



T.A. Noonan

Erin Elizabeth Smith



Photo: "IJshockey in badpak / Ice-hockeying women in bathing suits."
Photographer unknown, 1925. Image courtesy of Nationaal Archief.



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a dusie kollektiv chap
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Skate or Die is set in Calisto MT. Cover logo fonts are Santa Fe LET, Impact, and Aldine Expanded. The first edition of this chapbook was released in February 2014 in a limited edition of fifty-two copies.

Digital edition ■ June 2014

T.A. Noonan's "Dorothy Hamill" is in conversation with series Erin Elizabeth Smith's "Cammi Granato" series. Together, they make up *Skate or Die*. Please view the right side of this chapbook to read the accompanying Granato poems.

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I'm telling you I was the King of Spain
(*now I eat humble pie*)

—Moxy Fruvous, “King of Spain”

Now the Leafs call me up to drive the Zamboni
(*once he was the King of Spain*)

—Moxy Fruvous, “King of Spain”

Dorothy Hamill Interviews Herself

Why learn to skate?

You can't
close your grape-round mouth.

Summers like fingers:
pointing, frosting. Swallow.

Let them clothe your throat,
edges and all. When the man
brings his Zamboni,

leave first and last.
Smoke your cigarettes.

*What do you wear now
that you've abandoned Carlo
Fassi?*

When your breath arabesques, snow
must equal leg and lung.

Love skating?
Seasons rise like two-
footed salchows—glide

flat-side left, lift right. Let easy,
string-bean snaps guide your teeth.

Cammi Granato, Age Five: "I Hate Dorothy Hamill"

My father gives me white skates
with a bread knife pick at the toe.

Like yours. My chubby legs taut
in beige tights. The hard round belly

swathed in pale taffeta. I'm taught
to keep my arms up like a scarecrow.

Like Dorothy, my father says, points
to your picture on the rink wall,

that fishing lure hair, leg bent
obscenely like a dog's. When he leaves

I watch the boys play – Tony slides
a puck beneath the goalie's right pad,

Don smacks his stick on the ice.
Who is anyone to tell me what girls love?

Camel spins. Pageboys. Tiny lips
on a bright medal. And you and I

from the same city, both too young to know
what we can't do. These skates so tight

my feet can't breathe, while your nineteen-

Even sleet forgets
its freefall; it, too, clenches
something white, bladed.

year-old smile gets seared into your mouth.

Dorothy Hamill's Preloaded iPod

Chicago's bel canto wind

supports her shoulders, whistles pitch—
the libretto of hair. One lutz two, three loops four.

She shuffles the ice's throat, even as she freezes off the recitative.

(All skaters arch and labor against this. Something about those mid-range parts,
the witches, bitches, and britches: butterfly spins, a spiral sequence, hydroblading.)

Her wrists emphasize technique, a torso edged by the grinder's diamond wheel.

When she flattens her body to the accompagnato, she oils her legs in henbane
and flies without trousers. To demonstrate, she holds lit candles
to her feet, which sing without flicker or hollow.

Cammi Granato's Special Providence

It's Providence,
1991. The bay makes no noise

on its rocks. The buttoning sea
winds bramble. This is no Chicago,

that lake a sad rasping
compared to the cold bridges

where death feels like a park
bench, the arched neck

of a carousel mare. The rivers
the city would later uncover

root through the rail yard.
Nothing is ever forseen,

except the firm ice in The Coffin.
The shifting of weight

to my instep. The heel.
I have seen the divine –

lilac morning snow,
houselights on an empty rink.

Dorothy Hamill's Guide to Practical Demonology
for W. W.

Imagine me in the hands of a Victorian invalid,
skating among his *precious things*: gold-plate

loofa, anthology of fans, first-edition *apocalpytique*.
He bends me, keeps me fit, shapes camels

with my waist. In winter, he recites Shakespeare
("And if my legs were two such riding-rods. . .")

as his wife shouts into her rosetone cell.
("Daddy, send me a harem and a sheaf of villanelles!")

