

**REMEMBER ME
WHEN THIS YOU SEE**

by

Sheila Killingsworth, R.N., B.A.

THESIS

**Presented to the Faculty of
The University of Houston-Clear Lake
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

December, 1999

**Copyright 1999, Sheila Killingsworth*
All Rights Reserved***


**REMEMBER ME
WHEN THIS YOU SEE**

**by
Sheila Killingsworth**

APPROVED BY



Thomas McCall, Ph.D., Chair



John Gorman, Ph.D., Committee Member



Vivian Atwater, Ph.D., Committee Member



Howard C. Eisner, Ph.D., Associate Dean



Spencer McWilliams, Ph.D., Dean

DEDICATED

TO

NELSON J. RANDALL

1924 – 1998

FRANCIS MARION FRANK

1836 – 1919

ABSTRACT

REMEMBER ME WHEN THIS YOU SEE

**Sheila Killingsworth, M.A.
The University of Houston-Clear Lake**

Thesis Chair: Thomas McCall, Ph.D.

Imagine a world painted with colors not from the rainbow. Green is no longer the color of winter wheat against a gray sky. It is the color of putrescence. Rose does not blanket the horizon nor climb the trellis in front of your home. It is the color of epidemics – cholera, typhus. Van Gogh's purple irises are the worst. Purple knots the stomach into fear. Purple is the color of death waiting patiently in the corner of the room, or walking out the door with a glance over its shoulder.

To paraphrase Peter Shaffer in his closing lines from *Equus*: We cannot know what we do in that place, but we do ultimate and essential things. We stand in the dark place of suffering and search for a way of seeing, a way of knowing what dark is this. In the end, we can only pay it so much homage.

This thesis is an alternation of texts (original poems and stories) and images. The images are sometimes simply chosen, sometimes chosen and modified by computerized techniques, sometimes joined with a text by computerized over-laying. The first section, "Picture Writing," is the body of the work. The section, "Picture Windows," offers interpretive comments, sometimes explaining the "inspiration" of a particular segment of the work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PICTURE WRITING

Dear Friend Mary.	8
Introduction	9
The Quadrature of the Lune	14
A Pause for a Breather	17
Deaf Psyche	19
And the Policeman Brought Boxcars*	21
Six Persimmons	23
Collisions	24
Dien Bien Phu	31
All Hallows Eve	33
For Those of You	35
Junk Mail	36
Save the Last Dance	38
A Young Crane Steps Through A Marshy Field	39
Feral Traps	40
Aspirate	46
Kuota Moto to dream by the fire	47
After Her Stroke	50
Imaging the Waiting	53
Fry Baby in the Pan	56
The Poet Lin Bu Walks in Moonlight	60
To Dance From the Womb	61
Shock Room	64
Dear Parents	65
Dear Mary Anna	68
Life Support	70
Cancer Terreno	72

II. PICTURE WINDOWS

Bone Picker	74
Introduction	75
Dear Friend Mary	81
Quadrature of the Lune	82
A Pause for a Breather	83
Deaf Psyche; To Dance from the Womb.	84

TABLE OF CONTENTS

And the Policeman Brought Boxcars*	86
Six Persimmons; A Young Crane; The Poet Lin Bu	87
Collisions	88
Dien Bien Phu; All Hallows Eve	89
For Those of You	90
Junk Mail	91
Save the Last Dance	92
Feral Traps	93
Aspirate	94
Kuota Moto to dream by the fire	95
After Her Stroke	96
Imaging the Waiting	97
Fry Baby in the Pan	98
Shock Room	99
Dear Parents; Dear Mary Anna	100
Life Support; Carcer Terreno	101
Remember Me	102
III. WORKS CITED	103

I. PICTURE WRITING

.

.

**Images in this thesis
scanned, sized, color adjusted
and united
by Richard Neil Fiess**



Miss Mary Anna Savage
Fountain Green
Hancock County, Illinois

Dear Friend Mary,
Remember me when you see
Through many miles apart we be
For often I think of thee.

F.M. Frank
64th Illinois Volunteers
Camp Glendale, Mississippi

Introduction

The dusky hallway continues forever. Bracketed whale oil lamps cast gold medallions onto mahogany walls. A hissing from soft flames echoes silence, sinks into Persian carpet patterns. Burlled doors with brass handles line the corridor like patient sentinels.

