# Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Poems

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Kaitlyn Lansing

Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Poems

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Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Poems

To Candida Pilla, my godmother

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I

#### Metamorphosis

That day, all over Baltimore near East Lombard Street, the voices rose to claim I had drunk myself to death, to say I was murdered by a political gang on election day, to assert I had a disease of the mind and body.

Allow me to inform all those driveling, shriveling naysayers that I am very much alive.

Not drunk, bloodied, or unwell — for at the moment I am sitting on a throne in hell.

My throne is laced with rhymes and ravens'

bones – wound together with book spines.

Pages of ink-blotted scraps fall down
from above. Thousands
of nevermores and Lenores,

Helens and Eleonoras. All the names! Names,
poisoned and perfumed.

Imagine the mind playing tricks on you.

In hell it is quite common.

I am the masque of the red death catching words from earth above, stuffing each one-by-one in the pocket of my shirt – still falling through to another room full of mirrors and prisms

of cold, foggy breath and gypsy hips that bring a fire to my step.

Death! Can you hear?

Devil! Can you speak?

Doom! Can you see?

When all of my words are lying here, I'll smell the pages one final time and touch the wrinkled edges.

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Holding my icy breath so near, I'll whisper these words in the devil's ear –

What we call "death," is but the painful metamorphosis.

II

## Man Worship

The smell of cotton quiets my babbling mind. I pray for a day when your warmth will cling to my flesh. For I have wandered down the path of  $\sin - a$  daze from which I cannot fathom new life. And yet, I step on your toes, Father, and you lead me in a waltz. The box step is all I know how to do. But I wear your shirts to bed anyway. They reach my ankles, and fold themselves a million times when I kneel down to confess. However, when I stand back up, I am in front of you, Husband – wearing your cotton shirts to bed – the hems tickling my thighs. I worship the both of you for the love that you wrap me in every night. Praise be to Man.

#### III

#### Philosophy

The scale of the universe. It exists – all these ties to the *real*. Each simplistic system maintaining order where formulas maintain the grace and brevity of a hexagonal molecular structure – ice, leaves, water, trees.

My world makes sense in all its hidden glory.

Does yours?

Have Kant and Derrida perverted your sense of reason?

Did these thinkers poison what you held so dear?

Where three, straight sides make up a triangle? Where six, unique sides make up a snowflake? Where nine, useful sides make up your latest gadget?

It all falls gracefully to the ground.

Contorting, twisting its crumbled sides,
in a whimsical ballet that makes no sound.

Engrossed in its own structure, its own form.

Until its tortured frame glides down to the ground —
waiting to be trampled on by Mother Nature's children.

There's father Man, daughter Snow, son Sun, and pet Spider.

The various family members all damaging the graceful structure of the leaf.

The mind, the reason, the form, the design, the life that you held so close.

What would happen if that fallen leaf had landed on the moon?

On the moon, there is no gravity – hence, no wind, no weather, no time. On the moon, that leaf would be saved from Nature's cruel tyranny. On the moon, the leaf could lay there – preserved forever.

If logic had been saved, then that leaf could have made it to the ends of the universe.

# IV

#### Clair de Lune

Last night the moon seemed to say something.

Its illuminating streaks of silver appeared to whisper softly in my ear.

"Defy the abhorred sun," it cooed.

"Why? I love the sun," I crooned back.

"You must, in order to save the night."

"Why would I desire to do that?"

"To stop time."

"For what purpose?"

"To make love."

"Why make love forever in the dark?"

"To kill death forever in the light."

# $\mathbf{V}$

#### Mr. Rowe's History Class (Round 3)

Exhilaration

from the comfortingly familiar stories.

The same poor old dented desk,

hit one too many times from one impassioned teacher.

#### Bang!

the apple smashes against the wall.

What kind of a masochist would take this ravenous beast's class a THIRD time?!

I would. I have. I did.

I took his class because I realized that he is just a big teddy bear after all.

A man who wears his heart on his sleeve,

a teacher who stands as the root to all other teachers in my life -

much like a father -

guiding me along a path of knowledge.

#### Captivated

by the new stories of the day.

