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The following thirty-two poems, written over the course of two years of study in the M.F.A. program in Creative Writing at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, explore the many languages, moments, and facets of desire: Eros's sweetbitter, limbloose prism.

WINE-DARK

by

Grace Gardiner

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To my mother and father
and the sunrise they missed over Whitby Abbey

APPROVAL PAGE

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THE VERNAL POOL

The man rouses the frogs of my singing
with a damp yelp. He thirsts to release,
pants sunk down his calves
against the spidered pine. The woman is a call
on his tongue. She curves to him
as wind to rock, as snowmelt to mountain
rut: she as deep as wet ache
in packed winter ground. A ripple shudders
up my leaf-litter spine.
Their need will last me
all the dry.

TAKE

Take down the pilsner pint glasses. Take up
the sweet stout after a dinner of Caesar
salad, grilled garlic bread. Take a sip, a gulp,
a four-second long swallow. Take a gander,
a gamble: take your lips to my slack mouth.
Take me to the tub. Take off my shirt, tan
jean skirt. Take off my nerves, their electric
fumbling. Take in my breasts, my bra's livid
scalped lace. Take a beat, a breath. Take me.
On the warm blue tile next to the heater's
chrome whistle, the steam's white wheeze,
the faucet's hard drip—*take me here*.
Take me out of this trembling
body. Give me yours.

PORTRAIT OF DESIRE

All of my hearts open and close for you:
heart of stringy kneecap back - heart where palm
finds wrist - heart of cramping foot's arch.
The eye-heart flickers and the lid-heart flutters.

The hard heart of the neck and throat echoes
in the ear-heart's thirsting drum. Pinky
toe's knob heart - fingertip's ripple of heart -
vulva's peeling stone heart: can you hear them,

hear this heart of hands alight on your upper thigh?
I will thrum the cheek's eggshell-thin heart
across your diaphragm's folding and unfolding.
Wait. Hold. Stay, stay. Listen:

my left breast's pulse is a rearing heart reaching
out to darken this erect left nipple.

IN THE SUMMER OF MY BIRTH

Every day my mother went to Dr. Mike's
Ice Cream Shop & Dentist for hot fudge
sundaes with scoops the size of grapefruit,

hand-whipped cream, and a blooming
cherry. The flavor changed with each nearing
contraction: vanilla or mint

in early May, peach and strawberry
or butter pecan in late June
—always the fudge sauce oozing

stiffer and stronger than any blood
nutrient, smearing down her chin
onto the black and yellow floral

print of her thrifted empire waist
dresses. I still taste its dark drip
in the corners of my lips when I lie

awake holding the empty cramp
at my womb on wet July nights
like a burn. I know this taste

is how we continue after
we die, to exist from egg, past body,
into a shell of dust.

Each aching cell is made full,
made too sweet before it turns.

FROM THE FOUR LOVES: STORGE

beneath me you are the ER scrubbed clean of its blood
place of birthing cries of sutures of skin and its willowing
edge how tender I hold you like a gurney holds
its gunshot victim kiss your wounds back from sepsis
how light your hands wrung fever-dry return my cooling
touch keep me here in the gauze of your breath
let the worry of sirens sleep on until morning

UPON SEEING THE ROCKIES FOR THE FIRST TIME FROM A BOEING 737'S LEFT WINDOW SEAT ON DESCENT TO SALT LAKE CITY YOU MUST CONSIDER

Not snow: cloud
ghosting the treeline.