This hallway is the threshold between "here" and "there." "Here" is the world of the ten o'clock news, waiting rooms, self-serve gas, stray cats, foot fungus, prom dresses, milk and dog food. "Here" is a continuous conversation of circumstances — conscious experience collated into photographs of emotional memory. "Here," action is inherently socio-verbal because an audience of self and others legitimizes the meaning of action. Intentions become a valid series of preceding circumstances. "Here" is also the place where the self's capacity to act can be lost, the opportunity denied. In the day to day "here," this loss and denial occurs when the socio-verbal audience no longer sanctions the acting self. Considered powerless, the isolated actor must then fill the void with a personal reinterpretation of intent, capacity, and opportunity discovered "there."

"There" is a magical place behind closed doors where the body cannot go. "There," the capacity to act is redefined and a new space of opportunity created. "There," action identifies and judges itself, and its thoughts. Words carry power. When the right word or group of words is spoken, a new universe of others is created. The necessary and desired personal effects are achieved. "There," the

self acts as a self-determining moral agent, not as one whose behavior is explained causally. The self is always whole enough to act. Space always contains opportunity.

"Here" and "there" are not mutually exclusive. They are dependent upon each other for survival. Separation demands a mind-body split that cannot be a self-sustaining performance. At best, this split is difficult to control over an extended period of time. At worst, short term survival comes into question. Yet circumstance often requires either "here" or "there" to take the lead. Some situations, such as cancer, war, and death, are never fully recognized "here," if at all, by self and audience. This is when "there" becomes an essential existence.

The brass handle yields with a faint click. The door silently swings inward. I step into the room on my left. The walls are a floor to ceiling graffiti of horizontal cursive writing and vertical hieroglyphic script. Pale greens and tans punctuate red and black. Reed penned curves and lines teem with religious hymns, love poetry, royal inscriptions, and narrative texts. The room is a scriptorium, the center, the "house of life." A man sits cross-legged on a low dais at the epicenter of the stone floor. Stacks of papyrus scrolls lie within his arm's reach.

"There," world-making language is not unlike method-acting. Both seek the goal of creating an unbreakable unity between human experience and its external

expression. Both involve the same basic steps where self-determination is frequently interrupted by serendipity. In other words, no matter how adept the method-actor's performance, the drama depends upon creativity's free-will being allowed to roam as if unhindered. This is particularly true of creative writing where the actor must also write the play.

Before I open a door, I must decide who I am – the person I will meet in the room. Next I must decide where I am – the setting for the person I meet in the room. This new self-awareness accompanies a re-evaluation of what is true and what is false independent of any outside or prior judgment. This is extremely important, not only for sustained inner consistency, but also for plausibility. The person I meet may be of unique importance, but he is still adapted only to the limited environment of a room. Somehow he must provide a universality of outlook. The following steps address this issue.

What is the person in the room doing there? What is his intent and action? What happened before I entered the room? What given circumstances determined the overall textural mood or emotional memory? This is possibly the most detached part of the process. Prior knowledge is allowed to assume its own form and decide its own existence. The person in the room is then free to express his once submerged thoughts and feelings. I am merely an observer, an audience that passively partakes in the ritual of performance then records what is seen and felt and heard.

The man wears only a short linen skirt pulled taut across his lap. He bows over the papyrus resting on this improvised table. His skin is a light sienna. His black hair is close-cropped. He has the physique of one caught between youth's muscular strength and wisdom's crinkled skin. A few moments pass before the man raises his head, pauses, then intensifies his gaze. His eyes invite me to sit on the low stool placed before him. His mouth hints a smile.

We do not create people we do not wish to meet. We do not create places where we do not wish to go. Creative writing is not necessarily therapeutic. The writer is not automatically exorcised of his demons nor freed of his fantasies. In fact, the act of formal expression simply makes the created people and invented places more readily available until the writer finds himself living out the situation. The knowledge gained about himself often changes the writer irredeemably.

