capacity to love without forgiveness”. The speaker “too, having lost faith in language” alludes to both the grievances of the real-life Stevens with the limitations of language, or as

Wit Pietrzak writes: “The perfection cannot be attained in the language so rife with imperfection” (Pietrzak 204), and the speaker’s contempt to Stevens indifference to his use of racist language. Yet, is also through language that the speaker is able to confront Stevens. Him placing his faith in language refers to the language of the poem itself, or rather, the poem itself. It is through language and through the poem that Hayes is able to confront and overcome his complex feelings towards Stevens. By placing his faith in language, in a poem whose sentiments go against the unmediated critical praise of Stevens’ poetry, we see the speaker confronting the figure of Stevens which is cemented in the succeeding line: “Thus, I have the capacity to love without/ forgiveness”. In this line we find the speaker finally able to overcome anxiety, as he is able to “love” Stevens with “forgiving” him. Here we see the speaker finally able to separate the two representations: his “love” for Stevens’ aesthetic beauty and his inability to forgive his brand of imagination and use of racist language. In the final passage of the poem the speaker addresses the representation of Stevens that he cannot forgive as his “foe”. The depiction of Stevens as “clean-shaven, gray-suited, gray-patron/ of Hartford” alludes to his career outside of poetry as the vice president of Hartford Accident and Indemnity company. The depiction is ordinary even mundane, focusing on the bodily. We see Stevens here as an old man working in insurance removed and de-mythised from his own poetry. There is a sense of irony between the speaker labelling this mundane depiction of Stevens as his “foe”. The poem ends on the line: “the emperor of whiteness/ blue as a body made of snow”. The “emperor of whiteness” is an allusion to the Stevens poem “The Emperor of Ice-Cream”. The second stanza of the Steven’s poem depicts an unknown dead woman (“On which she embodied fantails once/ And spread it so as to cover her face” (Stevens 39)). Though the identity of the “emperor of ice-cream”

is elusive, the use of “ice-cream” seems to be used associatively with the dead woman, as Austen Allen explains “By linking the chill of death with a frozen desert, Stevens seems to imply that dead and the sensuous pleasures of life have something in common: detachment or isolation, perhaps.” (Allen). The speaker referring to Stevens’ as the “emperor of whiteness” evokes both the racial distinction between the speaker and the figure (indicating a confliction between his African-American and broader American identities) while also carrying over Stevens’ own associations with “ice-cream” and death, detachment and isolation. This line and the succeeding line (“blue as a body made of snow”) imply that the figure of Stevens is dead and echoes the same callous depiction of the dead woman in “The Emperor of Ice-Cream”, as Thomas Dilworth writes in his essay “Death and Pleasure in Stevens “The Emperor of Ice-Cream””: “He [the speaker] is saying that death merely produces a corpse that should simply be clearly seen as that ... The speaker seems to say that the only honest response to reality, including the corpse, is to accept it apathetically or with equanimity.” We can see this equanimity given to the depiction of Stevens at the end of the Hayes poem. This ending can be interpreted in numerous ways. Perhaps it is a meditation on the death of modernistic philosophies on language, or specifically the death of the brand of imagination which Stevens promoted. It could be read as Hayes personally conquering his own conflictions with Stevens as a poetic influence. That without his aesthetic beauty, the figure of Stevens is simply a dead man. However, what we can see is the overcoming of the anxiety, the anxiety between his poetic and African-American identities, through his separation of the beauty from the imagination.

Conclusion

By analysing the three poems “SHAFRO”, “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” and “SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS” we see that in the representing, confronting and overcoming of anxiety in Hayes’ work it is the relationship between the figure and the speaker which is paramount. In “SHAFRO” we see the importance of the figure as a representation of a particular type of identity in the formation of anxiety. We also see that the depiction of the figure as unattainable state limits the speaker’s ability to confront and overcome the conflict of his identities. In “FOR ROBERT HAYDEN” it is the emphasis placed on the figure and the speaker’s use of direct addresses which allowed Hayes a greater fluidity in depicting the anxiety of his African-American identity. But with the absence of the speaker as possessor of the three identities – African-American, broader American and poetic – as the “I” in the poem which muddled the distinction between the speaker and figure’s conflicting identity. In “SNOW FOR WALLACE STEVENS” we see the speaker able to confront and overcome his anxiety by Hayes balancing both the confliction of the speaker’s African-American, broader American and poetic identities with the presence of the figure as the source of anxiety. It is seen then that anxiety is best represented, confronted and overcome when the speaker is both drawn to and resistant of the figure. It is both the commonality between a singular identity and the contention between the other two identities which is anxiety is best formed in and overcome.

Though the majority of my argument has been placed on the figure, identity and anxiety, it is the use of the speaker which has drawn me to the work of Hayes as I worked on my own. The speaker in his poetry operates as the colliding intersection of these three identities.

I'm interested in identity, but there's another circle that's closer to the self, and that's personality. Part of my personality, certainly, is because I'm black, and I'm Southern, and I'm male. But there are also parts of my personality that just had to do with some weird thing my mother said to me or that I sat on the lap of a woman that couldn't speak at a piano when I was three years old. (Williams 172)

It is the anxiety of the speaker that is central to my own poetry in this thesis. As I have discussed in my critical component, I am concerned with the figure and how it can be used to represent, confront and overcome anxiety. Where Hayes used the figure primarily to approach topics revolving around racial identity and American poetry, in the creative component which follows, my poetry manuscript *At the Museum of Masculine Beauty*, I engage issues of masculine identity. In the poetry manuscript, I am attempting, as Hayes did, to represent, confront and overcome the anxiety created in the presence of the figure. Like Hayes' speakers at times, my own speakers (for the most part) are dealing with a sense of anxiety around masculinity. The masculine is depicted through my use of the figure. Though the figures in my work range from historic to pop-cultural, they are drawn from w models of masculinity that are in some ways admirable and in some ways disturbing.