CORNUCOPIATE

Let's bring cheeseburgers
 into the bed, oil-crisped
fries, the glitter
 of salt and ketchup
blood-bright against all
 the rules warned of crumbs
and black bugs drawn forth
 like lines of beaded
sweat to eat. Let's suck
 oysters from their half-moon
shells in the shower,
 dribble brine and butter
down your chest,
 between my breasts. I want
to swallow the smooth
 sand-gray hearts, to let wet
salt learn to thirst.
 Let me crack chocolate
peanut butter cups
 with my tongue against
my cheek, spread their dark
 sugar down the shallow
bowl of your back. I'll teach
 your hands to peel
and plumb my body's
 mulling pit, make of each
cell an o-ing mouth.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS RIZZO IN THE SCHOOL YARD

after Marty McConnell

I hide behind a waterproof shadow
and red matte lips. You say I can't hurt,

though you ignore me on our dead-end
street. In the tub at home, I scum pink,

peel strings of puckered skin clean off
my nail-beds. I don't cry. I wait, hold

blood's tang under my tongue, clot the tears
with spit. In your Ford's patinaed backseat

I collapsed our altar; its centerpiece
was me: stripped and naked and thin

as the skin at the wrist, the back of the knee.
I'm not sorry to say the wrong words

for the right reason: I never wanted
you. There are worse things I could do

when leaving you is not enough,
when leaving you is still too much.

THINGS I SHOULD SAY WHEN WE MAKE LOVE

I.

In three months I made \$315.38 from staring
at the copse of your hands and wanting to run
my fingers through them like lost children.

At the circulation desk, in my mesh rolling chair,
I was untethered, and you were the dreamwork
Freud warns about: the boss made salt-river, made god.

II.

You are not a god. You are a man
I am starting to love. On my walk home
I've stopped romanticizing young children,
the bold who chase and the shy who run,
neither sure why they are running.

III.

What do you worship, who is your god?
Do not say me, my body. Take your hand,

bend my leg into a temple of the knee.
See the bone-round roof, the pediment

of capillary? Now release us from it,
run your fingers behind, over the *fossa*'s

curved, spongy pit: *here* is my real blood heat.

IV.

Yes, to your hands and their run
over, yes, my breasts' blushed blood
starring, yes to mouth, to tongue, yes, O,
you, yes you, your lips, I love—

V.

Is it possible to have wanted you since we were children?

(I am on top in the red dress when you tell me, *No
man ever steps into the same river twice . . .
but I've been moving toward you my whole life.*)

VI.

I can't come without looking
in your eyes. Their same green spray
sucked me into the sea as a child.

You work like the moon run against sandy earth.
Turn me, grain by ever-loving grain.

CENTO THAT REMINDS ME OF YOU

I sing of arms and a man
I am trying to write anew.

This thirst, which says *Love*,
looks like the rest of my life:

a cul-de-sac's dark cut
which deepens as it dreams

clean out of its mouth.
There is no better taste than his

collection of light: snow flaked
on an inner thigh; the common teeth

of a table saw, sugar-dipped;
a bed where the moon has been

sweating; the sparrow's daring
eye; night without ships.

WHY DO YOU HATE THE SOUTH?

The night I finished reading *Cold Mountain*
my ex came in dream to my door: face gray
as the coat on his back and mine hard
as the mountain wood that spit him out
like a naked chick from its winter nest.

He had washed in the creek where he took
what I gave that misty summer before
he left, when our bodies were whole, young,
when my tongue still longed to linger
over every sharp letter in his name,

but the rifle under his arm stunk
of the Federal heads it had split,
though I saw only his grandfather's
suicide—those slitted eyes—down the nose
of the corroded barrel. He wanted

it gone, he wanted it dead, dug down in
a long-forgotten plot dusted over
with mustard weed and yarrow at the base
of a five-mile length of tiring blue
mountain haze, a relic of the killing

he might yet shake. He begged my help
with the digging, for a drink at the well,
a bit of salt to lick off clean fingers,
then kneeled at the top step, made to clutch
at my dulled waist—*I'm returned, won't you speak?*

All night I stayed on the porch,
his hands reaching there like shadows
from a crow's flapping wing, my dress
ragged as a breath at its dark hem,
my mouth dry as cotton wrapped around

a wound, never saying
what for years I'd always meant.
I don't hate the South. I just don't love you.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS STEF & MOUTH

I wanted you to pull your whole hand
like a string of pearls from inside my mouth:

I first saw you thumbing a black penny
off the ground near the 900 stack

with a thin book on Spanish maps wedged
in your teeth. My glasses fogged at their lip

when you spoke *verde que te quiero* . . .
to the room lonely as dry translation.

