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unbound

journal



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Unbound is a platform of creative expression for students at the University of Oregon. We are a transistor for the prismatic creative voices on campus. We understand art as a continuous process and aim to engage in its development while respecting the integrity of the artists and their work. At Unbound we endeavor to foster and enhance a collaborative creative process by opening a dialogue between the editorial staff and contributors. In addition to serving as a canvas for student art, Unbound allows its editors and staff to professionally engage in the field of publishing in an equally creative environment. We are thankful for all of our contributors because without them we would not have the opportunity to practice what we love.

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blømfdoom

summertime haze crept up from the undergrowth
biting my ankles
the grey glooms have now come
but they don't know me from last year
the sum value of
elapsed days, not-Sameness
has kept the root file
but
switched the code
switched the language even
rendering
not a new set of bones but
a new latency of
being
your time is computable
yesterday I was 20.83
today I don't neatly
stop at the
hundredths
place: boundless,
leaping in soggy socks
to spill the lifeblood
forth
salt cliffs of distant lands
have boomeranged my
yawp
around and through
if finite in the silt
infinite in the ether
the barbed sweetness, writhing
in
cathode
rays
of grandeur
of haunted graffiti slasher flicks
seeping forth vitriolic basins
those scattered marbles of
forms behind a screen, or within
sideswiping, gnashing
flinging spears of oneness
into the slow hollows of prose
the human body is far too hot
it cooks things
right out of your
heart
as if you
glanced out your window at the
steeped, foliated
roots
to realize
they can talk to, are even
tethered to
Gaia
despite our tethers running through silicon fortresses of
mainframes; careening hypertext voids
a conversation is possible
it just has to be
oblique

TO THOSE WHO ASKED ME WHAT VEGETABLE I WAS

(WHEN MY HAIR WAS GREEN)

I would say I'm a hybrid,
were that word not reserved
for eco-friendly cars like Prius.

So instead
I'll be crossbred,
something spliced
from genetic modifications
comprised primarily
of delusions, nostalgia,
and the notorious "over-think,"

but cut
with the tiniest trace
of pesticide,
bug cyanide;
a Chinese rock
called rock n' roll.

The remaining forty-three percent containing:

31%

Sarcasm that fires straight past my neurons
to be recessed in my brain; repressed and unspoken.

6%

Brooding on how thinking about what they're thinking
doesn't make any difference; how the rejection
of this color enhances the shade.

5%

Awe at how they lived in the generation of Joey
Ramone, Elvis, or Bowie, but still can't comprehend
this hair color when ninety-nine percent of the populous
is tattooed.

1%

Regret for ever writing something this vindictive
that I would never say
aloud.

I'm celery. Obviously.



THE CONTINUITY QUESTION

I smiled. You grinned. We sat. We were happier.
Then curiosity burned your finger as you pulled
back my benevolent flesh only to unveil what you
created.

But you grew bitter
as I grew bruised,

and I was better than that. I knew a man. You knew
him too. Angels are a lot like devils only we don't
walk amongst them. Battle scarred and bloodshot your
boney limbs murdered my grace. For you were God,
and I, your child. I drank your words as soon as you
said them. Ashamed and afraid my blue eyes poured.
I watched sickened over your body in that room with
that chair as resurrection took me.

Story of the *Body*

I once watched as a body passed
through a car windshield with the same grace
of a maple's branches brushing against one
another on the quietest night of autumn.
There are many ways our bodies may move
through this world, none will end with consolation.
Your hands may pick lilacs, or negate experience,
it just depends on the way that you move them.
In the end, faith in consolation, is faith in something
we will never have, like the right words to say
to the ones that we love. These gestures offer
no more than the memory of us as we stood
in the field, waiting the brisk & red sky of dawn,
& to be reminded that these moments will move
away from us like the bodies that we once were in.
You come to realize at some point, you will be asked to leave.
& unless you are the last one to stand,
everything ends merely in eulogy & it doesn't matter
who is singing, because it is a song you will never hear.
Watch me, as I move through you & this world,
like a sparrow falls from a clear sky;
silently, & in a brief moment of beauty.

LU NA

My mind ties with the heavens as they steep beyond my waking thoughts.

Under the blues of life walking under the sun, heavy with the heat of worry I forget the loving embrace
the world has ready once I choose to release my thoughts into its radiant gaze.

I plant my fears in a raised bed.

My pillow acts as buffer as the moments creep but with a swirling psyche the only ease is between
Zzz's with breath and dreams the pain may cease.
Unaware of the full lunar footprint floating in the sky it becomes oh so apparent when I float into my
mind.