He makes me into a '77 doll, another shelf-rider.
I don't blame him; even Solomon would bottle

my knees if he could. I can live imagining
the way his eyes graze my neck, the way his lashes

sweep dust from my collar. Each touch like a vacuole
maintaining pressure—each whisper, a needle.

Cammi Granato as Mike Eruzione

As children, we all want to be Eruzione,
Boston kid who put that puck

above the Russian's right shoulder.
To pucker that net, the crowd

like a pulse in the wrist. Each night
blades clattered under the kitchen table,

while mom ladled casserole onto white dishes.
After, I practiced throwing my fists

into the air, my skates lifting
below me like winged sandals,

while Tony pretended to be Jim Craig,
blanket curtaining his teenage shoulders.

Now twenty years later, I'm on
that same ice, summer turning the glass

opaque, the rink flooded in steam.
It's not like TV. Here, you feel

your breath in the cage, target
the sinkhole of the goaltender's pads

and forget each golden miracle,

Dorothy Hamill, No Relation to Mark

the ice cube quickness of a life.

It's a challenge mixing lightsabers & Ice Capades since they, much the same as we, are quite unrelated——casual issues. (Example: I can say

“Chewbacca.” Teach Han & Leia pair techniques, Hillary Spins. Recall Ben's lectures, the shape my arms made that night in Munich. But last

names? races? *carnivale?*——never. There are rules here: inside axels must stay single-legged, reverses remain in practice.) Yet

we're the same tribe, aren't we? *Jedi?* Ha. Erase the mysticism, Imperial hunts, heat in a tauntaun's belly——we still understand

flats & winter landscapes better than mundanes. We realize fear is sly, & we abide by three tenets equally: never turn when leaps will impress,

every ace stashes a smuggler's heart, & a tin bathing suit can hide a princess inside a striptease. It's true. Tell me I'm right in less than three letters.

Dorothy Hamill Considers the Great Vowel Shift

Hold that — “ee”
— long as possible.
Pull lips. Open

mouth. See how
our tongues mat
against roofs? So

easy! Land it
every time! Hang
long vowels high,

breathe wheezy. Consider
tub rings — maybe
towel bars. When

you (feeling queasy?)
weave, grip consonants
like drains slide.

I’m well aware
how teeth involve
themselves. Now ask

me where diphthongs
grow. How water

Cammi Granato, Sister of Tony

Tony and I dig in our skates.
We wind sprint in the full belly

of night, flaying the lake
of its pallid skin. Blades

chatter as we send snow arcing
like white bridges between our bodies.

It’s mid-season, and Chicago is breath-
mint cold. Each of us home

from our separate cities –
Tony a King among the high

rises and palms. Me, a bruised
collarbone from my first

legal check in years.
What our bodies are made of

is what our father calls tradition.
Caps and blades. The mendable bone.

The muscle of Tony’s leg that pushed
him up and out of these college towns.

On TV last week, Gretsky clapped

breaks while rinsing

hair. How shampoo
matters. Why it
lathers whether you

go air or
use blow dryers.
I'm turning promise

on its ear.
Listen. One turn,
a lock opens.

his glove hand on my brother's shoulder,

while I ate french fries in T.F. Green
waiting for my flight to board.

How to explain the open-palmed
slapping in the chest, the pink

of my fingers holding a cold
ginger ale. Tonight, strapped in

our family's old gear, I remember
how as kids we tried to see

the pitch and buckle of waves
below us. How across the lake

our house winked, yellow swabs of light
building windows on our ice.

Dorothy Hamill Defends Her Vioxx Statement in Court

1: Claim

I've told this story before:
one woman, one paycheck,
just one testimony. That's the truth.
Doesn't matter who or what, except

one woman and one paycheck.
Maybe it's me, maybe not. Really
doesn't matter who or what—except
making a statement. I support that.

