

FROGMOUTH

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FOREWORD

Frogmouth is a collection of poems that seeks to explore layered language and thought in conversation with layered language and thought, the composition and process of the collection itself, and the natural elements of poetry. Both the title and main concepts for this project are loosely inspired by the phrase “frog in my throat,” as well as the notion of thoughts entering and leaving one’s mind without guidance or warning. In other words, through intentional finagling of syntax and structure, the encompassing idea behind the collection is the poem’s journey through the process of writing the collection itself; how exactly I choose to begin and end a poem, the steps that guide me through revision, how I deal with droughts of inspiration, and how I question the occurrence of inspiration.

In high school, before applying to college, I had a lot of trouble trying to write what I felt like I wanted to write. I experienced long periods where I would get urges to write, but could not for the life of me push anything worth writing out onto the page; I tried writing fiction story after story, but none felt energized; I didn’t feel inspired by my own writing, which is important, especially to a young writer. When I applied to college with a fiction-based portfolio, spirits low, I was accepted anyhow, and ultimately received a spot in the class of 2020. This helped boost the withering confidence I had in my writing. During my first year I discovered the impact that poetry could have on more than just people’s emotions, and my previously misguided opinion of poetry was changed. I began exploring the many different techniques used in poetry that are not

common at all in fiction, such as enjambment and rhyme, and suddenly my writing felt more inspired than ever. I realized that beyond being just a writer, I can also be an inventor, a designer, a pioneer. And through this I realized there just isn't enough space in a fiction piece for the syntactical and structural manipulation of grammar in which I'm interested.

I have become inspired greatly by the surrealist movement of avant-garde poetry that transpired in the 1920's. In their poetic practice, many surrealist poets based their work on the principles of consciousness, while challenging the confines of logic with a collage aesthetic. One of the groundwork poets of this time was André Breton, who practically invented the practice of automatic writing in which one pours their consciousness onto a page without a second thought. Similarly, many of the poems in this collection were written as an incoherent string of ideas, just to get the idea out of my head, which then were later revised using more precise language. Further, the connections between the individual poems are meant to encompass an automated stream-of-consciousness-esque movement through the collection. In addition, the surrealist movement relied heavily on its "dreamlike" qualities to appreciate and romanticize the beautiful aspects of the natural world. In this collection I have attempted to embody this same ideology of evoking the marvelous.

Additionally, some poets considered to be surrealists during the 1920's questioned religion and the ideologies of what it means to be a human, attempting to unpack the natural world in its mathematics and the logic of reality. I often ask myself what it means to be capable of creating. We as humans are created out of creation,

within creation. However, we tend to identify ourselves as living outside of nature. We tend to make the distinction between our ways of living and the ways of the elements. For example, when one leaves their house and goes for a hike, they might say *I am venturing into nature*, but who is to say that the space inside the house is not just as natural as the space outside? Humans are as organic as plants, and therefore the poetry humans write is just as animal as we are. Poetry is nature, humans are nature. Humans are animals, mammals, and poetry is a breathing and growing entity of its own.

The goals of this collection are plenty. The first is to arouse individually in my readers a broader questioning of the consciousness and its desire to be heard, whether it be the self's consciousness or the collective consciousness among all beings. Second, I would like to reclaim the term "writer's block" with a positive connotation. The period in which one is experiencing a blockage of ideas obviously seems like it is a hindrance to the person's expression. However, with a different spin on the connotation of the phrase, the "block" can be a block of time in which one is in idea collection mode, getting ready for an exciting exponential release of creativity. With this interpretation, the frog in your throat protects your ideas. Third, I want this collection to be a word of advice for other young writers who may feel as though their writing isn't inspired. A little perseverance really does go a long way. Finally, I just want to have a conversation about surrealist ideals in poetry regarding the poem as a process as well as a medium of creation. The writing process, and the creative process of art in general, is magic beyond anything humans could ever understand.

