

Hummingbird Drama

Year Six

July 2025 - June 2026

Gregory Nero, PhD

EMBRACING DISSONANCE

Cognitive Dissonance

Gregory Nero

***Abstract*—eye twitch (left far left corner), and my short term memory has gone to absolute shit, and my left shoelace keeps fucking coming untied, and I broke my glasses and fixed them with scotch tape and holy god I hate Outlook AHHHHHHHHHH**

***Index Terms*—SCREAMING, silence**

IV.

As for the people in my mind, the versions of myself, my inner community: I can't really picture their faces, or their torsos really. However, their legs are clear to me. The way they sit, the different angles the knees and shins and thighs make in their seats. Or their elbows, maybe. The way they rest on things.

I.

Blackberry stain scabs from eating fucking shit in the church parking lot.

Learning that shame makes you afraid of yourself.

And that it's kept between the base of the throat and the top of the heart: it both blocks your voice makes everything you love feel heavy.

II.

We're in this puddle together

Bodies and limbs anticipating the changing of things

And I think, think just maybe think that I felt your hand on mine

And your eyes - color and midnight. I'm sure we saw each other for longer than a second lasts

I'm just dreaming but I thought we could have fallen in love then and there

—

I went to buy batteries at the 7/11 at midnight for my pocket radio

Picking at fishnets on the way back home

III.

Just before the crest of the dirt hill I can't bike up, where I have to get off and push, the trail is lined with blackberries and I stop for a bit to eat a few. One hand clutching the breaks and the other picking the ones that are reddish purple because they are my favorite.

Heart Echo

Gregory Nero

摘要—My body is a machine that turns normal experiences into allegories.

Index Terms—space bandwidth product

I.

Over pool I tell you (or, admit, or, confess, or, pray, or beg) that I think things are going to feel different when we get back. See, I'm grappling with the feeling of heart splat and butterfly thread. And all summer I've been weaving the clothes (or, armor, or, lingerie) of tension and release.

For dinner I'm brave and I wear the top I bought because fuck it I'm beautiful and I paint my nails or what's left of them. I keep learning that to unravel something that's tangled is the best way to learn about it. I learned that when I was born my umbilical cord was wrapped and wrapped and wrapped around my neck and that the doctors had never seen anything like it.

On the rooftop late at night I talk to you about how precious an echo is. It means that something is out there, a feeling, a response to a call. It means that somewhere, some landscape of a heart is alive and I feel seen.

On the bar patio we hold hands and I feel that echo. I want to be tiny spiders together or those two cubes of egg sushi. I want to sit in rocking chairs and listen to the radio scan through stations with you while we drink tea.

Water between us - blue sweatshirt baby, curb crawling and pool table sitting. To the right of the

dashed white line at 2am we listen to the opera singer.

At night after work I'll walk through suburbia and talk to the voice recorder app. My throat feels too narrow a channel for what I've been trying to say, so I open it.

At night I ask Lamby : *"when we're all gone, what sounds will remain?"*. My toilet is making a low, droning gurgle

I'm judging time based on where the chipped nail polish on my toenails is.

On the trailer pad where I grew up I jump the crack in the cement. Nearby, I would grow strawberries in the flowerbed where the rose bush was.

II.

Sweet gentle , birthday candle moments. Cedar and paper, carefully wrapped blue with brown thread. My heart is a clam shell darling but you are the ocean. Dreams: three, and midnight sex. Hot pink CD in the car ride back, we hold hands. I marvel at the palace of you and the depth of your affection and maybe in another timeline we could be ours. Keeping this as a token that I can be loved for who I am without performance. Thank you gentle angle for this halo.

III.

I can't admit how ruined I feel this summer. I'm a
knuckle-rubber, I keep my hands in long-sleeve t-shirt
cuffs. Formless for most.

I am two red t-shirts in the park on Wednesday evening

We aren't allowed to float so let's just

Say we can and

Pick grass and listen to jazz.

IV. POEM I WROTE WHILE HIGH ON ONE HALF OF A
VERY VERY LOW-DOSE EDIBLE AND IT'S ABOUT
GROWING UP AT MY GRANDPARENT'S HOUSE ON THE
TERRACE

Rhododendron

We had plans to hole to the center of the earth

Hose settings: Mist, fan.

Next door I learned the word vagina from the kid on
the sidewalk

V. MY FIRST POEM IN MANDARIN CHINESE

A.

我不是太陽
我不是月亮
我是皮膚
我切蔬菜
我哭

B.