For instance, "Partimen for Charlie Sheen" suggests my admiration of his freedom. In both "Partimen for Pablo Picasso" and "Thérèse Dreaming Balthus, 1938" my admiration for the figures of Pablo Picasso's and Balthus' capacity for aesthetic ability is central. Tension with admiration, though, is in my speaker's disdain for the transgressions these figures have committed. In "Partimen for Caravaggio" it is Caravaggio's killing of a man which my speaker disdains. In

“Partimen” for Louis C.K” it is his abuse of power in making woman watch him masturbate. This is also expressed in the use of “Partimen” in the title. A partimen is an Old French lyrical poetry form in which a dilemma is purposed within a poem and two troubadours dispute over that dilemma in alternating stanzas. My use of partimen in my manuscript is two depict the internal dispute over the dilemma that is the figure, and the figure’s controversy. The anxiety underlying much my creative component, then, is concerned with ambiguity of how a young man should conduct himself in his public and romantic life in the 21st century in midst of these both admirable and controversial models of masculinity.

The title of my creative component *At the Museum of Masculine Beauty*—as I attempt to suggest in the opening poem of the same name—comes from an epiphany which occurred when I visited the Museum of Modern Art in New York. I noticed the care in which a museum takes in preserving their art was similar to that of a high-security prison. The MoMA building as seen from the street a giant monolithic building of concrete and glass. Entering the building your bags are checked and you are giving passes. The color pallet inside is monochromatic, and one is always aware of being watched whether it be by guide, guard or camera. And like the high-security prison cell, isolation and distance are paramount. No two paintings are within one meter of each other, and as a visitor there is a strict two-feet distance policy. Many of the artist I admire had also committed (Picasso, Balthus, Pollock) had lived controversial, and sometimes criminal (such as Caravaggio), lives. And, like visiting a loved one in prison, it is difficult to keep those controversies out of mind. The central anxiety of my manuscript is then that by appreciating the beauty of a controversial figure’s work am I forgiving them for their transgressions.

There are of course poems which break from this anxiety around masculinity, such as “2018 Department of Lands and Survey Mihi Template” which functions more as a meditation on cultural identity in New Zealand, and “The Isle of Goats” and “The Etymology of “You”” which are meditations on language. But as I see them, they all revolve around an uncertainty of belonging. Though the primary focus of my creative component is on the models of masculinity, the ultimate focus of my poetry comes down to an uncertainty around where I belong, whether that is in regards to masculinity, culture, or language.

With that in mind, I have ordered the poems so that they move from the external towards the internal. My hope is to evoke in the reader a sensation of the speaker gradually moving toward a greater certainty of self, and ending on the most confessional poem of the collection. My aim here is to some extent to emulate Terrance Hayes’ work in my use of the cultural or historical figure as a manifestation of anxiety, while also discovering the individual voice within my particular type of uncertainty.

Bibliography

- Allen, Austen "Wallace Stevens: "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"." Poetry Foundation 2014. Web.
- Assmann, Jan, and John Czaplicka. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique*.65 (1995): 125-33. Print.
- Bloom, Harold. *Wallace Stevens : The Poems of Our Climate*. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1977, 1977. Print.
- Casper, Robert N. "About Terrance Hayes: A Profile by Robert N. Casper." *Ploughshares*.4 (2010): 178. Print.
- Dash, Paul. "Black Hair Culture, Politics and Change." *International journal of inclusive education*.1 (2006): 27. Print.
- DuRose, Lisa. "Racial Domain and the Imagination of Wallace Stevens." Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. 3-22. Vol. 22. Print.
- Frankel, M. Alex. "Lighthouse Terrance Hayes." Antioch College, 2011. 391. Print.
- Hayden, Robert. *Robert Hayden Collected Poems*. New York, NY. U.S.A: Liveright Publishing, 1985. Print.
- Hayes, Terrance. *Hip Logic*. The National Poetry Series. New York: Penguin Books, 2002. Print.
- . *Lighthouse*. Penguin Poets. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2010. Print.
- . *Muscular Music*. A Carnegie Mellon Classic Contemporary. 1st Carnegie Mellon University Press ed. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2006. Print.
- Henry, Matthew. "He "Is" a "Bad Mother*\$%@!#": "Shaft" and Contemporary Black Masculinity." *African American Review* Vol. 38.1 (2004): 119-26. Print.
- Hesla, David H. "Singing in Chaos: Wallace Stevens and Three or Four Ideas." *American Literature* 57.2 (1985): 240-62. Print.
- McCallum, Shara. "A Healing Romance for the Plague Years." Rev. of *Muscular Music*, Terrance Hayes. *Callaloo* 25.2 (2002): 693-94. Print.
- Morris, Adalaide Kirby. *Wallace Stevens : Imagination and Faith*. Princeton Legacy Library: Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1974, 1974. Print.
- Pietrzak, Wit. *Myth, Language and Tradition. [Electronic Resource] : A Study of Yeats, Stevens, and Eliot in the Context of Heidegger's Search for Being*. Newcastle upon Tyne : Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2011, 2011. Print.
- Pinsky, Robert. "Democracy, Culture, and the Voice of Poetry." Princeton University Press 2002. Web.
- Rader, Dean. "Invisible Priest." Academy of American Poets, 2016. 25-33. Vol. 50. Print.
- Rowell, Charles Henry, and Terrance Hayes. ""The Poet in the Enchanted Shoe Factory": An Interview with Terrance Hayes." *Callaloo* 27.4 (2004): 1069-81. Print.
- Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity* London Penguin Books, 1991. Print.
- Smith, Derick. "Quarreling in the Movement: Robert Hayden's Black Arts Era." *Callaloo* 33.2 (2010): 449-66. Print.
- Stevens, Wallace. *Selected Poems*. New York, NY. U.S.A: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. Print.

