



# 1

i walked out that evening  
onto a rusty dusk, wooden pier  
busting open into sea green salt and sand,  
tugging on my neck like a pearl necklace  
and i saw you there  
saw you in the beauty of the purple stroked sky  
vibrant like a heartbeat lub dub  
in the soft bed of my ears

i can hear your music growing strong  
the way the wind just hangs on, purpling  
with tranquility and power

passionate, like the cracks in this street here  
clasping hands with the other side  
by the yellow dotted line  
and kindly, gently  
like the way our feet are loyal to the ground  
and the roots are to the sky

you are everything  
and even if dimmed out, light flickering  
by someone else's switch or sour pitch  
i can see the warmth  
under a golden current  
waiting for a moment for the sun to finally  
dip its toes into your depth

## 2

if the cottonwoods crack their long spines  
over this cracked open plastic bridge  
water constellations  
he says he paid a lot of money for  
pressed into our own backyard pond  
the way my brother carefully presses his européen pants

i used to fit myself  
into just a body  
loose like the way the grass' skin fits on the landscape  
snake-like and expansive  
he said he wanted a girl friend  
it didn't have to be me  
eyes locked in the cafeteria lips locked  
and then cornered into a vending machine  
kind of person  
i sat with them round table rounding stomach  
all straightened out like the way i used to  
press my own hair and skin into pastry sheets  
blending just malleable under some heat  
instagram posting to  
see if people had seen  
how great i was doing

and he said something about my shoes  
asked me which place i'd be  
and it felt natural when he ordered green tea  
drive-in movie theater kind of sheen  
smashed to smithereens on those same  
streets  
where his arms wrapped around me

### 3

it's all archived  
text messages gone to green  
and i'm trying to feel lean to break free of the boxes  
i've put myself into  
heaving and dragging my brown booted feet

i think belonging is lasting  
is pressing your head to someone's temple  
and feeling complete  
i have it all here  
where i'm scrubbing it all clean  
maybe i will write a book  
a book that screams where my voice otherwise goes numb  
and under someone else's thumb  
they'll see what i mean

### 3

missing someone  
Is like biting pepper out from under your nails  
reading stories you've already read but barely remember  
rote and circular in their sameness  
finding comfort in clay bowls  
and the dry feeling coffee beans leave in your mouth  
your chest caught in a tangle net of suspension  
just holding its sterling breath  
to watch through tines  
to see what you'll do next  
it's like 6am has taken over your body  
with bone white threads  
and seashells glued to a picture frame  
and you're left wondering what excuse you can make  
that would set you away  
from this constant tired feeling  
heart thudding in your chest  
like a brick on a cobblestone  
walk  
eyes glazed by time and that same, sameness  
etched white by some other artist's hand  
and talking makes it worse because  
you miss them more  
and then you're angry that you have to  
and the sunshine that falls around you  
in spotlight heavens  
is crunched underfoot  
over a telephone call you keep putting off

## 4

Watching a world as if it's all just sky  
Reflecting a blue chasm in my eyes  
Broken down into parts  
Like a junkyard or  
A prism cracks open light

They begged for my attention  
Bridled me like a horse  
Tangled in restraining reigns  
Poured in front of me like rain as  
I sat at a cafe, awning opening its great mouth to  
Keep me safe and dry from their  
Torrential entrapment

They watched me through windows  
The picture ones by Leetsdale  
The roaring, beastly avenue  
And strung around my neck like pearls  
At the opera:  
Gleaming, microcosmic  
Dwarfed in comparison to their uncertain counterparts  
In the form of stars  
Tickling the under belly of the deep night sky

I listen to them now:  
Press my ears to their gooey, glass-like figures  
Wavering under the hot pressure of their sun-like home  
I let them tell me stories before I go to bed  
Let them raise their hand in class  
Maybe  
Even capture my attention  
On a bus traveling past  
Like the fear giggling while I'm getting gas

## 5

I could love you forever like this  
But next time closer  
Next time pressed up against each other  
As we fall asleep  
Tête à tête  
Nez à nez  
Je suis folle de toi  
I would whisper as we  
Fell into a  
Slumber  
Warm with our embrace  
Soft smiles and soft morning light  
Resting its chest on your chestnut eyes  
Without a fight  
The world  
Paris  
Like a small puzzle collecting dust in a glass cabinet  
As we build our own  
Soft like the way I melt into your arms  
Ma rêve  
Tu es ma rêve  
Pour aujourd'hui et toujours

