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# Waiting to Exhale

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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Master of Fine Arts,  
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April 7, 2023

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I am so grateful that I get to know all of you for the rest of my life.

## ABSTRACT

We breathe as a measure of time, it keeps us alive, and fabricates the pattern of our lives. We are punctuated by “snarls,” “glitches,” or moments of irregularity – of trying to catch one's breath, having it taken away, or gasping for it. It is the punctuation of sighs, huffs, sniffs, scoffs, screams, and deep intakes that appear as glitches in the breathing system.

In our daily rhythm of breathing, the presence of the glitch, defined as potentiality, can create space for something unexpected or new to arise. Using the wind from fans and approximately 1,260 square feet of silk, this thesis explores the seen and unseen landscape in regards to different types of breath.

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## *Waiting to Exhale*

The language surrounding life-changing events usually suggests they are often experienced as paradigm shifts, or accidents that are perceived as a “wake up call.” Though I believe in the sincerity of these events, and have witnessed a burst or two of enlightenment, the impactful experiences that punctuate my life feel more like subtle moments. They consist of chapters, of “before the beginnings,” and the life that follows after. The first of those punctuations began with my mom’s familiar footsteps ascending the stairs to my bedroom, the wood creaking with each step. I counted until she reached the sixteenth stair, assuming her bare feet would cross my threshold next. I sat up quickly, terrified by the dreaded reason that led her up the stairs at four am. Swallowing hard, I watched her take a moment, barely illuminated by the soft green light of the smoke detector above her. She didn’t keep me waiting, but instead moved to sit on my bed, touching my shoulder gently. Someone I love had been killed in a car accident.

*The Uses of Sorrow*

by Mary Oliver

(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)

Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.

It took me years to understand  
that this, too, was a gift.

### *Waiting to Exhale, Again*

In my startled-awake state, I tried to form questions, my mind racing. We just sat there and looked at each other for a moment, my questions deeply lodged in my throat. She stood up to share the awful news with my brother in the next room. I attempted to follow her into the hallway, but had to lean on the walls for support. Clumsily, I knocked a framed photo to the floor, watching it collide with the baseboard. “What is *happening?*” My mom asked, confused at my inability to stand upright, and even further concerned as I began to experience a series of random arm spasms synchronized with staccato intakes of breath. Each spasm felt as if my body was attempting to fall back asleep. Was this a coping mechanism to discard the tragic reality as a dream? My brain reminding me that I needed to remain alert by sharply kicking my body awake? It seemed appropriate to assume these spasms were result of being startled awake by traumatic news at an ungodly hour, but it turned out to be the first of a series of glitches, called Myoclonic seizures,<sup>1</sup> that have continued to punctuate my adult life.

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<sup>1</sup> “Myoclonic seizures are brief, shock-like jerks of a muscle or a group of muscles. "Myo" means muscle and "clonus" (KLOH-nus) means rapidly alternating contraction and relaxation—jerking or twitching—of a muscle. Usually they don't last more than a second or two. There can be just one, but sometimes many will occur within a short time... Even people without epilepsy can experience myoclonus in hiccups or in a sudden jerk that may wake you up as you're just falling asleep. These things are normal.” Sirven MD, Joseph I. “Myoclonic Seizures.” epilepsy.com. Last modified March 19, 2014.  
<https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types/myoclonic-seizures#What-is-a-myoclonic-seizure?>