Williams, Jeffrey J. "Shakespeare and Scooby-Doo: An Interview with Terrance Hayes." *Iowa Review*, 2018. 168-87. Vol. 48. Print.

---. "Shakespeare and Scooby-Doo: An Interview with Terrance Hayes." *Iowa Review* 48.1 (2018): 168-87. Print.

At the Museum of Masculine Beauty

At the Museum of Masculine Beauty

This poem is the velvet rope that keeps you locked inside
of the museum of masculine beauty. Part preservation and
Part incarceration. For the confession I have not yet learned
How to love without also loving the crime, I keep them both
Locked inside of a prison cell the size of a human heart. For your
own safety, and the for the safety of our wives without husbands,
mothers without sons, daughters without fathers, prostitutes
without pimps, art graduates without full time jobs, this poem permits
you the freedom of dead men. You are free to haunt and hunt
only as colour and music. As colour, you are exempt from time and
space. As music, you are not permitted to leave your designated steps.
As both guide and guard, as zoo-keeper and rehab councillor,
as both grave and vessel, this poem is my inability to kill that keeps me
from becoming a decent man.

1.

The New Confessionalism

I keep talking to myself about the self

As if

The self is was something invented

By Plath

to argue over eternity's dinner table

That what she committed was murder.

In the new confessionalism, blood

Hounds chase down the escaped selves

Through swamps of fermenting allusion.

What use is there for allegory if you

Can't even use it to hide your scent?

I confess, I confess, O Judge, O jury, O

Thirsty gallows, this is only a Baudelaire

Costume I stole from Bukowski's grave.

I had all the intention in the world of returning

It, but I like how the latex feels against

My lips.

O Plath, O Mother who birthed her own

Father, like the snake that devours its own

Tail, but in reverse. Please forgive me for

What I said before. I could never hate a
Naked woman. I am naked here too, but
Only from the waist down

I keep my brain and heart bundled up
In a Ginsbergian sonnet which in itself
Is sutra-ed from a Whitman rhapsody.
I could not face myself in open court.
I have too many witnesses to call.

Partimen for Louis C.K

You dead-beat dead-meat ass looking for the beating
Of a lifetime spent beating off to two women laughing
in a Naked hotel bed-room. You big belly full-a paedophilic
humour black t-shirt wearing BBQ sauce-sweat stained
beautiful head as bald as a circumcision (I am only a white
intellectual without God, I cannot help but laugh at a good
Auschwitz joke) Saviour of the homoerotic locker room shame
fantasy Creaser to a senate of internet porn addicts, of men
who cannot bring a woman laugh, of woman without laughter,
of men and woman who cannot see the joke beyond the
confession I sentence you to an eternity spent inside of
a mouth laughing – like Brutus

I too know what it means to kill a man I love.

How to Make Your Own Woody Allen Halloween Costume

First, you'll want to find a Groucho Marx joke to wear across your face. Something like a beaglpuss disguise or a wolf-man's mask. *A man is only as old as the woman he feels.* It'll need to be big enough to hide inside of incase any of the other party attendees happen to be dressed in Gestapo or educated female columnist costumes. *A man is only as old as the woman he feels.* Remember, a joke is only as good as what it is able to conceal of the confession beneath it. Your body is only as big as the girls inside of a Balthus painting, so your shirt must fit across your shoulders as the daughter fits between a father's lap. It must be the embrace that is also a gripping. The love that is more than it should be. Think *Jon Miro and his Daughter Dolores.* Think Humbert Humbert and his daughter Dolly (pro tip: avoid sports coats At all cost, or else people will mistake you for Serge Gainsbourg). Don't think too much about the trousers, it is how they accentuate the cock that matters. Remember, the cock will be the *piece de resistance* of your costume, it is what black and white was to Fellini. Is what god, or lack thereof, was to Dostoyevsky. I would recommend tying an Oscar to the inside of your belt buckle and letting it hang like one of Smerdykov's cats – that way it will weight on you in both the literal and Freudian sense. At this point your costume will have begun to feel like a prison cell, but do not panic. Resist the urge to explode into breath burning through a Gershwin saxophone. Rememeber you are only the confession stuck between your teeth.

Partimen for Charlie Sheen

Impossible son of Sgt *Feeln' good Is good enough* and Sgt *I am reality*.

Of Vietnam and Hollywood back-lot Jungles. Of Wall Street and *Wall Street*.

I have come to know Man as something in halves.

Something between what's good and what is Greed. Between the effeminate
Divorcee who pays his alimony, who cannot convince a woman to love him,
and the brother who lives within cigarette commercials.

I am the son between the halves. The living proof that two men can give birth
to at-least half of a man. I am this song, and the son within this song. The
rifle hat the solider calls his instrument, and the guitar the musician calls

his weapon – what has the potential to destroy is a beautiful thing. This is for the half
of your body that is trying to kill the other half, this for the *wing* inside of *winning*.

The Dead

Having gotten my fill of Daiquiris and women without
Phone-numbers, I turn back from the bars to find appearing
Before, like a gas-station angel or assassin sent from heaven
The ghost of Wallace Steven's looking almost Christ-Like
In nothing but a pair of women's underwear. I've since come
To know the dead as eternities homeless. They're lives
The bad credit that keeps them from investing in real-estate.
Most nights, I can hear them from below my bedroom window
raiding through the church charity bins for something to move into.
Ephemeral hermit crabs. Naked as head-lice. I'm as bad as
Those Shamans who'll adopting any demi-god they find skulking
around they're pyre. I'll bring home any dead man who can sing.
After all, it's still colder to sleep in a bed alone, than is it to sleep in a bed
as warm as ice-cream.

