

A Throat is a Channel // Emasculate Conception

By Jake Makela

A Throat is a Channel and *Emasculate Conception* are companion pieces, each exploring transsexuality, Catholic notions of suffering as subjection, and queer ecology. Both serving as foundational to the development of my undergraduate thesis, *Trans*figurations*, each piece facilitated experimentation across categorical bounds of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and prayer in the messy marriage of seemingly disparate subject matter. *A Throat is a Channel* was one of my first attempts at this type of work, serving as a basis for further exploration across categorical bounds of subject matter. Seemingly spilling out of me, I practiced swimming from corporeal to spiritual, stopping frequently in-between in an effort to subvert or trans* traditional narration and form. Working closely with Lanceleaf Coreopsis in both Queer Ecologies and Natural Dyes classes, *Emasculate Conception* offered a rich creative entry point to explore and develop my relationship with this particularly rhizomatic plant and the prairie as a whole. From germinating its seeds to boiling its sweet, dried buds, I gathered a rich sensorial archive from which this piece, and my relationship with the plant, came to bloom. Overall, these pieces speak to the ever-ongoing development of a subversive, transdisciplinary approach towards creative release, trans* relationality, and unbounded groundedness.

A Throat is a Channel

Adam's apple sits like
a rock in my throat

Binding vocal chords
into knotted balls
of string, rosary beads
hard, tight, smooth stone
slice clean through
sacred heart seed
pitted and consumed

I want to be held
in the warmth of
her mouth in the
mud and the blades
sorrow grows wings
grows hair where
fruit used to
ripen, shrivel in the
stringy sun's veins

A throat is a channel
like all ties it binds
God from God
light from light
true God from true God
begotten and made
every sound drawn from
(Un)still air

A throat is a channel
A song is a prayer
Make me yours

Emasculate Conception

I'm standing shirtless in the prairie, allowing the sun to hit every inch of my chest. I'm thinking about photosynthesis. I wonder if I think hard enough, I'll be able to do it. I wonder if being shirtless helps, if sunlight on my tits is the answer.

I'm a patch of pink in a yellow field. I think about what that looks like from above. I think about objectivity, about removing myself from my body, about observation, and science. Homosapien. Coreopsis Lanceolata. Myself. The flowers. I pick some. I feel bad that I picked them and think about eating the evidence, about energy transfer. I bury them half-alive in a tangle of roots instead.

I'm jealous of the ambiguity of the body of the field. I can't tell exactly where it starts or ends. I become grateful for the white fuzz of my arm hair. I watch it blur the line between my arm and the air. I'm getting hot and sweaty and more and more pink. I think about how pigs use mud as sunscreen, and I'm tempted to rub dry dirt all over myself. I don't.

I feel fat. I imagine slicing deep into myself with sharp petals. Lanceleaf. I imagine what a flat body would feel like, whether there'd be any flesh. I'd start with my chest.

I remember something from Sunday school. Revelations 12:1. Mary is called a woman clothed in sun. I think about nakedness and women and sex. I wonder why I've never seen the virgin in the nude. I wonder what her tits looked like, her pregnant stomach. I wonder if she ever felt like chopping them off. I think about what it means to be fat, to be full, complete.

I could never give my body up like that. I'm far too pregnant with myself. A breeze grazes flower grazes my shin grazes my gory insides. I hear her voice in the softness of the petals on my flesh. There are so many different ways to love.

I remember deadheading in the garden with my mom. She held the shears and told me to pinch the droopy, dry blooms off with my fingers.

"Just the ones that are ready to go," she said. I didn't know what she meant by that, how she knew. I saw life in all of them, and she could tell.

"The plant is still alive, Joan. It's just the flowers that are fading." I flinched with each snip, watching her head slide off each browning stem. St. Catherine of Alexandria was beheaded alive. Her virginity is usually mentioned before this detail. Milk shot out of her neck in place of blood, seeping deep into soil and seed. One fatal lactation.

I begin to imagine my own head in place of my mother's, purging myself of maternity with each wilted bloom. I think about flattening myself between two heavy books, pressed, dried, and bound.

"Removal promotes renewal," my mother says, and I'm back in the prairie. I try to come out of myself, but my body is consumed by the warm yellow sway.

Sunlight hits a petal hits my retina hits interconnecting neurons hits interconnecting neurons. I am pregnant with a piece of that petal, a reflection of light, a thought, a prayer, a million fetuses. The field is pregnant with me, with roots and flowers and birds and bees, each pregnant with each other, pregnant with more than each other. My head spins as my mother trims it neatly from my body. I miss it now. I miss how she held me, how I held the half dead flowers held the fruit of a million more lives held a million more bodies. It's hot and I'm pink and I'm golden sun field flowers, sowing myself mud deep in the dirt. I'm mastectomizing myself with sunlight turned carotenoid turned sharp lanceleaf petal. Unearthing myself, uprooting my insides, unveiling the Holy Mother inside me, I am birthing and being birthed in and to and from this field. I am penetrated by sun and stem, not clothed or covered or virginal. A sea of roots and umbilical cords welcome my body is not flat. We seep into all corners my cornea can reach and further still until it's not only my body, but my mother's too.

I wake up beneath the soft blue blanket of night. I'm still for a moment to pray. A wafer on the tongue of the field. I am leavened by petals, sharp and unfurling. They slice me soft and slick through the chest like my mother's hushed voice. I get up slow knowing there's a piece of me lying there still. A piece of her. Be with me, my spirit. Tracing the seam across my sown chest, I feel a new heart beating. There are so many different ways to love.