

LUNA: POEMS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Poems are never completed—they are only abandoned.
-Paul Valéry

I begin with a quote from French writer Paul Valéry for it speaks to the nature of poetry that always allows for alteration, even after the finished product is exposed to the world. The beauty of poetry is that the work is ever evolving in the hands of its creator. Poetry is an art that flows into every movement of the day. It is the connection of soul with sensory objects and motions and gives our daily lives a sacred meaning. In this, I believe poems can speak to every part of an individual. They can be concrete and simple, shallow and delightful, or they can be the spiritual part of a person on paper. I write to gain awareness—of myself, of God, of others.

In this project, I strived to create poems that would resonate with all readers. I explored feelings of loss, love, suffering, and faith with the hope that each poem would be a spiritual and intellectual experience for my audience. In terms of human interaction, I have been surprised to find that in my own 21st century life, words are so often taken for granted. Rather than cheapening words and human exchange, I believe writing poetry gives words and life new value. Unlike other forms of writing for me, poetry feels selective, challenging, and stimulating. In producing the honors thesis, I am thankful to have discovered something I truly enjoy doing within the English major. I have no doubt I will continue to write as a means to living my life and living it authentically.

It will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.

-Psalm 89:37

Ser sincero es ser potente.

-Rubén Darío

Habits

I have been told
to write as a practice

allowing form & reason
to command my words

recommended morning & below
the light of a shaven moon,

like taking medicine
white pills spilling

from plastic bottles to
a palm that feels nothing.

Like clockwork, I set an alarm
to know the art of exactness

to dot my i's, to cross my t's
to wield pencils instead of pens.

Who would have thought
people would listen

to other people telling
them how to write,

how to live a life well?
As for me (& my pen)

I will hunger for words
question opinions

I will live from my heart.

When we were young

we are told not to worry
about keeping our colors
inside the line as we draw

our figures periwinkle
crayons smeared onto white paper.
We are told not to be scared

of the dark, the noises reverberating
off wood while dust bunnies come to life
making colonies under the bed. When

we were young, we believed our parents
could dispel fear with a baseball bat
and a broom, shaking it in the face of our enemies

as we cheered them on. We were praised
for the imperfect traces—jagged scribbles
running far outside the lines

creating new geometric shapes. Now, we
find ourselves staring at a blank canvas
or hiding alone in the closet—afraid

of all those things we knew when we were young.

I am one rock

To all that is disconnected in my life, I say: thank you. As when rocks find their way home, minerals under the earth, shape me into matter—solid, crowded, calm. Know the friction of a life lived in two places—I pray pieces someday reconciling into one form. Scatter me like pebbles in the driveway, dropped hard into this new place. Rocks are one piece made from clusters of earth, given to some neat space only to be separated—buried, unbroken, strong. Stones get thrown, misplaced—find another home—and are rolled away like grace.

Heaps and heaps

The sky is
Feeding on wind
While God sings

Rake my doubt
Into wild
Piles, mounds

In all through all
Before me
One force moves
Freely to fill
Empty space
With the bluest heat

Clouds vanish

Leaves rise

To find fullness
In the journey
To know their place

Like the grass
That meets my step

Together we are
Quilted into blades

Quizála

I was riding in an open-air, military Jeep, bouncing down roads with no lines, no signs, no speed limits—nothing. Sky, grass, hill, tree, ocean and wind were all that existed. Our drive seemed never-ending, free. It was the kind of night where shapes wait in the shadows, eyeing your passing. We sang like we were falling. Blanketed by this darkness, the moon enveloped everything, swallowing us in its radiance. Its brilliance became mine. Somewhere in Texas, I thought, as its huge glow caressed me, someone I knew, someone I loved, was with me, heart-pounding, breathless, staring into the light.

To pray

is to summon a child's courage
uttering words small, obsolete
while the modern life wakes—wearied.