How to Make Your Own Ghost Costume

It seems to me, that the single biggest challenge facing young single men, is that they are running out of things to wear for Halloween.

I've spent almost 2000 dollars on my Stanley Kowalski Costume so that my cock will look as big as a Dostoevsky Novel, and my abs look as sharp as the mouth of an opened

Beer can. Yet here I am – as naked as a razor burn – searching For a bed-sheet I can cut two eye holes out off. O Picasso, do You remember the night we shared a body, like two drunk

Teenagers shearing a jacket to sleep under on their father's porch? I have not yet learned the difference between shame and guilt, but I know that a costume is like a joke, what can be concealed

is only as important as what is left exposed. O Louis C.K., do you remember what it meant to be naked, now that you are the opposite of naked? Your face is hung in a permanent

laugh with a metal coat hook for a tongue. I am always naked. Everything else is a disguise. I am like the child hiding from his Mother beneath a clothing rail of dresses. I am like the ghost

Hiding beneath a body. Inside, I keep the rest
Of the dead company.

Partimen for Caravaggio

For the naked boy you painted as beautiful as love this poem
is the velvet rope that keeps you locking inside of the museum
of masculine beauty. Part preservation and part incarceration.
I have not yet learned how to love your confession without also
Loving your crime, so I keep them both hidden inside of prison
Cell the size of human heart. For the man you killed when you tried to cut
Of his cock but missed, I serve you this poem on a platter. It is made
From fruit and lizards. It is the wine that will not kill you, but the
Noosed lips of Bacchus you taste on the mouth of your glass.
It is my inability to kill you
That keeps me from becoming a decent man.

Whit-man

Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, alike ender'd, grown, ungrown, young or old
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
Chair'd in the adamant of time.

Walt Whitman "America"

Somewhere below America, hidden

Like a motel bible, a secret lair

Whit-man's *America*

No bigger than a buried whale.

The young outsourced poet, the latest to

Take up the Whit-man mantle, sits

at the monitor waiting for the Whit-man

Distress beacon to shine. His Whit-man

Caul hanging from a wall

The blunted tongue of a coat rail

Hooked through where his left eye

Should go. Still warm and a little

inflated from use

more leather jacket,

or a wineskin, than a mask.

“Computer” says the young poet
“Computer, I am tired of fighting. I have
Fought so much, so many nights

That I feel my body emptied. I
Have beaten up every boarder
Patrol officer who ever laughed

At a desperate mother bundled
In a wire fence. I have broken the
Jaw of every gun-control advocate

Whoever spat through their teeth
At the second amendment.
I have fought high-taxes and homelessness

I have built transgender bathrooms
In the oval office, and re-built every
Robert E. Lee statute toppled. I have

Exhaled gas into the lungs of every prisoner
With a multiple life sentence, while
I spray-painted pro-abortion

Slogans on my back. I have wed 999

Same sex marriages, and defended

A shop-keeper's right to refuse service

On religious basis. I have installed

Security cameras in every Mosque, school,

Gang-hide out, Pakistani taxi cab,

Church, celebrity's home and Republican

Locker room. I have fought for equal pay

For woman and for Bill O'Rielly to come

back to FOX News. Tomorrow I have to go

To Syria, to fight ISIS myself. And go

To North Korea to devour all of their

Uranium. I still don't know what I'm going

To do about Russia. And Yet, when the people

See me in the streets, running

From Ferguson to Las Vegas, they don't chant

But shout "White-man, white-man"

The immigrants in New Mexico shout,

"You claim of equal daughters,

Of equal sons, yet you do nothing for us.

Your president Don Quixote

Calls us sorcerers and giants. He tries to chase us out
with his broken lance and army
of Sanchos. you do nothing to stop him.

We know below your mask your skin
is the colour of dampened sand. We knew your mother
who snuck into this country with nothing

but a wineskin filled with the voices of her people.
The same wineskin she emptied over your body
to clean of off the mucus of birth.

White-man, you are not our champion.”

When I hear this my caul fills with tears

I have to drink or else will drown. In Oklahoma,

the farmers, the mill owners, the cops and grocery
store clerks all shout “Wit-man, wit-man.

Your words are expensive and flashy. You are just

A cheap peddler of rhetoric. What use do we have

Of rhymes? All alike? Grown and ungrown?

Young and old? Strong and weak?

These are just the embroideries on a
Jacket only the rich and educated can
Afford. They do not even sell those empty

Jackets of yours in our shops.

When we cannot mix your words into mortar.

When we cannot take them to the bank as collateral.

When we cannot curd them to make cheese and butter.

When we cannot run our engines on them

What use are they to us regular folk.

We knew all of your fathers.