Maybe it's me, maybe not. Really,
the commercial, sir? Yes. I had to
make my statement: *I support that
product*. People trust me because I'm

the commercial, sir. Yes, I had to
move as I once did. My legs are
products. People trust me because I'm
famous. It's good news: now arthritics

move as I once did. My legs are
walking advertisements; bodies, my
fame. Oh, it's good news. Now arthritics,
they bend, fall like children. They're

walking advertisements, bodies. My

Cammi Granato On an Eight-Day Trip to China

China is not only a country, but what its cold
freezes rubber into – the puck split wonton

from its galvanized round. The coal-thick air
through surgical masks, Tony's distant voice

in the ear – *Don't deke. Bury it.*
Today the airplane throws meal trays

across the cabin, and before, a Chinese girl broke
my right fibula. We both play through

that pain easier, though, than the diagram
of his brain tumor in the *L.A. Times*,

the year in Concordia when the bank
account dipped like winter.

In those years, there was nothing for us
but a promise of pioneer gold in the Far East,

clean sheets of ice, and the slick tongue
of a stick flicking in the black.

That's how us Granatos do it, okay? Tony says
over the line. *We finish.*

words are nothing. Forget that they bend and fall. Like children, their pain travels from bone to heart.

Words are nothing. No, forget that testimony. The truth is, just one pain travels from bone to heart because I've told the story before.

2: Counterclaim

I've told that story before: pain travels from bone to heart as one. Just testimony? The truth is, words are nothing. No, forget that

pains travel from bone to heart, bend, fall like children. There, words are nothing. Forget that walking advertisement. Bodies? My,

they bend and fall like children. They're famous. It's good news. Now arthritics—walking advertisements, bodies—move as I once did. My legs are

famous. It's good news: now arthritics produce. People trust me because I move as I once did. My legs are the commercial, sir. Yes, I have to

Cammi Granato Carries the U.S. Flag, Closing Ceremonies, 2002

It is turning spring in Utah, the blue flax and zinnia crowning its arid valleys.

Four more years until that endless desert of Olympic ice can be reopened. Until then,

what to do but wait, endure the swiftening crossovers of turning older, the uncertainty

of thirty-four, when the bones aren't yet annealed but instead the hair turns and the gloves tighten.

For the last two weeks, I've thought these running salt flats could be home if not for the sulfurous lakes,

the bitterness of that soft, lustrous silver. How distant the promise to any prospector can be,

coming West with nothing but rock hammers, screens, a postcard memory of the plum sky above Lake Michigan.

produce. People trust me because I
make a statement; I support that
commercial, sir. Yes, I have to.
Maybe it's me, maybe not. Really

making a statement—I support that.
Doesn't matter who or what. Except
maybe it's me, maybe not. Really,
I'm one woman. One paycheck

doesn't matter. Who or what I accept
is just one truth. That's the testimony
of a woman whose one paycheck
has told this story before.

Cammi Granato on Marriage

The black city snow is still hard
in the parking lot. Five AM

and the half-lit rink breathes
whitely. Skate soles frozen,

the first shot shudders the glass.
How many of these places have I been,

heavy bags propped on shoulders,
the arena so cold breath steams the glass.

Some days the stick is slow, the sheet too wet.
Others the last shot doesn't come

and your best skates are dulled to the quick.
There you are no longer young,

the tighten and loose of lace hardening the palm.
The blisters that break into stones.

And there's nothing but you
and a net and the high glass.

Not what you change into, buttoning tight
pantsuits, the ring on its finger ice-bright.

Dorothy Hamill Gives Cammi Granato a Pair of Sea Opal Earrings

with a line from William Cowper

I sing the sofa (and the French hook). I, who lately sang arabesques and Ice Capades, now sing you. Do you wear the earrings I sent—the radiated drops, silver crotchets like commas in the lobes? I know you hate me—fierce against my action figure, product endorsements, pageboy hair. It’s twelve degrees colder where I work, but you have slick-knee *effacés* to rival mine. I’ve watched your shaded taps of goalposts and crossbars pre-game, your digs in the flash-frozen pond behind your family home. These gestures are mine, too—six of one, half-dozen of the mother who paid to teach us both how to skate backwards. Medals can’t fashion the silk knives in your shimmering ears. You did that with your stick, played forward from Providence to Nagano, Montreal to Salt Lake—sure in the knowledge that every woman is architect of her own rink. Tonight, I recline on my couch, bones croaking all thirty-plus years since that first gold. I hope you realize I made you what you love. That nothing worth its cut survives, and no one worth her seat takes the cushion.

