

WHEAT PASTE and other poems

By Christine Byrne

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes... Christine Byrne fills me. I love the rhythm and sway and the play of this artist...it is interesting to me that the word rhythm is not encumbered by vowels except sometimes 'why' and neither is Byrne (encumbered, I mean). I only wish I was as far out there as she is. She has a lot to say, here are some snippets. "Paper mache me anyday" "Lover kiss the crux of her" "Eclectomania" "I am a pothole / Of suburbia, extricated." "Eat my panic" "Pickpockets my memories—" "—cackerjacker heart attacker..." It goes on and on, just like this, until we finally come to 'Omniscient Creamsickles' Nuff said! (Spacing and font size are poet's own.) HS*

Wheat Paste

Paper mache me anyday

Baby she's a hoot

She's acidic marmalade bitter

Stiletto heartthrob (ba-boom ba-boom)

My lover's lover exhales angel dust

Wears an unlabeled name tag ironically

Wears gold embroidered

Tablespoons of flour

My lover's lover

Purple laced uncategorizable

Brunette artist girl

Four steps behind my lover's lover

(Following her! I am following her!)

Because her cartilage looks exactly like my cartilage

if I pierced my cartilage
Because her bangs give her
sex appeal.

I wonder if I have
sex appeal.

Flour handprints on her pants

Hangs left by the mirror
(dimwit?) (shortcut?) (trying to lose me?) (trying to make me lose it?)
Hangs left by the mirror image of a mirror
(my eyes at myself sometimes)

I'm going to pierce my cartilage next Tuesday
on the opposite ear

On a bus, six steps down across
I watch her choke discreetly
on a piece of poundcake
I laugh at her choking

Once I know she's okay
I wonder if she knows
I wonder if she's
Boil over heat

I question my rationale, my intention, my
tolerance for needles

I question my love for my lover
(unfathomed!)
I question her love for my lover
(unclear.)

She gets off the bus
stop for a sandwich
scandal she's a vegan.
A vegan pedestrian.

Water and flour make glue

My lover comes walking toward her
(eyebrow profile- hand span- paint specs)
Lover kiss the crux of her

stompy madness (ba-boom ba-boom)
Adhering voices
Don't tease me, Wheat Paste (wink)
I like your
Piano fingers

(blink)

Summit

I razored your paint off the steel window bars of the Summit
from the cheapest twelve pack variety & re-Sharped words you painted over words

written before I showed you how to climb the eight floor of the locked building
to see the horizon is mostly trees cracked my nails for a fistful of paint chips,
hot films of sweat curling them

People are specs yes, I'm out of my mind, aspects I'm back to & back to
You, I don't think that anymore. The world's not for, proud of themselves, choke art
take & be thankful

You're right I'm the equivalent of a dollar pack

I still believe it's mostly trees stretching out conventional, & the little moving
paint dots the words charred in the ceiling
it's hot at the top of the world isn't the summit really some-

times You're inanimate you figment, you piece of What I won't say for myself

I won't stop it, if me at nine could see I can't really think about it
you walked me & when you talked I watched your breath clouds linger
I reasoned I was going to be someone explain I hadn't always

Been so, chips off the cold I don't wish you
anything I don't finish *fragile*

Honestly I liked the way you walked the way you seemed to have a right to
talk over me honestly, it's funny I'll keep

the static intermissions of driving a taquito commercial & the new age funk
as the car moves you exaggerate me
the difference
growing pains believe you dead in five *we're terrible terrible*

paint chips palmed sweat of my hands where time won't affect a little
shrivel, maybe

Eclectomania

I am a pothole
Of suburbia, extricated.

