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## Writing as Lament

Hannah Gears  
*Malone University*

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## Psalm In Which Everything I Write Becomes Lament

my six year old cousin tells me a story she learned at church – a man told God *i don't need you anymore, i can make everything i need* & God says *then make something* & he molds clay into a pot & God says *I made the clay start over* & the man cannot & is sent to hell – moral of the story making something of nothing is sacrilegious – God made the world God made woman – woman eats a watermelon & the seed grows in her stomach – it replacing her with a new hunger – her replacing it with a new life & such is the lineage of my family – my grandmother was a horrible cook both sides raised daughters who know better than frozen dinners & cans of fruit cocktail but my dad still uses my grandma's recipes – spaghetti pie – a faux dessert made of government cheese stolen eggs & leftover noodles & somewhere in the translation of the language she did not teach my father – the italian you cant find in my face – it being replaced with an american dream hunger & my mom taught me to make a meal out of anything – the skin tongued away from lips – a meal – a cup of coffee comunion & if you are hungry enough for long enough everything becomes a meal & if you're hungry enough for long enough it turns into sacrament & if you're hungry you have a body & a God to thank for the pain of needing what he has taken from you

## Discovery of a Jellyfish

I knew not to touch you. My touch  
could kill us both. You were  
supposed to die without me,  
there to save you. Your plastic bag body  
washed onto my feet. Found rest  
in the hollows of my foot prints  
more soft, than wet. A easy death  
on the beach. I thought vinegar  
would neutralize the stings,  
so I held you, pink and alive  
until you weren't anymore.  
You had washed back to shore  
before I realize that saving you was not  
what I wanted it to be.

## Family Traditions: On Faith and Addiction

He told me he was about to start drinking again  
but a young girl said a prayer  
and he stopped forever.

Although his spine can lead to my praying body  
I am no longer a young girl  
and I cannot make him sober.

I cannot make him go to rehab,  
or forget the weight of that man's eyes  
when they refused to see he was just a boy.

I know. I know. I know, brother. I know  
fear and hope and want and prayer and  
I know he hasn't taken a drink in five years

but that he'll always be an addict.  
He knows, I want to believe,  
that a higher power or another moment on my knees

will give me serenity, or at least another day of recovery.  
I want tell him that my addiction isn't one you can buy.  
I want tell him, I am sorry.

## Addicts Anonymous

in a room of stagnant light  
you say your name  
a spoon full of men  
with cough drop voices  
echo

being called by what is killing you  
assures you always have a name  
addiction will give you something  
to do with your hands at parties

whenever your skin is too tight  
you peel back a new layer of  
sick like a reverse chrysalis  
where you turn back into  
A baby thing, you didn't know better  
suckling fetus teaching you  
what you had to lose

you stand paying serenity  
forgetting your limitations  
believing that this time  
will be different

stop because there is nothing  
left to be to be done  
nothing left  
to be taken  
until you come  
with a new worst next week.

## **Candling**

The method in which embryo development of an egg is studied when bright light is shined behind an egg to show details of the embryo through the shell.

Hold a guarded sphere to the light  
it will glow a sunburst of veins.  
A naked bird with black seed eyes  
trembles before it is alive. I understand  
how you can fear your eyes before  
you use them. Once, I held my eyes shut  
so tight, unable to see him that still  
that my flooded corneas blossomed  
lavender slugs which slid onto my cheeks  
finger painting pools of gray down my face.  
But not looking into the casket didn't make  
him more alive. The years assigned to him  
didn't make his death more fair. Illuminated  
wax drippings, collect on my fingers to show  
that in a small glob there are eyes  
that have not learned to see. Blinding  
it in with my life in hopes that it will live  
without having to learn to accept death.

After Watching *Poltergeist* and Realizing All Houses Were Built Where Someone Was Once Buried

How long do you acknowledge  
the dead before there is enough  
dirt between your feet  
and their corpses  
to walk comfortably over  
them. When do you let  
tombstone become rubble.  
Start calling cemeteries  
ruins. Hire someone  
to deconstruct  
final resting plaques to use  
as bricks for buildings'  
foundations. How many years until  
you can build a house  
over my spine.  
Raise a family in my ribcage  
call my body your home. At what point  
do I go from being  
someone who was loved,  
to the dust on your radiators, the dirt  
for your carnations, the inconvenient smudges  
on your children's shoes.

## Cricket Love

It's not me coming home to fall  
asleep to the sounds of the country.  
It's a midnight alarm clock that won't  
snooze. The shrill repartition of chafed thighs  
the rift of a mating song screamed  
outside my window taunting  
those who could kill you In the hours  
you know they will not come. Each of them born  
an orphan like the nothing I found  
when my highschool sweetheart left  
after I promised myself that this 5th time love  
was going to make it. The 5th time summer  
before I never went home to  
drown out the score of canable love  
with my own limbs quaking

## The Body as an Affirmation

The body forgets pain  
like the languages of infant  
to adult. The sounds I borrowed  
before I knew words  
could have a meaning. I had once  
opened my skin expecting  
to find carved words  
comforting. I knew I would heal  
before I knew what my pulse  
tasted like. My body doesn't  
show the difference between words  
and scars but I know now  
that my wrists were never  
meant to be an epitaph.

## Stretch Marks

When you first arrived  
purple on top of my  
vains. I wanted to find  
the legend you made  
on my body. Red, blue  
and white all over;  
like a joke where my thighs  
were the punchline. Raised  
welts where my skin  
had not yet caught  
up with my growth.  
Silver white landmarks  
etched in my legs. I see  
now that the muslin pleats  
of my thighs are not  
the map or the destination,  
the canvas nor the painting. No,  
they are clenched fingers  
keeping my skin zipped.  
A sweaty palm slip  
away from opening.

## While Attending a Lecture Titled Writing as Lament at The Making Literature Conference

My mentor drug me  
to literacy  
at a conference.  
I snored through  
the lectures  
because  
in theory  
words aren't  
something  
meant to be  
taught.

When I woke  
in my set  
he was not looking.  
So I asked,  
“What is lament anyways?”  
“Praise”

Lament  
to love poems  
written  
in the past tense.  
Praise my first  
love, parading  
through this poem  
as someone willing  
to teach me. Lament  
to my mentor  
who hasn't written  
a new poem  
in three years. Praise  
finding him  
while we were  
still young  
enough  
to be willing  
to learn.