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## Moon Jellies

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Christina Garbarino  
Honors Thesis  
May 9, 2014  
First Reader: Peter Harris  
Second Reader: Rachel Flynn

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for my Advanced Poetry Writing classmates, who continue to inspire me.

## Contents

Dreaming Away Domesticity	4
Moon Jellies	5
The Bee-Spell	6
Incendiary	7
Yearning for Motherhood	8
Corrupted	9
Mrs. Snickerdoodle's House	10
Partway Here	11
Floral Socks	12
Leftovers	14
Bubbling Over	15
Square Stars	16

## Daydreaming Away Domesticity

inspired by William McGregor Paxton's "The Open Book"

He sips scotch in the parlor,  
in post-supper solitude  
the open book her excuse to slip away—

Brushing the sonnets aside  
she burrows herself into the study  
of daydreams...

She hoists herself onto the dining room table, turns to a halt.  
Her heels scuffmark the too-well-polished surface  
as she swan dives through the rose-colored windowpanes.

Glides through the too-dense-air,  
swims into the well-kept grass,  
daffodils tangle about her hair—

She slurps water from McGregor's pond  
(in the fashion of dear old Peter Rabbit),  
and plop. Body emerges, airy gown sopping, swishing—  
petunias catch between her toes, heels secured in her fingertips.

About the woods, she sprints toward the splintery panels  
the spotlighted canopy that crowns the lawn,  
prances into the festivities,

treads water to the jazz, waltzes with mustached bass player,  
dances the Charleston with goldfish Gatsby  
twirls herself, tangles into the rainbowfish balloons—

Scotch in hand. He captures, seizes her wrist.  
A pause between the mismatched pair, a deadpan glare  
*No. Away. Upwards.*

She ascends the stairs to the splintery white porch,  
accompanied by her glass of Merlot  
she gulps down, glub glub

lets go of the ribbons,  
releases the balloons upwards  
watches them swirling, twirling away from her, undulating upwards  
till the black sky fills with aquatic balloons and she immerses  
into the undulating ebb tides of daydreams.

## Moon Jellies

In this hour,  
we are giant moon jellies—  
not made of bodies,  
but flowing masses of sugarcane prism water.

We are  
in constant motion.  
The mystical, gelatinous,  
egg-white shapechangers.  
Peaceful blobs with no skin.

We twinkle turquoise-violet,  
wading from place-to-place  
in our own current.

We are globular shapes with no faces at all, just clear flows  
and I can see that your unique shade of turquoise loves me  
because when you are with me you glow all bright.

And our light-up-twinkle is so beautiful everyone *has* to see it.

Although, we are  
not in glorious unison on a bliss-driven earth.  
Actually, we are humans  
humans who know each other's skin barriers:  
the rosacea and the sun-poisoning, the cellulite dimples and fat lumps,  
the shades of brown, the age spots,  
the laugh lines, the crow's feet.

We are  
looking at each other flat-faced,  
lips tilting down at the corners...  
We only smile to show off our straight white teeth.

## The Bee-Spell

I've had too much espresso and not enough you.  
My thoughts swirl every which way,  
so I relocate my brain in my body.

My brain in my lungs has steady thoughts,  
My brain in my calves has slow thoughts,  
My brain in my veins has simple thoughts,

Because when I leave my thoughts with my brain,  
I-walk-down-these-institutionalized-hallway-swarms-of-bees-build-up-in-my-brain-  
the-bees-bounce-around-slam-against-one-another-multiply-over-crowd-suffocate-  
squeeze-single-file-line-in-my-ear tunnel-escape-into-the-too-bright-hallway-boomerang-  
off-the-walls-boomerang-back-into-my-skull-and-the-bee-storm-starts-back-up-again.

Mostly,  
I wish I could point an authoritative teacher finger  
at my brain to tell your bees "*Be quiet*"  
    To get the sweet synchronization  
    of a script-producing ear tunnel,  
    one viscous honey thought flows,  
    through my lungs, calves, veins,  
    morphing into a script of paper  
    handed from each organ to muscle.  
    And in the end,  
    my hands will roll up the resolution,  
    bind with a red bow and speak out this lovely script.

But I do forget to *calm-breathe* and *vein-think* when-you're-not-here-  
and-your-bees-streamline-through-my-figure-build-up-in-my-elbows-  
crowd-my-capillaries-rip-my-neurons-apart-

and I'm back through the too bright hallway  
under your spell of bees,  
expelling bees  
and begging them to return—  
I must love this.