There are voices inside of us shouting to be
stilled, asking for a peace
that only heaven can know, a force

standing guard by the doorway.
Look up at a sky so colored by the living
to find that which is beyond.

Calling words by their right name,
untruthing that which offends spirit
and life, you must listen

only to those who speak
love, patience, kindness, forgiveness.
Name the voices. Invite only a few

into your little home.

2012

I read that healing can
happen in a year, and thought

of everything righting
itself inside you

while Felix
jumped through space—Egypt

cast votes, one more voice
the first patient cured

of HIV in Berlin.
Protestors raided Greece,

and hurricanes made headlines
as men rallied on Jersey shore

when Michael Phelps swam, 22
medals hanging around one neck.

365 days later, freedom
walks our suffered earth.

It's Breakfast Time, Dad

The first time I met him,
he was wearing blue jeans,
baggy on his skinny legs, his face
as faded as his old Polo button down.

Ashing his cigarette, he
rocked himself shaky
driest hand flaking
onto his cold, metal wheelchair.

"Call me Chris," he said.
His voice reminded me
of the sounds the frogs used to make
when we lived in Walnut Hill

apartments, croaking on the creekbeds
one on top of the other. His stained carpet
dusted by Dalmatian hair as Gus
rubbed his black nose against the couch.

He was drinking wine-in-a-box
at 10 o'clock in a coffee mug.

Second

red wine sparkling
down thankful
throats, we are swallowed

by this second
when our past
breaks with
the present

dreams, we move
away from yesterday
forward, this day is
grateful, gone.

William

"Sometimes we just need to be held, sometimes we just need to be told we're beautiful"

-Nick Flynn

Mittened feet
Warmed by bluest socks
Heels not yet calloused

Skin pale and creamed
Lap it up like milk
Oh, to see beautiful

To believe acceptance
To receive life as good
When morning arrives

With windows wide open
Eyes refracting pure light
While sun heals the heart

Changed by a new beat
I have often wondered
If babies are closer

The source
Like caterpillars
Hardly emerged

Cradling in their cocoons

Twelve Oranges Later

I have no appetite
for spirit stinging words
acid neutralizing love
rotting like guilt
for things already gone.

Farewell is a
peel composting
in soil—my fruits
were the first
to be thrown,

disintegrating fear
spoiled feelings
buried underground
like dirt.

Climb the tree.
Grab the orb.
To eat, to know

the sickness which
comes twelve oranges,
ten sticky fingers later.

2724 Daniel Avenue

The old house with a purple door, I saw the tornado that tore through the neighborhood, our fence laying flat in the tiled pool, the popsicles in summer sweat, skateboards down cement hills, playgrounds of children made in trees, we ate crushed pecans along the sidewalk and sold Ziploc bags of mistletoe at Christmas. Remember the miniature strawberry garden, our praying mantis eggs hatching in a tank, the rooster calling from the backyard, we were the kids holding burial services for dead hamsters and lost turtles—replaced by feral kittens and colonies of roly-pollies...we were young. I imagined manna smelled like a sidewalk of honeysuckles and an old, green truck. The neighbors never knew their son had an oversized heart, until one Sunday, he was gone, twelve years old. Crowds gathered inside the brick duplex—I can still see kids huddling in the yard, hands held tight, praying so Lucas might hear.

What is patient?