## 6

perfume filling parts of you  
where cigarette smoke doesn't reach  
the little spaces in your shoes filled by the  
unfamiliar water you breathe  
and air you drink  
filling parts of you  
not filled by warm meals  
just things you find  
using words you had to find  
to piece together  
to



# 7

you wink at me the way that one does  
by the smoke from the cigar  
from the man that lives in the  
sky

she said she had never seen a dark that deep  
that cuts headlights  
light sighing and sinking  
into a grey couch  
on the second floor landing

the ground meets symphonies by my toes  
sliding up the hill in the woods  
laughing and stumbling the way  
i used to, grinding breath in sweetened air by  
sugary snowflakes  
the way i used to

waiting by the place where all that was was  
tasting the present like  
that sweet snowflake  
blinking at my luck like the star  
breath grinding cold heat into  
the headlights driving away  
street lights waning  
house lights like the one we know so well  
above our own grey couch

watching the past  
wanting this present to last  
waiting for my future to come over the hill

**8**

you are like water pushing up on a bridge

like i am pushing up on these words to make them fit this sentence

# 9

paris is like this rose plant here by my window  
i pricked my finger on it on accident  
and now it's stuck  
but it's delicate and it's vibrant and its color is soft and strong all at once  
you can get lost  
but if there isn't enough water or sunlight  
you'll end up with dead petals littering an unfamiliar floor  
so water it well and watch it grow by the light of your petite window  
and wake to these orange petals the way the oranges line magasins and  
cobblestone  
look, but don't touch  
yet

# 10

your heart beats the same way mine does  
what i thought was plastic is crumpled up papers  
and traffic and smoke  
im drunk on cigarettes  
on streets no one i know  
knows except for me  
and i turn the corner to my street  
messy and  
incomplète  
this is how paris was always meant to be

# 11

I say I dance  
I dance always like someone mad  
With shoes strapped on my feet  
Glued  
Like my eyes to this screen and my jambes  
To this chair  
I think it's me but  
My legs are growing roots  
Tightening  
Quick  
Vite  
à bientôt ou pas du tout

## 12

Dans ce café  
L'odeur est de ma jeunesse  
Comme des pommes de terres  
Frites  
Dans la salle à manger  
Ma famille  
Mon grand-père  
Tous souriraient autours les lumières  
Regardaient  
Et je  
Maintenant  
Je regarde tous les gens ici mangent leur déjeuner  
Sourirent  
Et je sens que je suis chez moi  
Jeune

//

In this cafe  
The smell is my youth  
Like potatoes  
Fried  
In the dining room  
My family  
My grandfather  
All smiling around the lights  
Watching  
And I  
Now  
I watch all the people here eat their  
Lunch  
Smiling  
And I feel like I am home  
Young

# 13

I was awake for a week  
Even when I was asleep  
Alight inside with  
Color like vitreux  
Warm with music  
Slow dancing in the kitchen  
Or holding each other late  
Into the night  
By a screen's fading light

Smells from cooking  
Keeping our hands warm  
Like radiators  
Dragging them into the streets  
Metal creating sparks  
With chestnut eyes  
Like those roasting by the gate

Real and full  
//  
A dull ill light  
Shines on my notebook  
Outside a graying window  
My hands red  
And voices I don't know, empty hum, sleep walking

I have a bed I haven't slept in for two weeks  
Anonymous  
Paris and cooking alone  
Headphones in  
Wishing you were  
Here with me

No color no taste  
And in this moment I realize the life we make—  
Full and empty, give and take

# 14

je ne peux pas croire  
que je suis ici finalement  
je goût des fraises  
et du café vraiment noir  
et sens comme mon esprit est  
devenu comme  
cette chaise  
pas confortable mais  
réel  
pas seulement dans mes rêves  
et dans l'imagination qui j'avais toute ma vie  
qui m'entraînait des difficultés  
j'ai faim  
d'explorer moi-même dans la même façon  
que je veux découvrir toute de cette place  
la villette  
ne semble jamais plus  
vivante ou permanente que maintenant  
et encore  
les fraises dans ma gorge  
mes yeux  
mon ventre  
restent  
parlent