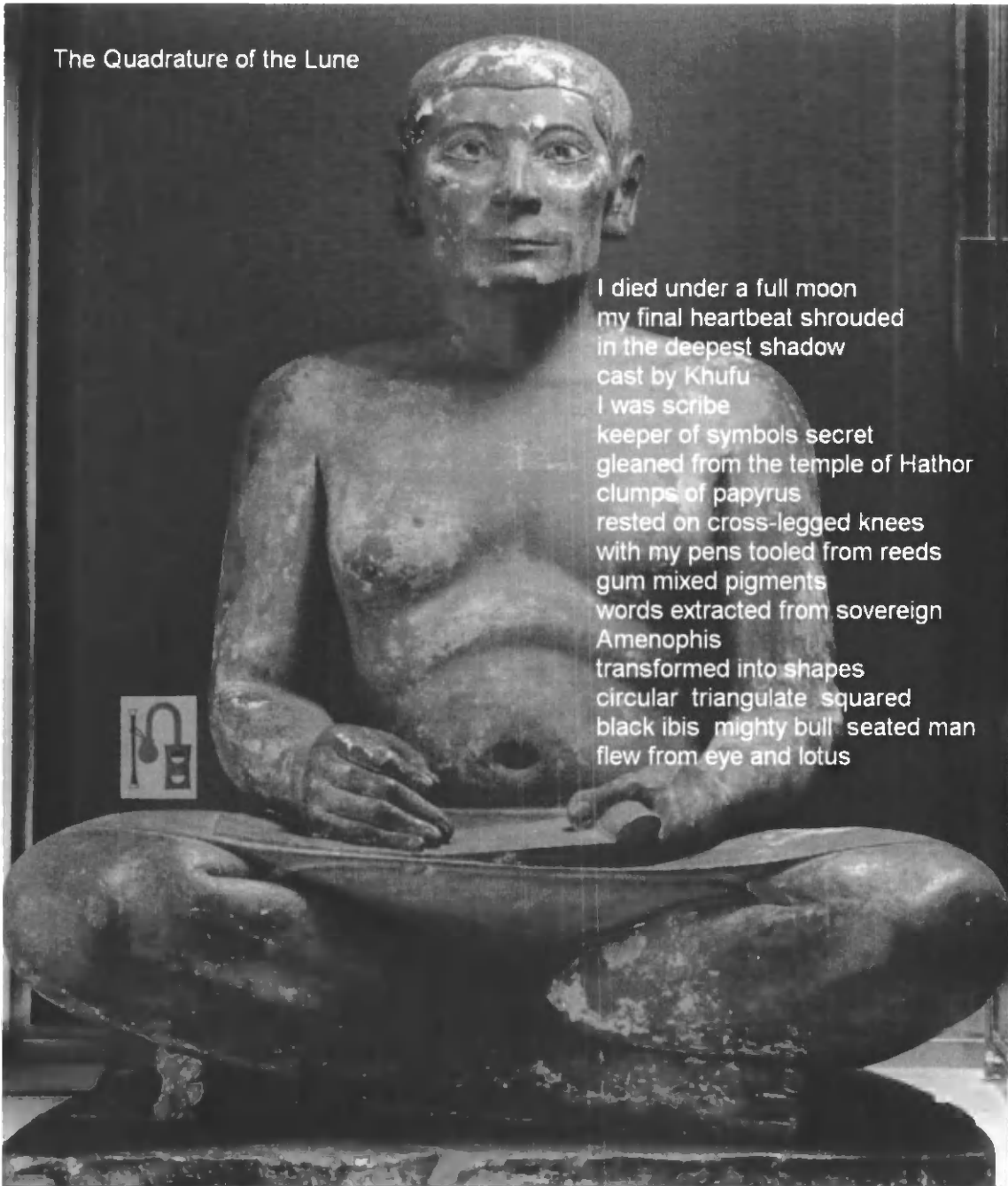
So why create? In particular, why create situations from people in pain and from places of suffering?

The mind naturally wants to expand into the limitless where something transcendent can be experienced – something never wholly comprehensible. This expansion is thoughtfulness. Something created from this place of beauty need only be illustrated. Suffering creates a circumscribed chaos proportionate in degree to the amount of pain experienced. An urgent need to create a new system of formal order arises – one detached yet more knowledgeable. The greater the need, the greater the insecurity. The greater the insecurity, the greater

the creative effort. Suffering must be re-explained. The forgetfulness it generates, the inability to remain completely aware of being human, must be drowned. It is not the suffering that must be destroyed by creative effort. It is suffering's forgetfulness, its threat of universal disintegration, that must be explained away.

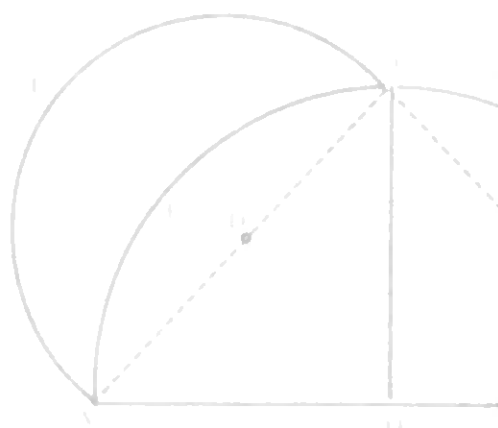
The scribe before me sets aside his painted papyrus and wipes his reed pen dry. With a soft, low voice, he begins his narrative of a past time lost over four millennia ago.