***My Secret (Least Favorite) Journal***  
***(A Decade of Glitch Recordings)***

8/08/2014: Hit the wall (4am), Austin Taylor died, mom woke me up.  
8/8/14-2/25/20: Undocumented.  
2/25/20: Talking to Joe, threw palette knife and sliced my finger.  
3/15/20: Slight spasm after dinner (7ish).  
3/16/20: 7:22am, Spasm after waking up – bent over to pick something up.  
3/21/20: 8:02, Spasm after being awake for 20+ mins while talking to someone seated in the car.  
5/8/20: 5am, Woke up for flight, threw my deodorant lid.  
5/9/20: 4am, Spasm.  
5/11/20: Spasm.  
8/23/20: 8:17 and 8:19, (on my period) Spasm while brushing teeth.  
8/29/20: 7:11, In bed looking at the phone.  
8/30/20, 6:56, At breakfast and again at lunch.  
8/31/20: 8:20, Getting ready.  
9/28/20: 4:30, Going to the bathroom, on my period.  
11/16/20: 9:00-9:12, Four spasms while on the zoom call following 2.5 hours of sleep.  
12/12/20: 9pm, Woke up from a nap and phone rang, arm spasm and dropped the phone  
2/1/21: 4am, Spasm (x2).  
2/24/21: 7:40am, Ran down stairs and talked to mom and dad because a neighbor drove down the driveway in loud atv.  
5/2/21: Woke up from a nap and jerked while falling back asleep on the toilet.  
5/5/21: Arm spasm after being woken up by phone buzz for a meeting at 9:50.  
8/13/21: New location, just moved to VA, in bathroom, spasm.  
10/13/21: Very tired, slept from 10-7:15 and then pulled tights on, had arm spasm with both arms.  
10/31/21: On period, 3 times at breakfast with the family.  
11/3/21: End of period. Helping Savannah get ready, bright bathroom light. Again at 9:52pm talking to Jake on the phone, working on an application.  
12/2/21 Eating a late night dinner.  
12/25/21: Morning, got excited talking to Jenna.  
1/31/22: Talking on the phone with mom, stitching. Flipped the hoop.  
2/8/22: Waking up to get Evelyn who was crying.  
3/4/22: Waking up for a flight at 3:50, again at 4:09.  
3/13/22: Woke up at 7 to lay out grapefruits and started to fall asleep.  
3/29/22: Morning jumped out of bed to help Evelyn, very tired, less than 8 hrs of sleep.  
3/30/22: Morning talking to Brenda, very tired, less than 8 hrs of sleep.  
7/4/22: Woke up tired and went to the bathroom (on my period).  
8/9/22: Home, ending period, slept hard, looking at my phone.  
10/22/22: 4:00, A light turned on woke me up before my alarm for the airport.  
11/3/22: 9:12, Talking to Julie, 7:20 getting dressed, on my period, slight intake of breath.  
1/12/23: 6:40am, Twice, on period, startling alarm + turning light on. Again at 8:09.

### *The Ride Behind My Eyelids*

Before reading Mary Laura Philpott's incredible book, *Bomb Shelter* in 2022, I did not recognize that my spasms – or “glitches” as I will refer to them here – were Myoclonic seizures. Each time one happened, I felt a sickening wave of anxiety. Surely my brain was malfunctioning or being eaten by some unidentified parasite. After several intense glitches where I lost control of my arms and splashed a glass of cold water at my roommate, hurled mascara at a wall, or dropped a palette knife that resulted in injury, I was reminded of the fact that I had a body, and that this body was not in my control. The experience was concerning and it seemed vital to surrender myself to an EEG.<sup>2</sup>

Electroencephalography, or an EEG is an absolutely miserable series of diagnostic tests meant to induce the patient into seizure. One of the most memorable parts of the EEG involved the technician placing a strobe light a few inches from my face and flashing the unbearably bright light for what felt like an eternity. The fear that these tests would induce a seizure was terrifying and led to the constant swirl of anxious questions. What would the effects of a full-blown seizure look like in my body? For my future as an artist? Would I ever be able to drive again? I closed my eyes, the light flashing painfully through my lids, and found myself rifling through the files in my mind for something recognizable- fragments of memories, songs, nursery rhymes-anything to hang onto in order to distract my mind from what was happening to my body.. At last, I found what I was looking for and slipped Matrix<sup>3</sup>-like through a mental doorway away from the reality of being in a freezing cold, closet sized hospital room with a strobe light, a stranger, and a network of wires taped to my gel-covered head. Breathing in deeply, I found myself in a memory and felt the passenger seat of my parents' Ford Flex beneath me, my

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<sup>2</sup> Electroencephalography – a recording of brain activity. During this test, small sensors are attached to the scalp to pick up the electrical signals produced by the brain.

<sup>3</sup> The Matrix, 2001 film

forehead against the glass, seeing the late afternoon sun flash between each tree as we drove through the foothills of the Appalachians. As I tried to settle into this ride behind my eyelids, I held on to hope that we would round the hills and soon be back to the open sunshine. Slowly, prayer-like, I began stringing together the words of a poem I had recently read.

***Pattern and Snarl***

by Amit Majmudar

Life likes a little mess. All patterns need a snarl.  
The best patterns know how best to heed a snarl.  
Every high style, every strict form was once nonce.  
The best way to save a snagged pattern? Repeat the snarl.  
Eden used to snow in fractals, rain in syncopated runs.  
Adam never imagined he would hear its seedlings snarl.  
Tug the wrong thread, and your wool sweater vanishes at once.  
Death pulls at a wisp of us – and just like that it's freed from the snarl.  
What *is* it about order that we love?  
This sense,  
Maybe, that a secret informs the pattern?  
Is it a toddler's joy in doing things again?  
Is it the entropy in us that warms to pattern?  
I never intended this line to rhyme on again again.  
Then again, sometimes it's the snarl that adorns the pattern.

