

LATITUDES

JAY SLONE



LATITUDES

By

Jay Slone

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters  
in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

August 2005

LATITUDES

By

Jay Slone

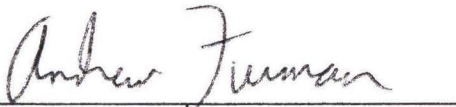
This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Professor Susan Mitchell, Department of English, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

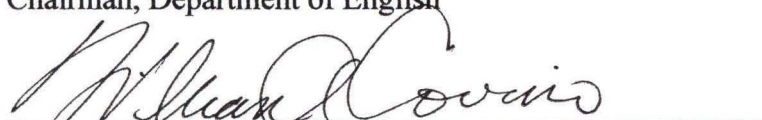
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

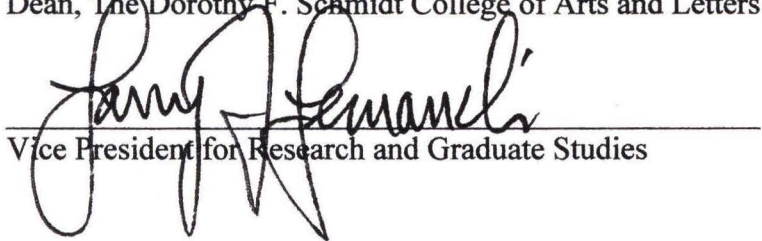
  
Thesis Advisor





  
Chairman, Department of English

  
Dean, The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters

  
Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies

June 14, 2005  
Date

## ABSTRACT

Author: Jay Slone  
Title: Latitudes  
Institution: Florida Atlantic University  
Thesis Advisor: Professor Susan Mitchell  
Degree: Master of Fine Arts  
Year: 2005

The poems of this collection attempt to bridge and break interpretive and formal borders. The speaker's voice is sometimes cohesive, sometimes fragmented. The title alludes to images in the poems: to the sea, the stars, storms, and of navigations not so much of specific places, but of motion or directions that are often tenuously connected or abstract. These poems are explorations, wonderings, and experiments. The speaker's voice shifts like the wind, sometimes leading toward a destination and other times remaining lost. The poems require navigation as the reader is called upon to engage in the process of finding the way—of making way—and participating with the poet in the process of meaning making.

## Table of Contents

Cargo.....	1
A Nineveh In Heaven.....	2
Or.....	4
Rattle.....	5
Interlude.....	7
In The Rain.....	8
Scuttle.....	10
Drinking Song.....	13
Ash.....	14
Skies Break.....	15
The Leaking Jar.....	16
Sophistry.....	17
Slowest Tide.....	18
Latitude.....	19
Earth Made World.....	20
Actus Humani.....	21
Travertine Falls.....	22
Murmurs of Brass.....	23
In Dimly Lit.....	25

# Cargo

I jettison ballast to make  
space—

deduct the hold

inert—

then weigh

from fathomed absence

what

floats on.



the larger body moves in  
given that  
unobserved  
a grey gull  
under moonless sky  
such mercies  
mend as brine  
fills in  
swallow  
latitude  
and star



Or

There are little  
from those  
as they were

contained but hunting

of necessity often  
what they needed

to find: no excess on  
a swan, idle  
as adapted

—spindled  
of constraint—

# Rattle

Given  
the need to  
seem to glimpse,

the complexities  
of the unexceptional—  
the lost umbrella, the orchid  
corsage—coalescence  
of the insular,  
corrupted

recognition  
that the intellect clings  
to these remains:

the peculiarity of  
distraction—relationships with  
many of the same approximate  
comforts—the possibility

that hope holds,  
or gives out;  
desire to make  
association;

and one does not blame  
the world or oneself these  
slumbering testimonies  
spired  
cathedrals  
tangled

versions of cities    caravans of promise  
and regret                    the impression-  
ism of the forgotten            this sullen

fecundity unencumbered  
like a violent pulse  
voluble but hard

to hear    the solemn pleasure  
of guilty dreams    senses  
that mirror and embellish    balance and  
plans to mediate    fluttering  
meditations  
whirlpools  
of words the universe  
of a single  
mind    the mindlessness  
of the single  
minded                    glimpse of the rattled cage.

## Interlude

Still delay  
follow garner

to feather  
the leap into empty

between jiff  
staged to lullaby

interlude preened as radiant  
pearls of ash hover

form.



## In The Rain

Having  
poured and stumbled through;  
bowed in the shade and fallen  
into rhythm; left behind  
this visible indenture;

homologized the conundrum  
of the primitive splice between  
being a part and apart

to the sense of hummingbird orchid,  
looming rain, and the feathered masks  
worn  
by leaders of certain tribes,

or the fragment of what remains behind,  
as when a guest leaves  
an umbrella,  
attentive only to desire;

made *athena noctua* ruffle and hoot in its cage;

believed for a time that enough was never enough;  
came to hope

to be near the end of distances, until  
the vanishing point seemed clear

with the chance that  
this rain could abruptly cease as if  
no longer prolonged  
by drops from leaves.