Stupid. I was so stupid to leave you
at the shelf without making known my face,

wire-rimmed eyes as caught as well-water.
Each night our friends skip rocks off the dock I

wonder *how many nights has it been* since
I haven't tapped you on the shoulder, haven't

said *I heard you. I want you. You've found me:*
I the coin with faceless back and you

the body at the end of my wishes.

If I am a body wracked with wishes,
you are a screwed-up face, with a mouth

bigger than mine and eyes that seem to say
I will always find you: at a crab barrel's

sediment bottom, in the wet brown sludge
of my clogged kitchen sink's sloppy piping.

Yo sé. There at the beach, here in my bed
I wait biting my tongue, your name soring

like sand in the raw curve of my throat.

Beneath my teeth are dusky gums aching
straight to bone: I am soft rot. Only you
pretend to ignore the cut at the back
of my laugh. Only I miss your face drenched
with dock runoff after I pushed you in
the green-gray harbor: cheeks salty with blush,
cropped hair dripping water thick as crude-oil
down past your lips, down into their gasping.

FROM THE FOUR LOVES: PHILIA

Noon's hard light does not reach the bed's blue dark.
In the air, the scent of eggs, the melting
of cheese. At my neck, the pulse of a pulled
muscle like a gum missing its tooth. I
turn, I wince. I turn back. Toward the shaded
window at the south of the house I breathe
into the body freed, relieved by lack.
What I no longer feel becomes its own
kind of desire. For the plated food you
bring, my neck bent down—despite the sting—for
salt, grease. For your hand on my nape, its weight
the point between the *here* of hurt—its *now*—
and the *then* of when comes warm remedy.

THE FISHING REGULATIONS FOR OTTER LAKE

The manmade grove cuts out of the Blue Ridge
like an exhibition featuring the one
and only natural world.

A staircase of stone leads
the lake's gushing runoff
down into a pooling creek,
ice resting on its top
like layers of brittle skin.

Tree roots turn up to frame
a safe path in the dirt; leaves give
off a light scent of the forest's
rustling. Algae whip their long veins
in the current of the creek, path now disappearing
into rock cropping and root bed.

Light brims over the lip
of the mountain, streams forward
as the water of the lake.

Melts forward,
tumbling, running, tripping
in fresh-thawed rut,
in the lichen-laden brush. Plunging
onto the lake's thin webbing.

Calling to what lies
beneath. Air caught
in the ice's netting like breath
from the deep.

The story beneath the stillness.
Bared to the grass.

Spinning,
grasping.

Burden.

The only thing left
to ground me
are the fishing regulations for Otter Lake.

SENTENCE DIAGRAMMING: ONE-NIGHT STAND

You tell me about eyes
 my monstrous blue
 I want
 hurting
 to look away and toward
 carpeted floor
 toward twinbed blooming under
 the lights'
 spindle-shaped bulbs
 under
 your hands

O
 your hands darling
 hands
 stripping off this bed
 before us
 throw comforter topsheet
 stripping off these clothes
 mauve suit pants
 buttons peppered down rayon
 undertank striped hyacinth-
 and vein-blue
 briefs shimmering
 green-then-black
 off you

Your hands
 strip me even
 out of my ankle socks
 petal-thin
 my body hurting still inside
 the ropes
 of its skin
 my mind
 threaded
 with *you*
 Will

you stop
 ever Will
 you start
 Here
 Touch your tongue to me

at the throat's caving
notch
Crush your thighs'
tops
to my thighs'
backs

Fill me

in the pit where
you learn
then lift

IN THE SECONDS AFTER THE GOLD HONDA ACCORD HAS FLIPPED INTO ROUTE 29'S
NORTHBOUND RIGHT SIDE DRAINAGE DITCH

The blown-out passenger
side window makes light
your only door.

You twist your body out
of the strapping seatbelt
like a key to open it.