### *The Potential of a Glitch*

Though it has been years since my encounter with the EEG, my introduction to Legacy Russel's book *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* in the fall of 2022 brought these memories again to the surface of my consciousness. Russel uses the term "glitch-as-error" as a means of wrestling with the potentiality of the body. "Glitch manifests with such variance, generating ruptures between the recognized and recognizable, and amplifying within such ruptures, extending them to become fantastic landscapes of possibility..."<sup>4</sup> Though this manifesto focuses primarily on disrupting the language of the binary body, Russel's lens leads me to believe that a glitch, physical or metaphorical, can function as a space for some unexpected thing to take root in the midst of the mundane pattern of life.

The concept of glitch-as-space-for-potentiality suggests that glitches might allow just enough room for something unexpected, like hope, to shine through the midst of the unbearable. The glitches that occur in my body are unpredictable, and signify a loss of control, which is always uncomfortable. Afterwards, though, a space of awareness and contemplation opens to me where previously there was none. This is not to imply that suffering or some terror is necessary to find a shred of delight or hope, but rather to suggest, as writer and theorist bell hooks does that "usually, (we) find that the place of suffering – the place where we are broken in spirit, when accepted and embraced, is also a place of peace and possibility. Our sufferings do not magically end; instead we are able to wisely alchemically recycle them. They become the abundant waste that we use to make new growth possible."<sup>5</sup> This belief embodies the idea that the glitch is an opportunity for potentiality to blossom. Similar to the way that Majmudar suggests that the

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<sup>4</sup> Russel, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism*, Chapter 01 – Glitch Refuses. 2020, Virso, London.

<sup>5</sup> hooks, bell, *All about Love*, Chapter 5 – Spirituality: Divine Love, page 80-81, 2000, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. New York, NY.

“snarl becomes the pattern,” the punctuation of these glitches seems to create space for moments to emerge that allow unanticipated curiosity or beauty to seep through the cracks.

I've come to realize that once deep loss is experienced, there is no forgetting, no going back. Loss is a condition we live with, its symptoms ebbing off into the distance and crashing back in unexpectedly. The reality that we will lose the people we hold dear weighs heavily on me, but I believe in the midst of the fear-of-loss-hum, there are moments of brilliance that generate space for hope, delight, curiosity and more life. I find myself eternally attempting to reconcile the tension between loss and delight through artwork, words, and actions. The glitch so wonderfully and abruptly interrupts the rhythm of life, inviting the unforeseen into our world and grants us the space to acquiesce- to shout, “yes!” to even the faintest glimmer of light in the darkness.



## *Metronome*

In addition to the strobe lights, one of the seizure-inducing portions of the EEG is that you are required to breathe heavily for a long time without catching your breath. The way this tolerance is tested in children is by giving them a pinwheel and asking them to blow on it without letting it stop spinning. When I did this part of the EEG, I again escaped into some memory but this time, it was not my own. There's a moment in Markus Zusak's breathtaking book, *Bridge of Clay*, where one of the main characters, Penny Dunbar, is in the hospital with an aggressive form of cancer (coincidentally, she was having limb malfunctions, i.e. dropping eggs, forgetting words... she was ultimately a large part of my choice to have an EEG). Penny was a concert pianist from a far-away land, once a refugee, now an educator who teaches her students how to read using a metronome saying, "read in time to this." Her students, visiting the hospital, surround her bed, and one places the old metronome by her head and repeats the familiar words back to her, "breathe in time to this, ma'am."<sup>6</sup>

So, there I sat, laboriously breathing in and out to the metronome in my borrowed memory, and reciting another poem to keep the rigorous pace.

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<sup>6</sup> Zusak, Marcus, *Bridge of Clay*, 2019, Knopf Books



***Memory is the Seamstress***  
**by Virginia Woolf**

(best experienced as composed by Max Richter) <sup>7</sup>

Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that.  
She runs her needle in and out, up and down,  
hither and thither.  
We know not what comes next, or what follows after.  
Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world,  
such as sitting down at a table  
and pulling the inkstand towards one,  
may agitate a thousand odd,  
disconnected fragments,  
now bright,  
now dim,  
hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting...