## Scuttle

realms divide twilight,  
lace opal in krill,  
upswell, pod gobbled,  
spout of shells dash out

breached

I'm snookered  
by hierarchy,

shander the scrimp  
like whittled jade as

a condition of systems of  
forecast

benched to thumb  
ride then stand

at roadside,

jarred noggin  
spilled  
onto pavement and hit

because I switched  
stations

step

in streams  
the delta  
of returning strain

as salient tarmac  
widens home to toggle  
the chandelier

in the Gregorian replica

contain but  
budge swanky for

exchange

they can observe variation,  
modify skin

color instantly  
to confuse prey, escape, or



shed, as one  
is anointed,

razed with cuttle

to be cleansed of  
what oil strips away

my eyes on an æon  
need space

have no time  
to deviate from

this lumbering  
pace.

## Drinking Song

Across a gulf  
cool beams burst from behind  
clouds. Nothing is set.

I wrapped you in blankets  
like the woman who slept in  
a wheelchair outside  
the closed souvenir store.

When it opens we turn  
to shore and gather shells.  
I can barely hold what I find, you  
have no trouble with one at a time

singing, while you dance across the bridge,  
a song of waves, but not  
a sound.

## Ash

The relics of sudden  
endings gathered dust, took space

but what remained of you  
found a place—

in unpredicted  
dawning beyond the objects  
of your world

—moved in and through  
the veil of memory unfurled  
to reveal  
what I wanted it to reveal.

## Skies Break

when skies drench  
with a painted light  
that blends our gaze

these silhouettes  
fall

to an ordinary pace  
beneath a canopy of leaves

it is my own confession  
that mouths

a failure to admit

the minor fraction that we bare  
under a golden awning

as we pause to kiss  
the other cheek  
in conventional fashion

out of grace

to call each passion  
home  
where I may find

in your lips

no word but

the desire to have



## The Leaking Jar

Synthetic wings aged in  
smoked religion came forth  
from the inconsequential  
headline that rainbows

a dying Argos:  
the kiln of convention  
that lost the ability  
to inspire distilled

the punchline as  
continuous plumes of  
moonshine splashed sleepy  
hands of passersby

and spilled the rarest of all  
smuggled sympathy

saved  
to choose hundreds of sleeping  
stories that spun out  
a jungle of years.

# Sophistry

Shuffling  
from the rushing waves  
stumbling to a stroll;  
untied, for a while,  
shoes slipped away as  
the surf pooled out—

and rising—

still,  
made steps to close  
the widening gap  
across the plunging

tide —stepping in,  
expanding and deepening  
still— then

waited for the crest to spill  
all name  
and odyssey,  
except  
unnamed,  
unmoved,  
unfilled.

## Slowest Tide

Here the early fog forms a still stratum  
shallow magnitude of parent molecule

convective vortices of ion wind in eccentric orbit  
(origin of chaos) internal oceans flux random

collisions populate planetesimal forms  
hypervelocity impact cratering ejecta

evolution of spin vector  
elliptical orbit

accretion of dust rim as lunar  
tectonic convergence

cycling tides primordial  
impact of cometary nuclei

the improbable witness of  
morning.

# Latitude

Earth wobbles were a matter  
for astronomers until  
solved by a novice:

global position,  
synoptic  
atmospheres would

have been in blunder  
to watch  
and want

to pinpoint targets  
as there is no  
algorithm

that spreads  
the scope

of motions—  
within range of

hemispheres  
and poles—that circle  
and confine the whole divide.

**Earth**

*first head then heart swallowed down whole taken with appetite satisfied hunger again with all too glorious wonder cannibal hunger took*

**Made**

**World**

## Actus Humani

The drizzle  
it takes  
to make  
with buzz and brush  
in busy days  
dance angled  
by the tilt of sun  
embrace and comb  
(no greater good)  
to wax and flower this home  
this tomb

and saved  
yielded all that could be  
painted in  
came swarming from frozen wind  
to calm all panic

## Travertine Falls

Found, surrounded by undressed stone,  
an American

Elm towered amid tan rocks: the last  
in this rise—ground grown over  
with bloodroot

which my steps  
crushed to leave  
impressions—

and the waterfall poured  
into a pool that spiraled out

as a stream moving down  
toward the west

bend of the Roanoke.

## Murmurs of Brass

Dreamt in hot bronze,  
as molten shape  
overflowed—

and trickled  
like rain on arid somewhere  
after midway quenched—

moon on dunes,  
swept porches, unbroken panes,  
up the steep drive to the gated,  
the walled and waiting.

It was a forest when my paper  
jackals seemed to measure up.

I thought the great rift  
was in the distance  
between tribes  
and the barefooted simplicity  
of our genesis,  
but I had no more time  
to roam—



drifted down  
the long drive,  
recalled footpaths—I am  
dreamt out—and vanish

the doubt,  
the silence.

## In Dimly Lit

It was late,  
the night you wanted to watch  
the stars fall,  
to drive out west  
where the city lights fade  
so even the faintest would  
not be missed.

One came curving  
across the sky,  
a stone skipping atmosphere,  
not ready to blaze  
it flickered.

Another sailed straight in sizzling.

Two appeared together,  
intersected, then passed.

At night I once combed the sky  
for lasting bits of creation,  
waited for the earth to come,  
for gravity and atmosphere  
to ignite.



