

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Scott Garson, English

Gaspings of a Miracle: Poetry of Identity and Terminal Illness

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These poems are taken from a larger collection included in the chapbook I wrote for an Advanced Poetry class in the Spring of 2020. The work centers around my twenty-three years of living with a terminal illness and undergoing three heart transplants, other operations, procedures, sicknesses, lengthy hospital stays, and the disorienting fluctuations between sickness and health throughout. Exploring these experiences using poetry as a medium with no boundaries, I am able to expose the otherwise ineffable underlying structure of my own identity, desires, and memories, and the ways in which they are—and are not—connected to my body and the more preternatural aspects of being a multiple organ transplant recipient. On the page, this poetry often takes strange forms, meandering across spaces and utilizing erasure, enjambment, and lack of punctuation to evoke the feelings of disorder, uncertainty, and confusion that my experiences exude. Although that effect is less pronounced in my oral readings, I make use of alliteration, consonance, and other sound work to try to bring those feelings from my audience's eyes to their ears. Many of my individual poems are best able to be understood within a collection, where they can communicate with other work and be given context. This proved challenging for choosing which poems to include in my reading, but I settled on a few that I feel best represent the overall body of work, and that I feel best encompass the wide range of emotions and forms present in my poetry.