VI. Statement: Intertwining of Poetry and Architecture within the British Isles

It is imperative to recognize the symbiotic relationship between history and poetry. In the British Isles specifically, styles of architecture coincide tightly with every literary period. The British Isles have been the home to a massive historical integration of cultures throughout the ages; this, in turn, created an environment able to nourish an immense range of literary styles. Although at times, history seems to be infinitely-faceted and abstract, surviving architecture refutes this claim by presenting a tangible connection with the past. The transcendence of architecture can be seen both within its own survival and within the literary eras that transform and interpret it.

I will focus on four particularly compelling and sequential periods of poetry in the British Isles: Medieval Literature, Renaissance Literature, Neo-Classical Literature, and Romanticism. I would like to challenge myself to write within the conditions of each literary era by situating myself within a few monuments that inspired each era (i.e. Exeter Cathedral for Medieval, Roman Baths for Neo-Classical, etc.). By visiting sites from each period and writing on-site I hope to recreate, to an extent, the reactions and sensations that those living and writing within those periods were pressed to feel; then, convey them through poetry that will connect with the past through the inevitable lens of the present.

I plan to visit historical cites in chronological order in order to simulate a smoothing and condensing of a transition between literary eras within my own work. By traveling in chronological order to these monuments I am hoping to both aid my understanding of the combination of influences that synthesized into certain eras of literature, as well as to be able to identify and separate the responses that architecture from each era triggered. Ultimately, I will identify how the surroundings and close contact with history influenced my poetry, and compare it with writers of the era associated with the monument.

I will give myself a couple of hours in each site visit to free-write poetry. At the end of each piece or set of pieces that I compose I will include a short dissertation that includes a brief description of the site (including pictures that I will take), a list of poets and their works that had been written during the period associated with the monument, and how the style of the monument manifested itself in the poem(s) that I will write while I am there.

My background as an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing and as a Classics major with a concentration in Languages and Literature has provided me with a strong understanding of the intertwining of history and literature. I have also taken a class in both Renaissance Literature and Medieval Literature; they have given me a firm understanding of the eras that I will be writing in. I have taken a class in architectural history, architectural design, and architectural archaeology that have taught me to be able to both categorize features of architecture, given me a solid foundation in the history of architecture, and taught me to optimally interpret the structure of buildings, past and present.

Samples of my poetry are attached.
In the Forest of Men

From the Leviathan's mouth I came:
naked and raw and smooth,
fit with unbearable fingertips
-one metacarpal short of blasphemy.
The air around forged my limbs,
each change stinging
like a hammer on an anvil;
Hephaestes hacking away at my waist,
at my jawbones, while I was still warm
and malleable. Only then, was I dropped
from his pinch, onto the neatly bound
patch of grass and water
that convened into an earth;
the world isn't spherical:
it isn't even flat.
It is only these four mirrored walls
of my bedroom.

You are tied up,
bound to the ground, without any hope
of being carved carefully.
I try to dig myself out:
there is no chance
that my facial features will survive
the excavation.

The whole world is moving
but I am still.
How do you manage to ignore
the sidewalks, rotating
through their finite patterns,
 stuck on their mechanical loops
 of printed-on scenery.
A tiny version of myself notices
from inside the fogged-up windows
of my eyes-
my cerecorpum, if you will.

Have you ever looked in a mirror
and watched your own brain
hemorrhage? I blow chunks
of it out of my nose often. The grey gunk
is ruinining my outfit again.
My lungs are collapsing
as a final scream
crawls from my mouth,
like a spider in a gust of wind.
The organ rejection.
The organ rejection.

Violent? Why wouldn’t I be violent.

I’m bound within my own body,
fit with the duel function of a coffin.
How convenient:
 oaken futility, without any chance
of thoughts becoming tangible.
You have no power to be tangible.
You have no power to be irreversible.
Is this heaven or hell?

Stop taking credit for the smell
of the fish skins under the kitchen sink,
the stench of the rotting opossums
and their bitter blood fermenting
in the front yard.
You are vain,
But I am far vainer.

Narcissistic? Why wouldn’t I be narcissistic.

The trees were once dancers and painters and poets,
transformed: welcome to immortality,
god screams, as hearts convert blood
to chlorophyll and legs twist into the raw
ground and arms yearn again for the touch
of the sun.

Have you seen your body
Turn into a pillar of sand?
My mirror has.
I Didn't Want to Write About Birds, But I Had to.

Remember that time we died,  
and the vultures, they chewed  
little windows into our bodies  
for the maggots to crawl in,  
crawl out of;  
like vile pilgrims, they whispered  
their stories to the dirt  
in passing,  
blood coagulating  
around their fearless  
mouths.

Maggot 1:

Remember that time  
you first learned  
the word for cardinal;  
it had fallen from the sky,  
at your mighty feet:  
god must've been playing baseball,  
and hit the bird just a bit  
-just a bit  
too hard.

Which circle of hell do the cardinals belong to?

Hell, I want the birds  
to stop rioting against me:  
don't they know we're akin?  
They can't know,  
they're only birds.

Maggot 2:

Vultures on a carcass,  
vultures off a carcass,  
vultures on a carcass,  
vultures off a carcass,  
Fuck this maggot,  
he sings silly songs
while I am ripped apart
by the shrieking vultures
shrieking vultures
shrieking vultures.

Maggot 3:

birds
are quite
the overused
vessel
of mortality
you're
not a man
you're not
a blackbird
you're
barely
a heap
of flesh.

He mocks me
with a mouthful
of veins
of blood
of liver
chewing
sloppily

this maggot thinks he is quite the philosopher.

I think I am quite the rotting
cliché.
Introduction of an Oracle:

I, the genderless prophet,
and you, the drugged-up teen.

Gaze into my metal eyes.
Let your cocaine veins throb:
there is fire underneath my vellum

skin. An assault of antiquity
captured in our breaths;
we fuse with the marbled floor.

Soak up my ethereal words

and let them coat your bones
with the slickness
of olive oil.