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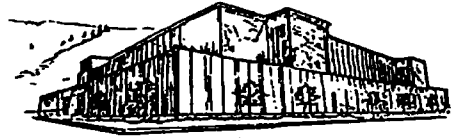
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Date: July 27, 2004

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EVERYDAY POETRY

By

Nicole R. Pastian

B.A. University of Montana, Missoula, 1998

B.M.E. University of Montana, Missoula, 1999

presented in partial fulfillment of the

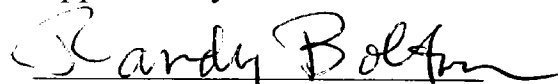
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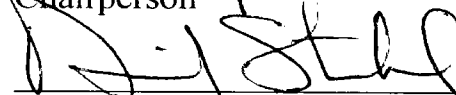
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Everyday Poetry

Committee Chair: Dr. Randy Bolton 

Poems based on happenings and emotions encountered in the author's life during the period of one year were created from the perspective of "Beginner's Mind." Having no prior experience writing poetry, research into the writing process, numerous drafts, revisions, and written critiques guided the progress of this project. The process allowed the author to begin a project in an unfamiliar art and see it through to completion. Revision is valuable to the understanding that creation is a process. The connection between teacher and artist becomes clear, as the same research and revision process used by the author as an artist is the same one used by students when they are introduced to unfamiliar knowledge and are aiming for a goal.

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PROJECT INTENT

The intent of the Final Creative Project was to continue writing and editing the existing body of work from the Field Project and also to explore additional autobiographical writing, fictional writing, and poetry. The completed Final Creative Project is a collection of poetry titled Everyday Poetry.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Final Creative Project was achieved through many small accomplishments. Looking back to the Final Creative Project Proposal, I was able to see clearly what I intended to do and what was actually completed.

My personal journal was key to this project. As an avid journal writer, I have numerous books spanning ten years of my life, each journal containing events, emotions and thoughts over that time. It is in the personal journal that I began to formulate my work. When I did not have my journal, a notebook was with me at all times to write down descriptions, ideas, thoughts, and everything else that might be of use. Information was gathered and documented in the journal or notebook without judgment of the source or self, and was gathered solely on the basis of being interesting, helpful, or inspiring.

Information on writing styles and a general 'how-to' were researched by reading selected materials listed in my Final Creative Project Proposal and consulting with my project advisor for four additional references. Since this project is my second attempt at writing, but my first 'formal' and guided attempt, the publications were all very helpful in

guiding my process. In addition to reading the materials, a notebook was always available to write down phrases of interest, help, truth, and inspiration. This notebook was of particular help as I drafted and edited my work, as it came to contain many ideas, techniques, and perspectives on the writing craft.

During my growth as a writer, I found it important to work every day. With the Field Project, I procrastinated and ended up with a large body of prose that was raw, unedited, and contained many mistakes and often too much information. I did not start early enough to be able to put the work aside and come back to it with a fresh perspective.

While writing Everyday Poetry, I was able to pace myself in a more appropriate and conducive way. When the school year started, I made it a point to either work through past journals in search of possible draft topics or read selections from the bibliography and take notes every day. As the project progressed, I soon realized that a little bit of work every day added up to a lot of work over time. As I worked through drafts and edits, I was able to put the work away at times and come back to it with a fresh mind. Pacing is a very important part of the writing process, and I am pleased to have accomplished my pacing goal.

One of the more difficult goals to accomplish was to send drafts of work to my project advisor. I am not the type that generally seeks help, and I often find it difficult to do so. My project advisor was helpful in suggesting new techniques and ideas, and also in really making me think about and define exactly what it was I was trying to say. Because I solicited critiques from my project advisor, I was able to produce stronger and more effective poetry.

Over the course of the project, I have created fifty-two draft poems, fifty of which were included in the first formal draft. Upon revision, the body of poetry contained thirty-six poems. Each poem went through at least four and occasionally up to ten drafts before finalization. All drafts are contained in my personal materials. It is pleasing to see that I have accomplished a substantial body of poetry that has undergone many drafts, edits, and changes.

EXPECTED RESULTS

I am pleased to have achieved so many of my expected results for this Final Creative Project. I continued writing avidly in my journal and carried a notebook with me. I began immediate work reading, researching, and drafting a body of work. I completed my first workable draft in May and my second with edits in June. My final body of work and assessment will be complete for graduation this summer.

