

10-22-2022

Fins & Limbs

Katherine G. Cruz
5903772@fiu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cruz, Katherine G., "Fins & Limbs" (2022). *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 5145.
<https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/5145>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the University Graduate School at FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcc@fiu.edu.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

FINS & LIMBS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Katherine Cruz

2022

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This thesis, written by Katherine Cruz, and entitled Fins & Limbs, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Vernon Dickson

Campbell McGrath

Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

Date of Defense: October 24, 2022

The thesis of Kate Cruz is approved.

Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

For my Rodrigo, who told me to leave it all behind and swing for the fences. I am forever yours, and so very grateful you took me to and out of Florida.

Also, for Inigo, Lala, and Mateo for patiently waiting for me to finish a poem.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all my committee members for their support on this project. When I met Denise Duhamel seven years ago, I could not imagine that I would be writing poems with her guidance as my major professor. I never thought I would get this far, and I certainly would not have but for her kind and generous spirit. I will love and remember her. Campbell McGrath, too, always responded with excellent advice. I am very grateful for his counsel. Vernon Dickson was the absolute best professor of Shakespeare. His marvelous gift of teaching has allowed me to appreciate The Bard in a more complete, and honest way. Of course, completing this manuscript would not have been possible without Les Standiford and Lynne Barrett. I would also like to thank Terese Campbell and Marta Lee. Their glorious and ineffable presence makes the Creative Writing Department at FIU what it is. And finally, Nick Garrett is one of the best people I have ever met. He is the best writer, and the best person.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

FINS & LIMBS

by

Katherine Cruz

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

FINS & LIMBS is a collection of poems about the struggle to exist in places on the verge. The ocean abyss is a place where mermaids and more “real species struggle to live. On land a young mother struggles watching her newborn baby nearly die on her kitchen floor. The poems in FINS & LIMBS address anguish as they delve into our intertwined struggles with the natural world. Existential threats to the natural world turn into personal existential threats. The poems in FINS & LIMBS are part lamentation and part manifesto for survival. Many of the poems are based in Florida and plumb the fertile history of that very swampy place in which both fins and limbs are required to exist.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POEM	PAGE
FINS.....	1
Ocean Ghazal.....	2
Pirates of Jacksonville Port Authority.....	3
End of the Fishhouses.....	5
Killing a Whale.....	7
Mermaid Manifesto.....	8
Florida’s Mermaids.....	10
W.H Auden is in Front of Me.....	12
LIMBS.....	14
The Bumblebee and the Wife.....	15
An Elegy for Alexandrine.....	16
Cleaning Up.....	17
Uncaged Parrots.....	19
Our Last Visit with Jane, Hospice Care Facility.....	20
In the Lobby of the Fontainebleau Hotel.....	22
Florida Down.....	25
Miami According to Julia Tuttle,.....	27

Miami According to James Deering,	29
Miami According to Frances Tuttle,.....	31
Dearest One:.....	32
How the Finks and the Fayyads Got to America	34
Love in Florida.....	39
Summer In Key West.....	41
Running to Stop a Meteor	42
Hospital Cafeteria	44
Knitters.....	45
Marathon Runner’s Constrained Action Hypothesis	47
Abel’s Token.....	49
Leave Me Alone.....	51
Postpartum	52
Making Me a Daughter	54
My Mother’s Hands	56
Dropped My Baby.....	57
Pink Slip.....	58
Topic: Review of 8 Psych Consults with Dr. Mattingly (Lockdown Protocols Observed).....	60

A Work Week of Haikus.....	62
Publix	64

FINS

Ocean Ghazal

To hide from eels, a frogfish waits for his flesh to turn yellow to match
The reef. A bigger frogfish eats him. Not much of a match.

A manatee and her calf search for seagrass in the shallows.
When they find none, they feast on the algae bloom. A fatal mismatch.

A Greenland shark lives alone for centuries in the Atlantic. Before dying,
she ponders her chance for eternal life: Anyone here? Want to make a match?

I watch you backstroke toward the mouth of the bay. When you go too far,
I scream into the breaking surf, taste salt and know I'm outmatched.

The loneliness of the sea sticks to some sailors. One night I watched
One douse himself in his lamp's kerosene, take out a cigarette and light a match.

A ship may rule the waves but capsized on the seafloor she sits. Rocking
As if thinking: why, at sea, do mistakes and consequences never match?

A storm brings the sea to your living room. A hurricane will bring
Your city into the sea. Drink your cortadito, Kate. Prepare to meet your match.

Pirates of Jacksonville Port Authority

Dollars, rings, keys

— We are boy pigs

Searching for truffles.

Freighters on our left,

Cranes on our right,

Broken conch shells

Between us. We don't stop

Until port security chases us

Off the beach. By then,

The slices on our legs,

From scavenging the piers,

Look like gills on a shark.

Our gashes call out for —

Stitches! Bandages!

We answer them with Smirnoff.

Parching in 91° heat,

We down that vodka
Like its ice, just melted.

Loop the pilings
The way we would our
Worried mothers.

Wrestle, grip
Tilt, sway
Until we fall

Into each other.
I love the way the darkness
Lets me wear your socks.

End of the Fishhouses

On an unsettlingly warm night,
I walked along a rugged coast
And found ruins of fishhouses.
I thought of you, Elizabeth Bishop,
Smoking Lucky Strikes with the old man
Who scraped scales off so many fish
He wore away his knife.
I imagined you singing a hymn
to a curious seal. Recall the words?
God is a mighty fortress, a bulwark amid the flood.
The flood's been through here, Elizabeth.
Gangplanks are gone, gables blown out,
Storerooms under four feet of water.
No fish tubs, no herring.
I don't smell cod, only the algae bloom.
Plenty of flies are loitering around.
Behind the fishhouses' collapsed roofs,
There's a cracked capstan, partly submerged,
Beaten down, covered in a black gooey rot.
Your fastidiousness, Elizabeth Bishop,
Led me to that forlorn object.

It roused in me a spirit,
making me crazy, audacious, enough
to confront the sea: *The capstan endures!*
Waiting to haul one last thing from your deep grasp!
I know, I know—
the water is utterly free,
silver and swinging. I can see it,
the guillotine.