# 15

This city feeds on smoke  
Exists as it  
People on the metro  
Off the metro  
On the metro  
Off the metro

Changing lines

Now waiting and walking

Waiting

Wisps of smoke  
Smoking in front of me  
It hits my face  
Circles it

Becomes it

Black coat  
Wool  
Black hat covers her face  
Red lipstick  
Smoke  
People pretending  
And imitating  
Smoking  
And

On the metro again

Disappearing  
Into  
smoke

## 16

voice  
cracking over an intercom  
cracking like mine sitting at the  
walnut wood desk curled up  
toes and pant legs  
getting wet in  
thé river ive created  
craters and divets  
dividing this  
room landmine piles  
land line  
phone calls 1 am or 9 am on  
a bus  
listening to a rush of  
the water  
as you try and speak

she's the only one that sees me  
clutching packages  
making eyes that say  
i can't breathe  
coffee cup clutched bent in half  
becoming the bedspread draping  
the lofted  
nook up above

just saying i love you  
i see you  
or listen to me,  
red wine anger pouring  
into a stream  
and i found the space just in between  
mary magdalene  
tilts her head  
as if to listen to this rumbling city  
ebbing water and desert interchangeably  
gurgling through wine and suitcases  
and 6th floor views and pieces of history

# 17

from down here the world is so quiet  
it's always so quiet, isn't that it?

zippered-up lips  
cutting off drips  
of oil's  
a quick fix?

kerosene eyes they  
have kerosene eyes, cant you see?

in efforts to keep the peace  
people stagger to a end they thought they'd never meet  
breathless bomb shells  
littering in the street  
isn't that what you see?

because to me  
it seems like everyone's watching their feet  
as if they're  
the most interesting thing  
while people are dying  
in a country most of us have never seen

is that how you argue it doesn't matter?  
it doesn't concern you and me?

what a disgraceful streak  
the rest of the world leaves on the sky  
ignoring helpless screams

# 18

How do people decide they want to change  
Fully commit to a version of themselves that's more loud,  
Or colorful,  
Or confident  
When we stick to ourselves like  
Bees' legs stick to honey  
Like coins stick to the bottom of cups  
Or concrete to the shoes  
That seem to match those of everyone  
Around you

Nothing has changed in the way  
People are looking at you  
They're looking in the  
Change-pockets that are themselves  
Some velvet lined  
And some more flesh than others  
Meanwhile you  
Donn a new  
Bright pink jacket  
Liking the way you imagine  
They care  
Feeling your hair being stroked by the hand of the wind

# 19

Try to fill your world with noise  
With excitement  
With dance and music and people that mean little to you  
You mean little to them, at least  
Nothing sticks nothing

So you can forget those nights  
You can forget the one you love to love  
Who you can't fully  
When they're given away again, to the wind

You can forget the hug from behind  
With dishes in your hands  
Of letting comfortable silence  
Fill the crack in between your shoulder  
And my head  
A vacant space wasn't vacant

Forget the way lips to forehead  
Feels like  
Salt on a wide blue we look out  
Warm and smelling fish and building fire

Make sure no thought can  
Crack itself like an egg  
Into your consciousness  
In case you make realizations you'll later regret  
You just have to hang on the way  
Eggshell does at the tip of the metal bowl

Wanting for time

## 20

it was cold  
of course it was  
but not cold enough for my limbs  
to stick to themselves like a freezer

résistance  
arms shoving water pushing air  
pulling breath  
again  
shoving water pushing air  
pulling breath  
again

and constantly behind  
seeing feet flashing arms hitting  
breath  
and still  
arms moving in a flurry of effort

seeing the clock  
snippets of conversation  
gasping on  
the air  
and when you're alone again  
under again  
you can't understand

so your arms  
continue shoving water pushing air  
pulling breath  
again

# 21

i said i wanted to  
open the car door on the highway  
just to feel the wind  
just because i was curious what the  
wind felt like following  
those yellow strips  
speeding towards  
or away from some end

