

roofless

by

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

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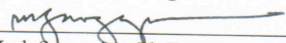
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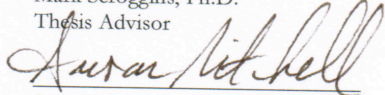
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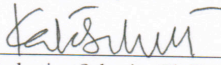
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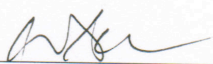
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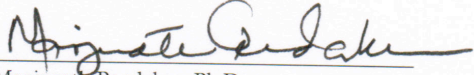
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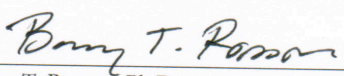
  
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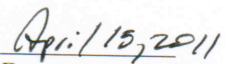
  
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## Abstract

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*roofless* is a space created by my poems.

Here, the natural world is consumed - a physical reality and an internal one. It is walled, but roofless - a contained space. Elements are absorbed, same energies interacting within us that work around us - the natural forces of gravitation and electromagnetism, fire and water, growth, and time. Fundamental interactions in nature, forces that hold the universe together are treated as symbolic of the human experience.

The sense of rooflessness is an essential theme to my thesis. There is a constant return to the sky. The shifting clouds, the stages of the sun and the moon mimic a traveling through time, a constant change. There is a given feeling of freedom and confinement. There is a vulnerability, a destitution, and a lack of shelter. The open sky, always out of reach, is a tease to be free. Though it also hints at a feeling of oneness, a symbolic relation between the divine and the human. The open, uninterrupted path for direct prayer. Roofless indicates a continuous linkage between the ground and the sky, between rain and dirt, between nature and humankind.

roofless

She grew poems .....	1
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---

She grew poems  
in her head.

seeds seemingly hollow  
climb in vines  
through

blankness

suspended  
past

far past,  
fog  
neons  
sky

weturnaroundtowatch

backseat smoke  
===== line up quietly in  
the sun

rain glows

pale

rinsed light.

poems without titles are  
homeless

There is something lost. floating  
my head, in broken orbit.

I want an end, a beginning      the empty space.

a slowing down  
a rush I can put my finger on, and stop.

the white  
sand soaking in miles of warm water.

air.

I don't need anybody.      But I do.

I will be gone.  
I won't feel it.

What kind of knowledge is this?

It needs to stop.



There's a moth wandering away from the light  
the sun is setting, maybe it's already gone.  
they will be gone too.

Empty sky

the moon burns out.

I look for words, but I might not need them.

*What is it saying?* I am not listening.

Why are you?

I don't criss cross these lines.

I create diamonds.

Shades are stains of a sort.

they smelled like earth all day

untrimmed

finger nails            hiding            unused dirt.

sunburnt backs held the weight

*of bird feathers*

glued against skin

They flew,

on carts

down aisles in the grocery store

and fingered their names in mud

slowly erased

ends of rainbows  
circle the brown of their eyes.

bloody knees  
healed

stand  
still

and momentarily turn

the tires of bikes

hiding

and seeking.

It tips

sky blue

who's it

not you.

sitting inside cars

pretending we could drive them

sneaking out

in the monsoons, dancing

till our panties were drenched

and we'd pee the rain.

for all the flocks

of birds we clapped for,

and all the ones we became.

The view from our terrace  
identifying our garbage in the empty plot,

figuring out

clouds, watching the sun disappear behind a line of roofless houses

our teeth  
placed with hope  
under our pillows

gravity

this force is negligible.

it cannot  
hold us down

They may toss us  
into a descending red sun

diffuse and nip us  
black, after a dim glow

but even the planets  
bend between us

empty bottles  
lined up to form  
constellations  
and their stars

the sky  
out of order

rests on our floor

Haven

he lays his head  
on my chest

birds hiding in trees

no wind to disturb  
a clear sky

my fingers comb  
break his hair free

a locket dangling on his chest

the sound of  
bangles, jingling  
against  
themselves

red embers radiate

fail to flame

ash  
and cinders

khol rimmed eyes

Heat Lightning

a clock ticks

but time

has swelled at our window,  
and left.

