

*where the cherry tree grows*  
grace osborn



Image credit: <https://www.thisoldhouse.com/gardening/21322409/autumn-cherry-trees>

## Preface

Over the course of this unit, I surprisingly gravitated mostly towards the sestina and the golden shovel poem. Usually, I don't like being told what to do, especially with my writing. In this case, though, I actually enjoyed the comfort of writing within a structure. The sestina in particular was a lot of fun to write. I wrote it based off of my NaNoWriMo novel, which is called Sylvia. The novel was inspired by the album Hospice by the Antlers, which is why the poem is called Hospice. Hospice is one of my favorite albums of all time and a form of poetry that lends itself to narrative structure was the perfect opportunity to write about it. This poem is probably the one I am most proud of. I haven't written a lot of fixed form poetry, especially in a format as complicated as the sestina, and I think that I handled it pretty well. I feel that I was able to paint a clear picture of the story with small details, which was my main goal when writing the poem.

The poem that was most challenging to write was the movement poem about the Garbage concert. Garbage is one of my favorite bands of all time, and I was excited to write about Shirley Manson (the lead singer) because I think she's very cool. However, I found that being purposeful about including verbs and making my poem come to life through action slowed my writing process down considerably. I found myself searching for lists of verbs I could use and constantly grappling for the right words.

Through writing this collection of poetry, I learned that I often gravitate towards the same few topics when writing poetry. I pull from one of about three of my most formative life experiences and go from there. As I continue to grow as a writer, I would like to learn to write about other experiences, especially broader social issues and narrative stories about people other than myself. I did this once, in my sestina, but the rest of these poems are about the same life experience I had. Despite this limitation, I was able to spin my portfolio into something new by telling a broader story. The poems are ordered in this way for a reason, and I carefully considered how the poems built on each other to end with one fully developed, complete idea. I actually wrote the last haiku for the sole purpose of concluding this narrative I created.

**you may forget the warmth he gave (golden shovel)**  
**after Emily Dickinson's "47"**

<one poem inspired by another poem>

on the back porch laid my heart  
just above the place where We  
laid together, miles away. no one will  
find us, now i claw to forget  
the red sheen, indentations of Him

when my brain sprints, it always finds You  
Your soft, wretched hands and  
crushed cherries, "i  
want you tonight"

a dull Knife was You  
i was Locked Away by the first of may  
clutching Our dwindling metal underbelly, "forget  
it all". they command, "the  
arms around your warmth  
will get weaker and he  
will fade, what he gave

was rancid" and i  
think i'm starting to get my will  
again, but to forget  
is never an option, the  
crushing of my hip bones the blinding light

red ribbons strangle me when  
i think of You  
the Guilt oh god, i have  
shattered a thousand vases what have i done  
the only option was to pray  
to ask the vines, stained, to tell  
me to stop breathing tell me

the hands were supposed to be there that  
my disheveled pink hair was picturesque. i  
wrung out my arms and legs but my stickiness wouldn't dissipate. may  
i let it go? would you be angry? would you know? the thoughts, straight  
were solid, as the world began to dim, struggling to find where you end and i begin.

**47**

**Emily Dickinson**

Heart! We will forget him!

You and I -- tonight!

You may forget the warmth he gave --

I will forget the light!

When you have done, pray tell me

That I may straight begin!

Haste! lest while you're lagging

I remember him!

## **garbage concert** (movement poem)

<free form poem>

sound tearing across the stage  
quiet exploding into orange, red, pink  
energy contained in sharp movements  
a constant, vibrating melody  
red hair shimmers into warm crimson tones

the guitar croons and melds with the pulsing voice  
auburn vibrations snake through the floor and our souls  
a low beat builds and crests  
in the sound of the crashing cymbals

gold cracks across the lines of our vision  
apprehensive greens scamper out of speakers  
a sweet strawberry blonde disembouges, salty  
into our awaiting eyes

arms link together in solidarity  
a collective scream scratches at the walls  
in this moment, united

a strong scent of summer  
as the sugared, red, candied notes  
rest, defrosting, on our tongues.