The Cortez lesson one final time.

A student always wants to tape it, but it just seems too magical to record.

You have made us your children and

we have found Neverland (a.k.a. "The Temple") -

only it is starting to fade away.

#### --Fatigue.

The training wheels have come off.

Graduation is coming near,

immersing me in a wave of fear and anticipation.

For what does my future hold?

This poem is just as much about you as it is of me.

#### A buzz.

Seniors crowd the long hallways one last time.

Kissing goodbye to some splendid high school memories,

all while keeping one eye on the future.

Colleges want us now, we are the NOW.

Carpe diem, carpe diem.

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At last...

Graduation time.

# VI

#### Plato's Chariot

My love lay there in ecstasy over me. He sees through draped eyelids my physique, for he does not need to open to see. It is a form which he knows is unique.

To have a body to love and to hold, that is what makes the bond we share strengthen. My body unites with yours when lusts fold. Naked here together – two shadows lengthen.

Test us – separate us – only to fail. Now we are unwilling to come undone. We are lovers ready to set sail, melting forward into the setting sun.

My romantic love is fit for the gods, for no one else could fathom such fine odds.

## VII

#### **Backstreet Blues**

Music makes me feel like...

the backstreet blues.

Furls of smoke gleaning past the illuminated dust.

The melancholy rhythm sweep picking each heart string in a downward spiral.

Sorrows take shape forming the notes of an A minor ballad.

It rings in my ears and the metronome follows the pounding of my heart.

Da-dum-da-dum-da-dum....

Unstressed, stressed, unstressed, stressed...

The music softly speaks words in iambic pentameter.

It is like Shakespeare to me, only more muddled, following the classic I-IV-V 12 bar blues

diluted by the extra variables which music factors in, not simply words.

This hormonal lust of sound wrapping tightly around my cochlea.

Instinctual, foot-tapping blues.

It feels so right,

so dirty, muddled...raw.

Bending up half a step, then full step, all while strumming ABA to a subconscious tempo that drives one's pick forward

as the guitar wails its sweet song of victory.

And when the song ends, the thrill is gone.

But the music still echoes through the liquor-draped night...

# VIII

#### Man Is an End in Himself

Mankind doubles over across the luminous Earth.

For the first time, he sees that life must come to an end.

That man is an end in himself.

To be alive is to exist, to exist is to live, and to live is to eventually die.

The circle of life spins round like a blazing wheel of fortune. But fate does not drive mankind any longer.

No – now it has become reason and purpose.

The chains of bondage rattle free and suddenly life takes on a new meaning. The individual is God.

Mankind elevates his head and smiles at the sun.

A wave of relief relinquishes itself upon the Earth.

Man lives for himself and no one else as matter is neither created nor destroyed.

And the entropy of the universe collides with the order of Man's mind.

## IX

# Photograph of a Gilded Corridor, 1682

The hall is taller than fifty men – light pours in through its windows as low-hanging chandeliers illuminate faces below.

This particular corridor echoes with loneliness.

But the music! A cello brings color to the paintings, dripping with tears of the Virgin Mary.

Paintings that drape the walls with grace – pure elegance.

Leisurely steps reverberate at the entrance to the hall. Gowns scrap marble surfaces, and uniforms lick mahogany chairs.

Whose war will be won today? All to each his own beneath the hand of God –

reaching out for Adam to give him life – painted

on the ceiling of the hallway that is masked with gold and stone.

# $\mathbf{X}$

#### Letter to Molly the Mollusk

Sunlight streaks fall on the homes of damaged mollusks.

They have washed up onto shore, all mouths gasping for water.

Blue, crisp ocean takes the mollusks back to their beginnings.

Their shells on the shore made me remember us – *you*.

Fine grains of sand, my hands act as a sieve.

Practicing time's art, weary-weathered masterpieces.

Glossy shards, rock specks, pebbles – shell pieces that need mending.

I wish I could *fix* you, Molly.

I would pick up all the shell bits I could find

and glue them with some spit and ocean water, then let the briny breeze adhere them together.

A tiny whimper, bound with a kiss.