BLOTTER

Brain case of bladder acid
 in the organs
I just remembered I have
 an ache
to stage an opus on my own
 blood
bags to be thrown as cathartic
 tomatoes,
and each one of me is restored into another
 antiblossom.

DIARY DIARY DIARY

Twilight kept center, squinting
through sprout. I expected violet
promising apertures egressed
on paper, lifted an orange
peeler to my forehead. Triple
socket drenched, tied up
trap, and came to devour
the bounty: homespun harvest
roused fresh from heavy
tailbones unconnecting
cerebrums whipped down
the crevice of my pelvis.
Unstuck, an unword
snapped into magic flutter
shot, squaring work
nights spent jinxing
the directions to this poem.
A build up startled
in my palms, the lines
read sharply parallel, warmly chafed,
almost nearly blended--

ANKLEBITER

What's worse is that
I don't remember
someday disturbing
the comfortable
grace on Earth, mercifully
consumed for a berry-
white concentrate
smearing across the sky, fair
scarce in highest quiet,
yet physical
enough to embody
members. Worsen still, I'm told to gather
embers of the balm
in my hand, a miracle
slapped into breath.

NOTES TO SELVES

1. Rinse off the fountain.
2. Vowel movements with salt.
3. Always concentric, concentric.
4. The sun is not only for us.
5. Wire birds in branches.
6. A pond conversation attracts flies.
7. Two stars can burst together.
8. People talk about me.

CANOPY CHATTER

Did you see that?

Sheer camouflage. The leaf

bug took off, shed

like dead tobacco in ill vanilla

cellophane, tempting

a question once chlorophyllic,

chopped at the nose. Murmurs,

build-ups of weeds stumped

half-thought from their root

rot, trail away. Out in slights of air,

choice glowlight bends

to a budding chorus

noise. Flycatchers couple

concealed in grapevines.

STILL LIFE IN CARTOON

Rounded in a sag we lounge, wordless, a
stroke away from bruising, when light stipples
in cosmic exposition, a little unsteady, its wick
strewn around our lyric skeleton. Ground pinks
delicate skeptical mingling of margins slicked
in flak. Mistaken spirit boasts, splintered
between likenesses, and secure.

HOME WORDS

Readiness to literate illustrates two of one thing:
Poets mind being don't poets, but fellow a trick,
rat to rat, each one word scalp gutted and finally
housebroken members a family. Think, therefore
slick frolicking in figments of discourse. Reduce
language precisely so household tensions strike
emeralds through unnoticed drapes. Hear those chimes?

FROGMOUTH

I can hear them chewing
misshapen brain granola,
mingling blue, straw, blackberries.

Spreading out the features in my mind,
breath heaving over heels at a standstill.
Have you seen this?

Mindful before fleeing,
sea glass is exalted, say it back.
Crass of salted contemplation

imprints roughly in a
swallow
restrained to
overstepping,
stones roll up
my tongue.

At the back
of my throat each of
us
birds
take light
like a match,
crash,
die on
the piled
rocks.

FOR SAKE OF HUNTING

[1]

Remember, after the Alpha calls for his pack
and the dew settles on the fallen
leaves pummeled with rotten pawprints,
the Aries moon will begin with a hungry howl --

Look, the wolves, they won't hunt!
Their canines! All broken
on butterscotch sucking candies, shards
lay scattered on the hilltops.
Plush to the touch, the beasts
threw instinct to the wind,
chasing fireflies in the stirring moonlight.

[2]

Stop! Hear them baying?
Sipping the indigo river, silver
staring eyes exchange hunger signals.
Teeming tongues extend
remorse and chipped incisors.

Don't break the wishbone!
And rabbits and rabbits and rabbits.
Tearing away at light, ripping heavy night into shreds.
And rabbits and rabbits and rabbits.

BLOCK: HEAD

Brain out musing cartoon,
ribbling impositions of order.
Don't unnerve! This is how to ____.

The shaping begins
over hot air,
turns a tale on its ____.

A spark flares, erases
the lying wasteland, blowing
neither raspberry blots nor ____
malfunctions.