I am not the sun
I am not the moon
I am flesh
I cut vegetables
I cry

C.

wǒ bùshì tàiyáng
wǒ bùshì yuèliàng
wǒ shì pífū
wǒ qiè shūcài
wǒ kū

VI. SHIFT, CREEEEEEEEK, GROAN, MOVE

I'm in the process of collecting things now. Gath-
ering it all up. Like, when I go to a grocery store and
think I don't need a cart or a basket and suddenly my
arms are filled with more than I can carry.

Or something like when I sit down at a desk with
some papers and carefully bring them together, align
their edges, and tap them down along one of their sides.
This is a kind of ritual. It could symbolize the ending
of a chapter or the beginning of a new one. It should
come with a breath, long in and long out. And I find
myself here now.

This summer was hard. I am still processing the
lessons. I am grateful for it. This is part of my becoming
the person I want to be. And one great way to do that is
to learn about the versions of myself that I don't want
to be. Bitter, necessary work.

I move forward now carefully and with more inten-
tion. There's been a thinning of the veil. I'm the bride of
these moments. I see clearer the lines (fuzzy, but drawn
with a steady hand) that I cannot (will not) cross. I
thank my community for helping guide me through this.

Up next ? More big change. I enter into the final
stages of my PhD, writing, summarizing, reflecting.
And beyond, beyond: more adventure.

Disembodied Adjectives

Gregory Nero

Abstract—i ran into the ocean. black denim salty wet belt. you took my glasses and i dove into the wave. toes sift through sand in the sideways current. constant cold, constant pull. i long to be this steady. concentrated joy.

Index Terms—crunch, time

I.

Rainbow splatter means that the 7:00am news has come and gone.

Last night, the fairies shattered The Moon and now I'm leaking clay red and highlighter yellow.

My grip is tight around this storm cloud: useless.

I wait for them to come for me in the morning.

Careful movements. This landscape of my mind is uncharted.

Tiptoe, hush, hush, hush, scream.

I can finally cry. The things I mourn I worship. Camo sleeves rub wet cheeks.

I think about my grandmother and expiration dates.

If Death must come, let me meet Them by the blue and white rope swing in the backyard.

I sweep and rake like my Dad taught me. Digging metal into dirt and coarse yellow fibers into every crack. Quick, short bursts.

Barefoot on the ocean rocks, I breathe and move with the crashing of the waves.

I write down some things I'm afraid of:

II. SOME THINGS I'M AFRAID OF

- living a disingenuous life
- confronting shame
- insecurities (friends/ppl don't like me, body, how i express)
- inadequacy (in work, in love)
- panic / losing sense of Me
- death and dying (me and the ppl i love)
- health issues (me and the ppl i love)
- inaction / being idle
- being consumed by anxiety
- hurting others / letting ppl down
- not understanding/realizing my biases
- spending \$
- wasting time
- big spiders
- being misunderstood

III. POTION

- madagascar vanilla
- dragon's blood
- strawberry
- cedar wood
- pink grapefruit

Each Breath Was Like a God

Gregory Nero

Abstract—sleepy on the red couch in your living room watching
the plastic fish swim in the LED ocean.

Index Terms—anarchy, science

FINISHING MY PHD

standby. defense next month november 2025. then ...

, and I liked it

Gregory Nero

Abstract—Like, at some point you'll realize that you're carrying your keys on a carabineer and everything is vastly different than how it was before.

Index Terms—change, of, plans

WINDING

At night I hear the call and response of two trains in love. Theirs is angel song and behind a mountain range of spiderweb I worship them at four in the morning. Nowadays when I can't sleep I reach down through my throat to grab my heart with careful fingers and breathe a square eight seconds on each side.

At Raccoon Elementary we'd play games on the swingset at recess. Who can jump the farthest. Dodge and dash between the row of swings to avoid being hit. Sometimes we'd try to swing all the way around. If you synced up with someone else you were gonna marry them and have as many kids as fingers fit around your wrist. Nearby Noah is jumping off of the highest slide on the playground into the mulch below.

In the garden at the dead-end drive we plays games like ant spit and sunburn. Little worlds of plant fuzz and seed pods, we get lost in the weeds tracking down tiny paths. Later on I pick off your scab and see the speck of 11 am sunlight on your hand. These gentle precious things keep me afloat.

Sometimes I've been seeing flashes of blue. Quick sprites across my vision with impossibly quiet voices. When I was younger I would cut the sides of my mouth with the Mr. Freeze wrappers from gnawing on sweet blue ice and plastic. In the outfield I'd chew on my baseball glove strings and look at the dandelions. In the cellar my pap would be fermenting purple wine in long winding tubes.

And now I'm happy to say that I have a plan for the end of the world. We'll meet at the truck stop with the sexy fairy statues off the interstate. And we'll scheme to build something new and beautiful over a root-beer float. Our socks will be soaking wet and we'll be as happy as we've ever been before.