PORTRAIT OF DESIRE

after Anne Carson / Sappho

How do I touch you without touching you
How do I hold us seconds before us

How do I wait in the wet breath of your lips
my hand strumming the air above your skin

I don't want to breathe out nor blink closed
I want to break in this eyelocking throb

Eros's sweetbitter limbloose prism

FATHER-DAUGHTER DANCE

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.
—Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr

In the sticky breath of July,
 my father took me aside
 to a less trafficked corner
 of our wraparound porch
and placed in my twelve-year-old
 hand a pack of gum, asked
if I would help him quit cigarettes.

 I felt my father's trust
placed timidly in my palm:
 he had known cigarettes much longer than me.
 The gray gum seemed a heavier communion
than the one he,
 as Anglican-boy turned agnostic-scientist,
 wasn't allowed to take
 in Catholic mass, a promise deeper
than the apocryphal body and blood.

 He turns fifty this year, and I twenty-two.
 He still smokes and I've begun
 to refuse Christ under my tongue.
 Is it weakness
on either of our parts, how he comes
 always out of the darkness
 to me with the familiar fleck
 of flame on his lips,
 how I am less sure of the light?

When we converse on the porch,
 he wafts smoke
away from my face, out of my path,
 though he doesn't know
 how I enjoy,
 how I have always enjoyed, his incense
of chemicaled earth
 and plant. The crisp wisps
 circle off

his cigarettes like blessings
sweeter than sense.

FROM THE FOUR LOVES: EROS

you
like *any*
word which opens me

up
on the desk
where we teach freshmen

how
to agree
nouns & adjectives

where
I unspool
singular & taught

worn
down by your
hands where I'm thin-skimmed

like
a grammar
reference for how

to
conjugate
the fourth-story dark

of
locked office
rooms here where there stand

in-
definite
rules you're the only

choice
I straddle
you I straddle you

NOCTURNE ON THE LAST UNPAVED ROAD IN GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

Another day dwindled down by winter
—its wink of light—and he is on his way

home again. *It's only six days* is his refrain
as he waves out the red hatchback's grimy

window, sprinkling cigarette ember
along the gravel alley like breadcrumbs

that die once the motion-censored streetlamp
forgets I am here and shuts off its light.

111 miles must seem a stroke
of luck to the stars, so short a distance

that not even the movement of a sneeze
or itch could compare. Yet I don't know

how to practice the patience of a prayer
as impossible as theirs: *Stay on*, they

say. *Stay open*. I want to know who
chooses to close their eyes, to fear, to wait

for streetlamps to remember their dark.
Tell me, once I move, what will happen

in the time it takes them to flood the night?
Tell me, what will happen to him, curving

along whatever night-road, in the time
that it takes me to next open my eyes?

ARGUMENTS IN THE OLD CITY CEMETERY

Lynchburg, 1806-Present

BELOVED who departed BELOVED how
blest BELOVED not dead she but sleep

I am not asleep in the shiny-sweet
tang of magnolia leaf not blest by
burst nor bloom crimped crinoline-
thick I hear a voice from the heaven
that stands 6 ft up in the fat buzz of
flies in the yellow powder'd wet of
gorging bees their pollen their hone
-y spit this wail that laugh this coo
and cough are the beads of my rot-
ting rosary

HE gave thee HE took thee and HE
will restore thee BELOVED you lived
seeing HIM that is invisible and death
has no sting blessed BELOVED are thee
the dead which die in the OLD CITY
CEMETERY

no know no grace no bright no
memory no darling no throne
no god alone no our baby
no humble no stone
no son enraptured speaks
their fame no name no saying
THE SAVIOR has died here in this
vicinity lies

do you hear FANNIE GRACE do you hear
baby EMMENT do you hear Mr. SCRUGGS
the oak's swinging lament *yea a yea a yea*

the train clanks by us like a severed leg
down the road the pest house hums dry
as gangrene a beekeeper stumbles
hill-side toward-hive
we dead grow

READING TED DEPPE FOR DAYS

Pheasant-like in the early brush
of the poem, I hesitate,
hold a gaze

starker than any gun's
before darting
back into myself.