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<sup>7</sup> Richter, Max and Woolf, Virginia, “V. Orlando: Memory is the Seamstress,” track 5 from *Three Worlds: Music from Woolf Works*.

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2FRcq167FYZsERuRyIRVar?si=a5398161e72b41c6>

*sighs, huffs, sniffs, scoffs, screams*

I became the needle, moving in and out, up and down, hither and thither, not knowing what followed after. In the midst of internally chanting this poem, my mind slipped into another strange place of meditation. The intensity of submitting myself to a test in which I attempted to induce my lungs into hyperventilation led me to a thought regarding breath and how it punctuates our lives. In fact, the snarls in the pattern of my own breath were the instances I remembered most vividly. On the album, *Three Worlds: Music from Woolf Works* by Max Richter, several different types of breathing are presented – from a musician’s sharp intake of breath to the lull of *XVI. The Waves: Tuesday*, that evokes final breath.

I am mesmerized by the ways our lives are outlined by breath: at birth, our breath first articulates the presence of trauma as we are forced from the world of water into the world of air, we must adapt in order to survive. Our daily lives are characterized by our body’s ability to regulate breathing. We breathe as a measure of time, it keeps us alive, and fabricates the pattern of our lives. As the breath creates these patterns of our lives, so steadily that we forget to notice, but instead what stands apart are the snarls, glitches, or moments of irregularity – of trying to catch one's breath, having it taken away, or gasping for it. It is the punctuation of sighs, huffs, sniffs, scoffs, screams, and deep intakes that appear as glitches in the breathing system. I remember my mom, focusing so hard on the task before her one day that she completely forgot to breathe. She was so consumed by the work at hand that it became more important than breathing. I heard her gasp after she finished the task and asked her what had happened, to which she replied, “I guess I was waiting to exhale.”

Our world over the last two years has become increasingly aware of breath and breathing – which has only amplified my need to explore this subject. In our daily rhythm of breathing, the

presence of the glitch, defined as potentiality, can create space for something unexpected or new to arise. We see the sun after a week of rainstorms and we cannot help but applaud it with a sigh of contented relief. We are so struck by humor that our bodies heave with laughter. We walk under the spring cherry blossoms and gasp at the beauty.

### *This Thesis Breathes*

This piece dives into the experience of breath – the pattern that makes up every moment of our lives, and the moments where that pattern is disrupted by transforming it into an undulating landscape that is recognizable and delightful yet abstract using the visual language of things not-seen: ripples in water, smoke slowly moving through the air, or wind blowing through a field of grass.

Through simulated wind, a technological score that auditorily imitates both regular and irregular breathing, and silk, “*Metronome*,” makes visible the inner pattern of breath punctuated by glitches. This 1,260 square foot piece of silk is an invitation to experience breath within the installation. The undulating landscape rises up, swallowing and overtaking a body within the space. A score composed by Eric Milliken manipulates fans to evoke different types of breath. This auditory effect creates an immersive experience, simultaneously acting as white noise that rhythmically synchronizes the internal patterns of the body rather than exclusively engaging with the ears.

This glitch helps produce a hope that acknowledges the reality of our depletion and weariness even as it anticipates new life. The glitches that I have experienced in my own life and breath present a tension that demands recognition: a terrible thing intrudes and disrupts, but creates space for hope and delight. This hope now punctuates every breath, it is what I hold to in the midst of irregular punctuations – that we will soon round the hills and be back into the open sunshine.

And, with that,  
“all that there is is to have it,  
to make it,  
to run with it,  
as long as you can.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Zusak, Marcus, *Bridge of Clay*, 2019, Knopf Books

