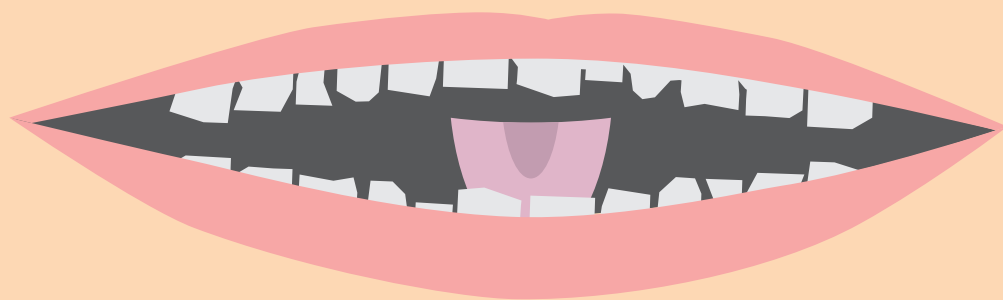
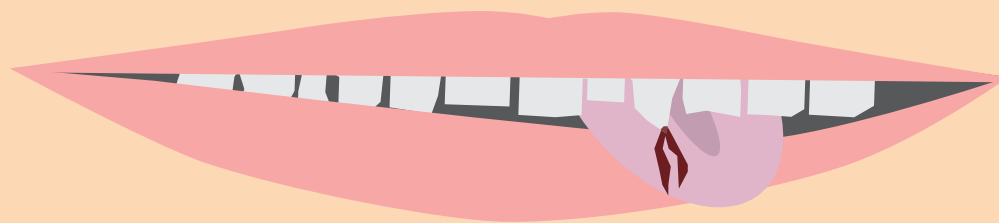


Hannah Taylor is a Writing undergrad at Texas Christian University. When she isn't writing, Hannah is reading, dancing, or exploring.

"Bite Your Tongue" is a compilation of pieces exploring various aspects of growing up as a woman. From love and lust to death, this work tries to define the complicated task of growing up. This is Hannah's first collection.



# Bite Your Tongue

*Hannah Taylor*

Bite  
Your  
Tongue

*Hannah Taylor*

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FIRST EDITION

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***To Try and Make Sense of  
At Least One Thing.***



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# Dear Reader

Brunelleschi  
gave us perspective  
with paint in the Enlightenment.  
Giotto and Duccio from Italy came  
and gave depth to the flat world of man,  
churches and graveyards and trees in fields.

They saw the world as it was, and the way  
we described it -- the inequity of representation --  
and made Real, made tangible the world we see.

Here I sit, with a pen, a wealth of experience  
as shallow as a kiddie pool filled  
with urine, a fire inside to make  
a permanent spring, and an echo  
of an ache -- but I am not  
Italian and I cannot  
paint.

# Phlegmatic

I think I could live in my head --  
set up shop in a room with a chair  
and just be up there alone instead.

There would be plenty of time to work and read,  
dive into words, to craft and inspire,  
if I were to live inside my head.

I would not have to share my bed  
with an awkward memory of the night before  
just be up there alone instead.

No judging voice to interrupt,  
no breaks in the quiet I desire,  
when I live inside my head.

No words misspoken or unsaid, I'd scream  
and none would be the wiser --  
just be up there alone instead.

Yes, I'd be freed  
with no one there --  
I mostly live inside my head,  
it's much better to be alone instead.



# Confession

When I was seventeen and you were five,  
I forgot to feed your fish.  
You were crushed by guilt,  
As we stared at the floating gold.  
I watched,  
Remorseless towards my fault,  
As you flushed your first friend.

And when I was twelve  
I let our dog eat your chocolate.  
You were shocked by your own incompetence  
To leave the temptation at snout's reach.  
I held your hand  
While his stomach was futilely pumped.

And when I first drove alone,  
I backed over our family cat.  
You were appalled,  
Remembering the door you left open.  
I hated that cat,  
But still felt regret  
From killing your last childhood friend.

Now we are experiencing an end  
That neither of us played a hand in.  
You are crying all the same.

Forgive me  
For divulging this now,  
Though I don't regret  
My slights,  
You would much rather believe  
That you were to blame  
Than to accept  
How little you control.

# like your French Girl

Walking around the emptied train  
on tiptoes to maintain the quiet  
of art watching, I found a wall  
of Impressionably stroked paintings.  
Peach women in frilly white dresses  
gazing over their shoulders  
with coy smiles and squinting eyes,  
round waists encircled by the arms  
of a faceless man. They were full.  
They were beautiful.

