ABSTRACT

DON’T MAKE ME BE

by Tara “TM” Keesling

These poems investigate and question the gender roles set by popular culture, the media, and traditional poetry within romantic relationships. The poems explore the role of the environment on those relationships and is, overall, examining the break down of environment, communication, and love within the work. The poems could be viewed as a single serial poem where the play with space represents the silences in a decaying romantic bond. The sections work together, but are separated because of their individual interests and prosody of the poems within each. Wholly, the poems work to look at how a woman can resist a certain gaze: on the cover page, “Don’t Make Me Be” is immediately followed by the author’s name with little space between. There’s a cleaving of author and text. As on the cover page, connections can both be made in the text, while also questioning why the assumption of a connection is made in the first place.
DON’T MAKE ME BE

A Thesis

Submitted to the
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Master of Arts
Department of English

by
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Oxford, OH
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Advisor: __________________
(cris cheek)

Reader: __________________
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Reader: __________________
(Margaret Luongo)
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Don’t Make Me Be

Tara “TM” Keesling
bitter
role-playing
by your words

injected through my ears

That Burn
dragged against carpet,
still beats,
clots and scabs circulate

bumpity and foreign.

—suggestive of misery.
Cycles

mentally disordered—

to decrease: function of sweating, breathing, excreting urine

could be
state of inertia

unresponsive

secrete saliva
juices
urine

diminished air
flow slow beat deteriorate

it be
forgotten practical
at once
heart hiccup at the mention
of time adrift, filched
heart hiccup at the sight
of strange familiarity
fuck

it
to
hell
“Scoot over, babe.”

Like every other night
they settled in for their shows.
Like every other night, he said
that.

Like every other night, babe, made her gag a little.

injected by your words
my ears
nitro

blooms courted me
got me to plead

*let’s run away together*

you were more sensible,
—and sometimes explosive

creation, ruination
tensions of your moods

*run*

adhesion
   aversion
dreams are a maze
I swim through til I’m drunk
I don’t care if I see the core

dreams leave amoeba alone
from the ground up

leached, latched, steeped,

depth in the dank

it will thrive lingered

after leaves have branched and built in

– vulnerability
When I say “stop being so sensitive,” I’m really saying “I wish I weren’t so sensitive.”
because if I weren’t so sensitive
my neck wouldn’t pop every time I look down
and the knots in my shoulders would slowly unwind

—relaxing posture
approaching ability
I wonder why:

I force us to have shared experience.
clearly the only thing we're good at is gardening  
   *guess*

I pretend I’m not enjoying using you
I pretend I want you to stay—

you want to leave  *guess*
so I wonder why I cum

deviation makes me happier
   *Obviously*
I like the drama.

*And I really wonder*
how much of what people forget is just what they don’t want to remember?
keep role-playing

injected into my ears
by your words
Remembering to remember. Remembering to recall the memory. Remembering that I forgot more than the memory that was forgotten.

Remembering that I forgot feels like a dissociation from my body.
don’t drink your coffee
because cracked

pot like the theories you serve
as pastries for my sweet tooth.
He said the word “camed”
but she let it go because his
brain was, at that time,
swimming somewhere inside her

The apartment was hot,
but not the kind of hot
from a heating system.
It was hot with breath
and oven heat.

She wished they could eat in silence.
I’m trained like Pavlov’s dog to apologize
we both know I’m not sorry

The thought of being vulnerable
[with someone] brings me to tears

but only when I’m by myself.
beat

For the man who never wants anyone to think he’s an asshole.
#cakeeater
my wound has a heart beat
so I think I’ll keep it

monitor the rhythm
the tip of my finger

to remind me to remember

it stills me
He tasted first
grease of her Chap Stick,
then the sad

Brussels-sprout flavor of her
and passed that, dust
lost afternoons and
salt of tears.

We got together on a Tuesday,
but it didn’t work out

that our anniversary would have
always landed on a Tuesday.
Things that are depleted.

She picks at herself
punishes her skin cells
sends them to an early grave

fickle love
shifty
When you say flow
you mean rhythm
and your rhythm
in particular—

when we talk of
my flow we’re talking of
something else
altogether

of the sun and stars
the beats

it stills me
my wound has a heart beat
so I think I’ll keep it
monitor the rhythm
add my own beat
with my finger tip
kept in check

it stills me
When she prunes the bush
she feels like she’s destroying
part of something alive
and it will never be
the same again
style meaner, leaner
  manner of poetry
changes the meaning
  lean tube
clean, cleanliness is up there
with Godliness, or so they say

  fuck me half
  fuck me whole

    Fuck Hole,
    don’t make me
    cleave

  still me
for this place

seedy, sweaty, waning energy
of youth

mouths moist with excitement
dime-sized pupils

raised roof crowned
with cigarette smoke

We chat, the conversation flat.
Our wits become dull spoons
The lime squeezed. The night
Has ended. Someone
Sings “Wagon Wheel.”
I think of how old I feel,
And long to be

still me
The ticking of her watch makes her nervous
She gives it a bath

reluctant beats

ba bum ba bum
like the pent of a sonnet

sonnets are only good
for one thing—
let your songs
   get old

here, no story
and no end

still you.
babbling
little hart
flirts and flails
from her to here

veering to greenery
I am the birds & the bees
I am barren
The low temps lifted, and the molasses descended.