In dreams the moon brings clarity of my path and those around me. Instead of the shadows pulling at
our edges exposing unknown, we dance under moonlight baring our own.

And for those fears I planted in my pillow? Well under the moons glow I see they were but burnt
kernels I feared to be hearty seeds, they actually fertilize with their unused energy.

In this moment I rise from the deep I thank the universe and its people for the chance I keep.
For not fear, hate, or greed can change where I come from. As a child of this reality I am ready for
what's good, for that that isn't is just misunderstood.

perfect enough

Beating hearts fleeting starts...

Steeping leaves left lonely into flumes of petals posing, to shed light through these paper walls of skin like lanterns from within one could see the lines of you and me and trace them into three.

Golden rays paint the leaves their trees and your eyes to me. The birds song dance eternally with the rising sun, like a held note we dance among these moments with the song of the morning.

I am the warming gaze of the sun's blaze to your sweet kiss of dew. A second I could stop and savor for centuries.

Selah

forgotten **SYMPHONY**

To my spread span her clipped wings mouth the words of a song the wind surely must know. The caged bird sees each step of all it must take to grow. The story somewhere inscribed upon her bones once used to soar, now quake in the wind and become her foe. The summer's end signals a new dawn.

Only the rains of an autumn moon can bring the change once desired... Even if forgotten the feathers sip on the showers, absorbing ancestral thoughts and warming away the fears of flight. Held within each drop is the secret of all...

To shed the past one must face it. To pave the future one must embrace it. As the dawn stretches its arms across the hills of each horizon she fans these wings of their morning dew, drying away the years spent hurdled over a dish. A beautiful gust reaches out its hand and takes her in its arms, with her fears subsided she beats her wings with pride, dancing with the wind to new heights and far from the cage now forgotten.

Her song is the most beautiful, and the wind reminds her he heard it all along.



ECSTATIC NOISE



The noise I made her make, it was
An ear-
full. Her voice

shocked me like a current
stirring within.
She came to hide and seek
from those I could not see.
But I was bigger than she recalled
and she couldn't keep me
down, my chest was too
full.

She could not give up
her pride

Her finger nails uncut
scratching his chin. They sat in
the bathroom tub
questioning life without me

Within her mind, an
escape awakening.

A painting of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a calm lake reflects the sky and the surrounding trees. A dense forest of evergreen trees lines the shore. In the background, a range of mountains with snow-capped peaks rises against a sky filled with soft, golden clouds. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

SWIM TIPS FOR THE SUB-ADULT

I'm watching the thick cords on my swim instructor's back surface as he comes up out of the water. They were so unassuming, hidden under the professional courtesy of a tee shirt, but now that they've been exposed I can't help but notice the differences between our bodies. He's built like an arctic seal, all instinct. My body would be more appropriately described as marshmallow fluff, buoyant due to a lack of density. I have no muscle. I have no instinct. He kicks off from the wall, showing me how to turn around instead of stopping dumbly at the end of the pool. With one kick he covers fifteen yards, rises for a breath, and then turns

around in expectation. It's me now that should be able to do that. Me, someone who can't swim fifty yards without panting, someone who has to fight just to sustain the illusion of competence. My kicks will never propel me fifteen yards. My kicks are short and impatient. Sometimes they don't move me forward at all. He opens his arms to me as if to say, "come on, it's your turn." My eyes trace the knots on his shoulders, trace them back down the shoulder blades which make such short work of the shallow end of the pool. Imagine what it would be to sling my arms around his neck and have him pull me to the other end. No effort on my part, little effort on his part. A symbiotic relationship, the remora attached to the shark. Of course, that isn't acceptable behavior for an adult.

In my memories, swimming lessons were about "feeling comfortable in the water". I knew this even then, a fact that outlasted the two weeks of lessons available to the child of a woman who was using free coupons to get her kid into summer activities. For those two weeks my mom would watch from the poolside and giggle as I parked myself in the center of the pool, suspended by bulbous floaties that hung up around my ears like some sort of waterbourne insect. If I kicked or didn't kick, it didn't matter. The swim instructor would come by all cheers and claps, offer me a ride "to shore", and I would hop on

her back and be towed to a destination. On the way there I would pretend to be a penguin, a guppy, an otter, whatever aquatic animal my class of potential swimmers was named after. I would pretend that I was born swimming, that it was easy, and that I hadn't swallowed four whole mouthfuls of water trying to buoy my way over to the deep end. A child prodigy. Even on the days without floaties, when I would try to touch my feet to the bottom of the deep end, things were like this. Right when my toes were about to meet that new depth, the pressure in my ears building, my breath escaping in bubbles, fingers slipping from the smooth tile ledge-

There was always a hand to scoop me around the middle and fish me out. "I gotcha," the instructor would say, and pat any sense of confusion right out of my head. Not one of us kids would ever touch the deep bottom. We didn't have to. At that age when no one expects anything of you, uncertainty is eliminated.