They were like us. They turned their words
into work. They suffered the wrath of the banks

And the draft. They loaded their songs on the backs

Of sawn off jalopies and drove them with us

to California. They shared their music in tin cups

in Hooverville. They salted them down and gave

us all a piece when they left. When they became rich,

they'd send us a ballad at Christmas

Every year until they died. You claim voice as your own
And charge us to wear it. We do not want to pay your prices
Wit-man. Now please leave, we are busy.” When I hear this

The lubricants of my body go dry, and my heart
Grinds against my chest. The friction burns up to my throat,
and my mouth fills with hot sparks. My poetry

could then burn down buildings, so I have to keep my lips
shut until I’ve passed. But that is not the worst,
The worst of them are the educated children

Of San Francisco. When they see me pass
they say “Whit-man, Whit-man. You are the
smallest of things. Your voice is a used napkin caught

in the suction of a passing train. And yet,
you think you are the own pulling the train. You claim
to be the one who birthed us, but

you were just our wet-nurse. Old
and nearly blind. Our victories in
Alabama, in Cuba, in Nuclear

Physics, in Global politics,

In the national debt, in electing
A black president, in recession,

And Vietnam aggression, in Hollywood,
In Kennedy, in Brad Pitt and
Howard Hughes, in Hemmingway

and Faulkner, In Albie and Miller,
in Frost and Stevens, and Williams,
and Elliot and Pound and Ginsberg

and Plath, and Lowell and Bishop,
Rich, Cummings, Wilbur,
Asberry, Hall, Creely, Baraka

And Pinsky, and Gluck, and Hass
Ours to victories to keep. Go
Back home Whit-man

There are puritans and western
Expansion here." When they shout
At me this I shrink to the size of the

Dot of an i
And become lost in the grass. I want

To fight the true enemies of the heart.

Death and love and hate and beauty.

They are the sperm that fertilizes

The womb, and gives birth to all

My known enemies. They are

The true enemies.” And the

Computer replies:

“But my boy, nobody buys

Poems about flowers

Anymore.”

2.

Partimen for Picasso

Picasso transformed an earlier painting of a boy to create this profile of a slender young woman. This paper uses X-radiography and infrared imaging to look beneath the surface of the painting and unravel the way in which Picasso transformed the male figure into a female figure with a few deft brushstrokes. ("Girl in the Chemise c. 1905 by Pablo Picasso" by Annett King, Joyce H. Townsend and Bronwyn Ormsby)

What's there that light

reveals in an emptied room

Woman in a Chemise, 1904, oil

on canvas woman

on emptiness breasts

on a windowed dress left

opened and un-

mouthed milk on a black

mug spilled wind

on a lace curtain

grows pregnant then not

then pregnant

then knot

What's there that light

reveals in an emptied

womb, a boy painted

invisible needled

paint brush bristle

white on blue

on blue on white
on night on light
enters the room
searching for a boy
who has just escape
through the window.

Thérèse Dreaming Balthus, 1938

What does a girl her age even have to dream about?
Becoming a mother? Her father has already told her
To get rid of the cat

or else he'll use it to string her mother's piano.

Evening pinks fall on the windows of her
neighbours empty loft. Mr Klossowski

has not yet come back from
his trip to the sea. He has promised
to teach her to paint. With her mother

she sits at the piano pretending it to be a lesson.

Feel the stings her mother might've said, holding her
Hand to the hollowed box *see, they are still damp with music.*

The Piano is a dry instrument, she decides. Only damp things
are living. The damp smells of Mr. Klossowski's workshop:
open paint jars, damp canvas, like precious metals and wine.

Like birthed kittens on her periwinkle sheets. Smelling like ocean,
like used bathwater. In her palm, their soup bodies warm beneath
their slack skin. Delicate boned. She hides them in her bottom

chestnut draw. Her own children will look exactly like her. She licks
the mucus from their steaming faces. Replacing the dampness of birth
with the dampness of motherhood, of children. Hiding them from the sun

So they will not dry into strings. Her chestnut draw

A piano. Silence, is its own kind of music. A dry music

With a dry and cruel smell. She has not opened it in weeks

like that says - Balthus says from behind his canvas - stay like that

For as long as you can.

Music

Music. Cacophony. Everything marked is heard. Tiny.

Ephemeral. More sound than space. The universe

Of shopping malls operates under the laws of music. Screaming

hot milk of five-dollar coffees. Shopping trolleys with loose wheels

will make the same sound as rings on the nearly bald woman's

hand as she applauds at her own jokes. Laughter is a breaking sound.

A porcelain mug knocked off a table. A chair pulled on tiles. She cries

to herself politely. Something half-drunken is dropped into

a bin. The spilling sound of a kiss. Shallow. Impersonal. The teenage

girl explains to her Twenty-something-year-old-boyfriend what is

and is not love. Love is what keeps playing over the speaker. *Lovin'*

you is easy cause' you're beautiful

Minnie Riperton sings even when there are no more lyrics

To sing *Do do do do do ooh* so simple it could be a child's melody

Without words like metastasis and mastectomy.

I lean over to ask the teenage girl what love is

And the nearly bald woman crying begins to laugh.

Western Motel, 1957

I too know what it means to leave and not yet arrive
woman in the Hopper painting print-out hanging
above the motel T.V. set. If I went there

Western Motel, 1957

would you still be there?

Still devoted wait. Still ascetically poised in a room
Still holding its breath. Still wearing that same dress
the color of paper bathroom roses. Still with what can

Be seen of a Buick as an extension of your body. Still
Sunshine shinning. Everything moves relative to a
Stillness.

Somewhere a car pulls away
Somewhere the surface of swimming pool breaks
Somewhere a plan moves like sunbeam across tiles.
The earth just tilted a little bit.
Somehow I've already leaving
Somehow I will arrive.

3.

Six Endings Without a Poem

*– To Richard Wilbur, Max Ritvo, James Tate, Philip Levine, John Ashbery
and C.D Wright.*

like a good fiddle, like the rose's scent,
like a rose window or the firmament, like a boy
who takes a razor from a high cabinet
puffs out his cheeks and strips them bloody.
You are beautiful, and I, a slave to cinders.
Womanless, twenty-four, and unafraid.
The poem has set me softly beside you.
The poem is you. Painfully beautiful
whether or not it will change the world one drop.