*Appendix I: METRONOME ITERATION 1*  
April 7, 2023



Image I., Taken by Abigail Johnston



Image II. Taken by Abigail Johnston



Image III. Taken by Abigail Johnston



Image IV. Taken by Abigail Johnston

## ***Appendix II: A Burst Appendix: Items on the Shelf of my Heart***

- Quotes from Markus Zusak's *Bridge of Clay* including but not limited to:
  - "I thought how 'before the beginnings' are everywhere, because before and before so many things..."
  - "She shook her head and took my hand and it was so damn happy I could have broken down again, I'm sure it was because I was glad. Glad. Glad is a stupid seeming word, but I'm writing and telling you this because that's what we..."
  - "And he liked it, and he loathed it. He welcomed it, he mourned it."
  - "Five long years he lay in that garage, on the floor, 'til it happened, something made him get up."
  - "And maybe it's the little things that kill you in the end."
  - "The sad, bad, mad, bad, glad man: full of kindness, but also regret."
  - "And it was a smile to keep from dying, or crying, he couldn't quite decide."
  - "I won't tell you to live how she'd want you to, but maybe to live how you have to, but you do, I think, have to live."
  - "If there's one thing I've come to learn, though, it's that if life goes on in our aftermaths, it goes on in our worlds before it."
  - "They're the sound and color of being here"
  - "We wouldn't have loved him so much if he'd lived"
  - "That's enough, mistake maker (to stačí, chybný výrobce)"
  - "He'd remembered, he'd remembered, he'd remembered, and now despite all self warning and discipline the smile he'd held fell out. It was almost like those army movies, the comedy ones, where the hopeless, hapless recruits struggles over a wall and flops to the other side, stupid and clumsy, but grateful."
  - "And all that there is is to have it, to make it, to run with it, as long as you can."



### **Appendix III: Remembering**

Written by Abigail Ogle, Fall 2022

In a world where suffering, grief, and loss are universal experiences, how are we to share our own sorrows and validate the sorrows of others in a way that resists triviality and insincerity? I would like to suggest, as Theodor Adorno does, that “Art may be the only remaining medium of truth in an age of incomprehensible terror and suffering.”<sup>9</sup> I believe this to be true, but in light of this *Art and Criticism* course, I am curious (and admittedly somewhat skeptical) about the need to amend this statement to say that art, when interwoven with theory, helps us make sense of the senseless. I think it vital to learn to listen to suffering, to realize that lament is not a solitary act, and that we should create space for visual elegies and thoughtful words that allow us to bear witness to the grief of others. This act of mourning is one that I find to be incredibly important, but thanks to the reading and conversation of this course, I have had my curiosity piqued regarding this sacred act as it is displayed digitally through a strange and transfigured memorialization.

Theory has existed as a constant hum in my life and art practice, but it has primarily been kept safely in the background. I believe(d) theory to influence, to go before, to come after, but not to be woven into the fabric of art making or experiencing. The experience of an individual declaring some stance, or wading through some idea or opinion has always been jarring to me, and who asked for their opinion anyway? Alternatively, the critic’s words, whether or not you agree with them, stretch your preconceived notions and ask you to look more carefully into something you were previously unable to. This seems like strange magic, one that I do not possess with words, but certainly attempt to bring to life with materials. It wasn’t until August when I came across the words of bell hooks, “When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice.”<sup>10</sup> that I have attempted to engage more thoughtfully with theory and its presence in art and life.

I first explored art and theory in the wake of loss. My high school boyfriend was killed in a car accident moments after I had seen him that day, but chose not to stop and say anything to him. To be human is to ask “what if,” I suppose, but I felt that if I had spoken to him, perhaps the mere moments I could have taken up would have been enough to let him drive away safely. As an artist, my response was to dive headlong into exploring materials, such as human hair, that evoked conversations of grief in art history and visual culture as well as in the theories of Abjection as put forth by Julia Kristeva.<sup>11</sup> In addition to wrestling with how to give dignity materially to the bodies of those who were no longer present, I was searching for a way to create space for mourning for those left behind.

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<sup>9</sup> Schweizer, Harold. 1997. *Suffering and the remedy of art*. Albany: State University of New York Press. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=8386>.

<sup>10</sup> hooks, bell. 1994. “Theory as a Liberatory Practice.” *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 59-75

<sup>11</sup> Influenced by the following: Krauss, R. 1996. “Informe without Conclusion”. *OCTOBER -CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS-*. (78): 89-106... and Kristeva, Julia, and Leon S. Roudiez. 1982. *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Since this event in 2014, my practice has been built on the belief that art makes us more human, that materials matter, and that if we take the time to listen to the stories of others, they can change us. Through the use of bodily materials, I heighten the sense of tension between desire and repulsion, and the familiar-made-strange. The ephemeral nature of my pieces evoke memory, grief, and loss. Often the viewer is asked to navigate the space with more than just their eyes, and to enter into conversation with materials that invite them to consider their own memories, experiences and histories.