When exactly did I lose that life preserver? I'm wondering this now, as my college swim instructor wades over to me with that look, the "disappointed coach". "Ramona, why aren't you swimming? Go!" he says. I topple into the lukewarm water, head first. It's freestyle swimming, the kind with your face down, and I try to pretend I'm anything other than what I am.



A dolphin. A crocodile. A whale. Only all of those things can breathe from the top of their head, and I can't. The instructor is yelling at me. "Ramona, where is your head? It should be pointing down!" Even though his voice is muffled underwater, I understand. I have to swim better. Arm moves up, fingertips brush the water, plunges down, switch. Breath to the side, spewing out chlorine from the nostrils, off the lips. Breath, a half breath, steal a whole breath. "Keep going!" he yells. Back down, the pressure in my sinuses building, a small pulling sensation in one of my heels. Breathe, a partial breath, a miss. I'm choking, coughing up a tiny fraction of water, breath leaving in trailing bubbles, and then my feet are stubbing against the concrete as I stand up and gag into my shuddering fist.

"Sorry. I swallowed water. Sorry, sorry."

"Don't stop," he's saying, and I have to throw myself back down again before my lungs are done forcing everything out. His look of exasperation behind me, the white floor in front of me offering no answers, and only the sound of water in my ears shutting everything off. Arm up, fingers skim, plunge down, switch. There's nobody here to take me to the end of the pool. I can't tell if I'm moving forward or backward, the cement all looks like the same color and my legs kick as if they're only a foot long. Quick, tiny kicks, like a

bath toy diver. Come up for air on the side, this time the left, and I choke again. Stand up. Cough. Breathe.

"Ramona, don't stop! You're okay. It's only four feet deep."

This is the extent of the adult swim instructor. At this point there is only guidance, only instructions, and when your body takes over, when it's you struggling for air smothering in layers of dead skin and weird indoor pool smell, at some point it's all just you. I want to float in the water, face down. I want him to grab me by the ankle and pull me out of the pool. And then I'll just lay there like that, covered in some kid's leftover band aids, and I won't get up.

I used to be able to give up in high school, back before I lived on my own. There were only so many afternoons I could spend gasping for breath from the side of a tinny rental trumpet, only so many times I could pretend that I cared about catching, throwing, kicking, running with some kind of sports ball before I would begin to wonder if I would ever be good at those things. It was torture to go to band class and be with the kids who could just look at an oboe and be good at it. And in gym it was worse, because I became responsible for the failure of the team. Everyone else, they seemed as if they were inherently skilled. We were a differing species. Soon I forgot to practice trumpet,

I sat around during sports, and my algebra book had mysteriously been returned to the public library never to resurface. This wasn't my fault, I would have explained when my grades started slipping.

But I rarely had to explain it to anyone. Instead I sat silently while my mom paced up and down the principal's office flashing her teeth and saying things like "Ramona is an A student" and "How can you be sure Mrs. Fitzgerald didn't lose the assignment folder?" In those moments she seemed as if she had been born powerful, all motherly instinct in sharp heels that scratched the floor like gray sandpaper. I would watch her circle the desk of the principal or the teacher or the student teacher while she continued her tirades about how wonderful I was, how nothing could have been my fault, and I wanted to agree with her. I was a brilliant star that had been victimized by cruel monotony. As they say, Einstein didn't do well in school, and isn't he a ruler we should measure all children against? Even when we went home these pep talks would continue. I was her only child, and I would never fail, even if she had to personally do all of my homework with me and correct it before I turned it in. She was my protector, my weapon, my single-mother magic. She erased every mistake I ever made.

The biggest relief in either of our lives at that time was getting my final transcript,

complete with passing marks. She was so excited she tacked it to the fridge, and we both forgot about the box of old report cards obscured by eraser marks, the ones that blurred the line between achievement and failure.

