

POEMS FOR MIT STUDENTS

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS • 2013



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Afterword

Foreword

Katy Gero / 2013

This chapbook was born from the title of a poem, not my own, written for a poetry workshop I took this semester. It was called 'Close Encounters in Lobby 10.' Our poetry instructor rightly criticized it as a potentially confusing title, because most people have no idea what 'Lobby 10' means. I wondered: Why do we worry about most people? Why can't we write poetry for each other, not attempting to explain our experiences to the outside world but rather attempting to process them internally? We can, of course, but we don't, or at least I had not seen the results. This chapbook is attempt to fix that.

All of these poems are by MIT students, for MIT students. Maybe as an outsider they will bring you in, but they were written for peers. I trust you'll enjoy them all.



Winning Poems

dan / Laura Zhang
Square / Suhas Vijaykumar
Scenery / Natalia Vélez Alicea
MIT Tour / Sebastian Denault

Honorable Mention

The Dream / Suhas Vijaykumar

welcome to lobby 7: look up!
on this spot, on this day
57 years ago
Richard Feynman farted
can you imagine, folks?

the earth-shattering gas passed from the ass of this
laureate-demigod of physics is said to have had such a profound
smell as to be capable of temporarily boosting the IQ of one who
inhales it
during finals week dozens of students can be found sniffing the
various surfaces in this room, hoping to gain an advantage by
smelling the antique flatulence of this great man –if you're lucky
today, you just might catch a whiff for yourself!

Thomas Edison
is said to have visited this specific lobby frequently
to lie down in front of the corridor
or stand blocking the doorway
just to be a dick

now, step right this way, folks

this is the very place where Buzz Aldrin and I.M. Pei
shared their first kiss
can anyone tell me what year this important romance was
inaugurated? yes, you in the purple...

correct! that is also the year of one of the most memorable “hacks”
in MIT history when it was discovered that Caltech student
suicides were being retroactively registered to MIT, their corpses
and macabre mise-en-scènes transposed to this campus and notes
confabulated implicating administrators in sexual coercion–
wacky stuff!

ok moving along, people...
if you listen carefully as we pass through this historic building,
you can hear the moans of the ghost of America's former
manufacturing hegemony

and this very spot, right here friends
is where Noam Chomsky
died of boredom



Almost

Julia Kimmerly / 2013

it's been a while since the smile of a pen has styled my page,
ages since mental meandering, penned pondering, wistful wandering
wondering about mysteries, histories, blistering bliss stories
of sinister misters, kissed-hers, twisted listening and
tea: a small plea from me to indulge.

today is a break from the intensity.
it makes a bulge in the tense immensity of stress,
incensed duress.
Dad's mom's locket rests in my palm,
her psalms next to his curbed proverbs:

once begun half done
measure twice, cut once
a stitch in time saves nine

but what about when the second half is baffling,
twice doesn't suffice,
and the stitches come undone
like poorly hitched horses looking for fodder?

what about:
everything in moderation
variety is the spice of life
everything is relative—

relative to what?
it's all the same insane struggle,
trouble bubbling over from one night to the next.
fight the biting light, the tightening sight as eyelids sigh
sleep is nigh
the group droops with equations left unsolved
greek letters in an unresolved war
equality separating the horror.
symbols swapping sides and constants barring pi's.
Intensity Has a Taste For Pain.

this feast of information has ceased to be fun.
the yearning of learning gone,
no longer appealing.
the feeling of prolonged gratification
empty.
the anticipation not
tempting.

teachers hold the treat just out of reach,
each time bringing me forward
toward the future, it's
badder, better, bigger, baller, butter from the stick
but if I don't get out of this mean fiendish routine—
color outside the confining outline—
i won't survive.
my thriving creativity of young,
now stifled insensitively,
clung to by what grip I have left.
i want to rip away from the
numerical masochism
hysterical workaholism
compensation for lack of sensation.

