ME AND THE UNREST

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Master of Arts

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An Abstract of the Thesis by

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Sometimes to learn about life, our personal lives or the lives of others, we have to look inward; sometimes we have to look outward to nature or the world around us. That’s the truth of poetry, and that’s what I aim for in these poems. In the words of Dylan Thomas, “A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape of the universe, helps to extend everyone’s knowledge of himself and the world around him.” I write so that I can better understand myself and the world around me. I share my poetry so others might be able to understand themselves and the world around them. The following poems contemplate family, identity, anxiety and depression, and the environment.

By primarily using free verse, I’m able to pay careful attention to sound and line breaks, create new and playful words, and alter spacing between words or lines in order to better replicate the experience. Crafting my poems in this way allows me to experiment with Robert Frost’s “sound of sense” and William Carlos Williams’ “new measure”/phrasal line and experimental spacing to mimic aspects of life, like breathing, hesitations, and busy thoughts and emotions. In Denise Levertov’s “On the Function of the Line,” she wrote, “The most obvious function of the line-break is rhythmic: it can record the slight (but meaningful) hesitations between word and word that are characteristic of the mind’s dance among perceptions but which are not noted by grammatical punctuation.” If a line-break can record these hesitations, then a caesura in the middle of the line can do the same. In a few of my poems I’ve implemented this strategy to capture the narrator’s thought patterns.

My poetry is immersed in images, and it experiments with surrealism, but it can also be meditative. Even if my readers don’t completely understand a poem—as some of my poems are surreal or centered in the unconscious world of sleep—I hope these poems lead them to feel or think something new. I’ve divided these poems into three sections. Section one, “Lushaby,” is a character introduction that sets up some of the major themes seen throughout the thesis: family, nature, and anxieties that migrate into problems with sleep and connections with others. Section two, “False-Warm,” deals primarily with family connections and unwanted or commonly ignored feelings that someone with anxiety has to work through. Section three, “Arriving Loneless,” explores the dark, deep-seated sense of loneliness that anxiety plants inside the self. “Arriving Loneless,” however, also acts as a reprieve from that lashing loneliness by diving into things that bring happiness and light.