

## Thesis Prospectus

### “River, Trip the Light”

My creative thesis will be a work of poetry. This work will consist of approximately 50 poems in one contiguous section. It will include approximately 15 poems that I have completed previously and another 35 that I will finish over the course of the next year and a half. The work will exhibit the growth of specific forms and themes on which I have focused and will continue to focus over the course of my time in the program.

Although it isn't true of every poem, my poetry leans naturally toward blank verse, working in steady rhythms of iambs. I also focus on sound, often choosing words which display assonance, consonance, and sibilance even when these words change or even muddy the meaning of the poem.

The iambic rhythms of my poems work with the meaning because I tend to write on subjects which involve movement. Movement is the single most ubiquitous feature in my writing. Though this concept manifests in many different forms--from the motion of water, to dance imagery, to the voyage narrative, to the migration of my Native American ancestors westward—motion is the major thread that will hold the work together. The iambs supports this idea of continual movement as they carry the reader through the poem like footsteps, waves, or heartbeats. Because blank verse has had such a strong impact on my poetry, my reading list will include works by poets like Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Keats, and Elisabeth Barrett Browning, who all wrote successfully in blank verse.

Likewise, my poems tend to be heavily enjambed. This is another device which supports a sense of motion in the poems, keeping the reader continually moving into the next line. For example, in my poem, "Fly Blown," which moves the reader through life cycles of flies, flowers, and seasons, only the last line of the poem is end-stopped. This forces the reader to continue to think about the uncomfortable subject of decay as they are pulled inevitably toward the end of the poem.

While the topics in my poems vary greatly, there are subjects to which I continually return. For example, I use poetry to gain a better understanding of my Native American heritage. The Brothertown Indians were originally New England tribes who were pushed out of lands in the Connecticut area, through upstate New York, Ohio, and finally to Wisconsin. Rather than being pushed further west into Kansas, my ancestors traded in tribal status for U.S. citizenship and private land in the Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, area. Now the tribe is working toward once again being recognized as a tribal entity by the U.S. Government. This returns to the journey concept, but specifically, the forced migration from New England to Wisconsin, and the ways in which this displacement has affected my tribe today, as well as my own place within the culture. Native American poets who have influenced my writing include Joy Harjo, Sherman Alexie, and Linda Hogan. For example, Sherman Alexie also writes poetry in iambs, which he says are "the ba-bump, ba-bump sound of the heartbeat, of the deer running through the green pine forest, of the eagle singing its way through the sky" (Alexie, xii). In other words, the iamb is a universal rhythm that can bridge different cultures. Since my poetry necessarily combines the perspectives of my two distinct ethnic backgrounds, blank verse is an appropriate form.

While I'm sure that my poetry will evolve as I continue to read and study new perspectives, I think that the general themes of movement and Native American perspectives will remain constant, as will my tendency to write in enjambed blank verse.

#### Work Cited

Alexie, Sherman. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven*. New York: Grove Press, 1993.

#### Reading List (in progress)

Bishop, Elizabeth. *The Complete Poems: 1927-1979*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983. Print.

Bishop, Elizabeth. *Geography III*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Print.

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. *Selected Poems*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2009. Print.

Hedge Coke, Allison. *Blood Run*. Norfolk: Salt Pub., 2007. Print.

Hogan, Linda. *Book of Medicines*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1993. Print.

Keats, John. *The Complete Poems*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Penguin, 1977. Print.

Louis, Adrian C., *Blood Thirsty Savages*. St. Louis: Time Being Books, 1994. Print.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Reissue ed. New York: Oxford U.P., USA, 2008. Print.

Moore, Marianne. *The Pangolin and Other Verse*. Burlington, ON: Brendin Press, 1936. Print.

Moore, Marianne. *The Poems of Marianne Moore*. London: Penguin, 2005. Print.

Ortiz, Simon, *from Sand Creek*. Tucson: U. of Arizona, 2000. Print.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1960. Print.

Tennyson, Lord Alfred. *Selected Poems*. Revised ed. London: Penguin, 2008. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *Selected Poems*. Ed. Stephen Gill. London: Penguin, 2005. Print.

