

Spring 1-1-2011

A Chloe

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A Chloe

by

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M.F.A., University of Colorado, 2011

*A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
Department of English*

2011

*This thesis entitled:
A Chloe
written by Derrick Mund
has been approved for the Department of English*

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Date 4/13/2001

*The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.*

Mund, Derrick, R (M.F.A., English)

A Chloe, 2011

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Julie Carr

A collection of poetry exploring the elegy and the exhuming of a body as well as of the self. It is a decomposition creation myth.

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The catalyst for this project in its current form came to me via a text message from a friend from Michigan.

Justin, "Hey, hear about my niece?"

"No. What's up?"

"Chloes dead she was murdered."

This is Justin's niece, his brother Christopher's daughter. Both were fairly close friends from Michigan, where I grew up.

Finding it impossible to receive such news through a text message I called Justin to find out the details. He didn't pick up. He texted me back. I heard the details from Justin via text messages over the next few days and by re-streaming local news reports.

Chloe Stoudt, age seven, was raped and murdered (by suffocation) by James Belanger (who then stabbed himself).

What happened next –in way of this project- was the first poem that begins this manuscript after reading Justin's final message, "TheFUCKING MONSTER killed hmslf."

Each smart ethereal poem I'd written evaporated. The obsolescence of a project I was working came to full light.

And that's how this project started.

I wanted to in some way write about Chloe, the murder, her family, and the circumstances. Eventually - due to mourning and Chloe's mom, Peggy, going to jail and knowing Christopher and Justin's personal lives - I decided to avoid a lot of the circumstances surrounding the incident and allow the project to focus on an elegy of sorts.

Beyond a conventional elegy the project walks through the murder in a telepathic sense. Since I couldn't bring myself to discuss the event in journalistic detail I decided to, like the elegy, keep things in the surreal and metaphoric "other" space where Chloe becomes a metaphor for loss, earth, innocence, and the representation of meaning.

Here is where I was able to, ethically, step away from the traditional restraints of non-fiction and elegy and allow the work to, despite it's horrific content, still exist in the dialogue of language and it's restraints. In this sense the project is concerned with the concepts of representation. A Chloe is both herself as well a part of the creation myth of a dying world. She becomes a character that Ara and Halcyon exhume, help decompose, and create a mossy flowerbed out of. She is also a body in a kitchen.

Still, this idea of representation and the manipulation of a character, that is both real and unreal, butts up against a lot of ethical boundaries for me. One's that I am not sure I solve. This has left me conflicted with some of these poems. I think future drafts of this work will further explore this conflict.

The other characters in the work are Halcyon, Ara, the narrator, and a distant “You” that is sometimes separate from Chloe and other times conflated with her.

Halcyon comes from a conversation I was having with someone at a bar. He mentioned coming across it in a crossword puzzle. I immediately wrote it down and decided it would be one of my characters. Halcyon is a mythical bird that sailors pray to for calmer waters. It also means calming. In this way Halcyon gently soothes the mythical Chloe while aiding in her decomposition. Much of his language stems from an erasure of Walt Whitman I am also working on.

Ara is a constellation that also, in the Chinese zodiac, is called the Azure Dragon of the East. It represents the east and spring. In Greek mythology Ara is the altar where the gods would make sacrifices. In this way Ara’s character is a little tougher than Halcyon. Ara does more too.

The narrator exists in both worlds. He walks about a very bleak earth and is able to view Chloe in both myth and reality. He also speaks to an woman that he is estranged from. (This is the “You” I mentioned earlier.) He also seems fairly estranged from the earth itself. He views it as fleeting, disparate, insipid, almost post apocalyptic.

The recurrent nouns also play character-esque roles in this piece. Their presence is intended conflate poems. I’m interested in these poems’ potentiality to exist ubiquitously. This is attached to my interest in a poem’s telepathic properties.

A great many of the poems stem from a meditative exercise I created last spring when I wasn't sleeping much.

1. Turn on your short wave radio.
2. Tune all the dials until a fuzz is developed.
3. Listen to this fuzz and write poems out of what you hear in-between the fuzz.

I decided to develop the radio language a bit more because I liked its synesthesia like presence, the way sound bends with light occasionally. Also, like the photography language, it brings into context the representation contemplation though out the work. Further, it lends well to the dystopian landscape the narrator finds himself present in.

On a whole, I still feel utterly conflicted on where this project has gone.

My impulse was to eulogize Chloe. This failure shapes much of the project.

Instead, we walk through the text in order to break down the body, exhume it, turn it into language, and in the end –hopefully- free it.

The world is a Chloe
with dirty blonde hair.

Blood caked hair like
the dirty blonde earth.

Like the space between horizons
dirty blonde
air in the kitchen
left with two bodies.