Mermaid Practice

Gregory Nero

***Abstract*—the mountains dissolve into the sky. this happens
near dusk.**

***Index Terms*—breath, hold**

LITTLE WOUNDS

Waves of heartache

Googling "hydroxyzine with alcohol" in the bar bathroom

A few laps in the pool to find my body again

Trying my hardest to act normal while Sue offers me
zucchini bread

Hot hot hot long long shower in the stall furthest back

While I make rice I wonder if the only way out is through

Reset button brain, reset button at the intersection -
slamming on silver and yellow

Too many seeds in my orange and I get pissed off for no
reason at all

Wake up at 10 or 11

Biting on straws and overreacting

Tense and getting tenser , tender - always just one letter off

Remember our rule: no big thoughts this late

I wish I was a flat plastic fish

Fade into dark and light blue

The smell of fire and maybe pine reminds me of the
Christmas tree farm at the end of the road

Green needle on the carpet , red and white and green skirt

Blue trays of food in the cafeteria and sloppy joes

I feel inclined to start over

Fuck you, january

Gregory Nero

Abstract—fully emptied

Index Terms—very, sick

LAUNDROMAT REFLECTIONS

I see the cranial stems of the driers in the narrow
passageway - dust ports, brooms, tired dark
concrete and cramped shaking.

Things I shouldn't be seeing but do. I pull my eyes
away in reverence.

Lungs laden with heavy sleepless nights.

I'm a sticky sick creature.

I strike a bargain with the darkest part of the Moon
to the tune of deep hums and shallow breaths.

During the day I roast myself on pale fabric in the
burning sun and cough up different shades of
3am.

This shell I call Body is a wind-up nightmare with
tight springs and rusted rotten limbs.

My vision is blurry from this leaking fluid, the
squirming of parasitic maybes.

The buzz of these hours replaces Me with throbbing
nothing and soon I have fire in my veins.

My spinal cord is a perforated seam and I'm being
slowly ripped down the middle.

—

Now there is sunlight and I can sleep again. Coins
clink and there is someone sweeping up
outside. Clothes spin and the world returns
to its track.

Embracing Dissonance

Gregory Nero

Abstract— 餓餓餓餓

Index Terms—membrane

I.

My tiny hands couldn't hold the horseshoe but while the adults weren't playing (loud *DINGs* on two metal stakes) we would collect clay from the railroad-tie pits and pretend to make pottery. I would try to throw that horseshoe across the grass and my wrist would bend like a young tree in a strong wind. The horseshoe would flop down with a thud nearby. This horseshoe was heavy, after all, and I had little hands and little wrists.

My morning hands are orbweaver windowsill spiders. We play horse and gerbil and set alarms just to ignore them for 5 for more minutes for 10 more minutes for 30 more minutes until the mourning dove finally says *get going*. And I still believe that heaven is eating chicken wings with you in my bed and falling asleep on your legs. We are pomegranate hands and blindfolded explorers. I am collecting our stains in my bedsheets.

I wake up at 4am to a bite taken out of the Moon and wait for it to bleed. I dance around on the concrete and *hummmmmmm*. I make up a little song. I go back to sleep.

I remember using my mom's eyelash curler and pissing the bed. I think I had my first orgasm in geometry class, probably grinding on the corner of Euclid's *Elements* or some reduction of that.

Things are changing. If I get scared I remember the warm hum of the wood pellet stove in the basement and how easy everything seemed curled up on the carpet.

Artichokeeeeeeeee

Gregory Nero

Abstract— 海風

Index Terms— 記得，窗戶

Thinking about the inevitable CLANG of metal.

Crazy, absurd amounts of cum. Dream drip condom
phosphorescence and big ouchie static shock sparks from the
metal coils on the trampoline and we

Fucked on the trampoline to the howl of coyotes and
shooting stars and the owl and the

metal CLANG.

Lola says the clang might be from the water tower. All of a
sudden it gets all BOOM and then the metal warps like a
portal opening. The lonely old man walks through it, never
to be seen again.

Can't I admit that sometimes I've been feeling miserably
distant from the things I want to be feeling? And what's on
the other side of this membrane? I push through with my
hand and it gets all gooped up and fucking sticky. I web
slime between my fingertips. I watch the entire wash cycle.

They said Nigel went to the flower bed to die. I remember
that one book about huge flowers from when I was a kid.

We are rainbows at 7am and I wish I hold you like this
forever. I make room for the spiders and move my plant to
the porch. I pick it clean. Someone asks "what have u been
up to?" And I want to say: falling in love.

Has the blood on my neck dried yet ? You kiss over it and
my scar becomes a pearl in a red-blue oyster. I talk with the
mockingbird on my front porch.