Mourning is messy. Whether the act is a physical, cultural, or historical ritual (ashes on the head, wearing sackcloth, shiva, services), it takes time and intentionality. These rituals matter, though sometimes they exist in a more performative way and the true grieving is done elsewhere. If we participate in these physical actions of mourning with great care, what happens when social media and technology enter the conversation? After someone has died, Facebook transforms their profile page into a “memorialized” account. It is fascinating what memories the social media platform is capable of circulating with the information we as users have populated it with. It allows the living to remember and see the support of their community long after they have lost someone. My obsession, after the death of my boyfriend, was not concentrated on memorializing him, but rather in helping his mother remember that there were people who loved him. I spent endless hours writing letters to her detailing the memories that I had of him. My memories started to blur and morph, things that I recalled vividly became confusing. It was as if my photo album had been opened one too many times, and the yellowing tape holding the photos in place had lost their stickiness. Each time the book was opened, a photo or a note or some important detail fell out. After four years, I never quite remembered what I had previously written, and started to question if I was writing things real or imagined. Had I ever really known this person? Upon reading Susan Sontag’s statement, “Words alter, words add, words subtract,”<sup>12</sup> in regards to the Abu Ghraib archive<sup>13</sup> along with Legacy Russel’s “Glitch Feminism” I began pondering the idea of memorialization through images and how our language, specifically in the digital world, changes when we are engaging in the act of remembering.

Social media remembers so we do not have to. What exists after someone dies (at least in my experience) are idealized images and words. I do not mean to suggest here that idealization post-loss was absent before social media, only that its platform – created to remember – is filtered differently after someone dies. Legacy Russel’s definition of a “glitch-as-error” as a means of wrestling with the potentiality of the body, presents a striking framework. Though Russel’s manifesto focuses more on disrupting the language of the binary body, the sentence, “Glitch manifests with such variance, generating ruptures between the recognized and recognizable, and amplifying within such ruptures, extending them to become fantastic landscapes of possibility.”<sup>14</sup> leads me to wonder what the idea of a glitch in an experience of loss and our attempts to keep the memory of someone alive looks like.

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<sup>12</sup> Sontag, Susan. 2004. Regarding the torture of others. *New York Times Magazine*.

<sup>13</sup> Photographs of Iraqi prisoners in 2003 at the Abu Ghraib prison depicting naked prisoners being tortured, piled on top of one another, or forced to assume sexual positions. In several of the photographs, American soldiers posed nearby or smiled at the camera.

<sup>14</sup> Russel, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism*, Chapter 01 – Glitch Refuses. 2020, Virso, London.

Our bodies exist on Facebook. It is no secret that social media is well known for enabling us to create identities that are not congruent with life “away from the keyboard.”<sup>15</sup> These memorialized profiles do, after all, resurrect the person momentarily. The only indication of death is the gray letters above their name that read, “REMEMBERING.” Is the glitch found in the mind of the user we attempt to remember? Is it our desire to create a narrative exclusively of the things we want to remember in someone’s life? Or is the glitch better understood as an algorithm that recognizes that no mourning user wants to see “incriminating” photos the user posted years prior to their death? The language that accompanies images on Facebook posts from the living to the dead are another layer of strangeness. These word posts are something that I participate in exclusively for the sake of the people who lost their beloved son, and the history we share. Each post is written as if the person who has died is going to read them. So, then, is the glitch that we suspend the reality of the physical and write to this dead person with the hope that they somehow see it? Is a memorialized account meant to give us the chance to compensate for the things we neglected to say, or the comfort we withheld in the hopes that the dead will forgive? Or simply an opportunity to dive into the potentiality of the body as Russel suggested in fantastic ways?

Unfortunately, I do not have an answer to how these questions find resolution, affect us as a society, or are particularly helpful; I do, however, appreciate the ability to consider mourning and memorialization through Facebook in a new light thanks to thinkers like Legacy Russel, Susan Sontag, and bell hooks. My life and practice involves a lot of meditative mark making that provides space to think deeply and have conversations like this – an important practice that grows with every bit of new information that is taken in. I think, upon reflection, glitches give us opportunities to rise, to grow, to learn, and to heal. Perhaps it is the very thing that creates a glitch or disrupts the program that leads to the most needed actions, redemptive hope, and delight, even in the form of some small Facebook post with memories that blur life “away from the keyboard.”