i have forgotten how to live,
rotten, now oblivious to what reality does,
sacrificing who I am now, or was, for who I could be.
but that to-be she is only one possible me
a successful breast full of delicious accomplishments.
yes, enticing time now is dimes and cents to my future dollars
a smaller price to pay for a greater later
a relentless satyr of ambition
searing volition to steer myself straight to the top.
but I don't want to wait and be
a fated one-sided, dull-minded, blind signer

i want to be alive.
strive for more than better letters and wonder numbers
get out of this slumber and
find time for stars and clouds and dimension counting
Mars and How's and existential doubting
the so-bad-its-good idea talks
the late-night, fate-type of walks
more coffee shops and railroad stops
beer stein hops and sly eaves drops
i want to tout the now and
scout the crowd for smiles and Guastavino tiled lies
(he knows woe woven into faulted vaults).

i want to drive and be driven.
And given the chance, yes i will.
but until the game is won, tassel hassled and the famous cap flung,
i have to persevere
buckle down for my career
gear up for my dear job.
study, read, feed my mind until it wants to be fed.
beg, plead, lead my mind until it wants to be led.
heed my mind until it is ahead, not overrun.
until all is said and done.

Untitled

Alexandra de Rosa / 2013

I remember
walking along Mem Drive,
it must've been late spring freshman year.
The breeze from the Charles
played through my hair,
and the sun was shining,
smiling down.
I looked up
and smiled back
through the cherry blossoms
across from the sailing pavilion.
I took off my pack
and shoes,
felt the soft grass
underneath my toes,
and finally,
I felt
at home.

Scenery

Natalia Vélez Alicea / 2014

I.
We are walking along the Charles.
It is a cool spring morning: we shiver obstinately in our summer clothes.
You are dodging traffic, darting from tree to tree to steal flowers,
and I sneeze, emptying myself from the nose like an open faucet.

II.
It is a sticky summer afternoon: I am walking alone,
and the heat has melted my dresses down to wet rags.
My head is filled with blackbirds—I sidestep packs of runners in a clumsy waltz,
back curved like a wilting weed. Your hands are in pockets far, far away.

III.
It is a crisp autumn night: the trees are ablaze in a heatless fire.
Your head is full of problems, and you are glued to the window of your room,
wishing you could walk through glass. I am as immobile as a sentinel
in the middlemost Smoot, halfway to Hell, clutching the railing of the Harvard Bridge.
The power is out in Cambridge. The skyline is halved like a wink from God.

IV.
It is a silent winter morning,
and we are hiding under the Longfellow Bridge,
dangling our feet above the sleeping river.
We pass a metal flask from palm to palm like currency—
Your cheeks are red as autumn leaves as you laugh,
head cocked back, hands as slick as summer,
and it is spring in my mind.

The Mind and Hand

Suhas Vijaykumar / 2016

Sweaty, moist digits
stroke the length of the battery.
Brushed metal, mechanical cylinder.
Instrument of pleasure
and destiny.

Never to doubt
their self-sustained purpose,
their enlightened
technoplasticine fetishism.

Ever since Cold Uncle,
with the blind focus of
a bull under a red
flag, penetrated our dreams
with pentagonal Penthouse
and Petroleum jelly.
(squish).

We the flesh
whose other half is fear
lie with Uncle in
masturbatory repose:
Complex accomplices
ready to copulate liquid
metal on the corpses
of his enemies.

View from the Harvard Bridge

Sebastian Denault / 2014

my sailboat arrived in the mail today
I'm writing from just above the bay's foggy infinity
Robert Frost is here too, he says
"the city's ugly, dark and deep"
I want to register my satisfaction with your services
I am now able to take cold showers
and sit on the center of a round table while all about me
the meanings and origins of various
words with the prefix 'copro-' are discussed.
I am now able to abstract every word a stranger speaks
into a sequence of letters and their cabalistic significance
my hair has grown back, thicker than in my boyhood, and
my genital warts have cleared overnight
I want to express my undying commitment to your corporation.
Sincerely,
Satan

“Longing, in Course 6”

Alexandra de Rosa / 2013

i wish i were with you as much as your computer is

i wish your fingers played across my body as often as they press
against each letter on the keyboard

i wish that you would look at me as often as you focus on what's
happening on the screen

that i could be your means of searching and asking and finding
and experiencing what you are curious about

that i could be as much of an extension of your body as your
computer.

i wish i was as patient as your computer:

never fussing until you are there to turn on the power,

reliably efficient -

as knowing of your soul -

and,

i suppose

i would love to be more often held by you

on your lap.