The Quadrature of the Lune



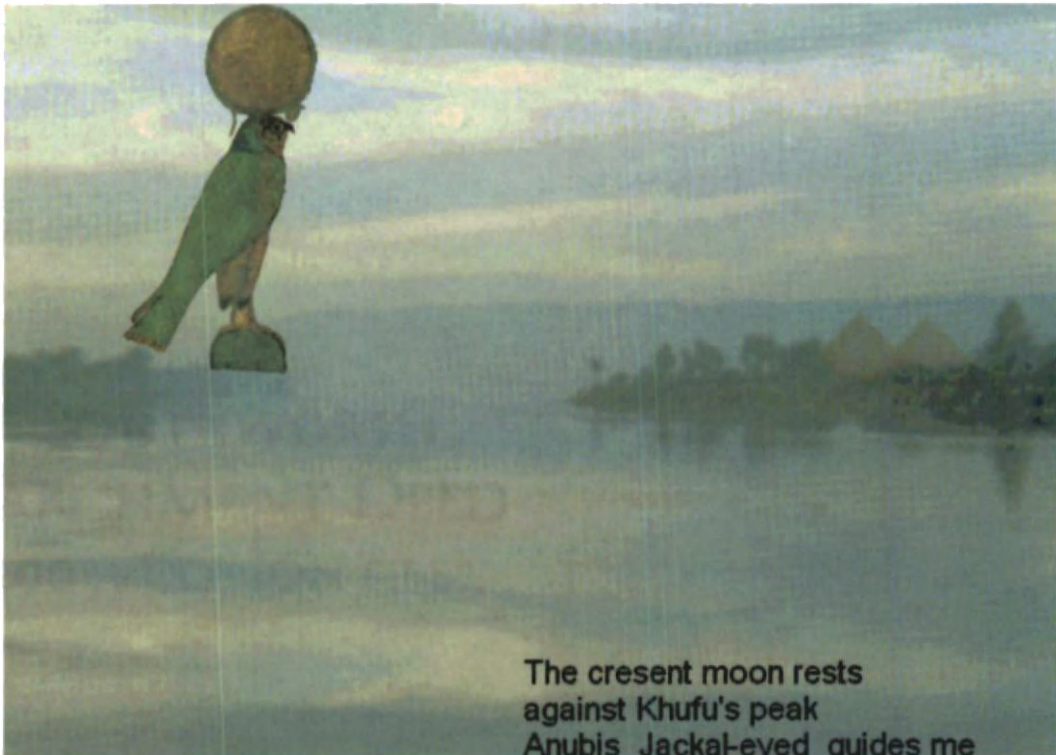
I died under a full moon
my final heartbeat shrouded
in the deepest shadow
cast by Khufu
I was scribe
keeper of symbols secret
gleaned from the temple of Hathor
clumps of papyrus
rested on cross-legged knees
with my pens tooled from reeds
gum mixed pigments
words extracted from sovereign
Amenophis
transformed into shapes
circular triangulate squared
black ibis mighty bull seated man
flew from eye and lotus





The sun semi-circles the horizon
 climbs Khufu's edge
 temple priests pack me
 in limestone salt hot sand
 my mind drops through nostrils
 once filled with smells of women
 I eviscerate into canopic jars
 flood waters recede slowly
 silting me with fragrant resins
 myrrh and cinnamon
 the lune empties and belly-fills
 twice before I am annointed
 with unguents and amulets
 fine linen wraps leather





The crescent moon rests
against Khufu's peak
Anubis Jackal-eyed guides me
Eater snaps crocodile teeth
kneads lion claws
my stilled heart balances
one plucked ostrich feather
Thoth dips his reed pen into pigment
Horus turns toward Osiris
and I the lune vanish
beneath
the Lake of Natron



A Pause for a Breather

**auto accident 16 y/o WF no seat belt pupils fixed
and dilated pulse thready respirations shallow . . .**

**Now at rest
murmurs from wired
breasts rise barely
fall in sinless ecstasy
Satin hair blood-tumbles
black a sudden horror fingers
not intending intimate touch
intrude on private thought
Pill-roll the room clean
of life's slow escape
Can we move away
any way
this is not the place to be
Karen Alone
shadows spill from the stretcher head
waiting for your heart to stop this**

. . . pronounced someone's child body released . . .