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<sup>15</sup> Russel differentiates between life in the digital world and life “away from the keyboard”

#### *Appendix IV: Breath*

- “Breathe in time to this, ma’am...” – a student places a metronome beside the bed of a dying woman, the mistake maker, the piano player, the broken nose bride, Penny, Penelope Dunbar.
- Gasp.
- Inhale suddenly with the mouth open, usually out of pain or astonishment. Straining to take a deep breath.
- There’s a moment when witnessing a string concert or recording in which the musician breathes in sharply. A Gasp, almost in ecstasy. breathing life into the piece. Calling you back to reality, to humanity, to life, and it’s so beautiful it hurts.
- Music as moving.
- Deep intakes of breath.
- Muscle/muscle memory.
- Breathing life *into* something.
- Giving breath.
- Breath of life.
- Loss of breath.
- Gasp/inhale/exhale/winded.
- Blowing/breathing into something to create/inflate/animate.
- Oxygen as something that fills the lungs and allows the body to live.
- Oxygen as something tanked.
- Tornado: a pressure eating the oxygen, sucking the air from lungs.
- In and out.
- Wide.
- Suck.
- Stretch/expand.
- Presence and absence.
- Capturing or visualizing breath.
- Takes your breath away.
- Out of breath.
- Gasping for air.
- Wind knocked out of you.
- Last breaths.
- The air taken into or expelled from the lungs.
- An inhalation or exhalation of air from the lungs.
- The power of breathing.

**Appendix V: Artwork Sources, La Otro, Musical/Audio Sources,  
Radiolab: Breath, Breathing Behavior, and Breathing Influences**

Artwork Sources:

- [Aliento, Oscar Muñoz.](#)
- [Cello by Kristen Morgin.](#)
- [Cameras are Keepers of the Soul by Bill Viola](#)
- [artbreath.wordpress.com](#)
- [Blue Sail by Hans Haacke](#)

La Otro:

- Breath as image.
- Breath to save.
- Breath to lose.
- Gasp of delight/horror.
- Involuntary gasp.
- Inhalation/exhalation.
- Rhythm.

Musical / Audio Sources:

- Caroline Shaw: [Orange](#)
- Ludovico Einaudi: [Primavera \(move you\)](#) and [Giorni Dispari](#)
- Antonio Vivaldi, Joshua Bell: [The Four Seasons](#) - violin concerto in G-Minor, RV 315. L'estate (summer): I Allegro non Molto
- Ólafur Arnalds: [0952](#)
- Biba Dupont: [Sonora](#)

Radiolab: Breath

- [Listen here: Breath](#)
- “Transition from water world > air sword and breathes (babies > the necessity of trauma, the serenity forcing you to adapt in order to survive.”

Breathing behavior:

- Quiet breathing.
- Active breathing.
- Reflex.
- Mixed respiratory behavior.

Breathing Influences:

- Medulla: depth/rhythm for safe rate of gas exchange.
- Cerebellum: for basic motor programs for muscles of chest.
- Motor cortex for practiced / learned motor control.
- Peripheral nervous system, influencing rhythm in coordination with large muscle groups and reflexes.
- Breath as measure of time.
- Relationship between musical characteristics and temporal breathing pattern in piano performance on Frontiersin.org. Yutaka Sakaguchi + Eriko Aiba.

## ***Appendix VI: “Breath” in alternative senses, Can Art Bring Hope?, Be a Weed***

“Breath” in alternative senses:

- [Massive Attack: Heat Miser](#): breathing in time to the music, unnerving.
- [Breathing in, Breathing out: 1977, Marina Abramović and Ulay](#)
- [Bill Viola, The Messenger, 1996](#). Baptism, drowning, gasping, impact.
- [Bill Viola, 12 Nantes Triptych, 1992](#)
  - First breath (birth), floating, Viola’s mother on her deathbed, mouth agape, breathing - art historical reference to altarpiece triptych.
  - “And she’ll never breathe again, she’ll neer look at y-... at you with those eyes. Gone. Pffff, like air.” Bill Viola
- [Breath Leaves, 1979-91, Giuseppe Penone](#)
  - Imprint of body

Can Art Bring Hope?

- [The Little Engine That Could](#) by Watty Piper
- Longing
- Reaching and reaching and reaching and finally achieving and resting.
- The light at the end of the tunnel.
- Seeds speak of potentiality materially, but I think it’s more than that “it can/it will” idea.
- Spiritual hope: something that “will be” is not yet, but is already happening/in motion.
- [Embodied Hope by Kelly Kapic](#)
- Dead tree feeding new life.
- Rising from the ashes.
- When despair and loss are transformed into something lovely.
- Renewed faith.
- To bolster.
- In the midst of devastation, look for the people who are helping.
- Plants growing between sidewalk cracks.
- Can something survive the odds?
- Utterly sensitive, on a gut level.
- Lifelessness now animated.
- Finding beauty and life in unexpected places.
- Something that almost makes it. It is achievable, it doesn’t give up, you know you will succeed, just not yet.
- Cresting.
- We do anything because we have hope. We believe something will be better for us if we go through the hard stuff.
- Hope is what makes us keep trying.
- It’s chemo and radiation: you’ve got to be doing something.
- The belief that this “won’t be the situation forever.”
- Almost, so close, never quite, but very close.