## XI

#### To Rise with the Defiant Sun

Pulsating warmth of flesh against flesh – soft and alive.

Curling up beside a wall of bone, shielding me from harm.

The murmuring heart of another beating rhythmically in my ear – a ceaseless wave of life.

As I watch the rays of the sun pouring through the curtains and onto the sea of rug – forming endless paths of blue where each holds my world together.

Sleepily sighing – an act of frustration for the morning's quick arrival.

Chill kisses touch their lips to our naked bodies from outside of the warm sheets.

The odorous sweat from last night's frolicking coats my hair.

To the defiant sun, mon amour, I wish you'd leave me be in the sweet silence of night's memory.

## XII

#### Ode to Marie Quisova

It is the 30s in Czechoslovakia. I wear my golden butterfly necklace around my neck. My dirty smock wrapped around my thin waist as I help matka stir soup made of nothing but broth, and the bones from last night's meal.

My matka can make something from nothing. She can bake cakes made from air, soups from marrow, bread from dirt, and dumplings from yesterday's scraps. My táta is an angry man who grinds the bones in my matka's soup.

Táta guzzles his Pilsner, beats my matka, and goes back to work by morning. All I have is this golden necklace.

We have to ration food now, especially sugar.

I wish my golden necklace was made of sugar. I would ration licks from it and make it last. But for now I work the fields.

The land must be my teacher.

Someday I hope to have a manžel of my own, who will teach me all he knows. I would even let him have my golden butterfly necklace.

## XIII

## Lovers of the Bygone

These are lush, dark forests.
Squinting is required to observe the gallery painting.

Yet my pupils dilate as they rest upon her youthfully glowing skin. Imprisoned in a snake skin dress she slithers up to his knees just waiting for his touch.

He gazes down with resolve.
He is held – enamored – by her bright, green eyes.

It is apparent that the lines of adoration were drawn long ago for their eyes know of no other's existence.

Frigid as stone is that luscious forest now among the scaly skin and dented armor.

Still, for all the beauty here, I know of no other so intimate as Adam and Eve.

## XIV

## Photograph of an Untouchable Ebola Victim

The room is blue and silent. The disease-control man's breath is trapped in a mask beneath goggles of impenetrable plastic.

His suit is white. His scrubs are dark navy. He wears a red, white, and blue label which says, "CDC."

White gloves hold a long hose of antibacterial spray.

The latest plague hit in West Africa, where people die face-forward onto the floor trying to crawl with their final breaths toward an opening.

The room is blue and silent.
The light from the grated window pours onto the thin mattress and the lump on the cool ground.

The CDC man stands back and sprays.

Thin shoes lie near it. But nothing will touch them again – those shoes will be burned.

## XV

## Products of a Semi-Conscious State: The Pill and the Bullet

There's blood pumping, rhythmically and I can't tell if it's my own pulse rushing through my ear or the sound of your heart beating in your chest. Did you have the same dream as I?

My friend is crying, holding up a tin roof above her head against the rain. I guess she wants to keep the baby, but the forces above don't want it.

Your friend is dead.
Murder.
He, my love, has been slaughtered for publicly making a joke by the people who listened.

Did we dream about each other? All I know is the fleshy part of your cheek feels exquisite against my forehead, reminding me that you and I are one mind.

The arms and legs that wrap around me, letting me know that you and I are one body.

Please, whisper in my ear and tell me we are safe from death.

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#### XVI

#### Le Petit Mort

#### Part I.

Bright yellow CAUTION tape wraps around the perimeter of the ominous, brick house. It was in that moment that I connected the silent ambulance – the blue and red lights – with a death.

Silent and lonely, ice fizzles in the sun.

#### Part II.

The asylum lies beneath the ground where light gets lost, but the upper floors still look majestic and proud. Madeleine LeClerc sees his face – all wrapped in gauze and speckled with dirt. The most beautiful part of him is his hands. Ink-stained, jagged his hands grip his quill.

#### Part III.

The next day, I pass by the house packaged in tape and a large dumpster obscures the front porch. Men in blue pants are throwing things from the second floor roof.