The first lines are often
the most accessible
so if I'm lost now,

how to continue? The fourth
stanza yields a familiar setting
of birdsong and the recesses

of morning light. I plunge forward,
let the lines and their current
undertake, grasp the page's

edge so as not to drown.
Here's an image
of a sparrow and child

learning to feed. I shiver.
It feels less than an excursion
through rock and tiny owl-dropped

bones, more like a caress:
Shy at the first stroke,
the words stammer too,

then trace
their lettered map.
Near the bottom of the page

the lines grow heavy, end-stopped—
a sadness to have come
only so far in knowing—

but it is a false end;

there are three more stanzas
to cycle through,

my lark-eyes lurching
in the last of the dark. I find
I have read myself

into a sickness I do not want
to escape: How the poem grips
my throat with the barest

of hands.
How I am like wind,
made song through chime.

WATER RITE

Straßlach 2002

What they call *gewitter*
flashes above my bed
in the square of light:
the *mutter* of thunder,
her *kinder* of rain,
the blur-and-splatter
of sky green like
der Herbst, its *trauben*.
What do I call you
as I call to you—
mutter, mother, *Ave*?
Seven years old enough
to know sadness rests
in the setting dark, still
I want to run off
in my altar-server's robe
for children's Mass.
The tang of wine and cup
tarts my lips. What should I
cry out to you alone,
Mary? I'm told *The Lord*
is with thee, that He has filled
you, made a blessing
of your fruit, but that's not
what I see: like a storm
clouds the night, my voice
fills you. Like rain catches
light, you are full of me,
you are full of me.

PORTRAIT OF DESIRE

I begin with the word: Cunt

mouths my body aching
like peach missing pit.

On the bedroom floor you wait
like an envelope to be torn

open with my tongue. The lamp's
shaded bulb blues my cheeks

raw: the night air swallows us.

ELDEST SISTER'S EPISTLE

The bedroom is a place for sleeping
and a place for lying. When I turned ten,
Mother hung the curtain in front of my bed

to teach me modesty, to protect me.
From what the moon might do, she said. My lust
for night-air, for the shape of stars-against-sky

only grew. Behind and in spite of the sheet's
musty white. The curtain was old, full
of attic-black holes. Its tattered shadow

drew my eyes to the crannies of skin where
Mother didn't want me to reach. Yesterday
you watched me turn seventeen. It's been three

years since I first thumbed the male body, since
I've touched and sucked in the many kinds
of domestic dark: In our mold-blackened

basement. The laundry room—if it can be
called a room—between the rummaging dryer
and the soapy click of the washer's

heavy cycle. The downstairs half-bath
with the toilet bowl rusted blue and cakey.
The nightlight-lit upstairs hallway.

Our brother's red playroom. Father's gold
Cadillac sitting dead in the driveway.
The top of the swing-set's broken slide

at the edge of the fenced in woods. Tonight
Mother let the round wax of moonlight flood
my bed. She cut down the curtain, hung it

up over you. Tonight I stare into
my virgin room. I stare down my trembling
body. Tonight I'm offered the chance

to choose. And uphold the unsoiled room.

And wish to burn the skin I have given
freely in the dark. What will you?

to choose. And alter the sacred room.
And let the moon drip its bright wick
down my body's dark curve. What will you?

BRIDE OF BUTCHERS CREEK

A red whistle from the reeds
leads me down the gray isle's

murk. No veil shadows my face,
no silk buttons up my nape,

only wind, the soft lipping
of water over my limbs.

Make no mistake:
I give away myself

to his ruddy sand and silt.
Each night I ache to pull

my groom inside-out,
to bathe my cratered curves

in his rutting mouth. Only
the pines wait to watch

with their long, dark eyes
how he curls around my light.

Pockmarked, I glimmer breathy
as fog over his warm marsh.