Kitchen feeds me, removes my hands, kitchen braids
My light into
Effeminate sneezes. In Kitchen I
Chauffer my battlements,
Work blinkless and tissue wrapped but

The Cat judges
Sitting in yellow as Kitchen's Guard Cat
Gulping all the light

Kitchen says
Tongue up, move tongue
Kitchen doesn't gentle Kitchen needs

And I give my clothes, trace
My appendages
In inverted mirror fog

Kitchen says *swallow kitchen open*
We tuck our demeanors like tails
Kitchen whispers *mend your grievences!*
Deceivences, thievences! I Blink and the Cat
Blinks *weavences blink peevences!*

Eat my panic

Misbelievences! Counterceivences!

Cat knows where Kitchen keeps it but
Cat says no. Cat speaks ir-
regularly, checks his paw-time

Kitchen steals my fingernails
Kitchen threatens
To take the cat away
If I try to leave Kitchen if I cut into
Deliria, as another public servant
Doses me my panic

Even cat (blink)
Nervously overgrooms his hind legs.

I am ashamed. I have been bad.
I have nothing in this businessal medicinal!

Kitchen says *swallow*

Here,

Kitty kitty

Lady Cade

I am already inside when Cade arrives, sits, says: *this isn't business*, just
Checking in and *it had nothing to do with Rife* wearing a wedding ring
That day I ran into him in the bakery on Damen.
Or how they married young, fell in and out of it, were settled now. This all
Wasn't unlike him. Younger women.

To become and come from, this is business.

She orders a single pear. Eats politely.
Pickpockets my memories—
Have you always been such
A brunette?

This can't be measured by lifespan, we both know

How quietly he became healthy again, reabsorbed, I'm sure made
Promises to himself at the foot of her bed, eased in, explained
How the pregnancy did not take. There was no consequential change.

I think of my green linoleum childhood
Countertops, learning certain moves—
How to move myself with implication or
How hard it is to move oneself.

Lady Cade: *ordinary fears*.

Yes that's the thing about Rife he would
Whisper into me
 Present or presence I was
Unsure always

Lady Cade: *I heard it started with a watermelon sundress?*

Yes it started with my thumb pointed down the road stepping carefully so as not to
Damage anything bare—breathless from pretending not to be breathless
See, when I don't look at him I can't picture what his eyebrows look like, which is
Strange, because they're why he reminds me of when it's cold outside
And I love it when it's cold—yes,
The problem was I wanted to become all of these things
Simultaneously, with childishness, and was too (how to sum it in up)
For lack of asking...

Little walks. Incapable composition
Notebooks. Desperate cities. I was having dreams
About some future son, and would wake clutching belly,
Renting \$2.99 movies to keep myself awake, talking
To the prostitute at the bus stop about her
Organic soap

: *It has been a serious and unnatural mimicking*

Sitting down for dinner with my
Lover's wife I investigate
Her nature: small hands. Deviance
In the eyelids. Intentional wrenching. Scrapes
At her chin. How did that happen? I can see her as someone
Accustomed to aprons. Grieving in pears.
Neither of us would ever be mothers.

Lady Cade: *And how did that make you unmade?*

Love said by looking I paid
Attention: we met
In a supermarket I was
Twenty-two—
I got Pregnant and then
Was not pregnant

: *Sorry. Bad question. Let me try again*

I was convinced I was too old
To grow up with anyone and that meant
Something about love
About looking
About that whole incomparable: *you have been*
Young together. And he never saw me

With those clear plastic dress straps,
When I would paint in my
Underwear, skinny enough
To cast my own ribcage

Crackerjack
/'krækərˌdʒæk/

Noun:

- Crackerjacker heart attacker *I hear Tina left you*
- Reincarnated plywood with skin cancer
- (v.) A pacified ka-pow

See also: How to belittle a choirboy

Blindingly deniable
overly reliable
Tina never nibbled at the little bits

- Crackerjack you
sicko are pentatonic. Your etymology unravels phraseology
slinky but obscene (& a looker) (v.)
- Intravenously shooting the kool-aid
- Economist of the least great cause (ew)

It's only a matter o' time

Alternative definitions are subject to include:

- A peg leg kind of atmosphere
—Modern history of barbarian drugs
- A pacifist fascist with immediate regret

Tina took your cookbooks & your diary

Impaled by hails of investment healing
See also:

The sexiest wrongdoing (*verb*)

—Sensationalist Reputationalist (sp.??)