"Have mercy for this moment between fences" –Ada Limón

Love

The seasons

The hunter at dawn

Leaves preparing to fall

Flowers to bloom

And the curtain call

Love

The questions

The tide at high sea

Moons waiting to wax

Honest trees letting go

And an incoming fax

Love

The variables

The algebraic uncertainty

Children running to recess

Dollars to earn & to save

Being content with much less

Love

The secrets

The look of the beloved

Safely huddling in pairs

Longing meeting fulfillment

Putting to rest yesterday's cares

Welcome

At the heart of a precipice and a fall, the winds twirled around my damp body telling me their secrets of earth, of sky, of simple living: eating and drinking, saying thank you, and believing God. Fear faded into the hovering clouds. Pink fluff like cotton candy you could buy at the State Fair reeling in the sky now recreated above me. I looked on at the landscape of a painting, and no spirit in me fought the marvelous, terrifying thought that I might not matter in this all-too-big-world. Streaks of paint and creative engineering. I could in fact rise to my life, now reflecting orange sickle dashed in the ambience overhead. I am fortunate to believe that I have seen enough beautiful things—sometimes, I can close my eyes and know that I am there, standing in a foaming sea, tasting the salt on my tongue, walking up a bowed mountain. I know there are good things still, waiting to receive me, to take me in, and in turn, to be known by me in the great and fantastic order of things.

Luna

I have done my duty here. I have sucked my own mouth dry.

-Ada Limón

Ears building
wax orange
soft like pears
hairs that thistled
one eye looks
inside a waning heart.
Moons peter out,
stars give way.
I am falling
down
through
moving
sky.

You asked for mine
I gave you love
that lipped me dry
sucked like a leech
tongued me cotton
plummed my peach.
I have gone away.
I learnt silence
is not hiding,
like the moon
who stays
hushed quiet
candling in
her sky.

Windstorm

I was
thinking
about the wind
torrents that tore through the neighborhood,
strong like waves that make else obedient.
I saw an autumn red tree—if those shaky, fraught leaves can hold on &
stay fastened to the source, so can I. Winds are blowing: fear,
pressure, expectation, insecurity, lies. We can learn
something
from those
leaves. But—
unlike us,
leaves know
a new season
will follow.
They expect it
and after falling,
possess a
certainty that
spring,
a time of growth,
is coming.

Someday

If I'm the moon,
you're the sun

orange crush
melting in

azul sky.
Light me up

like woods on fire
we shine across

the expanse
side by side.

When your love stops
burning blazing beaming

i will hide
in clouds that cover

my face.
I am cratered

cocoa powder mix
flour to self, i rise

when you fall
like an ocean

softened by stillness,
pearl me into sight.

We pass light
between us, we are

two for one
living harmony

nature calls us.
We are

candle and flame
waiting to be fired and lit

wave on wave
pulled into sight and sound.

If Hope Had Feathers

I don't believe
Emily Dickinson.

To never stop at all,
where do we begin?

Meyling would meet
her mother to find

out her birthday
the day she was made

in heaven
for the first time

celebrate: to eat
pollo frito for dinner

smashed Oreos
and Gatorade.

Nothing Lasts Forever

What is that feeling
to carry someone inside you

where organs
find space for

another heart
beating red

curtains are pulled back
for people watch wide-eyed.

There is nothing scripted—we hope
for a day when our plays

may live beyond
the end.

To be you, to be me,
to make this real.

Casa Esperanza

I am exhausted of taxi rides as I make my way across Managua, a city with no street names. Smoke, fire, water, humidity that liquefies my breath. Kids knock on my car window for food, boys on stilts, girls run the streets, while their parents at home wait for spare change. I see a pregnant woman on the corner. I am going to see the girls that have lost too much, so soon—I pass a field of burning trash, bridges hung over rivers of litter, dead dogs. Ana Maria listens to gospel music while she drives—I arrive at the gates, little girls run to meet me while their mothers sit on cement porches—I am sundered by love.

Bluest Jay

It wouldn't get any
easier if I were
to call you,
wouldn't make us
forget, that time
you threw me
a peach on the streetcorner,
it juiced all over my face.

I remember
the pizza at Crazy Jay's
alone we were
three o'clock dark,
hiding together in the
bamboo fort.

I see brown hair
curled under a Texas Ranger's
ball cap, smell your
plum striped sweater
that still has a shelf
in my closet.

I am naming the reasons.
I am sinking.