The Dream

Suhas Vijaykumar / 2016

To float mercilessly
through a sea of
individually wrapped,
magnetically disjointed
metallic bolts,
needing no-one.

Square

Suhas Vijaykumar / 2016

“It’s square!”
He shouted,
fists clenched at his sides
as if to crush themselves.

He sat in the corner,
eyes bleeding,
hair matted with sweat,
encaged by four unbroken walls—

white concrete, smeared with grease,
covered in jumbled signs;
the barred window
illuminating his throne.

He rocked back and forth
in his universe of half-measures,
and for a moment
he was right.

dan

Laura Zhang / 2015

you carry his backpack to the kendall station
swiftly following him through the turnstile
while the system beeps, having been cheated a dollar seventy
saying goodbye isn’t difficult
you only have to watch, passive,
as he boards the train and waves at you through the dirty window
through the blur of tears that reminds you of opening your eyes underwater,

straining to see the surface
but the water is dark, very cold
midnight in december and they’ve convinced you to strip
they forced you to strip with their joy and their love
and you climbed over the railing and down the ladder
letting go at the bottom with arms and a willpower that was not your own
you noted the half second delay
before your body screamed
your head sank under and then came back up,

holding the test that you scored low on,
the lowest in the class
shit. it’s hard to study when you’re mourning
it’s hard to study when you’re deciding whether you should cry alone
it’s hard to cry alone.

you escape
you run away, you come back
it’s hard to escape when you tried so hard to make it here
you start to confuse your physical and emotional desires
you want to hit someone and wrestle them to the ground
you want to be struck down, exhaling as you hit the floor
it’s hard to be alone because your anger is a boomerang.

you came here for the robots
and now you sit in your room, thinking about the things you learned about love
it’s not what you came for
but it’s why you stay

you walk back from kendall
and pick a strand of lavender to bring back to your room
you’ve decided that you’re done saying goodbye.
next time they leave you’ll go too
it’s not what you do here
but why.

the years that pass like waves like rapid fire bullets
 only a span (that are an eye for an eye too soon)
 though I hate this fucking place
 as some one one
 to be all the things of all the things
 not only to attain in knowledge
 (cool down) (cool down) (cool down)
 the walls & windows & every space you think is better than your eyes
 you're connecting raw energy
 FOUND PARADISE
 I HAVE TRULY
 you until down broke
 with in a perfect storm
 (strive higher)
 and in these jets
 before you leave
 what what does it mean
 and what is said
 what is said what is said
 TO ENTER is a life of time
 is to behold what is said
 the walls of science
 until at last
 the suspension pen ink
 bid out here
 forever whole preserved, yet
 the buffet
 teaching, low
 in silent
 until at last
 in company
 of friends

13.100: Navigating MIT
Professor J. Ellermeier

Problem Set 1

Due: Monday, November 5th, 2012 at 7:00pm

Question 1: The ice is melting at a rate of $5 \text{ m}^3/\text{hour}$ with an added increase in temperature of 0.5°C per day. How many days til it's gone? The ice is melting. The ice is melting. The ice is melting.

Why aren't we trying to stop this? I shouldn't care how fast it's disappearing. I should just care that it's going to be gone. Let's interrene, not obserre.

Question 2: The machinist screwed up again and misread the part drawing. What did he machine wrong? Wrong. Again. Again. Wrong.

Maybe the drawing's wrong. You have that fancy PhD but that "lowly" employee of yours probably still knows better.

Question 3: What are the maximum endpoint velocities of the robotic arm shown below given a torque of 5NM ? Faster. Faster. Faster.

Can you just stop? There are too many things happening right now. Stop forcing this.

Question 4: Nothing to be done. Nothing to be done?

Is that a question? Can't solve. Too many unknowns.

Oooh, she's been a bitch tonight.
And by bitch I mean this school, no answers, nowhere.
So, I had to down the red bull, sharpen my pencils and hope
office hours would help me.