To use you in a sentence would stagnate the numbers
To use you in a sentence keeps me up at night

I wanna be

 Locked in your teenage bedroom
Hooked on all your barbarian drugs

I want to

 Lethally inject you
 Get in bed with
All your atlases, go worldly —

See also: The Prime Meridian Suspect (*ka-pow*)

—C, if $\frac{A+B}{\sqrt{\text{me}}} =$ an inability

I'd help you track down Tina

You are—

4 percent fruitjuice an
 8 month subscription with a late fee telemarketing
on hold in an elevator the framework
 of modern technology's receding hairline (noun.)

See also

—Recently single

Omniscient Creamsuckles

Everyone keeps asking how I destrangled myself
rebuilding healthy disdain starting each day naked

And what the hell happened to you

I don't feel that different I guess
my throat hurts. I swallowed a few
rich girls from cul-de-sacs hiking Europe's
goddamn secretaries & carcinogens &
an internet scam seducing the pretense
of running out of air from blowing hard enough

And of course it will come back to our parents,
Our full time entanglements sticking tongues at us—

And we love it. And you've been better

I know it was a damn hard time
pushing around the insides of six weeks ago,
we're just a little bit thinner. Filthier. And I know
we won't be introspective at museums or offer realistic options
trying to blink out greatness
sitting in sliced sunlight so your face looks
a little more naked. You just
get the supplies
gravelling, groveling, *first a lick*
then the whole thing

It was the middle of the night and you wanted to
Do something with your life

Passing the billboard advertising the sight of God I call the number
greeted by Not-God, commercial breathing intervening

tolling numbers for proof mumbo jumbo Not-God
has digestive issues Not-God's a little insecure about Not-God says
your legs look so good underwater like that Not-God
wants to know you better than a phone call is
Not-God

Then delirious chewing rocks to repave side-
walks of life tonguing glass so fruit rollup
my whole face in my mouth & then the
Do you believe me face in my mouth with all your
voices—I guess I'd pissed myself my eyes
were so swollen they had to do things to my face
and my mother said *that's my daughter*
over other hospital voices. Something else then
you are gravelly *found her like that*
gnawing, rawing
asphyxiate exclamatory catastrophe
Leaving metal instruments holding my face
toward your faulty cropped
Diesels hovering ankles *I'm not*
Gunna touch you

Everyone's leaking bedside brilliance these days
wanting to know how it feels to be
recovered. Barefoot & resistant, whether I think
places make us sick

In other words

You gotta get your hands

In my velvet jumpsuit leaning on a fist nodding

Off oxygen in just this spectacular occasion

Then snorting cheeto dust

And cock and my gone toe and all these old plans

Baptized then shoved into the freezer

Embarrassed falsettos of excitement

Frozen ruminants in bottles lifted to coldsored mouths

Releasing to our veins the omniscient creamsickle

Single ceiling-cells crawling upside provocative sucking

Plastic gin jugs & the cereal grave. Erratic but hibernated

We are bugs bugged like labs rats, the aspirated Hoverers

Eating lunches lacking answers as everyone asks

where the hell you are they want to know

who the hell I am now someone says

you can't

heal here

The expressionless walls of faces—

Capped jars of indistinguishable solids—

Tell them I picked the gravel out piece by piece that the indents
texture my esophagus that they can
bring their own flashlights & check inside

THE POET SPEAKS: *It's definitely hard for me to say what inspires my poetry. I think most everything that occurs in my life will end up in my writing one way or another. I find a lot of stylistic influence comes from the wonderful teachers I've had—Bruce Cohen & Darcie Dennigan. & the rest is just life, I guess—things I get to see in whatever specific or peculiar moment.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: Christine Byrne is a recent graduate of the University of Connecticut. She was born and raised in Norwalk, Connecticut and currently lives in Chicago, Illinois, where she teaches and writes.