UNEXPECTED RESULTS

As I began to write, I considered the autobiographical topics I wanted to write about. Several independent stories came to mind, but I lacked a common theme to tie them together. I began several pieces of fictional writing, but found right away that this was fruitless. I did not own that work.

In summer 2003 I had an amazing time in Dr. Bolton's Creative Writing class. It was one I looked forward to. I enjoyed drafting, editing, thinking about, and finding new

ways to express myself with words. At the end of that class, I had discovered a new voice that needed exposure.

As I began my research and reading for this project, I realized that I no longer wanted to attempt prose and was intrigued by the challenge of poetry. I wanted something personal yet not too revealing, and I had already tried my hand at prose. I was frightened of this shift because my only experience with poetry was Dr. Bolton's class, but I welcomed the challenge. I seek a challenge, and this project was definitely a challenge.

I found that as I drafted the poetry, it could be autobiographical, but without implications or divulgence of personal information about me, or those around me. I could share my poetry with everyone, and it would not cause strained or lost friendships because it moved to the universal in its expression.

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

Everyday Poetry was significant in several ways, the most important being how the project continued to move me forward as an artist, and more importantly, as a person. I had numerous ideas for the Final Creative Project including: snippit quilting, sculpture, visual art, and being a Teacher's Assistant. After much thought and discussion with my project advisor, we both agreed that writing for the Field Project, even though it was rough and unedited, was a catalyst in my positive growth as an artist and person because that writing forced me to take a clear look at who I am, how I think, act, and react, and my relationships with those around me.

As I thought over my prospective ideas for the Final Creative Project, and decided that writing was the best choice for my continued personal growth and learning as an artist and person.

As I began to draft the poetry, I began to think about my experiences, reactions to situations, and decisions I have made. I realized all of those things comprise who we are. As I was drafting poetry based on these experiences, reactions, and decisions, I was forced to think about the future. How would a different reaction have changed things? Would it have helped? Hindered? What would I do in the same situation in the future?

As my writing progressed, I felt that the act of writing put me back in control of my life. Writing helped me deal with many life issues in a non-destructive, non-self destructive, positive way. I met those issues head on, was forced to deal with them, and resolved them in a positive way through writing.

The second major significance of Everyday Poetry was that it allowed me to try a new discipline from the beginner's mind. As a musician, having musical projects denied forced me to go outside my comfort zone and into a different creative field. I had always wanted to be a writer, and until the Field Project did not have the confidence to do it. The revision process was especially helpful in working through a new field. I could experiment with my poems as I considered their meaning and essence. Each revision helped me become clear on the point of each poem. Revising forced me to think about each poem as a separate work of art. I was not done revising a poem until it could stand on its own with clear meaning and essence, and my project was not complete until all the poems in the collection were strong.

The third significance of this project is my appreciation for the body of work that I composed and that *I own*. Owning the work is very significant to me. I have reached that dream of being a writer. This work is autobiographical and very personal to me, and is titled Everyday Poetry because the poems are about things I think of every day. My job, life, love, family, curiosities, and favorite places are all included. I spent a time each day for a period of a year thinking about my every day things in an artistic way. I have taken every day thoughts and ideas and turned them into a body of work I am proud to say that I own.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARTIST AND TEACHER

The writing of Everyday Poetry has helped me become a better artist, a better teacher, to see the correlation between artist and teacher, and to begin and complete a project from the beginner's mind in an unfamiliar field.

Being unfamiliar with writing and especially poetry, I began reading and taking notes from various suggested resources. As I was reading and taking notes, I was going through personal journals noting anything of interest, value, novelty, or inspiration. It was in this stage of the process that I realized I would like to write poetry and not prose.

I began to draft poems by filling notebook pages with the notes from my journals. The first drafts looked more like jumbled notes than poems. I wanted to be sure I had all topics included and had everything in one location. Each poem was identified by a poem number and a draft number and placed in a binder. Each page was tagged with this information at the top for easy finding in the binder.

After each poem had an initial draft, I started at the beginning and began to work each poem through drafts one at a time. I found it was helpful to stay working with one poem until I had a final draft before moving to the next one. I worked through the poetry in this sequential order. As I worked through the poetry this way, I realized some poems only took a few drafts to say what I wanted them to, and others were taking numerous drafts and still not quite communicating clearly. All drafts were tagged and placed in the binder sequentially.