And you know that MIT should stand for:
Mother-fuckers It's Tough
So then I start the pset
Feeling like a drowned, harassed rat
And I'm greeted, not by TAs at the door,
But our friend, Tim the Beaver
Yes honey, the admin shut down OH
So no help for me, I don't even know what's the t
So I hope you're up girl
Because we are all coming over
Lock the doors, lower the blinds
Fire up the computer and grab your textbook
'Cause I know exactly what we need

Let's do a pset, I gotta do a pset
Lock the doors, tight
Let's have this done, motherfucker
I'm gonna let you do it
Let's do a pset
I gotta do a pset
hack, punt, tool
Let's do a pset
We're gonna spam, and rant, and work
And h-h-honey

A pset is a bitch, just getting on your nerves
We're spilling tea and getting much more work than we deserve
And though the sun is rising, few may choose to sleep
So try an' finish; we'll all hope we're not the one to weep

Let's do a pset, I gotta do a pset
Lock the doors, tight
Let's have this done, motherfucker
I'm gonna let you do it
Let's do a pset
I gotta do a pset
Fail, turn, work
Let's do a pset
We're gonna cuss, and code, and work
And h-h-honey

Institute

Heather E. Acuff / 2013

To learn anything at MIT,
you must be willing
to ask the difficult questions
that haunt your mind, and

you must be willing
to set aside your assumptions
that haunt your mind and
make up your past.

To set aside your assumptions
for the benefit of the world,
make up your past
to fit in with the extraordinary.

For the benefit of the world,
forget who you were
to fit in with the extraordinary,
to be accepting.

Forget who you were
before attending this institution. Be willing
to be accepting
of why it's impossible.

Before attending this institution, be willing
to ask the difficult questions
of why it's impossible
to learn anything at MIT.

Design and Manufacturing II

Sebastian Denault / 2014

Yes

I made God

I manufactured 40,000 christstealthbombers

It is importantwhocares to follow Shewart X-bar charts
6-sigma design and manufacturingdestruction iswhocares
invaluable

Success in industrysatanhellfire is dependentbitch on thorough
theoretical foundations

I am preparingharm youharmyou for a position in
industrydemons satan

I created Godmyself

Made myselfuhhuh into Godsatan

And I saw that Onan was wicked and smote him

Monstrum monstrorum si linguis hominum penis vocatus
apostulus christi

To manufacturedestroythe world

Study hardkillyourself

I mangod made manufacturingdestruction christis

Can't they manufactureobliterate better students

These studentshelpmearchangels

These stststudents

HELP ME

They are wicked in my eyes

Losttenmilliondollarsthenwoundupasaprofessor

I Godman ufacture Chirstself made not born

Amen

Only 'Meal'

Anthony Farrell / 2013

I do not break-fast any more;
I do not sup or dine.
I have no schedule, you see.
I just don't have the time.

Pancakes are an evening fare,
Paninis are at eight.
In fact, before sixteen o'clock
No eggs will touch my plate.

Now, salad could be morning food,
Hors d'oeuvres sont a minuit,
And soup, perhaps, at nine AM;
(That's if I'm not asleep.)

It's odd that crowds should gather to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner—
Inefficient business that leaves nobody a winner. Gladly,
Campus life allows me to eat *whenever* I feel.
So, for me, from August on, there's no more "breakfast"— only "meal".

Broken

Sebastian Denault / 2014

broken
inside
rattling and creaking
billowing smoke
crumbling like a hearty cornbread
crashing gracefully
in constant collision
splattered like an unfortunate bowl of chili
soaring with wings
of terrible miracle
the view up here
is great.

(TOO EMO, NEEDS WORK) ALL YOUR SEVEN DREAMS

Sam Fomon / 2015

go away, wanker
do not fucking enter
you came to the wrong neighborhood,
motherfucker
enter terror, it's alive
me voy me voy me voy me voy

(welcome to the world
of everything you want
all your seven dreams
and nothing you need)

*"But I don't want to go among mad people,"
Alice remarked.*

decadent and depraved
you found the fringe!
modern art installationism 4 ur vu-ing
real flowers, flavored vodka
crack and eigenstates for breakfast

(tyger tyger burning bright,
people not being people
everyone is beautiful, beware)

angel-headed hipsters, heralds of the new christ
make suite love in the machinery of night
tatters and hollow-eyed, open mouth syndrome
the starry dynamo, treasure archipelago

"Oh, you can't help that, we're all mad."