Apple

In Old English apple, or *appel*, was a generic term for all fruits that were not a nut. A “date” (*fingeræppla*) was a “finger-apple.” A “cucumber” (*erophæppla*) was an “earth-apple” (not to be confused with the French *pomme de terre* which also means “earth-apple” but actually refers to potatoes). “Banana” (*appel of paradis*) was “apple of paradise” (not to be confused with the forbidden fruit of Eden (sometimes referred to as paradise) which is more commonly depicted as an apple (in the contemporary sense), though scholars such as Israeli professor and author Hossien Nasar argue that though this may be the case in Christian and Jewish readings the Quran (according to traditional commentaries) does not explicitly refer to the forbidden fruit as an apple, but is more likely to be wheat (wheat in Old English *hwæte* literally translates to “that which is white”). This argument was also put forth by 2nd century Rabi Judah Bar Ilai who pointed out that wheat, or *Khitah* in Hebrew, was a play on the word for sin *Khet* (in inner historian and theologian circles this is still hotly debated whether or not the forbidden fruit was an apple in both the literal and metaphorical sense (Kierkegaard (not an historian) would argue that the apple was the crux of Adam (and subsequently everyone else’s) anxiety (*angest*) (a subsequent argument to be had is the significance of “Adams apple” (laryngeal prominence) which many theologians believe is caused from a segment of the forbidden fruit being embedded inside of Adam’s (and by extension every man’s) throat. (an argument could then be that the source of anxiety is voice (specifically the male voice) however, there are controversies surrounding the use of Adams apple. Firstly, the phrase was appropriated from the Hebrew תפוחו של אדם which can be translated as “Adams apple”, but the word Adam (אדם) can also be translated as “man,” and word for apple תפוחו can be translated as “swollen.” Thus, the phrase could also be translated to “swelling of man” (which of course refers to sexual arousal) and the source of anxiety would then come from arousal. Secondly, Adams apple (laryngeal prominence) is commonly associated with men, hence the term Adam, a masculine proper noun which is misleading (I myself was once in a long-term un-committed sexual relationship with a woman named Adam (she was named so because her parents (and herself) were “forward-thinking” atheists (and with myself being a “backwards-thinking” atheist this led to many arguments (which

would also lead to resolution-less sex (the act of “sex” does not possess (in etymology) its own word outside of its desired (arguably) result of procreation, but instead appropriated other mundane words in a kind of reverse-euphemism: “sex” comes from the Latin word *sexus* (a state of being either male or female) which was most likely derived from the word *seco* (to divide or cut); “intercourse” was simply “communication” or, in Old French, *entrecors* (to exchange, commerce, communicate). (I explained this to Adam one night after “making love” (euphemism) that sex is really the division between man and woman through communication to which she quietly replied with her back to me “then just call it something else.”

The Entomology of “you”

the singular “you”,
the “you” that is
also “me” which
is also you. “you”
the collective of
“me”. Like “bee”
the collective word
for the genus of 20,000
species of stripped
winged insects, that
are not wasps. Yet,
a bee is so easy
to picture when said.
You are too generic
To picture. There are
Too many species
Of you to
Count. The brown
Hair you. The brown
Eyes you. The pale
You. The you with a
Malformed knee.
The you who’s sister

Locked you inside
Of an aviary – like a bird
Undiscovered.

The *eu* that flower
flowers so delicately
on the page, that only
the gentlest of suffix
will be drawn to

Euphoria

Euphony

Eurhythmic

The *eu* that marries
for pleasure.

But then there is the *eu*
whose presence is
absence:

Euthanasia

Eulogy

Eunuch

the *eu* whose sterile
shape scares off anyone
who might consume you
Ya-Te-Veo the man
Eating tree.

The swallowing “you”

the tentacled “you”
The unknown “you”
who grows on the fringes
of the dark. The s
 u that is the expanding
universal u or μ as in
mathematics
a unit of measurement
in physics, the coefficient
of friction. The you who
is both distance
And friction.
The unison,
the unisex.
The one,
the singular,
The I
that is an apple core,
Longing for bee to
Borough into it.

2018 Department of Lands and Survey Mihi Template

Key:

M – male

FM – female

>25 – Above the age of 25

<25 – Below the age of 25

>UQ – Posses an education above or equivalent to a university qualification.

<UQ – Posses an education below a university qualification.

Mihimihi template and answer guide:

The Mountain that I affiliate to is _____

- M or FM – <25 – >UQ or <UQ, answer: **Mt. Doom**
- M or FM – >25 – <UQ answer: **Mt. Everest**
- M or FM – >25 – >UQ answer: **Erebus**

The River/Lake/Sea that I affiliate to is _____

- M or FM – <25 – > UQ or < UQ answer: **Tasman Sea**
- M or FM – >25 – > UQ or < UQ answer: **The Thames**

The Waka That I affiliate to is _____

- M – <25 – >UQ or <UQ answer: **The Pequod**
- M – >25 – >UQ answer: **The Endeavour**
- M – >25 – <UQ answer: **Noah's Ark**
- FM – <25 or >25 – >UQ or <UQ answer: **Herself**

My (founding) Ancestor is _____

- M – <25 – >UQ answer: **Sir Francis Drake**
- M – >25 – >UQ answer: **James Cook**
- M – <25 or <25– <UQ answer: **Moses**
- FM – <25 – >UQ answer: **Kate Shepperd**
- FM – <25 – <UQ answer: **Princess Diana**
- FM – >25 – <UQ or >UQ answer: **James Cook**

My Tribe is _____

- M or FM– <25 – >UQ answer: **Colonial**

- M or FM- <25 – <UQ answer: **White**
- M or FM- >25 – >UQ answer: **United Kingdom**
- M or FM- >25 – <UQ answer: **New Zealand**