Halcyon says,

“in the hand

is candor unfolding:

what is written

without words kneeling.”

Posies are the way
to become wobbly
in the shutter
orange cacophony
of a winced night
and its plastic bag windows.

*

To come to
in the looming
blue shame
of words

and blight.

*

A dirt flower
gilded
in the cross-section of morning.

Semblance

waved from a passing window

frame memory

of a lamplight.

A Chloe

or living for the supermarket.

*

A Chloe

the sink with its basin of stars

missing teeth in the swirl.

I turn on my radio.

I step into the shower.

reports of

shreds of

bits of

the B.B.C.

*

Another house

another radio

on a kitchen counter

a Chloe below

left in the swell.

*

pasty on the

local news

reports of

a murder

in Ludington.

Ara listens to the little bits

dripping from the ceiling crack.

*

In the difference

between a wheel

and a turnstile

blades of linoleum bloom.

*

Ara

kisses a Chloe's

coarse face.

Show something here of the air

*

No work all winter

Us forms of blood

*

A Chloe derrick mund

A Chloe says,

“I be careful.

I follow.

I fade from windows.”

I think about the ice on my cheekbone.

My typewriter's been a taking pictures of me in R.E.M.

and tacking them to my bathroom mirror.

Take my old short wave radio; let it grow into a small southwestern town. Tune waitresses and a sheriff, overweight women, and their toothpick husband's long sad faces out of the jittery fuzz. Allow the treble to take on the roll of orange dust. A cracked speaker will do for the moon's static push of light as one of the waitresses walks the trebled ground to her apartment above the AM/FM switch. Let the cracked moon whine and fuzz between American talk-radio and Eastern European electronica. Tune her chloroplast dreams under the Bulgarian polka sheets. Seep into the worn out stations of the Pacific Islands and her luau dreams -where Polynesian pop plays from a radio on her balcony. Place that radio in the hall adjacent to the kitchen. Let the distance and the overturned squelch feed back the image into the simulacrum's fuzz. Twist the antenna so the air goes green under the speaker moon.

Grass blades

with two faces

outside the double-wide

breathing like stab wounds

in northern Michigan.

*

A Chloe,

a seven year old

idea of a body

dirty blond

in the squelch.

I was born

I took a picture of a tree becoming interior.

“Isn’t it incredible to hear two sisters sing? Two voices so similar that they carry one another?”

In Halcyon's hand

her hand is a morning bird.

In Ara's hand

her hand is a

In my hand it's only a dot.

*

Light fizzling

in and out of context.

I had a rainbow flipbook once

of lost interest.

Each page peeling like linoleum.

The napkin

 bloomed like

the nail polished cotton balls

 I pick each morning

 off the sidewalk

 at the bus stop

 -taste eggplant gravel-

as the frost pools -before evaporating- in the brasicus' leaves.

*

A Chloe,

a leaf-cradled particle

left in an aurora.

I took the earth apart last night
and that look on your sordid face
-inorganic light of a used refrigerator-
resonating like fireflies.

*

Photograph flashes
from a murder scene.

Displaced bits of moon
in notches around the linoleum

*

A Chloe
or film-stills of rain
scraped from a choked throat
coughing up small southwestern towns.

A Chloe's elated.

The radio feels otherwise.

In the inflorescence of a body
a refrain
reverberates to moss.

*

An instant in a Chloe
a space surrounding

a belly river
a stolen body

an amaryllis bloom
pawing from its bank

cooing for its repetitive
and all the yellow tape
lost in the reluctant fuzz
she surrounds.

This morning

a girl who poured hand soap all over her curly brown hair
stitched the last of the mammatus clouds
to the linoleum left on the floor.

It was what flowers look like
coughed up outside of the duplex.

Forms of daises
in a tangle of breath
made up of the rocks
she's been spitting up
for days.

Halcyon is the moss loosening a Chloe's fingers from her wrist.

the interior of a veined knuckle

resting in dirt

*

The little eyelids droop in a children's story about a body and all its paper bag parts.

sand and glass

cuddle

burnt

on the beach.

*

there's a bird in my wall.

We talk over
bioluminescent limbs

on the ground.

We listen to Ara

lily pick on the water
below.

Halcyon says,

“What kind of idea are you

- your iridescence

like meadows

either side of the interstate?”

I've been forgetting to apologize to my breath
each time I let go of it.

Maybe I should be apologizing as I turn down the radio
and watch the moths
- dead in the light fixtures.

Ara thinks of earth in light spectrums

licking the air between a Chloe's ribs.

*

A tongue's touch

on the pavement

glistens with the liquor bottles.

*

A circumference's refrained measure.

Halcyon's elated.

The linoleum feels otherwise.

This poem is a pear.