## Incendiary

You're indecipherable notes in corners of my notebook pages  
and my built in bra that doesn't quite work.  
You're a soggy hemp bracelet that gives me a rash  
and blonde hair brunette from the ocean.

You're daily specials that never repeat  
but the vitamins I can't absorb.

You're undrinkable tap water  
and I'm sunken in cheekbones.  
You're a wind turbine with primary color blades  
and the dead birds under those blades.

You're a hot shower on my sunburn  
and make me feel like last night's eyeliner beneath my eyes,  
under the tickle of fringe on my forehead                      at a concert of banjos—  
and the scam to get into that concert of banjos.

You make me want to lick the sherbet sky,  
but if I could, I'd make you chew on a beehive  
while I high-five a stop sign.  
You are the sand in my molars,  
and I have no idea what to do with you.

## Yearning for Motherhood

I want the argyle sweater and the mom haircut  
the little baby I can put in a fleece blanket and hold in my arms.

I want to run about the farmer's market  
to fetch a dozen eggs for my angel food cake.

I want my skinny jeans to turn to pinstriped dress pants  
but then they'll cling in all the wrong places.

Once my shower caddy to floats  
into a Longaberger basket for my Kodak family.

I could even turn into a crystalline faucet that cracks  
Or a slinky rusting in the corner of the toy closet

Or actually, I might be  
that broken spring in an incandescent light bulb

you know, the one that rattles when you shake it?

## Corrupted

my lips that sip raszberi Stoli with seltzer  
will give you raspberries in the rocking chair

my hands that clench beefy thighs wrapped in Levi's  
will push you higher on the swing set

my legs that sneak into his room for some midnight lovemaking  
will rush to your crib, to hush your cries

my raspy voice that whispers *come home with me* to men in bars  
will sing you lullabies each night

the machine that washes one-night-men out of my comforter  
will cleanse your saliva from bibs and dishtowels

the rattling of pills in my birth control packets  
will be the swishing of rattles in your toy bin

my slouchy stance over your high chair,  
will be, seventeen years later, a lanky boy in black jeans

who might just lean over your lunch table  
and say: "you will all die and be forgotten," and walk away.

## Mrs. Snickerdoodle's House

Did you know, at Mrs. Snickerdoodle's house,  
the shower drain is actually a waffle  
that she left in the iron for too long.  
Yes, the iron did plate the burnt batter,  
and she had nothing else to do with the metal contraption  
than to place it at the center of her bathtub.

Did you know, at Mrs. Snickerdoodle's house,  
you check your body at the door?  
Yes, you'll toss your body onto the coat rack  
to hang out with the other bodies,  
chatting *hey, I'd like to ride an elephant*  
or *hey, I'd like to eat some goat cheese*.

And some of you will exit the coatroom  
a puff of perfume  
and some of you, your noodley intestines.  
Really, it depends on your mood.  
You'll careen through the living room  
slither through the corridors,  
feeling glamorous as ever—

Yes, at Mrs. Snickerdoodle's house,  
we may go swimming in a pool of beet juice,  
then lie on the deck placing star fruit on each other's bodies.  
The sun will imprint our crimson skin with star patterns  
and we'll gallop tree-to-tree in the damp grass,  
screaming camp songs like we do on the playground.

We'll sit on the wicker chairs, atop the tree hotel.  
And I'll say to you:  
did you know, when we aren't looking  
the sun's eyelashes butterfly kiss the clouds?  
that the raindrops have ears;  
that clouds speak to one another;  
they say, *you look like an elephant*  
or *you seem like some goat cheese*.

Did you know, at Mrs. Snickerdoodle's house,  
you may check your body at the door?  
But, there you can never lose your imagination.

## Partway Here

I've always got to be a little tired,  
or a bit hungover, or have aching muscles  
so at least half of my emotions subside.  
But hopefully, more like three-quarters.  
A swollen forearm diminished.  
My resignation the bag of frozen peas.

I've always got to have some song stuck in my head,  
otherwise it's the *I don't call my parents enough*, or the  
*I should start exercising again and stop eating so much bread*,  
or the *I have no idea what I'm doing with my life*  
Maybe I'll be a UFO spotter? A tree dweller?  
A pharmacist? My mom says it pays well,  
and will give me time with my prospective children.

At dinner tables, in class, driving my car,  
I conjure up some song  
I can bounce in my chair to,  
wiggle my toes in my boots to.  
Partway here.