When I was comfortable with the drafts I had, I compiled the first working draft of Everyday Poetry and sent it to my project advisor. This was early May, and by mid May I had a completely critiqued body of work returned to me. I was surprised to find that my advisor had commented on all fifty poems. I read the comments, and realized I had much work to do with my poetry. My initial response was one of shock, as I was not expecting such personal attention by my project advisor. I felt very overwhelmed, and for a bit of time wondered if I was up to the task at hand.

After taking two weeks off from the project, I was able to rework and edit from a fresh perspective. That was very helpful to me. I ordered the poems from easiest to edit (typographical errors or no corrections) to most difficult to edit (poems that were not speaking clearly to their essence or point).

With each poem, I took my advisor's comments into consideration. Since I was approaching this from the beginner's mind, I was thankful for the direction. At times I felt that the comments were very helpful (changing the order of lines, reorganizing, clearing up the essence) and at times I felt the comments would change the poem too much (that it would no longer say what I intended it to say). As each poem went through

additional drafts, I referred to the notes I had taken from my readings about style, content, and direction in writing. During this stage of the process, I was thankful to have taken notes from my resources.

Most of the poems finished stronger and with more clarity and focus after this reworking, but fourteen poems were cut from the second working draft of Everyday Poetry. I felt that even with my advisor's comments, the resources, and numerous attempts at reframing and reorganizing they were not communicating as I wanted them to. I realized at this point that I would rather have a smaller number of poems in my collection that were strong and conveyed my intent clearly. The second working draft does that.

In this draft I revoked the titles placed on the poems. Titling the poems was hard, and often the titles did not match the subjects of the poems. I chose at this time to take away the titles and simply address the poems by the numbers in which they appear in the second working draft. I am comfortable with the reader not having preconceived ideas about the poem based on the title, as each reader will react and interact with each poem on different levels.

Through the writing and revising of Everyday Poetry, I realized that writing is a process. I understand now that no writer ever gets it right on the first try. They may come close, but every piece of writing needs editing and refinement. I was able to not judge myself based on the number of edits each poem took, but rather by the quality of the finished product.

I discovered that writing is enjoyable and necessary. I have always sought ways to express myself in words, and I believe poetry is the perfect venue for that. I will

continue to write poems on a personal basis, with publication attempts. The simple joy of the process is what will inspire me to continue.

I have learned to have confidence in my writing. I own this work, and that makes me an artist that has been successful in creating a body of work in an unfamiliar field from the very beginning to the very end of the process.

In addition to making me a better artist, Everyday Poetry has made me a better teacher. Even though my personal poetry may not come widely into play in my general music and band classrooms, I have experience starting at the very beginning of something and seeing it all the way through. This skill is one we teach our students, and it is very important that we as teachers do not forget what that is like. It is just as hard for that beginning band student to pick up an instrument he's never played and try to make a sound on it and be working toward the goal of the first concert as it is for a musician to produce a body of poetry for a Master of Arts program.

It is important to see the process broken down into manageable sections and worked through slowly. It is important to see progress in any endeavor. I have shared my process with my students as it is important for them to see teachers struggling with things, taking on new endeavors, and trying to put themselves back in the beginning place. I have more understanding and tolerance of my student's struggles, having experienced them firsthand through this project. The correlation between artist and teacher is that process we all go through to learn new material, to create, and to be willing to try something new.

My writing has really opened my eyes to what it takes to start at the beginning of a new discipline and complete a project of quality and substance. I am proud to say that I am the author of Everyday Poetry.

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Everyday Poetry

By

Nicole R. Pastian

1.

I don't believe
your zen bullshit
today.

Clutching every word
used to make me happy.
Fuck that.

You'll never be
able to own up
to anything.

I can't stand
your rebuttal smile
when I call your bluff.

My body burns angry
with blue orange embers
of ruin.

2.

My vehement voice frightens some,
you ignore.

When drowning is your only choice,
lies get louder.

Everything I fought to trust unraveled,
false truth exposed.

I vomit hurt and your smooth cocktail
designed of equal parts
never planned,
never meant,
we'll talk someday,
we'll never dance again.

3.

no one...

watches me do this

will see me hurt

trusts us

wants us together

will let me choose on my own

believes the only way out is through

knows the only way through is away

4.

Friday
no response
canonical breakdown
again

scream
won't listen
you know
again

smooth
work it
make believe
again

lies
claimed once
not sure
again

5.

Purple iridescent
oil nautilus
floats underneath me
on a river.

Tiny minnows
camouflaged in silt
dart,
change,
grow.