## 22

i feel pretty lonely  
the light comes on outside  
i hear the normal bangs from my neighbors  
a zipper  
drawers  
sirens dotting the air like metal buttons  
a far away scream tastes like fireworks

and striped across my room  
are shadows that smell like lime juice  
and peanuts  
and the rain i always think is starting but it's just this old building  
clothing itself in wind  
cape-like

drinking the wine of the night  
as i fall deeper into  
the wooden chair



## 23

i don't know  
how to explain how i feel  
in a way that makes sense to you

translate my limbs into waves  
into the aspen bark peeling from the trees  
sakura blossoms between my fingers  
and wind for eyes

you'd seek solace in the way my skies  
shimmer  
through a gradient  
of rusty reds  
smiling with flushed cheeks

and mortar and pestle rainy tears  
feet on paved streets

there is no in between  
just brightly colored clothes  
under a grey sheet  
or an every-pattern cloth  
shielding an unconventional frown beneath

## 24

how many days have i loved you now?  
i started once  
between laughing talks about bibles and orange juice bubbles  
i just never stopped  
i can still feel your breath hot in that closet  
still taste the churned spices  
by the riverside when i first knew this was good,  
still warm my hands in yours looking out over a waterfall we've only just started to get  
to know,  
that's when i knew this was safe

and i love you still  
more  
by the light from a telephone screen  
pressed cheek to cheek in beds we don't own but have claimed like a temporary  
haven just for us  
where only we exist  
and the world takes a breath to  
breath us in as we are, as a pair  
saying this is right  
that your hand belongs in mine

## 25

you there  
wrapped parchment paper  
in hand  
blue jacket

we're always at this metro stop  
together  
à la fois

i don't know your name  
but you waved back

you waved back

## 26

Poisson

Leaping out of the

Skyscraper

With blue tongues and silver gills

Into a dragon paved with roses

Waiting mouth open below

The girl with eyes

Watery blue watching the animals

And the cherry blossoms,

Sipping on tea from above then below,

On a stool made of cork

As if she swims in a cobalt

Sea

See, it's

The same as the one he asked me about

The one with the

One blue eye

Œil that leaps

Out of my screen

Je ne peux pas entendre

Mais

I can see you just fine

And down here, sipping cherry blossoms,

Legs treading

You can see me

I never realized how important smell was until Paris. Before, my memory, sure, consisted of lilacs crushed under foot out in the back alley or the nail polish I accidentally spilled on the hard wood or the smell of lentil soup loudly announcing itself at the bottom of the landing...but it was never like this. Here, smell is existence. It's like people have manufactured themselves into perfume bottles, melted down like leaky ceilings or wax for the back of letters into rain, rolled themselves up like cigarettes and tucked themselves between your teeth. I don't remember ever passing someone on the street and smelling them before I see them. I strain my eyes against a Parisian sun, upwards, and see their trench coat cut against the wind, but first, always first, their musk cut against my upper lip as I breathed it in—sandalwood and pine and citrus peel all in a melange, awfully presumptuous.

This morning, my feet explored a pavement fresh with rain, and watching my brown boots (that make me feel like home) skip the pieces of plastic I smelled something familiar. Lilacs, hundreds of them, laughing languishing in an afternoon flood...they know no alleyways. Yet, here they are, temporary whiffs on a 1pm breeze, existing as something lovely in a city where everyone cares—as in, everyone's watching—and no one cares.

## 28

flavors of berkeley  
on hidden gardens  
a butterfly perches  
coffee so sweet  
sugar finds itself under foot  
or in an alleyway  
filigree kissing  
my cheek  
ribbons in the wind  
lattice work propping me into the branched haven

the fire in an ember  
the beach in a grain of sand  
eternity in a moment

## 29

même si tu habites dans la forêt  
tu ne sens pas isolé  
tu es toujours avec quelqu'un  
comme un autre monde  
avec du pain et du neige  
tu as habité

mais maintenant, le neige  
est manquant  
et tu peux voir la terre, encore  
il est sèche et vide  
et tu ne crée  
plus  
du pain

## 30

I wish I could see  
Parapluies aging  
As they rise from underground  
Opened quickly  
Teeth digging into the sky

I age in transmission  
In orality  
In high heel boots tracking their way through metric  
Metros in a way I never thought I would be able to

She ages in red,  
And I saw her in my dream  
My grandma came to a wedding  
I havent yet had  
And I held her, crying