I wonder if doctors can induce half-comas.  
Then, I'd never have to bother with the overstuffing,  
the overcaffeinating, the song-sticking,  
the treadmill exhausting.  
Still be half-conscious.

So this is me:  
partly, but never fully alive.

You know what I mean?

## Floral Socks

I can't fold my socks without thinking of you—  
how backpack full of clothes you came over,  
*a little presumptuous don't you think?*

I fed you Amy's vegan soup from a can.  
You helped me fold my socks,  
told me you liked this one pair with the flowers

and I said *they are kind of pill-y*,  
but you didn't know what that meant  
and your stomach

grumbled vegetable gas  
as I rested my head on your shoulder  
because you'd never had so many vegetables before,

*my mom would be proud*, you said  
as I handed you a napkin, you said  
*we aren't even dating and I already made you feed me*

we watched that show you like, the one with all the nude people  
and I got uncomfortable so I got a bloody nose  
and embarrassed, but you said *it's fine*

*should we stop?*  
*are you nervous?*  
*no, it will be okay.*

I asked you where you got your sweatshirt from  
and you said *it's from the ex*  
and we only spent a few weeks together

and I thought you weren't too bright  
and that I wouldn't get attached,  
but I started liking the way

your eyes did that tilting down thing  
when you doubted yourself,  
they opened a bit wider—

and I can't look at you  
because you do that eye thing.  
We ended when you told me

you were getting back together with the sweatshirt-ex  
but I can't help but think of you  
when I reach into the cabinet for another can of Amy's soup.

## Leftovers

freshman roommate orders patagonia sperry top siders then transfers when it rains the clones the hunter rain boots and neon rain jackets the skinny professor who self-deprecates the mixed drink signals sleeping 2 hour nights overstudying for exams now not studying at all Edith Wharton Camden hill b with homesickness tearing open my acceptance letter *never thought I'd get in here* abroad in Rome ciao bella piacere *oh you're the Colby girls*

*would you like to take any of that home with you?* why yes the mashed potato people please the friends I love not crying lemon drops at text messages but what about the professors who let me sit in their office hours making big talk of pound cake and paella and *I am smart enough to be an English major* the rainbow jimmies not sprinkles French onion soup Shakespeare not the tough steak pain of a failed friendship not the dread of getting off the Waterville exit on I 95 *too full ate way too much all dressed up and nowhere to go* sitting on a bench by the pond alone on a warm fall day crunching the cheese and cracker leaves not with string bean boy x explaining my cranberry sauce feelings *one is the loneliest number* two summers here, the library chugging coffee tanning on the dock with corona but not the dock spiders on the roof yes chatting with friends to the late sunset getting stuck in the window burnt bread in the toaster mourning lost grandmothers yes to the grandfather clock in special collections my coworkers and not dead pets though really I'm scared of dogs—

*I'll have it all to-go, please.*



## Bubbling Over

I bury my head in the snow.  
I bury my face in the sand.  
I bury my ears in my shoulders,  
but I'm not shy—you're talking too loud.

I drive the roundabout till sunrise,  
listen to Sandy Denny, chow on leftovers.  
I litter the culdesac with tire tracks.  
Dizzy, undone from a skein of yarn,  
I stumble out the Mountaineer door, slam it.

How is it that I gallop into back hand springs, stick my landings,  
as sprinkler heads pop up  
and metal traps spear moles?

I prance around the neighborhood  
as suburbanites waken to lost morning sex,  
as housewives pack lunches for tots  
and pretzel women in expensive spandex do yoga in the cellar.  
Namaste.

In the silver lagoon of Lite-Brite crustaceans  
the mermaid—you know her?  
She sinks her head into the sand.

## Square Stars

A professorial candidate repeats the same response  
to *tell me about yourself* each time she's asked.

A college girl recites *shall I compare thee to a summer's day*  
each day she wakes up a bit more nervous.

An overweight wife watches the same soap every afternoon;  
dead characters come back to life, you know.

And I could get out of bed this morning, but I'd rather not.  
I've just washed my sheets  
and they feel so clean.

Nothing like lying in bed listening to the oldies station.  
I used to sit in the back of Mrs. Malinowski's station wagon,  
waving to unexpected drivers.

Tonight, maybe I'll dance to oldies,  
wiggle barefoot on my bed  
in my too-expensive underwear.

The shadow of the window  
makes a square on my curtains.  
Maybe tomorrow, that square will be a star.