Schools of thinking reflect light
while bashed against rocks
by upstream currents.

6.

Almost nothing better
turned sorry see ya later
not long thereafter
guilt and surprise
collided at my door.

Your embrace around my hips
lust led to red sheets
but avoided lips
yet passion stains
not with silence
but pleasant games
on terms agreed.

I won that bet
I hit the core
but I absolve you as you leave
you won't come back as per the score
when I mean nothing
past that door.

7.

I can smile
when I let it go
that outside image
of nice girl
my sexy vixen hidden in red
with a beautifully tarnished
heart of gold
is stronger than I am knowing.

8.

If I forget to breathe
my heart skips beats
will the sun always rise?
set?
Is tomorrow another day,
earth beneath?

Yes,
I used to think
I would always wake up breathing
heart beating.

But when my God lies still
in a hospital bed
gray and pale,
doubt rushes in.

Faith in your God is gone
two and a half minute eternity
no heartbeat
no breath
shock reality back
eyes open to a hum.

The sun did rise
set
on another day
earth beneath.

I don't trust
but we're still here.

9.

Ask me what I want that I can't have.

Looking in the mirror

black lace gown

red satin robe

dark shadowed eyes

perfect hair

I feel ridiculous but beautiful.

Ask me why I go to extremes

to get your attention

knowing you'll never be mine.

10.

I can stand up to you
until temptation breaks me down.
You shouldn't be here
but you won't leave.
My mind screams stay
my voice whispers please.
When you kiss me
I succumb to my addiction.

11.

Luscious seductress she-devil
models sheer red
as she curls her lips
into a smile.
Her sights are set
you are caught
in emerald eyes' mesmerizing glint.
Her sultry stare
takes control.
Your mouth open to taste delight
coming closer
yet she vanishes...

12.

beauty inducing
slick stoppage of thrust
put your hands on my body
here
we move together
black lace stretching
over shimmering skin
both softly sweating
as quiet comments
lick my ears
nip my neck
our curves changing
joined
roll top to bottom
breath heaving
while anticipation glistens
builds
tongues tickle whispers
tasting shaven skin
captivating pleasure
don't stop
on the edge
our lust demands
you fast inside me
gripped tight
you beg for mercy
from the red goddess!

13.

Bastard!
Let`s talk about obligations?
Want me on a pedestal
at your whim
to admire at will?
Bullshit!
I admire myself.
Direction,
determination,
unstoppable.
move,
free,
grow,
stretch,
hold me?
No you don`t!
Stop wasting my time,
shut up and do the work!
Consider it done!
Good.
Now go back to your whore wife.
I`m not going to wait
to patch your fuck up.

14.

So much fun
the jazz you and I played
years ago
when we were kids.
Our own rhythm
against the world
you bass
I keys.
Our first time running away together
that day we stole the show!
On stage with the changes,
through the changes.
You my bass line,
I your harmony.

15.

I let you go
I don't know how
I worked it out
I'm happy now
I've lost the cloud
I'm not tied down
I'm truly free
I believe in me

16.

Opened the door
to find you
standing in the rain

Stood surprised
as you came inside
wasn't turned on, really...

Blushing as you call me beautiful
hair undone
yesterday's mascara

I felt awkward
not having
the outward appearance of such

17.

When
evening
sun
glints
on
shallow
running
water,
I
think
of
everything
slow
and
beautiful.

18.

Dirt colored sculpins
still and staring
from the river bottom.
Tiny
tinier
tiniest fish
safe under rocks.
in shadows.
Frogs
I don't actually see
until they plop
toward the shore.
Rock bugs
carrying stone homes
crawl
up and over
tip
tumble
try again.

19.

Stellar's Jays
campsite crows
blue plumaged punks
with mohawks
shouting obscenities.
Hummingbirds
now more than ever
dog fighting warplanes
dive bombers
landing in trees
white bellied babies chirp
a new song to me.

20.

We do not make choices.
Specificity is conflict.
Specifically—
Can we put specifics
on an undercurrent
from rapids rushing
through forced canyons
searching for the point
of existence
ending in
blue green pools
appearing stagnate
at the bottom of caverns
filled with water
while the ignored and denied
bubble up?

21.

I resent
pinning myself down
with fake obligations.

I love your element of surprise.
I'm always dodging the artful shaft.
It's the thrill that thrills me.

Your diction
perfection
pouring smooth over my body
with bent intent.