There is no more rain,
no more shine
only the end's
still waters.
I jumped ship
swimming like
a fish upstream.

overton park

park benches signed
with family names

by those that have passed
letters inscribed in metal

reminders that
we are our own

story existing inside
a thousand others

when we sit—
we are with many

the couples who walk
their poodle with the kids

that graduated from tricycles
walking sticks left by the creek

while teenagers stretch, leaning
legs across the aged surface

we are here
our memories nailed

into place. we stand,
holding that which was

that which will be
iron wrought by living

Dear friend,

you are the Lost
Battalion of the 77th Division
trapped by forces of your own

friendly fire, surrounded by enemies
without food, unable
to evacuate. These wounds

will not be healed
until suffering ceases.
I am my own

homing pigeon
finding my way
back after World War I

like Cher Ami.
I fly with bleeding
wings to deliver the

message, "for heaven's sake,
stop it!"

New Orleans

We wander
melancholy through

high seas of men
stench of alcohol

& sightseeing boobs.
Waking up

with bloody mary
stinging spice,

we discover
tracks of trolleys.

See the shaven men
with half-haired heads

bobbing together like ducks
while venders masquerade around

naming their price
cheap sunglasses, hats—sold.

We are sugared,
standing on powdery ground

while fried beignets melt
our hushed pink tongues.

If God Were a Question

I have made God
into a Question.

I have walked on him
like astronauts on the moon—seeking

answers, testing gravity I watch
the Earth above me

spin,
spin,
spin.

I climb up
the lunar lander by a ladder
twelve rungs high.

I fall like a shadow.

The oxygen is
thick in space, my breath pushes
and sounds against empty

as air meets substance.

Daisy-petaled love

Mary hears God
 string by string
 tuned by spirit
 humming with guitar.
 You can tell me

to be loved
 show me how
 to trust—but

nobody wakes
 up fully free.
He loves me
He loves me not.

I wonder
 what would happen
 if I buried myself
 motionless
 bulbing in the dirt

wasted time
 dawn blending
 into dusk
He loves me
He loves me not.

*

Weeds are easy
 growing—wild,
 unwanted, feeding
 off earth
 where life should live.

Weeds are living
 things in gardens
 known to fields
 sustained by lack.

We are told
 Pull it up.
 Rake it out.
 Be better.

Be loved.

To be without
a rake is
to need you.

Human fingers
pick you
petal by petal
He loves me
He loves me not.

*

This day I watch
rakeless
as Mary pulls her weeds
out by hand
time rights
the soul like grace.

The only time
wasted is twenty-one
years believing
You are
a daisy-petaled
love god.

Mary says if I
become dark like
the dirt that houses me

and still

You love me
You love me a lot.

Nica dust

Third in line for my beans and rice,
 don't drink the ice.
 Bring the toilet paper to the stall.
 Oh, if a dog approaches you,
 pick up a stone, he'll scurry away.

Teach me things so I know.
 My teacher tells me his goal is to understand
 the people in his own home country.
 Maggie tells me to try not to understand
God never asked you to understand,
He only asked you to follow.

Sometimes, I just need to be told
 I am brave. I led *la anciana*
 to her home, misshapen knuckles
 clenched to find even steps.
 We walk in the dark. My madre
 prays, "Si señor, si señor."

No pavement is even, every street cracked
 men sell bread at 4am over an intercom
 the streets are calling my name.

My father looks in the empty room.
 His son died from cancer in his blood.
 He cries, showing me old photos while
mi madre puts one hand on my back.
 Red eyes go with the water
 that is no good. I itch.

The dust floats here.

ABSTRACT

I write poetry because I believe it gives my life value. In short—poetry makes life tolerable and true. The following poems focus on a few ideas and experiences: my time in Nicaragua, love and loss, faith and God, and the moon. I titled my thesis “Luna: Poems” because the moon frequently found its way into my writing, bringing forth numerous ideas for this collection.