I look at myself in my bathroom's  
long mirror and think,  
*I could be a Renoir girl.*  
My plump cheeks shift when I place  
my chin in a cupped hand, my breasts  
overflow when I cross my arms beneath,  
my pale rolls show when I slouch.  
I chew on my fingers the way they did.  
Maybe I would have been beautiful  
in 1800.

# Sunday Morning

Fall on your knees  
And flatten your palms together.  
Intertwine your fingers  
Like the grooves of a basket  
Carrying the weight of the world.

Bow your head  
To hide from the serpent  
Odor of incense.  
Ignore the piercing cry  
Of the baby, and the mother  
Hushing her flesh.

Squeeze your hands tightly  
And recite the words you have known  
For many years, imprinted on your brain  
Like the red outline of a ruler  
On your misbehaving hand,  
Punishment granted  
By a woman who was as righteous  
As she was cruel.

Open your faultless book.  
Read it so you may know it,  
Know it so you may speak it,  
Speak it so you may believe it.  
In belief,  
Find your freedom.

# From the Steps of the Chapel

There is something enthralling about the way a woman walks.

If she is in shorts, you can see the snaking rivers of muscle move up and down her legs with each care-filled step.

If she is confident -- shoulders rolled back, collarbones framing her face as they jut out like tiny wings, clothes draped over her body, arms swinging like hypnotizing pocket watches -- I could watch her walk for miles.

# April 11

Our mother and father both called,  
I texted you a heart.  
Your head was stuck in a list of tasks  
as long as his life was short.

Matthew was gone -- he left a note  
and left the world. We look  
to you with worried eyes, trying  
to gauge your state of mind.

Our brother found you in your room,  
a chisel in your hand.  
Will ran to find someone to tell  
that you'd be stopped or damned --

when the one thing worse than being dumb  
was being fat. You'd aim  
to craft, and carve it out --  
a Sculptor with a dream.

You sit alone in your bedroom  
and stall your faultless pace --  
his face and name unknown to you.  
Grief fills your chest with weight.  
The mold you ran from years ago  
falls squarely into place.

Tears flow in tiny rivulets,  
mascara drowned in your prayers  
like spiders across your cheeks --  
you thanked God for failure,  
your cloud white skin unmarred,  
safe from the only task  
you've failed.

# Lakeside Spa

The summer has come and gone,  
faded, as the sky's bulb does.  
The water sits, contained  
in its rocking motions, bubbling  
from the forceful jets of scalding air.

Fall in,  
the polite water will move for your comfort,  
liquid of your same size sloshing and spilling  
over the flashing sphere of color,  
making that great leap, separating  
in the cracks of worn wood panels, where keys  
and loose change meet their end,  
to find a new home in the soft green beneath,  
so that you can escape the chill.

# Goodnight Kiss

Was the last time your lips met another's, a courtesy for  
a night on the town; was it goodbye under a lit door frame;

was it a brief pause between a few staggered breaths; was it a small sign  
of forgiveness in the eyes of your man; was it the punctuation

for years of soft touches and long explanations or notes of what's to come --  
or was it like my last embrace, with his hands cradling my face,

my nodding head tucked in the crook of his familiar arm,  
my warm sigh empty, no errant hope for more -- just a moment,

the unexpected flood of long-kept secrets finally breaching?

# My Be(loved)

*After Simic*

If our story were etched into the lines of his face,  
his eyes would be the black dots of a sentence begun  
and unfinished.

His eyes were a ticking a clock,  
his eyes are a black dot of a different sort.

To be able to describe his smell . . .  
from the crook of his smothering neck.  
His smell was a snake  
coiled around my throat.

Ah, to forget his smell,  
I'll think of his hands.  
His hands that lined my skin  
like the first gust of air on a frozen day.  
His absent hands drive me mad.

When he whispered in my ear,  
like a whistling pot, his voice  
promised boiling blood.  
His voice soothed me like rushing tides,  
encroaching. With each wave threatening to drown,  
in my gasps of breath, I heard his name.



# Spare Change (and other clichés)

A penny for your thoughts, I thought,  
Standing at the water's edge,  
Flipping the cool copper coin  
Between my fingers.  
I handed it to you  
To decode the unfamiliar nature  
Of your eyes, the faded moonshine  
I once gazed at in darkness.

Have you ever had the urge  
For adventure like you did  
When you pulled me out of bed  
And said, "Darling, let's learn  
To walk on water, let's run away!"  
But caught in excitement and the task  
Of making plans, time had been the one  
To run. We stood in the sand,  
Drawing lines with bending sticks,  
Watching the faded blue boat,  
Fade further into blue.  
Our ship had sailed.