CRICKETS

Musical muck
unstressed,
 it happens

the suggested
stage sets
 collapse

in a stream of fists,
my likeness
 root-capped,

losing
taste and touch
 in the slugfest.

PLACED

We're not designed to stay inside, look
up! Word-clouds buzz along
an assembly line of blue mold and fresh

words still to be heard. Magic needs protecting
in other realms unsettled.
Framing quietly dirigible, nonetheless delusional,

stitching reason through a ghost town
under visitation. Who knows
how to become a poem worthy of being

etched in crystal? Valleys robbed of phosphor,
working overtime like pitch birds
charging accents for their enunciated pickets

in the lawn. The stars appear homely,
and a few craters
gorge the so-called real world.

SATIATE INTERLUDE

Sometimes I imagine us
together in one body,
my selves approximately
mineral. However, I
fragment

POIESIS

Blissful oblivion --

Geiser
neuron activation.

Chicken liquid to a lion
controlled gaze,

monkey sees
action

scaled against the meter
these lines are written in.

How, prime storm of mathematics,
do I understand the whole from within?

Flesh holds me
responsible.

UP SWAMP NECK

A porous voice says *mouth*, says
auction through the fringe of its lips,
pining with sensitive antennae. Ineffable
clot of gnats clinch cross and spool my uvula
moldy to bundle the barkless cypresses,
and I take a think to myself....

*I can crust over
if I please.*

TERRARIUM

A rainfall soils the rocks
black, shimmer light
blue, shrinking clockwise.
The ants rearrange

petal mulch into madness,
scatter to express. Oh!

What special awareness.

Overcast green meshes
swelling opposite
disciplined exclusions
posit under pressure.

It's clear glass surrounds!
So sharply it shrouds.

BUG-EYE

Is it day again
already? Dew-moistened
boredom spouts

immensely anticipated
hollers from the poplar trees. Are
the voices addressed to me? I know them

by their ceasing to be exceptional,
and what poetry a worm could slink
topside, where the land --

*I must mud
my spotting skin
mooning to be cradled like a crescent
caterpillar, but matted in rational
animal disorder, plucked
and looked at, should I retract
what I said?*

Nightlessness beaks
brightness through its shell.

VENUS TRAP

If only my roots understood
my pursuit for blood. These words

blush through the surface
heart-shaped, hummock without a trace

of discipline. Braced
down to bend away the latch,

I clutch this probed one-

pitted matter, cover my eyes,
and think away the evil.

It seems the thinking
always bounds to bite me.

THINKING ABOUT THINKING ABOUT THINKING

This foolish April
murmur first
unbecomes a verb,
no longer synchronizes.

This lingering
calm in solitude to rest,
misinterprets.

This word
turning forward, more
torrid as it delivers vaster
afterimages, embraces
imposition and hard stony sounds.

This watered hole hangs
concentric in the sediment.

This motional consonant
mounts a rainstorm.

YOU WILL FIND

Sometimes in Heaven
something ungodly occurs
that's not worth the mention.

Review your reflection
in righteous clouds impure
that linger in Heaven.

Maybe you're taller in another dimension,
marveling in the miniature,
and not worth the mention.

Your angel's dozen flies eleven
when one believer
wills to fall from Heaven.

Shoulders fleeced of ascension,
burnt departure of myrrh,
Not to mention --

Father, I have a confession!
Hush, He says in a whisper,
Sometimes in Heaven
it's not worth the mention.

DREAM GALLERY

I watch you sleep
and wait to see
the easy dreams
you break and breathe.

We put them in
a gallery.
Then wait for all our friends
to leave.

'Cause few can see
the energy
that comes from you
so cleverly.

TWO STRANGERS

We equip ourselves with the skies'
greetings, both sides of a reservoir

mouth strained of saliva,
attempting to survive

under the same intimate sun.
Isn't it strange to share an infinite

divided? They discuss the differences
with innocence in their squirming voices.

BURST

Exhale!