Palpitating, my heart squeezes itself one beat too late.

Aching, my mind hooks onto the new windowpanes.

#### Part IV.

A scream is heard from the third room down in Charenton asylum. It is not the Marquis, and that is all that matters. Madeleine watches him intensely as he dips his quill into a bottle of his own blood – congealed, it drips slowly from his tip and all she wants to do is lap it up from his parchment.

#### Part V.

On the third day since the red and blue lights, the giant dumpster was removed – only the CAUTION tape surrounds the grounds of the house. I try to separate the connections I had made from before. I did not want to know that this old woman died, was buried, and then forgotten.

#### Part VI.

The Marquis de Sade rose, placing the crinkled parchment into the front of Madeleine's dress. Her little soul rattled in its cage – willing to perform any task required of her. The Marquis lifted her dressed and bit her thighs just enough to produce a moan that sounded strange compared to the regular howls of the asylum's patients.

## Part VII.

The final day sounded the death knell for de Sade and the old woman. They were last found playing ring around the rosy in a forest near the house trying to drink from the fountain of youth – only all of the water was falling straight to the ground and poor Madeleine was rubbing her face in the wet dirt – thighs open – weeping.

# **XVII**

## In the Voice of Hunger

I create fatigue and discomfort. And cannot be satisfied with good will. I know it's hard to share a bed with me. I am all that is inadequate. I feed and feed and feed. But only shit derives from my vocation. Ignore – me and feel the strain. Obsess over me and feel my weight. Crave me or starve me but you're my slave. Madness – driven by perfectly normal madness. For I am the pit that will never be filled by you. The person that gives the beat in your belly. Games - hide-and-go-seek my pretty. You totally deserve this – it was totally worth it. Don't think about the calories. Give me what I want. I crave you inside of me forever. To quench this painful hunger for good.

#### **XVIII**

#### The Negation

An orb – no, a translucent drop. Time's eternal strictures are setting down its rules, the mind dictating its every second. Seasoned with the souls of the plenty, a testimony to the whole of existence.

These souls create a myriad of harmonies, painting their soft whispers on the many closed doors. The plague has arrived!

O, how the serpent's tongue writhes through the cracks. Its slithering body makes trembling shadows on the walls.

Gliding over the oak threshold it enters the bedroom. The lights are out and her pale arm hangs off the bed. The Earth has closed its eyes, becoming vulnerably dark. A musty odor enters the unseeing room.

The serpent hisses and wraps itself tight around the dark-stained wooden bed posts. Squeezing its own organs to the point that it suffocates itself, the plague uncoils and begins to unfold the green skin and blind eyes.

The devil attacks and the pale arm begins to dissolve. The atoms return to the continuum from whence they came. Time's loving distance spreading its arms to take back its gift. The mind blinking quickly – leaving last...

Neurons, blood, tissue all close their doors, shut their eyes just as the Earth begins to wake up. Falling backwards into a void – a negation of itself, non-existence. But *what* is it? *Why* is it? *Who* is it? *How* is it?

It is the cancellation of a soul thrown back into eternity.

A body made from nothing, tossed back into nothing.

A soul given to a body, wedded to the truth, and divorced from reality.

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# XIX

# René Magritte

The Son of Man is René Magritte. René's hat is round and small. Like a speck of salt as it waits to receive a wave. The whole shifting business makes his suit look darker, his red tie more patriotic.

# $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}$

## Frustration

Elena sits and studies. Elena feeds her mind. Elena thinks about her buddies. Elena discusses moral crime.

Elena can ponder about all of creation. But Elena cannot find an occupation.

## XXI

#### Ode to the Workaholic

Tired, so tired am 9. My world keeps expanding and expanding to a point where 9 cannot catch-up. 9 feel POWERLESS. Will 9 make it? Will my hair turn grey at the mere age of 20 from all this anxiety? Will 9 ever recover from lack of sleep? Time. No time to feel free. 9 am bound by a world that keeps on growing, Drowning in a sea of materialistic mirages. Soaking up whatever blows my way. Always feeling behind and always, always BUSY. Say hello to the workaholic. To those who are cursed by the monotonous stress that 9 endure every waking day, 9 speak to you. Ode to the workaholic,

Work, work, **WORK**. **No** play. **Stop** wasting time. <u>You</u> have no time. Accomplish all that you can now. **NOW** before it's too late.

