Prospectus

There are certain things you learn growing up in Michigan. You learn there's better medicine found on the forest floor than in any pharmacy, and that red river water is fine to drink even if it tastes sharp like blood. You learn that islands spring from the bodies of bears, the shells of great turtles, the dirt in a muskrat's claw. You learn to tell the difference between the light of the sturgeon and the strawberry moon, to listen closely and hear the sand sing on log slide shores. And it's when you ceremoniously dive into cold, clean Lake Superior each summer that you truly learn to breathe. More than anything, though, you learn to always be from somewhere.

This deeply engrained sense of place is what inspires my writing, and will form the basis for my senior honors thesis, which will be a book-length collection of poems focusing on the connection of ritual and myth to place. My thesis will explore the way rituals are invented, established, and reinterpreted over time, moving from the well-known stories and aphorisms specific to the region to a more personal level. In my poems, I will draw from the folk wisdom and stories I grew up with in order to craft a sort of parallel world based on them; a world in which everything is true. My poems will have a dream-like quality, blending the familiar and the fantastical to create a new mythology. Michigan has a rich and strange cultural heritage, and I hope to create a sort of Great Lakes gothic style in writing about it.

Though I didn't learn to write poetry from a class, it wouldn't be accurate to say I'm self-taught. I owe my education to the poets I've read obsessively ever since I first picked up *The Collected Poems of Sylvia Plath* in high school. Like many teenaged girls, I was taken in by Plath's almost-romantically tragic life, but what kept me interested was the control
she had over her words and lines, and her vivid imagery was unlike anything I'd ever read before. My first experience with creative writing in a formal setting was Professor Chibka’s fiction workshop, which I took my sophomore year. As much as I enjoy writing fiction, it became clear I wrote stories like a poet, focusing obsessively on image and word choice instead of crafting plot. Junior year, I took Professor Robert's poetry workshop and participated in workshops and readings at Shakespeare and Company bookstore during my semester studying at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Recently, I've been working on tightening my language and experimenting with voice. I've found myself becoming more interested in the lyric—the way the sounds and shapes of words affect the reader and taste on the palate—winding it into my more narrative style. Imagery remains central to my poems, and will be particularly important in this thesis. I am convinced that it is through strong, engaging imagery that a poet really reaches her audience. Images lure the reader in and make them comfortable, allowing them to let down their guard and suspend belief in order to accept what the poet is saying.

A dozen of my poems have been published in *Stylus, The Laughing Medusa*, and *Pure Francis*, and my poem "Folk Medicine" was awarded third place for the Kelleher award this spring. I have been layout editor of *Stylus* since my freshman year, and will be interning for *Post Road* for a second year now. This winter, I will be applying for MFA programs in poetry. It is my ultimate goal to write as a profession while teaching at the university level. The hard work and discipline that will be required of me in writing this thesis will be great preparation for my graduate studies, and the finished poems will form an important part of my applications. I'm very excited to begin working on what will be the first of the many poetry collections I plan on writing over my career.