Cammi Granato Gives the Color Commentary

At 34 Granato was cut from the Olympic team and hired to be their color commentator. That year the U.S. women suffered their most humiliating defeat ever in international competition.

In the box again – this time above the ice – and it’s like narrating memory. Turino laid out like a buffet, city of homes and espresso cafés, and me without my hollowed skates, a blade to wrap methodically while the crowd fierces through the walls. Except this year the puck slips beneath Gunn again and again and the black disc claps at center ice to the clash of Swedish sticks. In my black suit, I call each peppered crossbar, clean shoulder to the chest, and I can’t stop watching that college girl with the blonde ponytail who wears everything that used to be mine.

Notes and Acknowledgments

Dorothy Hamill was born July 26, 1956, in Chicago, Illinois, and grew up in Connecticut. She began skating at eight years old, demonstrating tremendous devotion to the sport. In 1976, she received the gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Innsbruck and placed first at both the U.S. and World Figure Skating Championships; she was only nineteen. She is credited with inventing the “Hamill camel,” a camel spin that turns into a sit spin, and sparking several fashion trends, including her signature pageboy haircut. At the top of her sport, Hamill turned professional in 1976 and performed on television, Broadway, and rinks and venues around the world. A former spokeswoman for the (now infamous) drug Vioxx, Hamill has written two autobiographies and worked extensively with many charities.

All of the poems in the “Dorothy Hamill” poems make use of inherited language, obstructions, restrictive forms, and/or Oulipean constraints.

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Skate or Die would not have been possible without the valuable suggestions & feedback of Angela Ball, Eric Flynt, Julia Johnson, Rhonda Lott, Allison Riddles, Jordan Sanderson, Lindsay Walker, Lynn Watson, & William Wright.

Special thanks to the editors of the following publications where some of the works collected here first appeared:

88: A Journal of Contemporary American Poetry: “Dorothy Hamill Interviews Herself”

Everyday Genius: “Dorothy Hamill Defends Her Vioxx Statement in Court”

Versions of the “Dorothy Hamill” series also appeared publicly and privately on my blogs, as well as in the full-length collection *Petticoat Government* (Gold Wake Press, 2011).

Notes and Acknowledgments

Cammi Granato was born on March 25, 1971, in Chicago, Illinois. The younger sibling of NHL player/coach Tony Granato, she is often considered the “female Wayne Gretsky.” She broke nearly every scoring record in women’s college hockey during her four years at Providence College, earning Player of the Year for three consecutive seasons. From 1990 to 2005, Granato played for (and later captained) the U.S. Women’s National Team. In 1998, she led the U.S. to a shocking win over rival Canada to earn Olympic gold in Nagano and then silver in Salt Lake City four years later. Before the 2006 Turino games, Granato was surprisingly cut from the Olympic team in favor of younger players. Since then, she has been serving as a color commentator for NBC’s Olympic and NHL television broadcasts. In 2008 she became the first woman to be enshrined in the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame, and in 2010, along with Angela James, she was one of the first two women inducted into the international Hockey Hall of Fame.

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Aethlon: “Cammi Granato’s Special Providence”; “Cammi Granato, Age Five: ‘I Hate Dorothy Hamill’”

Intentional Walk: “Cammi Granato on an Eight-Day Trip to China”; “Cammi Granato Gives the Color Commentary”; “Cammi Granato Carries the U.S. Flag, Closing Ceremonies, 2002”

Product: “Cammi Granato on Marriage”

Sports Literate: “Cammi Granato, Sister of Tony”

Stymie: “Cammi Granato as Mike Eruzione”

“Cammi Granato, Age Five: ‘I Hate Dorothy Hamill’” also appeared in *A Face to Meet the Faces: An Anthology of Contemporary Persona Poetry*, edited by Stacey Lynn Brown and Oliver de la Paz