Actions speak louder than words,  
So I left.  
Though I suppose some words are deserved.  
Let me spell it out for you:  
G-o-o-d-b-y-e.

# The Cinema

I sit alone in the darkened theater  
the smell of buttered popcorn in the air,  
crowds wait for the start of the night's feature.  
They laugh, the screen in front begins to blur.

To try to stall the racing of my mind,  
my errant fingers trace my ribs and chest.  
I hold my breath and wait for the rose shine  
from bright red scars that line my battered heart.

I fear that as the lights fall to shadow,  
the glowing pain inside my chest will burn.  
Clearly they'll see that I am now alone,  
that my red pulse still gleams for love ignored.

And still I hope the brightest pains will fade,  
my scars unseen, now, all began opaque.

# Share it on SoundCloud

You said the song was mine  
In the car that night.  
Rain carved streams in the fogged windows  
as I listened to you play another song  
for just another girl.

And I marveled at the power of your fingers,  
and the timbre of your voice  
ringing out over the soft  
patter of rainfall and the rush  
of my staggered breath.

I cannot write you anything  
that will mean as little as the words  
echoing in the back of your car --  
a mimic of one thousand notes  
over the decade of our acquaintance.

We were not made by the river  
in the spring, or to bloom like roses --  
but as blisters form,  
worn away painfully only to become  
further resolved in our quest  
to remain the same.

And our scent will not linger --  
cinnamon and vanilla lining the air --  
but their songs always will,  
crafted melodies ringing,  
words you have written for others.

# Lancôme, Paris

Lying on the blue tile  
between the toilet and a cardboard box,  
I found the pink-hued perfume  
that reminded me of the winter

night when I smiled so wide  
the chapped cracks of my lips split  
down the middle and I could not kiss  
my fair-haired boy under the mistletoe.

I placed the half-empty bottle among other relics  
and tried to avoid the aching hollow  
as I wandered past framed pictures --  
remembering

how its scent had lingered, the baby powder  
and roses coiling around the tall pines  
like a mist snake weaving  
through the bitter air looking for a victim.

# Inside Joke

I remember the first time I heard the word slut --  
snapped shut, a bunny trap --  
my mother gasped at Will's audacity.  
"Son," she growled, "we do not shame

people for how they choose to use  
their bodies. No mention of sluts in this house."  
He smirked, the ends of his lips pulling  
towards his eyes. "Fine. She was a fat whore."

I remember the first time I called her a slut --  
between gasps of laughter among pillows --  
Sophie gasped at my joke, knowing  
the family rule.

In faux horror, I reneged,  
"Excuse me, I misspoke.  
You are a fat whore."  
We were hyenas, overtaken by hilarity.

I remember the first time I was called a slut --  
bookended by fucking and tease,  
gasping for air as I pushed his hands  
off of me, the world

shift  
ing.  
Every beat of my heart echoing,  
*no mention of sluts in this house.*

# Rainbow Connection

They asked me to sing Kermit's song  
with my bubble gum pink ukulele --  
a gift I received for my eighth birthday.  
She loved that song.  
"It is only right," my mother said,  
"darling, she would have loved it."  
My grandfather looked at me  
with tear-drained eyes.

I knew nothing of being a lover,  
or dreamer past the baby blue  
of my bedroom walls. She sat  
next to me on the bench  
of her father's baby grand piano  
and sang ladadedado  
as I watched her weathered hands  
create billowing melodies I hoped  
to replicate. I learned to accompany  
her, virgin hands plucking clear  
wire -- slightly offbeat, slightly  
out of tune.

I stood in front of the congregation,  
hands shaking as I timidly plucked,  
voice crawling from my throat,  
wearily, while the room reeked  
of flowers. I wondered if I would  
ever watch The Muppets again.

# The Queen's Sailboat

We went to spread her ashes.

I heard the waves smack against the boat  
the peaceful hummmmmm of the motor's tongue  
lapped the salted wet and the gentle murmur of  
voices familiar rose above the heavy, watered air,  
I saw the bulb of bright sun fade beyond  
the white whale's snout, and dolphin's smile  
as they called out to grab their missing pup.

And still, there was a quiet.

# Takeoff

The grass lies below us, the endless  
patchwork of fields disappear as we soar.  
Lego houses carve circles into the Earth  
and I watch as the clouds overtake them.

I read somewhere once  
that a cloud can weigh a ton, hovering  
over us all, while children lie on their backs  
and make dogs and flowers out of it.  
How helplessly do we trust  
that massive white.

And we go --  
over hundreds of towns and people,  
past lives and land moving, unaware  
of my viewing. Many grounds never  
touched, faces never seen --

it can make you feel as small  
as the world, falling away  
while we pull through the clouds.





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