It has a maggot. From now on there should be a way to avoid this. This is a bad chance to think about the pale album faces and their grid and the borders and the way they play on the radio.

This is up to the throat.

This is grim.

This is your cute linoleum lip

peeling to the cheek bone.

The space between my arms is another square shape, attracted to the moth mouthed shapes you make as your arms bend.

Did I tell you I had a nightmare the other night about a Chloe where she was the wet air surrounding the shower curtain? Each little flake of air took the shape of breathing lungs inside a real girl. Moving her ribs. Moving her daisy patterned dress. Moving her, oared from the earth.

She wasn't real.

Still Ara insists

the made up girl looks so sweet

resting in the chicory

and laces a Chloe's

sweet complexion

with elaiosomes.

A Chloe.

A mimesis of meaning.

Her tendrils spool

the horizon.

*

a turquoise ankle

a lamina moon

*

orange spills of snowmelt

A Chloe says,

“My eyesight

was conceived before my

mother’s womb.”

Here, she belongs to the earth.

Here, the worms help her heal.

Here, Ara crumbles

a leaf.

Still, birds pick at the soda pop spill
and beg to be observed in flight.

I'm writing in the absence of iron I was thinking about what you said about
ornamenting words I ended at this place where I had scuddish apparitions beneath
each clouded flat state mirror outside the bathroom pistol-whipped just as the
driveway promised I wrote for the sky the other day forgive my hairspray brain
vision due to a sex drug side effect I've been working on making my life *mis en place*.

Step one is an apartment.

Step one is an organized medicine cabinet.

Sometimes you're the way stucco could just be the wall
overstating a string of small birds on a wire.

Just a song
-clinging-
like most songs
to a thread lost from a burlap sack.

I like a bicycle over your sweet soft brown eyes.

You're the way small birds pull worms.

I see you singing like oil spills on the pavement.
I see pavement most everywhere I go nowadays.

It treats me right.
Looks at me the way grass gives
cellulose a loose purpose.

*

These are someone else's ideas going through my new mind.

I'm elated.

The moon feels otherwise.

The posies are fucking.

I feel so internment again.

Somehow there's a world out of this.

We get all

bits of brain stem

in a parking lot.

midwest morning liquor suffocated speech in the dashboard stung with light
mimicking meaning stained linoleum split grass blades spill like self inflicted stab
wounds breathing out on the pavement while the lamina moon scrapes phone rings
of posies blooming pasty red in the squelch

On the local news there are:

hip shots of yellow tape

denim thighs

bit inner cheeks

and grey thrushes

of un-mowed grass

against the siding

of any doublewide

with concrete steps

and a handrail.

notes or bruises
on a neck.

Shades of the window drawn
and the hum above a twitching hip.

The inflorescence of fuzz surrounding particles of light

A Chloe says,

“The way that swells in a stomach.

A without space meaning something too mean.”

A Chloe says,

“On the inside of my skin
I have molecules.
I have cells.
I have my palm surrounded the handrails,
I have fingers that don't touch the rust
beneath them.

I have toes on wet concrete.

I a belly of book covers
with dogs and sad elephants.”

The heart and the spleen
are the tupelo

thrushes of grass

and wooden shapes left in the undertow.

There's a left-handed maple

bent to the curb

grained in the photon buzz of radios and snow.

Above, the mumbled streetlights

search for more from the nice clouds.

Ara says,

“I thought about your cells
peeling like scotch tape,

horrid
and without place.”

*

Halcyon takes silica from a Chloe’s eyes each afternoon.

eyelids becoming bloated clouds.

*

The circumference of worms

curdle, curious of a page.

Ara's elated.

The light feels otherwise.

I think of you as a body
still
with two indelible moons.

Halcyon places a pinky
in what was once a mouth,
blows into it
as if kneading a fire.

residual saliva
and breath

The friction of the dry tongue -
October frosted grass -
gives dimples.

Halcyon's eyes
are the reflective gaze of the spit bubble moon.

a dimple
a mole
a fleck of gravel on a Chloe's cheek.

Halcyon says,

"I can see her through the fluvial lights in the tree."

A sweet poem balks in the contours of a Chloe
like a din in water
getting murky with the dusk,

the linoleum drawn eyelids,
and tidbits of maple leaves.

Halcyon draws a string,
-severe little twine- tracing
a daughter
out of some worthless season.

*

A Chloe.

A larynx of moss

overtaking the pavement.

Crawl out of this paper bag.

Go home.

Stop grinning

at the drunk trees.

Let the streetlights do more of your talking.

Place the next day in hills,
think about a pigeon as your spirit animal
pecking at a soda pop spill.

Feel this undone moment, bronchial,
with eyes like quotation marks

– the way a circulatory system
remains elated –
an integral part of a breath's denial.

Transpose to a ridge.

Take turns dangling.