Deaf Psyche

Statue-still
 upon a marbled floor
 you wait
 arm curved above bowed head
 equipoised
 one knee bent in demi-point

The dusenwind disturbs your tulle
 torch-lit sight dims
 as heartbeat drums sail
 on oared ripples
 waves of gooseflesh song swell
 his seduction
 your sacrifice
 begin the dance

My gnarled fingers work needled
 thread in contretemps
 autumnal memory tapestries
 the age when I
 was danseuse étoile
 and he flew to me
 wings beating to touch
 my soul with sound

His every whisper en l'air
 chassé ciseaux
 couru jeté ballon
 Psyche brisé battement
 piqué pirouette
 fouetté en tournant
 arabesque par terre
 coda

The vernal shroud compassed
 lamplit hands
 drop
 to wash and clothe
 this carrion body
 the night
 aged

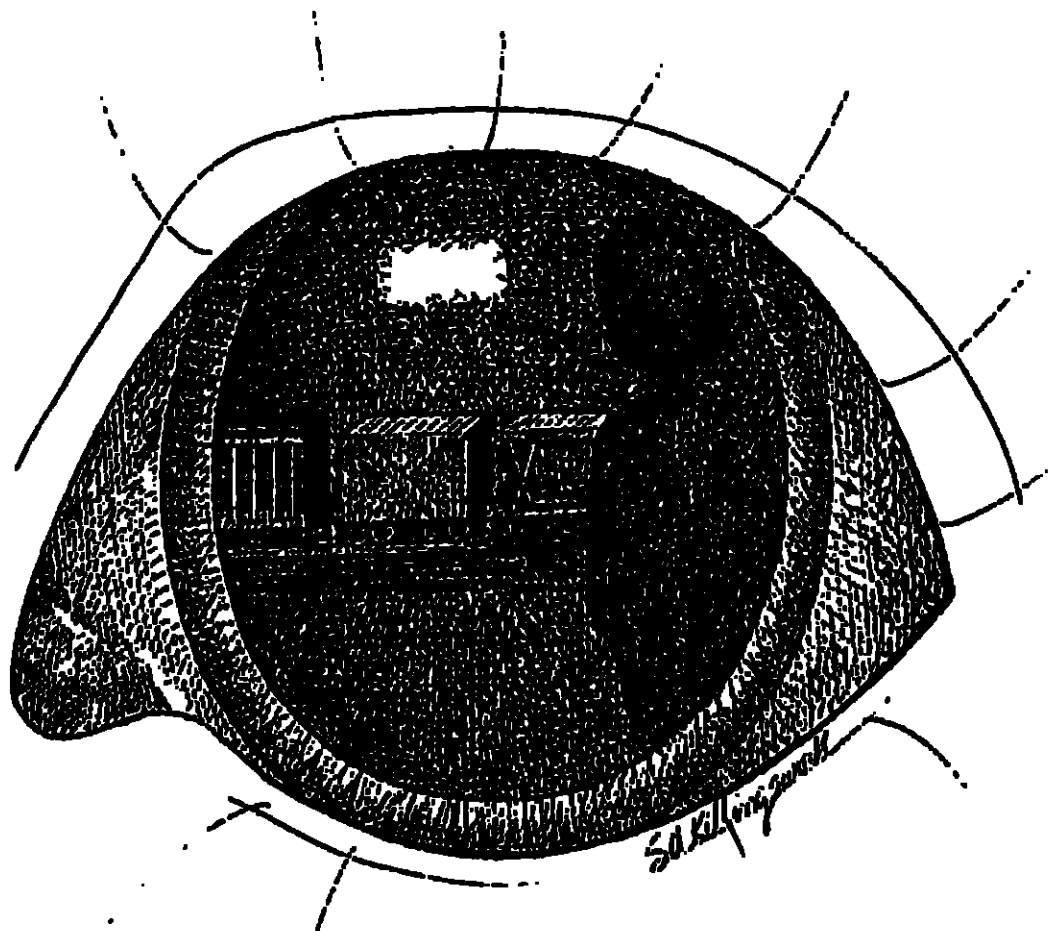


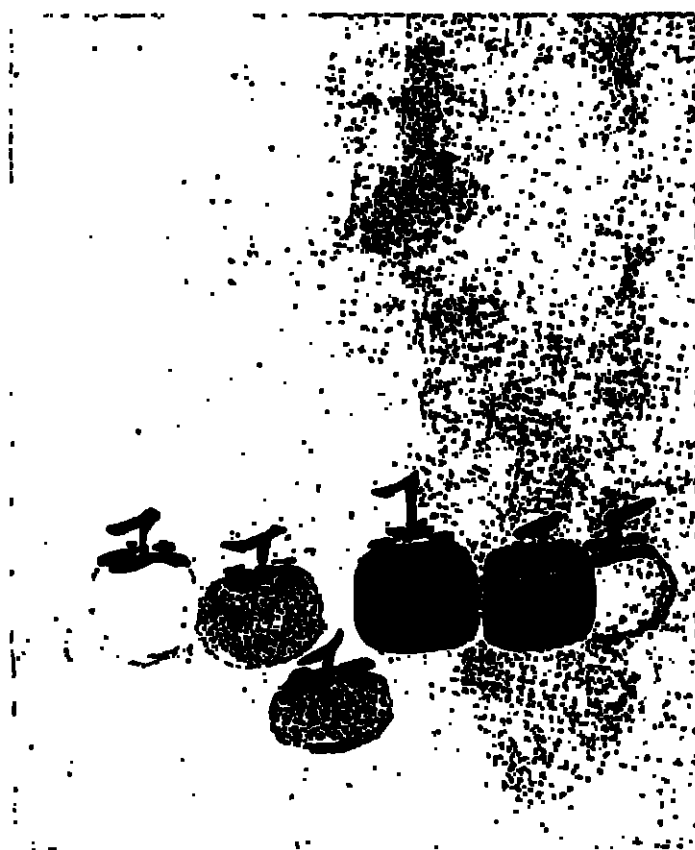
And the Policeman Brought Boxcars*

Deaf hearts pulsate the track
 venous thirst steams to a stop
 stretchers unload bundles
 conductors triage pain
 syringes document passengers
 departures pay at the gate
 A blue-flesh pushcart races
 on an airless rail
 into a silent sanctuary
 of viewing
 white-habit readies revival
 sees
 acolyte kneel at the font
 watches
 priest bow with visionary
 scope
 to peer
 into a retinal infant soul
 of loaded boxcars miniature vessel
 boxcars
 cross-switched
 the darkened spur

*boxcars – appearance of retinal arteries due to clotted blood – occurs postmortum, ante rigor mortis

*boxcars – double sixes on the first throw in “craps” – a game of chance





Six persimmons
broken from a crooked bough
fall
into the mist
cool breezes
drift
with raindrops

Mu Qi

Collisions

The Booster Club President was twenty minutes late for the first cheerleader parents' meeting. Kay and I knew no one except each other. We waited quietly at school desks. Kay's eyes suddenly shifted, then widened until , her eyebrows disappeared under her bangs. I turned toward the classroom door. This was the Booster Club President? This was a Cheerleader Mom? Her bulk waddled to the front of the class, leaned into the teacher's oak desk. The desk slipped backwards, then counterweighed.