ANTE MERIDIEM

Sleep with your boss rings the alarm clock.
Trills the red coffee pot. Gurgles the clogged
kitchen sink. Hisses the wet frying pan,
the oil and egg. *Close his office door, get
on your knees* hums the fridge's vegetable
drawer. Sloshes the Brita filter, the jug
of settling orange juice. *Or sit on
his lap* pops the toaster. *Make him pull
your hair* slathers the apricot jam,
the butter on the palm of your hand.
Ask him locks the deadbolt. *Tell him* flashes
the jeep's rear lights. *How he can make you
shiver* wind the leaves, the white winter sky.

HALF-LIFE

The morning after the night I do not remember
when I matched you pint for pint & topped off

my stumblings with the dregs of a bottle of cheap
red, when I lost control of the tip of my tongue

& its rounding off of vowels & small, simple
sounds, when you laughed in good fun & I hurt

in the head, in the sunken corners of my bloodshot
eyes, when I cried in confusion over whose voice

was Ludacris' & whose was Lupe Fiasco's rapping
on the radio, you drove us 100 miles north to your

parents for a late Sunday brunch. Even at nine the sun
burned white as an x-ray & every bump in the poorly

paved roads churned salty bile up the back of my throat.
I made you pull off at a Pilot where I coughed down a pill

with the little tannin-rich spit left to water my mouth
& sat low to the ground, slid my head in the diamond

of air between my wrists crossed at my knees' bent
tops. The wind blew scraps of receipts & ash

past my feet. A woman carried a bundle round
as a pregnancy under her coat. I gagged once, twice,

asked if maybe I should be the one to drive. You said *No*,
you should try to sleep. In the passenger seat leaned

all the way back, I dreamed we crossed over
to the southbound lane, smashed the windshield

into a glittering heap of sand & pearl-colored beads.
Just before the outskirts of town, I woke clenching

my left hand into a fist around a shell button
I'd forgotten was in the right side-pocket

of my corduroy jeans. We passed by the out-of-season
outdoor ice cream stand where two summers ago

you convinced me not to marry the man
who didn't really love me, who was just sticking

around out of grief for what little clump of life
I had not wanted and miscarried. Two streets over

at your childhood home, your mother waved us
into the drive, wrapped me too tight in a hug

before I could speak. We ate the cold food she'd
made at the short kitchen table built by your dad,

then appeased your parents' love of games
& played Scattergories, list 13, letter D.

Things At A Wedding. Dancing. Dirty Dishes.
Deuteronomy. Drunks. My head still ached

for a bed. You asked to play another round while I
excused myself to the bathroom, watched

the window's blind-slitted light shimmer down
the shower's clear curtain onto the peeling tile floor

& across the trashcan's swinging lid where I threw
out my used tampon dotted with gluey brown.

You knocked on the door & after one cup
of coffee it was finally all right for us

to go, to return to the road, its red reflective strips
winking by the black-bristled pines patterned like lace

against the sky. No difference in dark or light
for my stale body. No difference between

dusk, dawn, day, night, but the direction of my face.

FROM THE FOUR LOVES: AGAPE

how your voice transubstantiates your throat
hums like Wednesday ash
on my forehead meets the wafting hook
of my thurible hips I drink in the tart
burn of its smoke the candlewick-flame rising high
to inaudible squeak and snuff organ-like you
tremble above my hands lingering psalms let them catch
your face's stained-glass shape its brush of light
your wine-dark whimper

SELF-PORTRAIT WITH TINDER BYLINE *AND I EAT MEN LIKE AIR*

After the shower's fog
my eyes smudge black
with mascara's smoke.
My phone dings on.
A man wants me
to explain what Plath
means by eating.
He asks *how big*
is your mouth.
I caption a close-up
of my dripping lips:
how much room
do you need?
His texts' gray bubbles
blink back fast
on my lock screen, light
the dark path
from the bathroom
mirror to my unmade
bed. I pull the loose
sheet up like a noose
around my neck.
When I tell him
but I don't swallow,
when I ask him *my place*
or yours, what I mean
is *Will you*
hurt this body?
I want you to
split me by my throat.