Sitting on the Porch

Gregory Nero

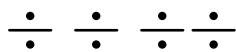
***Abstract*—Pixie dust on the top of the parking garage. Grey-hound spray paint. 東風 with the girls.**

***Index Terms*—giant beans in red sauce, spider webs**

Absentmindedly watching a fly writhe and die on my desk
The buzz is sporadic, sickly static
Whale sounds and a bloody lip, paper torn
Peeling apart s'mores pop tarts
Banjo echo moan in the corner
Brave dragons together.

Spilled beer and blue towels squelch on the tile
Banjo and violin
The great dragon scratches from behind the glass

Real love and driveway slants
He takes pictures with the little black box and I smile
I lean into their chest and I smile
We share an ice cream sandwich and I smile
This is life.



Gregory Nero

Abstract—◀ *AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH* ▶

Index Terms—slow, implode

I.

Stream of spit on a green dress

Dead lizard

Ice cream truck

Hand hit fan

Squirt glasses

Chimes see wind

Portal spilled water clock stop

Ice clink glass sparkling water post fuck

Grass carp golf course pond

Bird house dog grave rock weed wacker

Light house crab hunting

Throwing sand on my back to hide

Whale sounds

Chugging prune juice to shit

推拉

Gregory Nero

Abstract—amidoingsomethingthaticareabout? i ask myself this on the plane back from taipei. the dark, timeless cabin echos with that question. some moments feel extra pivotal.

Index Terms—big, changes, coming, (again)

PEERING

So this is six years of Hummingbird Drama, eh? Six years ago on my front porch in the middle of the pandemic I started this adventure. I would watch the hummingbirds at the feeder and wait for change to come. I find myself at the precipice of yet another gigantic life transition. I've just finished graduate school and a short post-doc appointment here at the University of Arizona. I started here in August 2020, and August 2026 is approaching at a blinding speed. In September I'm slated to move to Taipei, Taiwan to begin another post-doc there. I will frankly say it: I have never been more unsure of exactly what I want to do with this thing called a career. In the last few years I've been emerging more into my own politics and view of the world which has, to put it briefly, made job hunting more complicated. I now move very carefully and intentionally. What is my role as a scientist in this day and age? What does meaningful work in optics look like? How do I navigate a job market without being complicit in the stranglehold that big tech and militarization have on both the public and private sectors of my work? There is no fairytale scientific lab where work happens in a vacuum, apart from the social and political implications of that work. In a way, I have become less interested in the technical work and more interested in these aforementioned implications of it: who is doing the research, who is funding it, for what, and to accomplish what ends? These questions wrap me in their web. My only regret is that I didn't start asking these questions earlier. But, alas, I'm here now and although it has been more challenging, I see no other way of proceeding. As a scientist, I'm compelled to search for reason and truth in all things, both technical and social. **This is my red pill moment.** And, to top it off, I'm about to turn 30 (29 comes first). So, like, what better moment for me to question everything that I've been doing up to this point and maybe make some drastic and life-altering change because of these questions? That's what your 30's are for, right?

As for this project: I have no intention of stopping. I don't know what it will morph into, how it will adapt to my creative visions (ravings?), how I will change it and how it will subsequently change me. It is a companion now, a trusted one. All I know is that I fucking love writing and that I have ideas. The rest will have to work itself out naturally.

ANOTHER MESSY AND BEAUTIFUL COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES

In my dreams, I peer through the small gap in the basement refrigerator. I draw it for you in your notebook. Later in my dreams we are there, laying where I remember laying by the stove, and Pearl is pissing on the bricks. *What happens when the mind relieves itself of a burden?* In the metal sink, Dad fillets the bluegills with a mechanical saw. I never saw the guts. I remember a nightmare I had when I was younger in that same basement area. Dark shadow, looming, stasis.

I play you a song on my nose whistle and we giggle about small noises and other beautiful things. Blended fruit and yellow, runny yolk become a seductive love poem. We talk about the future on a Very Large Rock. We talk about *our* future on a Very Large Rock. The Very Large Rock hold us above the river and all of a sudden anything is possible with you. We open our pasture and keep in spacious. I love the ways we blossom together.

When I was younger I would smash coins with a hammer and a vice grip in the garage. Pound and squish out the patterns until the metal is smooth and clean. *What am I supposed to do about this parade of angst behind me?* I want to text you "what happened?" without realizing you've already given me the answer. Somewhere in the parade line a small figure jumps out of step and skips off into another street. (Insert some shit about the wisdom accumulated from being in your late 20's). I buy a Circle K Polar Pop and fill it all the way up with ice and yellow and blue liquid. My phone overheats and my internet dies while I try to complete an Uber Eats order. I witness him gently lift the spirit from the feather before she picks it up. I have this urge to empty out my room as much as possible. I wait for some rain.