My Marae is ____

- M – <25 – >UQ answer: **Michelle Foucault's *The History of Sexuality Vol 1&2***
- M – <25 – <UQ answer: **Night Club**
- M – >25 – >UQ answer: **Radio NZ**
- M – >25 – <UQ answer: **Church**
- FM – <25 – >UQ answer: **Tumblr**
- FM – <25 – <UQ answer: **Tinder**
- FM – >25 – <UQ or >UQ answer: **My House**

My Name is ____

- M – <25 – >UQ answer: **Ishmael**
- M – <25 – <UQ answer: **Officer Cadet**
- M – >25 – >UQ answer: **Herodotus**
- M – >25 – <UQ answer: **Winston**
- FM – >25 >UQ answer: **Survivor**
- FM – >25 – <UQ answer: **Madam**
- FM – <25 – >UQ answer: **Bovary**
- FM – <25 – <UQ answer: **Mum**

The Isle of Goats

The King also caused [to] take one deaf woman, and put her in Inchkeith, and give her two bairns with her, and furnish her in all Necessary things pertaining to their nourishment, desiring hereby to Know what language they had when they came to the age of perfect Speech. Some say they could speak Hebrew, but for my part I know Not but from [other people's] reports. – *Historie and Chronicles of Scotland*

“It is more likely they would scream like their dumb nurse, or bleat like the goats and sheep on the island.” – Sir Walter Scott

1.

Early on, she had tried to give them names;

The boy and the girl. Only what is un-discovered

Is nameless, she knew. Two unknowns. An approximation

of shape drawn from its surrounding known. Without a name

to define their smells and sights and touches. Solid nothings.

Their names caged behind each of her eyes. Domesticated

Animals left without food, or space, or companionship turned into

Vicious beasts. They clawed at her skull, and she could hear them.

In her own way she could hear them. They yelled in broken windows,

in vomiting drunks and fist fights and dead horses. They yelled in the

smell of sweat and breath, and sick sick ocean. Wanting

to reach the children to consume them and she wanted to see the

shape of them in their stomachs. Held together by the membrane of name.

The children had no idea how close they were to existing.

2.

She had learned to know speech in the same way she imagined

An infant blinded by the act of being must know warmth and hunger.

To her, the mouth was a filled closet. Each word spoken was a garment brushed against her cheek. In the Edinburgh market, she felt herself walking through endless washing lines of cold linens, coarse woollen jackets, laced school girl stockings. Silk evening dresses. All whipping at her in the gushing winds, all pulling against her
her
resisting the bodies movement. She longed again for the weight of language. She dreamed
herself lying naked in the centre of those markets as the people buried her
happy and feeling beneath their voices.

3.

The children spoke nothing. Not even a spider's thread escaped them.
Sometimes their lips would move in response to the island. A tree
Falling under the weight of its own fruit, staring dumbly, their lips would
Follow as if their mouths were concave mirrors. There was chewing, though.
Constant chewing sometimes for hours or even days without break, as if
To taunt her. She saw herself caricatured in their oscillating jaws. Her constant
Feeding of the goats and mending the hut, or reading the sky and ocean.
Condescended
And satirised in a tiny puppet shows hidden behind a crowd of lips. Weightless
Chewing. Is this the language they wanted to know? The language of chewing and
Dumb imitation? She tried to feed them more, almost constantly, to stop the chewing
But they stared at as her dumb as goats chewing on their pointless tongues.

4.

The children learnt to carry on without her. It had been years since they had
Last seen a supply ship carrying the ship's flag. It did not matter. They
Had their own flag of goat's tails. The isle of goats. She named the boy after
the matted black coat of the ram, and the girl after the smell of the ocean before
A storm. Their names changed constantly, not really names at all, but how
She saw them at any particular time. But the children – who no longer really
Were children – seemed to settle into their own definitions. Their own
Formations independent of the cartography of speech. Existing in themselves.
Self-birthered in their own language of chewing. But then this was not true either.
They had really birthered each other, for they would soon be lovers, and give
Birth to their own children independent of her, and her language. The language
Of the isle of goats. The woman deaf and mute and nameless receding into her
own definition. A shirt thread pulled unbreaking while still being worn. But present.
Forever present. Buried under the voice of bleat.

4.

Hercules and the Hydra

Until severed, how could the heads
Have known what they meant
To the whole?

To look up
And see
Your absence filled –

What does it mean to leave –
What does it mean to stay?

The Dead Organism

We went to a little theatre off Main St. to watch a production of Macbeth in which every character was portrayed by a woman. We hadn't known this beforehand. None of the advertising mentioned it, and neither did any of our friends who saw the play beforehand. And even while watching, it was not easily noticed (I wouldn't be surprised if a handful of those aforementioned friends did not notice it at all). All of the male characters wore heavy beard that even watching made me hot and itchy. They wore plastic armour that hid most of the actresses feminine indicators and spoke in overenunciated Scottish accents to hide any softness of voice. It was only during act 1, scene 3 when Banquo and Macbeth confront the weird sisters, and Banquo says: "You should be woman; and yet your beards forbid me to interpret that you are" that the choice revealed itself, and I laughed. Perhaps out of realisation, or at the absurd metafictionality of the line, but my date leaned over and whispered something in my ear that might have been outrage, but I'm not sure. I thought of something I'd read in *The Unwomanly Face of War* when a former WWII pilot confesses to Alexievich that during the war "... for three years I didn't feel myself a woman. My organism was dead. I had no periods, almost no woman desires. And I was beautiful." I wondered if this had something to do with the choice of casting. Whether the director was making a comment on how war turns everyone into men, or man-like things. I thought of Lady Macbeth, who inhabited this quote with eerie precision. How the act of killing is a masculine act defined by its antitheses to the feminine act of giving birth. And how by flipping this – making them all woman – somehow fit in to the thematises of Macbeth perverting the Christian hierarchy through his act of regicide. After the play, I came to the director and asked – what

must have been the question of the night – why she cast all the characters as woman.