SAY

Say bed. Say rip off the cover. Say turn
on the AC. Say is that your phone. Say how
does the damn strap unhook. Say help me—
no, got it. Say your. *Breasts*. Say sacré bleu.
Panties. Say laugh. Say swallow. Say lick.
Say condom. Say you fixed the frame. Say I
liked its creak, how the whole floor could hear us.
Say did you turn on that AC. Say oh.
Oh. Say do that, do that. Say wait. Say more.
Say how. *How do you*. Say do that. Say fuck.
Say my hand at the end of your back. *Here*.
Say hold. Say let me hold. Say take, I'll take.
Say let me take. *Let me*. Say now. Say you.

WORLDS IN WHICH YOUR NAME ENDS IN A K

for Eric

1.

In Alameda County Fair's dust you eat
cotton candy, twirl sugar-threaded air

like strands of hair around your fingers & I
wince in the lot's wash of high-beam light.

Your hands glitter, gilt with grainy spit,
while my eyes blur on the o-ing of your lips

inviting me home. I say no. I choke.

2.

You go to St. John's, read the Great Books
in a clawfoot tub while the harbour wind spurs

your heart red to wine-dark. I move abroad
to stay, nibble the edges of German

ginger cookie hearts, pocket forget-me-nots
on the bank of Starnberger See & we

never meet—

you do not find & I

do not see the horizon tinged violet
with lust or its softer longing.

3.

I die

in that drainage ditch like I was meant to,
thrown from the flipped chassis corrugated

like undertongue.

4.

But I don't die alone:
you're here & you die by the roadside, too,
still strapped in the ribbed passenger seat.

5.

No—

you live, thrive, turn tears to honey
in the hive of your grief & I appear

as water flash-flooding a creek; as one
letter tricking the ear, though rarely the eye;

as the word *bear*, meaning *carry across*,
to ferry—but also *endure*.

NOTES

“The Four Loves”

The four poems that comprise this series—“Storge”; “Philia”; “Eros”; and “Agape”—take their titles from C. S. Lewis’ philosophical treatise on love, *The Four Loves*. “Storge” is defined as “affection” or familial love, a blood bond between parent and offspring. “Philia” is defined as “friendship.” “Eros” is defined as passionate or romantic love, “that kind of love which lovers are ‘in.’” “Agape” is defined as “charity” or the “Divine Gift-love” of God in Christianity.

“Self-Portrait as Rizzo in the School Yard”

This poem borrows language from the 1971 musical *Grease*.

“Centó that Reminds Me of You”

This poem borrows lines and language from the following texts, respectively: *The Aeneid* by Vergil; “Something Entirely Different” by Kristina Haynes; “Strange Sea” by Edith Södergran, translated by Averill Curdy; “Día de los Muertos” by Brenda Sieczkowski; “For Life” by Beau Taplin; “Relingos: The Cartography of Empty Spaces” by Valeria Luiselli, translated by Christina MacSweeney; “Día de los Muertos” by Brenda Sieczkowski; “The Evidence” by Erica Jong; “the ‘i like you’ poem” by Warsan Shire; *Forever* by Maggie Stiefvater; *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski; “Stay” by Andrea Gibson; introductory statement for Poetry Society of America’s New American Poets series by Aracelis Girmay; “I Want To Tell You Yes” by Kallie Falandays; “God Bless Your Fingers” by Sierra DeMulder; “Take This Waltz” by Leonard Cohen; “Día de los Muertos” by Brenda Sieczkowski; “The Light Keeper” by Carolyn Forché.

“Self-Portrait as Stef & Mouth”

This poem borrows part of a line from Lorca’s “Romance sonámbulo.”

“Water Rite”

This poem is an ekphrastic response to Lucinda Devlin’s “Massageraum #1, Hufeland Therme, Bad Pyrmont, Germany 2002,” a photograph from Devlin’s *Water Rites* series, and borrows language from the German nursery rhyme “Es war eine Mutter” and the Hail Mary, a traditional Catholic prayer.