Now I live two states away from my mom, separated from home by all the colleges she promised weren't good enough for me. It's in this space that I'm supposed to be learning more about myself, discovering my future. Instead I watch the barren poolscape as it spreads before me, no pattern to follow, no stripes or tiles or arrows pointing me in a direction. How much does it take to keep this going, this blind self propulsion? If I quit, how deep will I sink? I'm only swimming because I wanted to swim. I chose this class, this first choice for myself. But that's the thing about personal choices. If I can ever learn to do it, I have to swim on my own. My own hand up, fingers brush the water, steal a breath, switch. Arm out, plunge down, gasp, drop, thinking, "Am I capable of this?" Arm up, kicking, skimming, breathing, switch, back down.

"Good job Ramona, keep going!" the instructor yells, and he's somewhere very near me. In front of me, almost a collision, that's where his legs appear. Underwater they're skinny, marbled with sickly light, pink as remora eels. They look weak. They look like mine. His torso, hips, toes, all

of them pale and lacking definition. My hand rises, skins, dips, and beneath the surface looks a lot like his hands, white and fleshy without nails. A few years back he must have looked more like me, small and muscleless, wishing an instructor would carry him across the pool. He probably made all the mistakes I make. He probably screwed up with gelatinous legs like those. He didn't have the abilities of an otter or a penguin, and he most certainly could not have been expected to swim like a shark.

So much for instinct.

I take a breath, breathing out through my nose. It's easier now, but still not perfect. I can hear him behind me as I pass still giving me instructions. "Don't stop! Hum, keep the water out of your nose!" In my head I make a comparison. Dolphins

don't have to hum, but they're also animals that are led around their whole lives. They swim in pods. I am not a dolphin. I'm an animal that has to swim on its own. Arm goes out, skims, plunges, switch, breathe. My arm goes out. A rough feeling, a grating on my fingers. It's the wall at the end of the pool, and I surface. The floor is sharp asphalt against my feet, but I come out unscratched and having carried myself across the water. I can hear him yelling, always yelling. "That was good! Now do it again." I smile, because I know he's lying. I practically crawled through the last seven yards. But still, I earned that congratulations. I take a deep breath, a life-giving breath. I turn around to throw myself back down, down into the water. This is learning to swim. ■



I walked a mile in someone’s shoes yesterday. Okay, they were mine, my shiny black shoes. Everything else: hers. I had crawled into her polyester skin, when I stole her husband’s sweater, took a gander through her knitted eye-sockets with a prescription two sizes small. Today I found a name tag in the trash, it read: “Hello, my name is TONI” They say it’s treasure, so I dug it out, then buried her with a new name.	After Shave
ICU	I want to smell like a man, like tobacco, Old Spice, and dusty pages of patriarchal novels. To steal your shirts and live in them. My feminine form fully naked underneath. I want to lather my face with my grandfather’s shaving brush, stare at the foamy beard I have grown. To fit my feet in my father’s waders, feel the tug of a fighting fish on my line. I want to bruise my knuckles in bar fights, swig whiskey, and still stand tall. To shoot empty beer bottles with sniper precision. I want battle scars like a Roman general, his nightmare visions vivid - breath - dirty fingernails of a coal miner, desperately digging for oxygen - he needs - the nose of a boxer concussed in the ninth round, victory he near received - haunting - the wrinkled tattoos of senile sailors, who’ve forgotten meanings - hidden - within ink stained fingers of Hemingway that drip, puddles on the page, stream, tide, then ocean’s wave. From sink, straight down the drain. Rinse. Repeat. KING It was last call, we were sitting in the shadow of the juke box, Johnny Cash playing. Your head stuck to stale beer on the table, red neon illuminating the right side of your face, as you motioned to go. Outside on Alberta, cool Portland evening, the stars looked like the smile of the beggar on 24th street when he shows his few remaining teeth and the darkness between them. One hand held your slouched self up against the brick wall, the other rested on your bent knee. Your legs gave, and you crumbled away from me, collapsing to the pavement like a king eventually falls from his throne. I bowed down and helped you to your feet. We walked home past empty lots, chain-link fences, and jail cell shadows cast by barred bodega windows. No words exchanged, staring down at our shoes, keeping our hands tucked in pockets. We would occasionally glance up, trying to catch a glimpse of who was behind the windshield of a car driving a little too fast this late at night, as we wondered where it could be going? Tonight, brother, I wonder the same of you. Tell me just where it is you are going. Hand over your cardboard box of dreams. Read me the court record of your regrets. Tell me what the moon looks like to you. 21 22

UNBOUND