He doesn't  
He's stuck  
In hanging on to a reality  
He lives with three films, vivid back home  
Black and white past  
Sepia-seeped tea bags  
That I made him in this moment  
Sitting on the coffee table



## 31

A man with a quilt dragging across  
The linoleum smeared floor  
A bird indoors  
And the warmth of the sun finally making its way between the  
Tiny little cracks in my teeth

Une petite piece, s'il vous plaît  
What you're holding becomes the most interesting thing  
Like a child fascinated with the cracks in the sidewalk  
Singing a nursery rhyme  
The rhyme here is the occasional music played  
Down

By the tracks  
Seeing a rat scurry, a  
Horn sings for far too long to be joyful, instead  
Escalators becoming microcosms  
Of productivity and ability

It's capacity here,  
Sweet when it hits my tongue  
Smelling someone else's carton hitting an oiled pan with a glance  
Curious

## 32

Riding down a mountain  
Fire welding shut the camera lens,  
Water spraying into my eyes  
It's like four p.m. me  
Thinks it's the middle of the night  
Having no business stuck in the bushes  
Of deep sleep and harnessing sound and color  
Tricking my under eyes into believing in  
Some candy-spun fantasy, like  
That cotton in their backyard  
Back when he was still alive  
How much of us is us when we are awake  
Alive and trenching through the streets  
Hiking our metaphorical waistcoats up to our waistlines  
And how much  
Is when we are under  
Like anesthetic, rubber-gloved operations  
Too many I have seen where  
The monitor beeps  
Is that what whatever  
Pulled us all here sees?  
How much of that is me?

## 33

Radiator denim  
Growing roots  
Like a seed  
Cracking open lentils on a nine-pm stove  
Warming my skin in flowers  
Heat pulsing from a room filled  
With aimless people  
Aiming eyes or  
Emails  
Sun warming trottoirs skin covering  
Distance cheeks  
Flushed with a red  
That says your clock is wrong  
And now you're running down the boulevard  
Skin of your feet  
Clasping distance like  
Locketts  
Locking knees

## 34

Head pressed against windows  
Buildings melted butter  
Bread under foot like cobblestones  
Becoming pigeons,  
Pecking at my toes

On the hour  
Becoming stars,  
Christmas light towers or  
Streets paved with the sweet fragrance of  
Southern remnants  
Of fraises

Maybe the laughter knocking  
Its loud knuckles  
Against my familiar door  
The bridge who laughs  
Rire  
As my feet struggle to keep time  
With its complicated steps

Listening and understanding  
Somehow  
Listening

Maybe the smell of  
Perfume and cigarettes  
Little tongues speaking the way I do  
Flowers growing roots in photographs

I never liked doing dishes  
Stacking remnants of the  
Days I reminisce  
But my head still finds itself lodged  
In ancient windows  
And I can still hear bike bells, here

# 35

If you love someone

Don't leave them

Work it out,

Let your ego kneel to

Your love

Rather than overcome it

I know you are hurting

I know that it's hard

But don't ever give someone you said you loved

Up

If they are worth something to you

Make sure they know it

## 36

Âme

Means soul : mine, or yours

It used to be hard to know

But now we crackle like two embers  
In an ether only we know  
Separately grasping onto  
Brick walls and trees casting shadows

I heard my own voice repeating it  
Getting it wrong, hers loud and confident in a way  
Mine never was

I heard you're not doing okay

but you seem just fine?

Repeating the words to songs we used to listen to together  
Into a microphone  
I repeated

Your message

My            âme            faltered a little  
But then came back stronger  
Into view

Clear edges, not blurred like  
Flames or moles or  
The ones we both know that  
Only ever existed for me

Âme like colors of  
My wet clothes hanging on the heat  
Âme like my colors  
Coming back with more heat than  
You have seen in a long time  
I haven't seen you in a long time

I haven't seen me for a long time

# 37

clenched teeth

don't think

try not to ask just

breathe

fill your time

don't blame

yourself just remember

to sleep

live with yourself  
and live without

you already taught me  
i'm already learning  
you're already leaving  
im already loving

you stayed and i left  
but you left when i stayed

## 38

I used to watch my reflection from the side  
Tucking in and pulling down  
Now I don't even glance, eyes stuck like thumbtacks to the road ahead  
Head high ponytail  
Jaw set and just breathing in