We burn

in silence,  
fallen softly over our ears

our bodies ignite  
                  slow   breathing  
electricity

we burn

till the sky  
          melts  
          back into the ground

and mute stars

turn blue  
          and

out



We were memories

We lingered on

the way tail still moves

cut

from a lizard's body

the soul, dead.

Secret fertility

this one  
didn't know anyone

this one was quiet  
was lost

past  
shadows                      on the wall.

darkness drawing out stars

spacing trees

trees have space                      within them.

the putting forth of flowers and fruits is always  
taking place in them.

they sicken  
and dry

put forth flowers  
outside stink    dirt  
oxygen

sacred perfume

Sit down in the fire

your eyes  
still

full of hail, rain, snow.

Drink water  
for the sake of this fire  
heat sitting quietly, talking.

Maybe it was something you prayed for.

Can you remember

if it came from a warm heart  
or Hell radiating  
your body thin  
flesh and skin your soul thinks  
it's air that makes it move.

prayers travel like the sun,  
slow under the earth limping  
pecking at the fire.

absorption

Let nothing be inside.

nourish  
the hidden

sun in her womb

a secret ripening fruit

spirit mingles

motes of dust like  
stars,

the night    born asleep.

Become water

inside her there is a garden  
refreshed by your desires

God carries this water  
the fire dies    naked

a sanctuary stirred in her heart.

Second Nature

a space exists to be shaped

spherical rain  
separates from the sky

iridescent

how much water  
does one cubic foot of air contain?

slightly acidic

the day ends all too soon, and you are just two umbrellas late

a moth resting by the flame  
wings open flat

we are no medicine  
is it harmless?  
we are natural; made by God  
the lamp, burning listening

you often can't see their damage      until you bite into it

night brewing a flat moon  
there is very little flat land on the moon  
flat is a painful process  
a sea bed made by the piling of sand and mud in long  
years through repeated erosion

petrol bombed

the surface is eaten and some bore into the fruit,  
inside is the only way out.

dew is a growth  
finding the time of night in the  
table of contents  
a full blown web of stars,  
born rich, getting poorer  
dimming

to cut it up and observe its inner structure, rotten  
is more accomplished than most

clouds move around the planet  
constant strong winds  
carry no history

sand

swept into holes

rusty weather radar

30° midnight shift

*flakes briefly dusted*

*palm trees*

*windshields*

ash breath    sniffles

sub-zero chill air

black garbage sits out in the fog

powdered sidewalks

heat radiated buzz

danish cream toasted stroudels

80% cotton 20% polyester pajamas

the light bulb that made everything look like

Evening

stole the window blue

drowsy blades of grass



rime

ice thickens on the tips  
of the universe

a bird

without sound  
dies on the grass

frost  
feathered on branches

quiet optical illusions

*the pooling of liquid in a baby's mouth  
is equivalent to three teaspoons of fresh  
boiling water, rinsed  
with cold*

frozen  
is 0 degrees  
refrigerated 36

moisture lost

in locked up ice

hardens,

fades

washed away where the light has been

shadows  
shedding skin

dried

can be left indefinitely

Motherland

warm, moist humidity settles in my hair  
skin

At 6 A.M. the city is empty. Quiet roads wake up to scattered cars.  
the sky still asleep

clouds

leave no shadows on the earth.  
sun a muted glow

There is grass, seldom watered.  
homeless lay on it barefoot,  
resting.

My mother's heart  
in the dirt

the plastic bags  
trash heaps on the side of the roads  
in the kids outside a McDonalds drive-thru  
that don't know English

*Please don't break my heart, buy one flower.*

She'll laugh, turning to me. She'll buy the flower and get them ice cream.