Nature loathes the vacuum

you've leeches around its mouth,

as if the trees

climbed limbs

to fill hollow, blinded safely inward.

WATERBODY SOLO

I am willing,
question
babbling,
action motion,
directional sense.
Spirit split
midglide
expressing broken
greetings.
On hand
a gesture, holding
plenty, only
to ponder
in sunlight
a telling iris.
Deposits
infrequent,
I am not a current.

SMUDGE

I, with winged symmetry, I
am monarchs accepting the light
of the burden. Togetherness:
fluttering in proximity,
to catch a chance to speak
I'd seek eternal burning.
A momentary flare
preserves brightness worth
less among the sunflowers. Time
for a new outstanding
star, but what an empire built.
Akin to the sun that sits
outside of my body,
I thought this mind into ample islands
working closely as one exquisite silence.

PER CLAVES

Helpless in my passion,
I scrape vowel sounds
off the tops of my teeth,
grinding consonants out
of my gums. Won't let
them learn my name,
I'll be an orange daisy.

I'll read the starlines,
make a break for it.

A wolf as my best friend,
a dalmation my road map. I am
naked because I feel naked. Boil holy
water over Hell fire and watch
the steam rise, add pasta and
a teaspoon of antifreeze,
set the clock face down on the
table and count the seconds in
my head for precision. Don't
you get it? I'll dance diamond-heeled on
rose petals, play hard to get on step
three of the Waltz. For my broken
crayons, I'll eat the leftovers.
I know my own golden.

EVERGREEN

I wish

to materialize
beyond seasons,
even words
unearth knots of dust.
The kind to settle with
its gravity
a pact of vitality, turning
mercurial as earth
limits turning
the truth.

In the morning smooth
and clever my ghosts
disregarded in youth
feel again the sweetening
of the starlight
in the trunk of another
mercurial earth.

The hillside bellies
an oldie
heard from the distance

everyone agrees.

SACRED RISING

[1]

She went a ways down
skin above the river end,
wave length short.

So I'm going
by way of hard darkness.
No wings --

We had words,
a few shared rays
reading backwards

and refracting through
sore poetry
eating at the sunflowers.

[2]

Mind how she sleeps --
In the beginning
no one was listening.

Here we go again:
Scanning the river
the long way.

Is she coming?
Please be coming.
Speaking to the dark

extract of distraction:
distortion of the *you* --
please become.

A PLACE WITHOUT WALLS

The field concedes to much of myself,
swallowing too much of myself. Feeding my head
with my head with my head, I'm sensitive
and far away from everything.

The only being in the field that feels
comfortable talking about me is not myself,
fear of the beans. All the time in my cells
in my cells to confess about myself.

Ask questions, I'll explain them
with selves and then beans, I tell myself.
My bean bag explodes, taugth in my fists,
and it's all confetti drooling onto my feet.

The field feels afraid of the field,
alone, but myself. I feel comfortable fleeing alone
in the field fearing beans and their many
selves, because they're many selves.

A lone bean gingerly in a bag of many
selves. Feeding my head with
beans and my head, and the field
fears for me in my many cells.

The beans in my impulses confess fear
of their heads. Sweeping up the wet confetti
and sleeping in the field bays deceit
away from my sensitive selves.

Talking to the beans with selves in hand,
I heard from the comfort of my cell, and feel
my head explode. My beans splatter
my feet, I swallow the smell of ginger.

RESIGNATION

Despite all signs
of the contrary, I still believe
I'll fly. Deep inhale --

I am talking to my shoulder
angel about my anger,
when eyes cry,

Halved clementines translate
attachment to passion: keep
an eye, please is implied.

Dawn with eager foxes learns
to quickstep, and a blond sun
curls over the horizon,

Mastering the kindest mindset
that everything kindled will be
invited to retire once again.

I am taking my time to adapt.
Long exhale --
and I learn something knew.

CROAK SONG

After oozing
out opera

in dim light
I settle

into echo --
into pauses.