Twenty minutes was too long a walk  
Now I walk and feel myself in the landscape, morphing to become a part of it  
And it a part of me  
The hedges nicely shaped like my own walls that have grown  
Where watered and  
Withered when purposefully neglected  
Left out to dry up like leather in a Tucson sun

I used to waste my time  
On quizzes to learn something about myself  
Now I just know  
That art and poetry and music and dance and  
Learning about how people work from the inside out are where  
I find smiles  
Tearing paper cuts into my cheeks that don't hurt  
But feel like they're permanent

I see myself in the way the bridge expands and contracts to  
Welcome in the rush home from work  
In the rushed French spoken on line six by people  
Talking to the people that not only they love, but  
Love them back  
Even in the way the Eiffel tower glitters on the hour  
Winking its way as if to say no matter what time it is,  
The weather, how it is feeling today  
It still knows how to light up at least one person's life

If I'm lucky, someday I can light a whole city like  
This stately symbol who lives fearlessly  
In a city of dreamers and doubters and dabblers and doers

I am not afraid of what used to scare me, anymore



## 39

I am not broken, just as you are not  
To all those women who look in the mirror and wonder  
Why it appears as if their limbs are attached, each hair  
Still finding roots and eyes still working—to some degree—  
When they were told they were broken plates  
Like a child who runs carelessly around the house  
Has smashed them, their mother running to get a broom  
To sweep them up or superglue  
Them back together

They are not, broken,  
That is  
They are very whole and very valid and very deserving of  
Good things to happen to them, of people  
Who don't make them think they are:  
Missing, something

You have all your limbs, and I am so proud of you for getting out of bed  
Today  
For rising with an intention of doing something you enjoy, of being someone  
You, yourself are proud of—  
Or even for eating three meals a day—that  
Is an accomplishment, too  
If you're like me,  
It is

I am so proud that you have wondered based off the words you heard  
Or ate in your cereal that morning  
The words that seemed to not only float into your mind  
But force their way in, all bird-beaked and wooden and tapping like nails  
Into picture frames  
I am so glad you questioned whether you embody that wholeness, all on your own  
Because it led you to read this, to believe this, to try to take my words—just more  
words, after all, but with loving intention rather than a blameless force shield—

You. Are. Still. Whole. No. Matter. What. Happened. To. You.  
Seek. Things. That. Don't. Make. You. Question. A. False. "Brokenness." Ever. Again.

## 40

The humble man does not wallow in his unhappiness  
He says the trees are dying,  
Something Michaux said that I can't get out of my mind

It's simpler to get caught in a  
Loop of glass tubes, temperatures spiking, perhaps a bath made of sand  
Gas leak roundabouts that  
Burden your mind with  
Confusion or frustration or all the material tied with a certain kind of a grief

Much easier to pour from your airy glass  
Into a forest fire  
To sit with your head in the ocean, watching coral reefs decay  
Or a court room where abortion rights get taken away  
You matter, so much  
And since you matter, and since you feel like you don't—  
Can't you turn that matter into a physical matter of  
Social justice issues that matter  
That

Are burning a hole in capital buildings  
And Instagram filters by the hour?

Your happiness is out of control  
Like the way the flames rage and  
Right now, that happiness reduced to embers  
But the coral has lost all color  
And people can't find a clinic and the  
World is in a chaos: suddenly  
Oceans are polluted and air is smoking and  
People no longer have the right to a  
CHOICE over what they do with their bodies

If the temptress of humility is what it takes to get you  
To raise a flag  
Choose humility so the Earth will exist,  
so other people will have a choice

## Artist Note

For fear of immobilizing the poetry, these poems mustn't have titles: only numbers, as if belonging to a series.

What you glean from them comes from you: will you analyze and critique? Will you place in a context, historical, social? Will you simply appreciate them as they are? Or will you, perhaps, see yourself in the words—whether they have anything to do with you.

Whatever you learn, I hope you take what you need.

Poetry does that, at least for me. It seems to contain everything I need in that promise of an empty page, an emotion begging to be expressed, a moment itching to be chronicled and witnessed.

If you haven't tried it, I suggest you do. It's no different from a diary—personal, uncomfortable, everything I have thought or felt or wondered over this past semester in Paris.

Poetry has the power to heal from the pen to deep within.