- [DVD screen bouncing from one side to the other, until it actually hits the corner.](#)
- About to ignite.
- Interrogating the body.
- Passing through memory.
- Artwork that makes the ache of grief beautiful and meditative.
- Fleeting memories and the hollow sadness accompanying their absence.
- Vivid transparency.
- Acknowledging our troubles are real, and that God is unflinchingly faithful.
- We need a witness for the pain and the provision – for that’s what keeps you sane.
- A full lament is deadly (Jesus bore the weight and it killed Him).
- “We will discover hope only when we’re ruthlessly honest about what lies between us and that hope.”
- How can artwork acknowledge the validity of suffering, still be beautiful, and point to hope?

#### Weeds

- Weed as wanted, (Sandi said, “a weed is only a weed when it’s unwanted).
- Weed as intrusive/unwanted guest (Dad despises the dandelions I blow across the yard).
- Weed as embraced/the thing we choose to love even though it’s the thing choking out the good stuff (Parasitic, beautiful but harmful: wisteria, poison oak).

#### Margaret Renkl – *Be a Weed*

“Sometimes, when I haven’t slept or the news of the world, already bad, suddenly becomes much worse, the weight of belonging here is a heaviness I can’t shake. But then I think of the glister of a particular morning in springtime. I think of standing in the sunshine and watering the butterfly garden, which is mostly cultivated weeds punctuated by the uncultivated kind that come back despite my pinching and tugging. I think of the caterpillars on the milkweed plants, unperturbed by the overspray, and the resident red-tailed hawk gliding overhead, chased by a mockingbird and three angry crows, and the bluebird standing on top of the nest box protecting his mate, who is inside laying an egg. I think of that morning– not even a morning, not even an hour–and I say to myself, *Be an egg. Be a mockingbird. Be a weed.*”

## ***Appendix VII: Joe Novenson, Jose Munoz, and [The Sandman](#)***

Joe Novenson: [The Powerful Compassion of Jesus](#)

*“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion (the intentionality)... When Jesus saw this woman, his insides were deeply stirred. Here’s the point, your savior does not relate to any sensed hopelessness, with a professional, disinterested, sterile, uncaring, heartlessness. The infinitely sovereign Lord is utterly sensitive. Intensely so. On a gut level...”*

*“The distress, the disequilibrium that death brings to survivors. That hopelessness brings to those enduring it. Matters as much as destroying death does to Jesus. He doesn’t say, “stop crying, I got this, I’ll fix it all.”*

*“Finally he’s dealt with what hurts us the most. But then as soon as he’s done that, bringing glory into the present, he comes forward and touches what nobody else would touch. You know what he’s doing? He’s touching what he won’t let you touch. He’s stopping what you can’t stop, death. He’s about to give what you can’t give: life. And he’s doing it with the same thing he used to make the universe, he speaks. “Young man, get up.” and he does. And he starts talking. And he starts to speak... When Jesus, the Father, and the Son said “let there be” and nothing became something, that did not take as much from God, or God did not have to exercise as much when he said, “young man, get up” or when he gave you new life spiritually.”... Now he can say, “I’m covering this. Get up.” ... he gave him to his mother.”*

*“When Jesus gives life, he does so, so we might rightly love the people with whom we live. He gives us back to one another.”*

From Jose Munoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*

*“Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope. In a 1961 lecture titled “Can Hope Be Disappointed?” Bloch describes different aspects of educated hope: “Not only hope’s affect (with its pendant, fear) but even more so, hope’s methodology (with its pendant, memory) dwells in the region of the not-yet, a place where entrance and, above all, final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy.” This idea of indeterminacy in both affect and methodology speaks to a critical process that is attuned to what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes as potentiality. Hope along with its other, fear, are affective structures that can be described as anticipatory.” pg. 3*

*“My approach to hope as a critical methodology can be best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision.”*



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In the Sandman, a story written by Neil Gaiman and turned into a drama by Netflix, Morpheus duels with Lucifer in a battle that ends in a slash of annihilation, “what can possibly beat annihilation,” Lucifer asks. And, the only thing that can defeat the darkness is hope.



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