(our lives are defined by chemicals
who wants to rise above their chemistry?
if it doesn't look like the himalayas,
you're not dreaming big enough)

smoke satan, worship crack
viva la vida en ignorancia
read instead, the world loves
you are welcome here

"But how do you know I'm mad?"

I love my mom, my dad, and my dildo
when I am at peace, I cry
I am very upset about many things
if I lose my mind, might the silence seem terrifying?

(the words we write are meaningless)

listen kid, we need to talk

thou art the height of my desire
o baby, when you blink
you make me hungry

that's all there is, there isn't any more
to love you is to need you everywhere
there has to be a way out,

you are my love, my angle,
don't treat me like potato

or are we just getting old?

(sport death; only life can kill you)

you have your way
I have my way
as for the right way...

"You must be, or else you wouldn't have come here."

welcome to the world
of everything you want
all your seven dreams
and nothing you need

(I can't quit you, seriously.)

~

*This poem is a rearranged assemblage of words found on the walls
of Building E2, better known as Senior House.*

Refraction

Marianne Gosciniak / 2015

Today you were assaulted by the sound of silence
And we laughed about it
Other circumstances would warrant bitter remonstrations,
Bitter as a concentrated ammonia solution,
To which I calculate the pH with the Henderson-Hasselbalch equation,
(that equation of brevity using logarithms and initial concentration)
A reflection of our affinity,
As it avoids the ICE box of cold mortality
And precious seconds better spent drinking coffee,
Having insomniac dreams,
Not needing to choose to neglect
The X in the problem which is good because neglecting
Leads to self-reflecting
And angles of reflection, invariable calling to mind
Angles of depression. Though if you ask me
Depression looks the same from any view; not unlike
My old friend, darkness.

Barker Library

Sebastian Denault / 2014

If I read every book in this library
If I read every page on wikipedia
If I take every class at MIT
If I write a poem consisting entirely of winning spelling bee words

there will never come a time when I'm done
when starting won't be impossible
when you won't feel like throwing this book out
storming off to make your deeds commensurate with your lofty ambitions
storm off to revenge your father
except that that action involves getting an education
and you move away to study at a prestigious school and gradually forget
why you're alive
you doubt there was ever a reason, and you spend hours in a library
boiling with misplaced rage
the rage is in a pressure vessel made of apathy
the pressure vessel meets ASME standards, will leak before it bursts

and then, maybe sleep

Rosa Manzo / 2016

tired.
i can't.
tired, i breathe.
slowly,
i am
but i'm tired.
and so i sleep

but i'm still tired.
within the confines of my mind,
in my sleep,
tiredness
nothing more to find.
within oblivion,
abysmal sounds,
inexistent, in existence,
i am there.

there, in sounds;
in silence. there,
working, waking, doing.
there.

shake, convulse,
eat.
eat before you sleep.
eat - before, after - eat.
don't forget to eat
and don't forget
you have to breathe.

breathe, sleep
breathe, eat
but to eat and sleep
is surreal.
surreal, cereal, serial.

cereal to eat
in the serials of sleep
in a surreal meet.

meet to be,
meat to eat
meeting to eat meat
to eat and breathe,
and then,
maybe sleep.



Afterword

Katy Gero / 2013

I wish to thank, heartily, all those who helped make this happen: first and foremost my two poetry teachers this term, Erica Funkhouser and Prof. Fuller, both of whom not only swiftly offered to help make this happen, but also repeatably told me it was a good idea, the most valuable thing one can tell another person.

Alexandriya Edmonds and Luke Plummer were my illustrious co-judges, who gave their time during the busiest part of the semester to read and re-read poems and pretended, at all points, like I knew what I was doing. Paulina Mustafa, Sebastian Denault, and the amazing Ned Burnell graciously helped with the publication itself and also pretended like I knew what I was doing, although they all had far more experience than I in making a chapbook. Tim Yang designed the cover of the book, as well as all of publicity content. Angelique Nehmzow coordinated all of the submissions.

I hope you enjoyed your time here.



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