"This meeting is called to order." Her voice shoved its way down the aisles. "We need to talk money. Camp is fast approaching."

I couldn't budge my eyeballs. Her lack of body contour fascinated and disgusted me. Cheekbones, jawline, breasts, waist, buttocks, knees, ankles – everything buried under an avalanche of flesh. Pudgy, ringless fingers turned dividers in a three ring binder. Her cheerleader daughter must have resulted from artificial insemination.

"Camp practice begins in four weeks. The estimated cost for everything involved is \$600, payable by the first day of summer practice. We have fund-raisers planned. We also have a coach for the camp dance. His fee is forty

dollars per girl, payable tonight. The treasurer will break down the costs for the group."

Treasurer Mom stood up, "Welcome, Rookie Moms and Vets." She counted out stapled packets then handed a batch to the first person in each row. "I think this breakdown is pretty self-explanatory." We each took a packet then passed the rest to a mom behind us. Treasurer Mom continued, "Just want to remind everyone about the ten dollar dues. I need this payment tonight. Participation in this booster club is mandatory."

President Mom interrupted, "That fee does *not* include the parent polo shirts. Every parent is required to wear a parent polo shirt at all school functions. Plus the tumbling coach's fee is thirty five dollars per month."

Treasurer Mom continued, "You can include this with your dues. I checked into the camp deposit. Need to send a check by the 14th."

President Mom interrupted, "Add another fifty dollars per girl to tonight's payments."

I didn't dare look at Kay. I'd lose it and be sent to the principal's office.

Fund-raiser Mom took the floor. "We have a garage sale scheduled in the school parking lot one week from Saturday."

President Mom interrupted, "Make sure you arrive no later than 7:30 in the morning for set up. Have all items clearly priced and initialed."