Sap covered everything.

Swimming through molasses

or

Humans stuck like flies on tape

or

what it feel like to be a sperm
what it feel like to be a sperm

may the blue chafe you

its very substance
—both tragic and fantastic
his arrow
flits and flails

flits and flails
here to there

may the blue chafe you
I’ll be my own, Valentine.

“It illustrates how fragile—

and how

impacted by our activities.”
Suffocation

The CEO takes responsibility,

—shockingly.
snail trail perfume
he licks it up

a Musing_10

affecting the environment
entering it, but not allowing
it to enter me
Human Molasses Sucker: The Aftermath

groaning chisel from
candy-glazed bodies

hardening gunked
this city

carried footprints
track the tragedy

and even the air tinged sweet
lingering, choking the survivors
[Topical Paradise 3]

Dehydrated Fish Snacks

heavier than water
thicker than blood
sweet sludge

osmote effect
Sweet Disaster (Boston, 1919)

Part 1:

boiled juice of sugarcane
centrifugal extraction of sugar crystals

boiling (extraction)
boiling bitter

Part 2:

spice in the streets
unhinged
unleashed

buildings swept off foundations
crushed by sickly sweets

It seeped into everything.
They seeped into everything.
Everything seeped.
Sticky Shit Covers Everything (Honolulu, 2013)

[Tropical Paradise 1]

an unregulated product
down the faulty pipe

a flush
of molasses

with nowhere to go.
Non-Newtonian Fluid: a dense wall of syrup

*in which its viscosity depends on the forces applied to it*

examples of this include:
- toothpaste
- taffy
- ketchup
- custard
- butter
- mayonnaise
- magma
- paint
- soup
- shampoo
- gums

saliva blood mucus & semen

thick and goopy
they’ll shift with a tilt

however,
apply stress
and note the flow
he is the birds & bees
she is barren
he cums when I feed him
that fat cardinal
taking
the greenery
for a nuzzle
Warning Signs

slivers and rivets become shrapnel
moaning in the background

little did she know,
the flood was coming.
Plan B Because
She needs to control his seepage.
little heart
flips and flairs
from here to mirror
faking
the greenery
for a nuzzle
a voids the arrow*

*scupid’s arrow
[Toilet Paradise 2]

Suffocation

—he doesn’t consider
coral
nether regions
choking & dying
brazen
Using_11

99.9% of them die, but the .1% grows and wants to kill everyone; envelope us in their shit and suffocate us with their presence
Get the mild inside of you.

No, I got the spicy.

Then I need to eat at a different restaurant.

(And that’s how we break up.)
Vade in domum tuam et cor
Yer drunk.
To write is no longer to situate death in the future.

he’s thinking very carefully

“And your father—is quite well?”

thought that it might
black hole in the calendar—
cunt tattooed with a compass
show me my north star

I forgot you’re not a sailor
and do better on land—

I only cum when I’m on top
but my lover’s a Republican—
likes it the way his parents liked it

(elephant style)
heavy on the tusk
We: were: She: be: He: came
They: left.
It: remained,
them: there.
Schmoozing_8

Moten

on the edge of money
social upheaval
eruption
against your teeth
get the feeling

speech in writing
speech in right-ing
My lover’s a Republican—

I only cum when I’m on top
he likes it the way his parents liked it.
for twenty-something, young, female

subject of the fidget
center the focus

voiceless avoidance of gaze

that’s awkward

Go home, cor ebrius es.
I mean escape
    the swollen nethers

she drags her cigarette

“the poem” goes unwritten
    stuck

somewhere abysmal
    and lost to the conscious

—missed
I’m fine:

sweating
thinking about the fastest way home

boys can be pigs
in desperate need of a shower

always interesting to see true love
whatever that means

is it too aggressive to off myself?
Fusing_1

tangible because—
entirely giving thought
otherwise, body
quite matured.

because i am—
i will around
whether i escape
or not
I only cum when I’m on top
but my lover’s a Republican—
likes it the way Jesus liked it

e-MISSIONARY.
peppermint gum
lips made of ThinMint™

hipbone to hipbone
—grinding
cut skin
the chain dangles—
around your neck

the cross:
pull you deeper

I finger its sharp edges,
between my teeth
grab warm silver

and don’t realize
the clasp cleaves
in your flesh

I only cum when I’m on top
but my lover’s a reptilian—
likes it the way Jesus liked it.
the-eyes-have-it

the first sitting went by fast until—
time slowed down a bit

without losing eye contact
i feel connected to you

held you tighter
yours dilated

I only cum when I’m on top
but my lover’s
forked-tongued Republican—

iguana style
system jolt

they feeding on my blood
contagious
making me crazy

they engorged and lazy
except to feed
unable to move

the they the they the they
the lice

Go home, hurt
You’re drunk.