Don't sit down, don't stand up!

Strings fall down and attach to my skin. They pierce me and hurt.

I hate them. Kids can be so annoying sometimes. They act as if they were three. Despicable. GROW UP! They make my stomach broil with unease and a fierce bitterness. What makes us so close and yet so different? You are my blood and yet you 'adults' don't understand me like I do you. You are all SWINE and I wish you no success in the future. Now get lost...

Move those fingers left now right. Press Esc. Then shift!

Don't look down, look up I'm here to guide you through the night...

 $\label{lem:interpolation} Its 6 oh shit! I' {\tt mrunning out of time.} I {\tt cannot type as fast as mybrain is} \\ \textbf{spinning.}$ 

Wake up, now sleep.

9'll always be watching you...

Wait!...success is right here. I reach and grab but the image returns to *dust*. **DAMMIT!** I was so close! **Success** was at my touch.

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So I work and work, no play today.
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As I waste away the days of May.

IT sucks, too bad!

You'll get your way when you've served your sentence. Tough.

Be strong. I am! Be driven. I am! Be competitive. I am! Then keep going! **Success** is at your door...

Test here, test there, test every-where!

I'm physically sick with the stress.

Calm down, stress out! Sit here, sit there.

Do not make a sound... Beware. The Philosophy of Pleasure.

 ${\mathfrak S}$  am an enemy of the old. A lover of youth.

The human body is full of lust.

It is more beautiful and inspiring than any celestial body of the universe.

Why can't our minds match the splendor of our exaskeletons?

These clear blue eyes peer into ones soul and bitterly weep for the aged. Youth is everything.

It is the ripe pear before it soon bruises and withers away.

I despise death, but I despise the decrepit more-so.

For a failing body begins to lose its drive, the need for pleasure and what was once beautiful is now macking itself.

Only an ugly heap of skin remains, wrinkled like a yellow piece of parchment all over the decaying marrow of the soul.

I wish to never grow ald. For this cruel, sick jake has made a Kedonist out of me.

Shame.

I am full of shame.

But at least I will never perish...

Let me go! Why must I always be tied to my work?! Why can't I be free of all this guilt?! Why will there be no tomorrow if I just relax for one evening?!

Because my child...there is no time in space...

 $\dots \infty$ 

I work for myself as an individual and as a consequence I help others. Does that make sense?...

I love bright and sunny mornings that are chilly so that I can wrap myself in a warm sweatshirt and PJs under the toasty and luxurious covers. Then I get up around 8:00 AM and I make a nice, hot cup of tea along with some cinnamon raisin bread that when toasted makes the whole kitchen smell like autumn. In fact, it is autumn in my world and it is beautiful.

Flawless. The air is pure and clean. The hue-ridden foliage gently falls to the holy Earth. I breathe and it makes me feel alive. I feel whole. Fresh. Renewed. I am calm. Free. No strings attached....until I awake...

I awake to another long day of work. I get up groggy at 6:00 AM, put on my clothes, put on my make-up, eat some cold and fat-free yogurt and finally get onto the bus at 7:21 AM. I am tired. Exhausted. I go to school and enjoy learning new things for a while but then I have multiple extra-curricular activities which wear me out and I leave in my dad's tired car. Soon after a quick dinner I head up to my cave and work some more until I fall asleep with my head on my papers, drooling steadily, only to begin this tiresome schedule again...until I awake...

I awake to candy colored mirrors of all shapes and sizes. I breathe the corn starch-filled existence of bubble gumwrapped poison. Clouds induce deep sleep. No homework, OH CRAP! Project due tomorrow! OH no! I'm in my underwear in front of everyone! Oh please, please kill me NOW! I can't bear it!... And a shimmering rainbow glistened in the glowing universe. I kiss the stars. Softly they sing a simple melody while down melt the sprinkles of frozen tears. They warm my cheek... Mom! Why? Are you ok? I thought I lost you forever. Mom?... While the anticipated lung of appreciation collapsed in my chest. I suffocate in the delicate blankets of youth. Set me free! Touched by the wind that whispers of chocolate waterfalls and purple skies, I wish to be there. Take me there oh merciful brain! Take me away from these strawberry fields of demise! Take me away from these candy-coated realms of darkness! I no longer wish to be here!... Mom?...