I raised my hand. "I can get you a car wash at K-Mart." President Mom looked me over and smiled until chubby cheeks squeezed her nose. My mouth

opened to continue. Her mouth moved faster than mine. "The Board makes all fundraising decisions."

I wished that bloated woman's jaws wired shut.

The school parking lot broiled under a hazy sky. Garage sale junkies arrived faster than we could set up our tables. A young woman with four small boys wanted my old Nintendo. I couldn't make change. No one could make change. President Mom wasn't there with the money box. Kay and I scrambled, passed dollars and quarters back and forth, tore off masking tape tags as fast as we could. President Mom owned the garage sale binder meant for the tags. We stuck pieces of masking tape to pieces of money and shoved all into our pockets.

A cherry red Mustang plowed into the parking lot and pulled up short of a clothes rack. A petite redhead in a lime green halter top and blue jean short-shorts bounced out of the passenger seat. "I got my pictures back! Anyone wanna see my pictures?" They may as well have been issues of *American Cheerleader*. This girl had the perfect body, perfect teeth, perfect skin, perfect look of an All American.

"Cindie get back here! I need the card table and lawn chair unloaded now!" commanded President Mom. Cindie's perfectly curled, copper pony tail swung an about face.

President Mom's Mustang visibly groaned as she hoisted her ponderous

body out of the saddle. Something was seriously amiss. She wore an orange flowered, sleeveless muumuu. Bright lemon terrycloth slip-ons covered her feet. The pale spread of arm flab destroyed any illusion of "kissed by the sun."

Cindie placed the table and chair one mom down from me. Cheerleaders gathered to giggle at her pictures.

Treasurer Mom approached President Mom as she plopped the binder and money box onto the table. Obviously not in a good mood, Treasurer Mom barked, "You're over an hour late. How do you expect us to make change and keep track of stuff without the box and binder?"

I couldn't keep up with the argument. A man wanted to haggle over my battery tester. I finally agreed to \$3, down from \$4.

My attention returned to the two moms. President Mom's arm jiggled at the lawn chair. "It's your job to sit there and collect the money." She glared eye to eye at Treasure Mom.

Treasurer Mom's finger jabbed at orange blossoms. "Fat lady, shove it up your ass!" Treasurer Mom made a quick run for the safety of her own table.

A shocked woman, arms loaded with jeans and T-shirts, stopped like the proverbial deer caught in headlights. President Mom snapped Cindie to attention. "Help me with this stuff." Cindie beamed a smile, then took the clothes from the woman's arms. President Mom wedged her frame between the arms of the aluminum chair. Green and white webbing sagged as muumuu blobs poked through the spaces. One pair of jeans lacked a tag. "Three

dollars," she demanded from the woman then turned to Cindie. "No tag makes it ours. Not going to waste my time hunting the owner."

I unloaded my pockets, unwadded masking tape from bills, and counted my take. I sneaked \$25 into my left pocket, then stuck pieces of masking tape to ones and coins. I clutched \$6.85 in my fist and presented it to President Mom. "Here's my money so far. Every penny is tagged." I wasn't about to let her steal from me.

I wished "fat lady" into a four-by-six maximum security prison cell, without bread and water.

I pushed a wobble-wheeled shopping cart through the store. The packet from the Booster Club meeting contained a list of essential camp items, all purchased from Wal-Mart, please, so the colors will match. Purchased from Wal-Mart, please, so everything is alike. Food topped the list – granola bars, Ranch-style Pringles, Blow Pops, six raspberry flavored bottles of Wal-Mart water. Raspberry? Why not kiwi-strawberry? Or peach-apricot? What if my daughter didn't like raspberry?

I worked down the list into the clothes department. Panties for all shapes of female butt filled the racks and shelves. No red panties to wear under red bloomers hung among the lingerie. A full wall was devoted to sports bras empty of their contents. Black and white posed no problem. Red was nonexistent. My basket wobbled and weaved its way to the biker shorts. I waded in circles

around racks of spandex thighs. Nothing yellow lived in that pond, but I found plenty of teal. That Booster Club had sent me after cheerleader snarks.

Hair accessories and personal items bottomed the list. I started my run at the deodorant aisle, then rounded the corner into Hair Care. Another cart smashed into mine and sent it into Feminine Products. I should have known. President Mom. "Sorry," she snapped. "I'm late picking Cindie up from tumbling. You shopping for camp, too?" My mouth opened to reply. She made an abrupt U-turn – a barrel of flesh on a Wal-Mart rampage.

I wished that woman's inflated mass into the automotive department. A Hell's Angel on a Harley lurked near the brake fluid.