What part of a memory is a picture?

A ridge, like a spine:

cumulous and before sound.

This comes in traces of a burnt dress
across someone else's afternoon.

We acquiesce small talk with leaning shoulders
black and white tattoos
and T-shirts.

Or something about
Portland
or Chicago
or good cigarettes
or here,

humid with bike locks.

Capillaries woven with elaisomes
or, gravel
dragged across a Chloe's face

scraps of moss littering an old photo.

*

We get so Poloroid in the evenings
just before dusk's lips
get even with the snow touched horizon.

Like the moths
gather in cups of light
- dry and without place.

*

Still
can I sit and smell the iridescence
ambient out on the interstate?

Halcyon says,

“A memory
is the nucleus veiled:
a cloud cover over a ridge,
a breath or against a spine.”

*

Ara asks,

“Do you know spring
through what’s found
when you trace back?”

*

A Chloe asks,

“A body or
a place in procession?”

A Chloe's lungs swim
in the radio static of a small southwestern town.

*

Ara's leaf float notes are
loose in the pithy taste
of blight between
hair flecked with blood.

*

Halcyon -with dead bird wings- blushes
touches a Chloe's tumescent belly.

A body

or a determined
repeated motion

like geraniums
nudge the linoleum.

Lips on the underside of the handrail.

A nimbus exhales
 over the same earth,
a human and sweet corroded body.

Ara listens

with the calmness of the pale yellow air.

*

A face advertises its wordless tongue.

Ara and Halcyon lay in the anemones

-hand in palm

in a palm at the end.

The curdled day turns bloated twilight.

Halcyon says,

“Once, instead of poems I had sisters
who made the inflorescent fuzz
around what words used to look like.

They let each lily bloom

lilt.”

Scattered tongue dust.

A Chloe

An earth

An apology for breath

Life looks so pretty
beyond this panic rusted to the linoleum.

1. Baus, Eric. *The to Sound*. Amherst, MA: Verse, 2004. Print.

I like the way Baus is able to revel in the weird. It's kind of post-surreal. Something I'm trying for too.

2. Burroughs, William S., and Brion Gysin. *The Third Mind*. New York: Viking, 1978. Print.

In the chapter on film they discuss film's existence as representation. Not that this is a new idea, but it's something I'm interested in.

3. Carr, Julie. *100 Notes on Violence*. Boise, ID: Ahsahta, Boise State University, 2010. Print.

A valuable resource when approaching a work that contemplates and explores violence.

4. Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1960. Print

Her immense control over the turns a poem takes. I've attempted such subtle turns. Also, a words ability to stand with multiple meanings within a line.

5. First Aid Kit. Entire Discography.

A band I credit with a lot of the mythical woodsy scenes. I was just listening to them a lot while writing. They're the two sisters with voices so close they carry one another.

6. Hume, Christine. *Shot*. Denver, CO: Counterpath, 2010. Print.

Hume's inconsistent use of punctuation and form. Allowing each poem to have its own agenda. Not pushing the poem toward an end. Also, the idea of a poem's telepathy stemmed from this book.

7. Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984. Print.

Semiosis and its relationship to forming new connotative meaning for language contained within a mythic field. Also, how semiosis might be

manipulated to allow for a new emotional resonance through images: unrelated to meaning in the conventional sense.

8. Mallarme, Stephane. "Stephane Mallarme: Selected Prose." *Cialis For Sale Visa, MC, Echeck Online - Canadian Healthcare*. Web. 01 Apr. 2011. <<http://studiocleo.com/librarie/mallarme/prose.html>>.

rom Crisis in verse I, consciously, began paying attention to words purposely out of place. This derives from a re-interpretation of his desire for manipulated rhythms.

9. McGlynn, Karyna. *I Have to Go Back to 1994 and Kill a Girl: Poems*. Louisville, KY: Sarabande, 2009. Print.

This book deals with very grim, dark, and violent material in an admirable way.

10. O'Hara, Frank. "Statements on Poetics, Frank O'Hara." *The New American Poetry*. New York: Grove, 1960. 419-20. Print

"It may be that poetry makes life's nebulous events tangible to me and restores their detail; or conversely, that poetry brings forth the intangible quality of incidents which are all too concrete and circumstantial. Or each on specific occasions, or both all the time."

Beyond that, I'm enthralled with his mastery of the colloquial. It's a thing I try and do too.

11. Watson, Patrick.

Another musician I listened to quite a bit that helped me occupy the space of the project.

12. Whitman, Walt. *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose: Leaves of Grass (1855) ; Leaves of Grass (1891-92) ; Complete Prose Works (1892) ; Supplementary Prose*. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1982. Print

Much of Halcyon's language was derived from an erasure of Leaves of Grass I've been working on.

The word moon against
your face as you
wrinkle.