She laughed, and told me during the auditions over the Summer, it was only

womenwho showed up. And they all wanted to play Lady Macbeth.

Hospital

you say it like *horse-pid-dle*

horsepiddle

horsepiddle

“I am going to the *horsepiddle*.”

“I am going to see my Mother at the *horsepiddle*”

Like that.

And where will you see your mother in *horsepiddle*?

in D.O.S.A. *Dose-Ha*.

DoseHer.

“My Mother is in the *horsepiddle*. I am going to see her

in *DoseHer*.”

And where is your Mother going after *DoseHer*?

into Theatre.

Fear – Hurt – her

Fearhurther.

fearhurther

“My Mother is going into *fearhuther*.”

and what do they *fearhurther*?

surgery *Sur-ger-y*

Say “sermon”

say “urgency”

now say *Sermon-Urgancy*

Surgency

Search-her-rry

Seachurry

surgehurry.

Caesarean, say it:

Scissor-in

Scissor-her-in

Scissorherin

miscarriage

Miss-Carriage

Miss-Courage

Missed-Care-Rage

Watching Films with Prometheus

Tonight, we are here to watch *Planet of the Apes*
The 1960's version with Charlton Heston where
The apes are not really apes, and the planet is really
Our own planet, and the hero is not an every-man but
Every man. The young usher with the beautiful birth-mark
In the shape of Michealangelo's *Victory* eyes the old man's eyes' gapping
Palms, his pierced liver, and mistakes him for Jesus. Ashamedly,
He does not correct her. He has reached that age where you cannot
See him as anything other than an old-man in that same way
I cannot remember myself in a child's body, knowing only
What a child should know. I cannot ever remember not knowing
The ending to *Planet of the Apes* so I remember always knowing
The ending to *Planet of the Apes*. I have never cared for Sci-fi.
It is the ending he loves. That it was the future all along. His can only
See things for their end. Behind his prescribed progressive lenses
Two celestial bodies nearly blind with light – as a boy, he'd take me
On the train to see the latest movies. I'd sit with my back to the city
Watching the universe of the corrugated fish town through the window
Pass me by. He'd sit opposite me. And watch as what I cannot see
Fastly approaching.

The Year of the Rabbit

That was the year they finally got Bin Laden and Gadhafi, and Kim Jon Un would Die of heart Failure. The year good and evil was so simple, it could drawn on a map

And the all the girls in my year had stopped wearing shorts beneath their skirts. We were

Out behind the Long Jump pit where the smells of the neighbouring pipeline factory

Passed through us osmotically, like new thoughts. We called it “Fight-Club” back then

Even though we had never seen *Fight-Club*. That was the year we knew things

Before the intimacy of knowledge. The year of the Japan Tsunami and Fukushima Meltdown. I didn't really know the boy. He was a year below but in my biology class

And might've been the top student. He could recite the chemical equation for every Enzyme of the human body from heart, and before class would etch the names of bands

Into the upper thighs of girls with a heated compass. We all might've loved him.

That

Was the year they released *Captain America: The First Avenger* and the Harry Potter films

Ended. He was to fight this other boy from *Boys High* who was shorter and wider
with

Darker skin and hands like a welder's. It was over a girl. The other boy never
showed.

It was a victory for all of us. That was the year they of the post-recession slump.

The housing crises. The Christchurch earthquake (again), and money is made in the
hands

and the knees. The soul and the mind are no longer lucrative industries. They are the
things of your parents' generation, the radio host recites, and Marlboros go for \$18
for a pack now.

We looked to our ball dates for a future *make me into a biologist* we whispered in
their ears

Make me into an intellectual, and I will make you into a woman, but they'd decided
on their

Own future without us. The boy from my biology class was jumped outside of a
dairy one

Week after with a tennis racket, and we never saw him after. He wanted to be a
teacher.

That was the year of the Rabbit, we used to chase them through the silage season as
kids

Stunning them with flash-lights their eyes perforated like birth. We'd club them into the soil.

Our Mothers, concerned, would tell our fathers' to talk with us, and they would reply:

“so long as they are not bashing each other. It will be fine.”

Notes:

“Partimen [...]”

A Partimen is poetic form used in Old French lyrical poetry in which a proposition is made (usually in the form of a question) and two troubadours would dispute it in alternating stanzas. The poem is then the result of that dispute.

“Partimen for Picasso”

Epigraph was cited from:

Annette King, Joyce H. Townsend and Bronwyn Ormsby, “Girl in a Chemise c.1905 by Pablo Picasso”, *Tate Papers*, no.28, Autumn 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/28/picasso-girl-chemise>, accessed 30 July 2018.

“Six Poems Without an Ending”

Each line is taken from the final lines of a poem written by a poet who has died since 2015. In the order of appearance in the poem, the poems cited are: Richard Wilbur “For C.” (2004) Max Ritvo’s “Dawn of Man” (2016), James Tate’s “Poems to Some of my Recent Poems” (1991), Philip Levine’s “The Radio” (1980), John Ashbery’s “Paradoxes and Oxymorons” (1980), and C.D. Wrights “Lake Echo, Dear” (2002)

“The Isle of Goats”

Both epigraphs were cited from:

Jones, Paul. A. “The King of Scotland’s Peculiar Language Experiment”. *Mental Floss*, 2016, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/75378/king-scotlands-peculiar-language-experiment>