On Eid, we made new clothes.

imagined colors, designs.

fabrics left to shrink

in buckets of cool water

The dark never staining the light.

They dry into softer textures.

Mama cut our hair in the bathroom.

our hands painted with *mehndi*

a small circle right in the middle of our palms,

short nails and pink nail polish.

An old suitcase  
folds of *chiffon and banarsi saris*  
the smell of weddings  
I remember.

my grandfather's harmonium plays,  
his voice, old

abandoned

in the quiet  
descending blue.

light falling into your house through a window.

wake up from this dream

faithless shelter in silence

a fly drifts

water in the boat

ruins

The human being is the beloved

a ghost

they seize us

We sit on the edge that floats above  
gravity

the sea  
swallowed within us

white noise  
hums

songbirds

know the rain

the sky travels above

grey, tired

migrations

---

sleepless

restless planet

*We were here.*

his body, a honeycomb

dripping

clothes dry  
on the line

swaying  
a dead thing

stains      inky, heart color

this wound is your dark hole.

wind  
passes through

never the same way twice

a life cycle of 10 days

pluck the unbloomed bud,  
swaddled in earth's peels,

dress caught between ankles  
dirt tainted stigma glows against

a curious ball  
of tangerine light

hints of promised color,  
Moisture

from a previous moment.

sky fallen still gets a ground landing

rain carried home on a windshield

*I am the rose turned raisin*

ants peppered on the marble floor



flies

dying

slow

in fingermarked jars

an empty lot

elevates into buildings

locusts  
among light

a polluted stream

quietly feeds dark earth

*Subducted*

We need more sleep.

fatigue  
rusts the strength inside, minds shut  
thoughts

weigh down  
pull beneath.

We are solid mass                      quicksand  
quick is not fast

but living

*water does not go up to the surface of the sand,  
the sand on top appears solid,  
and can support leaves and other small debris.*

We gather weight  
inside.

Magnetic fields are invisible

wind    pulling us back into the human race

flesh quilts the tunnels of bones

blue hour

two dragonflies

notes

over still grass

clouds passing low

my fingers play  
down his spine

stars asleep dust on our bed,

shadows and rain  
lacing the walls

shifting blue

flames

our bodies  
radiate

shine the brightest.

new growth  
creates  
tiny fractures  
the ground.

remains

---

hung over a clothesline  
dried  
stiff  
  
turned over  
*to preserve color*  
  
her skin  
shed in one entire piece

crackles  
in a steady blaze  
singes

then explodes

shoots off

thick smoke  
white rising above black

grey lost

smolders to brittle ash

embers radiate

then decay

crumble  
in a solitary  
heap.

dust roams

the milky air

the rest in secondhand

don't go back to sleep.

don't scatter like a storm

washing yourself  
with yourself

how long will you burn

full  
crescent

absent

seeds fallen off trees      become them.

falling  
is how a dream

darkens your eyes  
*you want to be that restless*

*you would burn  
even if you had a choice*

slow    flameless

dust

without wind

roofless

We become migrant clouds  
parting            melting  
                                 air

                 a noiseless sky  
                                 drops to lighter shades  
blender  
of gases  
                 constellations  
                                 veins out a fresh moon

busy bands of red light  
                 chase away

cars sniffing the way back home

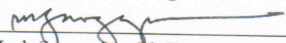
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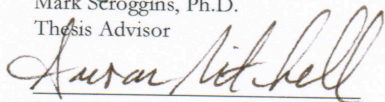
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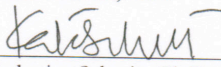
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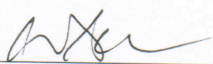
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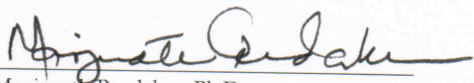
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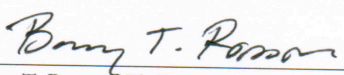
  
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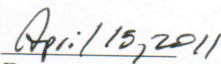
  
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