Heaving. Sweaty. Mess. That I am awake to find myself conscious of my pitiful surroundings. There are no colored rainbows, or beautiful leaves gently falling down a cascading river of gravity. No. Just a bunch of wet papers beneath my face while the alarm jams 6:00 AM down my unforgiving throat. I hate mornings...

On **Earth** you cannot delay because there **IS** time and youneedtocatchup to what your mother **Lost.** 

Life?

Correct!

For she lived in constant fear. She hid behind her zomantic novels, writing on their backs her own hopes and dreams.

## Agoraphobia.

What an ugly word and oh how I hate to discuss my mother for I had put Her upon a pseudo-pedestal high atop the arches of my grieving brain...

Panic attacks.

Ah Freud, how I wish you could see what her [controlling] Mother did to this frail soul. She was trapped in a [BOX], unable to live her life freely and for that she paid the ultimate price.

# Anita.

That was Her name.

She had a face, a body, a mind. Oh did she have a mind.

Accepted to Harvard? Oh yes, but too afraid to be that far away from mummy.

No prom? Too nerve-wracking.

No plane flights? Nope, too risky and the list goes on...

# Suffocated.

Trapped.

Stuck.

Lost.

Dead.

So here's the <u>lesson</u> for today's class:

*Live* life every **waking** moment *p-r-o-d-u-c-t-i-v-e-l-y*.

Discover, learn, create because your life is worth **TWO** now.

But I'm ill, distraught and my lightness has become unbearably dark!

It will get easier when one life is fulfilled.

*Fine.* I will continue to struggle on, but what else has driven me from my **youth**?

You have been *forced* to mature quickly into a world so brutal. Unarmed. Your religion *is* learning, working, seeing...believing. Youcannotwastetime! There is **SO** much for you to learn.

The clock reading 2:00 AM illuminates my pupils as I stare at the workload beneath me. Every night I have to catch up with all that humanity has given me. History. Mistakes. Theories. The list goes on. I crave those books which may unlock wisdom so deep that I will conquer all of mankind's problems. Religiously I concentrate on my work, feverishly editing my last essay of the year. Then summer strikes its venomous teeth into my brain and I feel empty and ill. School is my home, my church. Here is a piece of me no matter what anyone else says. A key to fulfilling my lives. A door. A portal. A cornucopia of knowledge. So, I wait out my days and think, much more than normally...

You work for hope, inspiration, forgetfulness and you play in death.

Now **go! reach out**, **teach** and **lead** the people who care so that you may save **TWO** lives, one to replace yours and Hers...

## **XXII**

#### Aristotle's Plant

Broad, leafy greens play as bridges for insects. Backbends and arches structured with hollow tubes. Vesicles, veins for sugar and sun, solace on solstice. Rooted to the spot to cool itself with rain. Narrow straw cities cover the flat terrain and busy aisles. The elements are all used – the purpose is all solved -A is A. Green chloroplasts take in and out, as we breathe amongst the leaves. Plants face toward the sun fulfilling their purpose, as we struggle onward toward attaining. Plant streets deliver sustenance, as ours provide blood for oxygen. Plants do not veer away from being themselves - they face the sun, as we try to hide our leaves.

#### Author's Bio



Kaitlyn Lansing was born on 3 January 1994 in New York. Kaitlyn studied literature and philosophy throughout her education which shaped her creative voice. Her published works include: Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Poems; Unveiled: An Anthology of Nonfiction; Urgency: An Anthology of Short Stories; and Marginalia from the Snake Pit: A Novella. Kaitlyn's unique perspective and raw prose bring light to matters that are often left untouched. Readers can see more of Kaitlyn's work at www.kaitlynlansing.com.