## **hospice (sestina)**

<narrative poem>

thirteen, she sat hollow-eyed on the ground  
paintings strewn around her like flowers  
the moonlight whispering across her vacant eyes  
father's words tight and expansive in her ears  
the little room shrouded in darkness  
her fingertips softly pleading

her mother was always pleading  
as the glass figurines hit the ground  
the women could hide in darkness  
while their bruises bloomed like flowers  
the father's sharp ever-present ears  
would rest, and the women shut their eyes

the daughter had searching eyes  
her prolific paintings always pleading  
for father's praise to bless her ears  
instead, he shoved her to the ground  
her pens spilled like flowers  
as she cried into the darkness

when she left she was trailed by darkness  
she tried to seal her eyes  
willing the growth of joy like flowers  
spent her whole life pleading  
barely off the ground  
any praises a sweet honey to her ears

the cancer left a ringing in ears  
destined to never depart from darkness  
determined to claw herself away from the ground  
shove away the pitying eyes  
she would never again be pleading  
her strength grew like concrete flowers

the doctor caressed her flowers  
whispered love into her ears  
but she could not forget the pleading  
he broke into her darkness  
hot tears slicing in her eyes

when she shoved him to the ground

he got up off the ground

loving tears in his eyes

as her sick body fell to the darkness

**to burn is to let go** (burning of the old year response)

to burn is to let go, to forget  
and i won't, i couldn't, i never will

months ago  
steeped in my own salt and iron  
i vowed never to throw the past away  
burning or otherwise

to burn is to let go  
to forget  
and make yourself vulnerable  
again  
to the things that tore you before

and i won't, i couldn't, i never will  
i am still not well  
my clawing, shaking efforts to convince myself otherwise-  
have lost their pull

to burn is to let go  
to forget  
to pull a weed  
without its root

these tendrils  
encircle my forearms,  
my thighs, my heart  
and if i burnt them  
id burn myself too

and i told someone i love  
id never do that again

so instead of burning  
i trim and prune the  
rancid, wretched plant  
that has interlaced its vines  
with mine

a weeping wad of capillaries  
It and i, intertwined



i can't get rid of it, but  
i can care for it  
keep it from blocking  
my airways, and  
spilling, caked in red  
out of my skin

to burn is to let go  
to forget  
and i won't, i couldn't, i never will

**absconsion. n.**

*flight, disappearance, or an escape from custody. an instance of this*

Apparition, apprehension,  
Buried, barely able to breathe  
Sealed in a serrated circle  
Captured, cold, can I ever leave?  
Outside, over me, light whispers  
New sight, nearing my eyes  
Scared, shaking, it kisses my fingertips  
Iridescent, yellow expands  
Over this place, into its soft hands  
Never, never going back again

**where the cherry tree grows (haiku)**

<fixed form poem>

cracks in the concrete  
yellow warmth glows, sweet scent of growth  
where the cherry tree grows

## Writing Workshop Reflection

I selected my movement poem about the Garbage concert for the writing workshop because when I finished my draft, I still felt the poem was incomplete. I felt that it was lacking something but I wasn't quite sure what. I hoped that the writing workshop could illuminate what I was missing in my poem. I was hoping to receive feedback about the flow of the stanzas and how I could better display the intersection of color and sound. I believe that I have a little bit of synesthesia, which is when the senses intertwine. I can often taste and hear certain colors. I was hoping to accurately describe and immerse others in this idea through my movement poem. The feedback I got was mostly useful, and I took a lot of it to heart through my revisions. The main piece of feedback my peers gave me was to include more lines about the interaction of color and sound. I added one more stanza and added more detail to my second stanza in response to this. I also added a stanza about the intermingling of taste and sound to add to the sense-blending effect of the poem. The other prominent piece of feedback was that the ending of the poem felt cut off and abrupt. I didn't realize this was the case at all, but I added another stanza after my original final one to combat this. The workshop experience allowed me to see limitations of my writing I wouldn't have otherwise. I often hesitate to share my writing with others because I feel I am critical enough of myself to catch all of my potential literary shortcomings, but this experience helped me to see that this is not always true. In the future, I will keep my objectives narrowly focused so that I can receive the most useful feedback.