22.

Don't judge me,
you pristine
 falsely righteous
 just want the world to think you know something
 people are more accepting than they let on
 hypocrite!
I won't miss my life
because I've lived it
I'm honest,
not golden,
I won't be the one in hell
when bad befalls fake.

23.

Everything displaced
Cyclone of shit
What is isn't
Isn't is.
No new consideration becomes the past
that is that,
that is fine.

24.

On an evening
when I don't imagine company
I listen to the rain
with the window open.

The cool air
carries a refreshing breeze
with a misty chill
and a symphony
of pat
tap
plink
and splot's
wet
slothy
slosh.

All of this
on a stoplight corner
of sudden squeals
shifting gears
big bass
cars sans mufflers
ambulance sirens
and tonight the rain
all play their parts.

25.

You pull your shit.
I let you have it.
Damn sure of how I feel.
Plan changers
Frustrate me
This is not okay!
Put my foot down
But not my spirits
Fuck that!
Life`s too short.

26.

Never up when I don't have to be
except today
swimsuit on
contemplate as I walk to the pool.

Outside starry dark
steaming springs
a view surreal
that seems not to exist.

Slow sun
rises speck by speck
through misty steam
wish you were here.

Bubbles pop
tickle burst kiss my skin
caress me
as I hope you always will.

In meditative silence
peaceful thoughts of you
put a bright disposition
on my day
as dark gives in
very slowly to light.

27.

Cynical imaginations disregard value
disparate elements
stories cry out to be told.
Do we write to shut them up?

Write, revise,
omit needless words
do not be ashamed
do not be your worst judge.

Dig artifacts
clean up and polish
make intriguing reader's heart possessed.

Be brave, unique,
and show the art
The scariest moment is always right before you start.

28.

Those
who
are
fearless
of
failure
succeed.

29.

You are a wrecking ball
to the wall of bricks
I've spent so much time
building up.

30.

I dream
that I can rant
in poetry.

31.

I wanted you to listen
to my bad day.
You brought p all the wrong things
then left angry.

Come back later?
You're already there
on my back porch
white carnation in hand.

Peppermint heaven
shyly given with a kiss
this first time
you were sorry.

32.

like a swimming duck
in a plastic covered public pool
in gray evening

like a seedling viola
growing best between
grass and patio

like a purple lamplight shadow
hiding behind a dumpster
in winter

I am fifty pounds less
but afraid I look worse
than I ever have

33.

My devil love
has
brown eyes
long black hair
a gorgeous smile
hard working hands
perfect height

My devil love
likes
beautiful pictures of me
black satin
leopard lace
my hot body
in cool red sheets

My devil love
loves
springing chaos
making me daydream
flushing skin
rushing heart
turning me on

My devil love
teases
nips my neck
lips on breasts
pushes his weight on my body
making me beg for

My devil love
pleases me
his strong pointed wings
wrap around me
from behind
protecting me
from reality

34.

I will never give in
to the stupid fat bitch
the knocked up high school dropout
who works one day a week
at a gas station
to buy cigarettes.

Marching her fat ass
in to the superintendent
her complaint is
“she picks on my girls
because she told them to shower”
and says,
“I can’t deal with her
from past experience.”

I roll my eyes
while sitting at the eight a.m. meeting
I’m told to be at
where I’m deemed by her as
“Pathetic,
not a qualified teacher,” and
“completely out of line”
and also told,
“do you know how hard it is
to get a teenage girl
to take a shower?”

And I have to be ‘professional’ and take this?

I’d love to tell you—
“I’m sorry you hold grudges
you spineless fat cow,
and don’t think for a second
your fucking pathetic slob ass
makes a difference to me.
I didn’t earn three degrees
to be told what to do
by white trash.”

35.

hot soak in bubbles
coconut lime
scents smooth shaven skin
the damp air
humid with anticipation clings thick
as leopard lace
covers yet reveals
coming to you now
I enter slowly
my eyes light up
on the edge where I smile
I lean close
with lips on lips
hands in our hair
heat of our bodies
I love this feeling
perfect fit

36.

barely awake
turned on the light
not much time
late at night

lay on my chest
feather touch
on my back
magical articulation

turn to my side
your hands on my chest
then tracing my face
that you can't resist to touch

"I wish I was beautiful."
"You are, oh you are."
"How did I deserve this?"
"Maybe it's what you needed."

you left my side
when you had to go
I sat up, reaching
for this evaporating dream