A cherry red Mustang rushed past as I backed my car out of Wal-Mart's space. I slammed on the brakes. Another unavoidable rendezvous with President Mom. I pulled behind her at the parking lot's exit. Its light turned green. I was amazed how quickly that Mustang galloped, weighed down as it was by President Mom's elephantine body.

President Mom gunned the Mustang, ran the Beltway light, rammed into the front of a dual-cabbed truck. A streak of red flew backend over front. Crashed upside down. Scraped the pavement. Slid into the curb.

I jumped out of my car. Ran. Stopped.

Shattered glass. Twisted fender. Cherry metal scraps. Plastic Wal-Mart bags. Candybars. Panties. Bottled water. Pairs and pairs of yellow spandex

bikers. Red sports bras. Everything heaped and scattered like trash at the dump.

Tires spinning. No windshield. Roof. Passenger window crunched. Powder blue polyester crammed. Way too small.

Never wished for this . . . Not this . . . No . . . Not . . . This

•

April 30, 1954
Dien Bien Phu
Indochina

Étienne. Ami. Comrade. This valley was once so beautiful. The sun transformed surrounding hills into a world of shifting greens. Rice paddies tended by a graceful people rippled under endless blues. Monkeys, birds, insects filled palm tree clusters with sound. The world is no more. It is dark. We are encircled by human-wave assaults. A ceaseless barrage of artillery entombs us. Monsoon rains drown us in our trenches. Our strongholds are blood-soaked piles of rubble strewn with the dead. Thousands, Étienne. Thousands. Légionnaire. Viet Minh. Parachutists. *The horror is in the smell.* And night is the worst. The dead haunt the dark with the odor of rotting slaughter. Their sweet stench fills us with fear, possesses us, prepares us for nothing. The full moon shines through mist. I can barely see you near the planes's wreckage. Your bloated arm, outstretched, beckons me. Your blind one-eyed stare accuses. Please, Étienne. The end is near. We are all dead men. Soon I will waft through this valley. We both will perfume hell. As of now, the fear of you is in me. How can I keep it from possessing me? Marcel



All Hallows Eve

**We were as pagans then
wanderers in harvest fields
prairie wheat
elm-bordered corn
players of hide 'n seek
with a one-eyed tabby
who blended
into rusted car parts
dumped
near a sandy creek
We practiced search and catch
with POW jars
and firefly stars
suspended in skeletal lilacs**

**It was Samhain festival
that eve of the year
ancient bonfires
on darkened hilltops
frightened evil spirits
lit the homeward way
for dead soul visitors
We renewed ancestral laws
returned herds to tenured land
divined our marriage to fate**

**A daemon invoked
All Saints Day
It was war then
hobgoblins haunted
the belly
of a jungle scorched dragon
cricket stridulations mingled
with distant bombrumbling
lightening tracers
from rice paddy perimeters
briefly bared
rain-pocked heaven**

Our boots were captured by mud
slurp-sucking
like bullfrogs after a mosquito meal
blood stained uniforms hung
from claymore shoulders
shriveled into a wrinkled mass
Fear crouched in spider holes
leaped
from silver stars

Some called it Tet
that eve
we became cave dwellers
faces lit by tallow candles
our hands paint pictures
scripture
frozen on a black stone wall
We are hooded chanters now
to a god
who never created
tunnel rats

For Those of You

**As you enter the sickroom
note the deliberation between bed
and bedside
the weighing of words with pounds into kilograms
the envisioning of blood and bone
can it all be made benign
before he wanes as worn as the red
eviscerated
chair
in this room**



Junk Mail

L. L. Bean lambswool fleece
 silk Nieman Marcus scarves
 Calvin Klein Levi Strauss
 Sam Walmart buried in heaps
 of Lucite stains Damark deals
 deflated Discount Tires
 Eddie Bauer are you there
 among photos pastoral
 occupants Glad Bagged
 by anonymous hands

II

Hungry Man devours
 Victoria's Secret envy
 mouths air brushed nipples
 hidden in Lean Cuisine
 Chanel Bare Essentials
 Academy camouflage Gerber knives
 double-ought buck shred
 split fryer thighs
 misplaced children persons
 into recycle trash

III

slanted rain carrion hunters
 newsprint rot lidless cans
 Target child crumpled
 in Burger King uneaten
 Tonka truck rust undone Tinkertoys
 Have you seen me
 Fisher-Price My First Barbie
 one grade school grimace
 dumped
 by Natures Own

Save The Last Dance

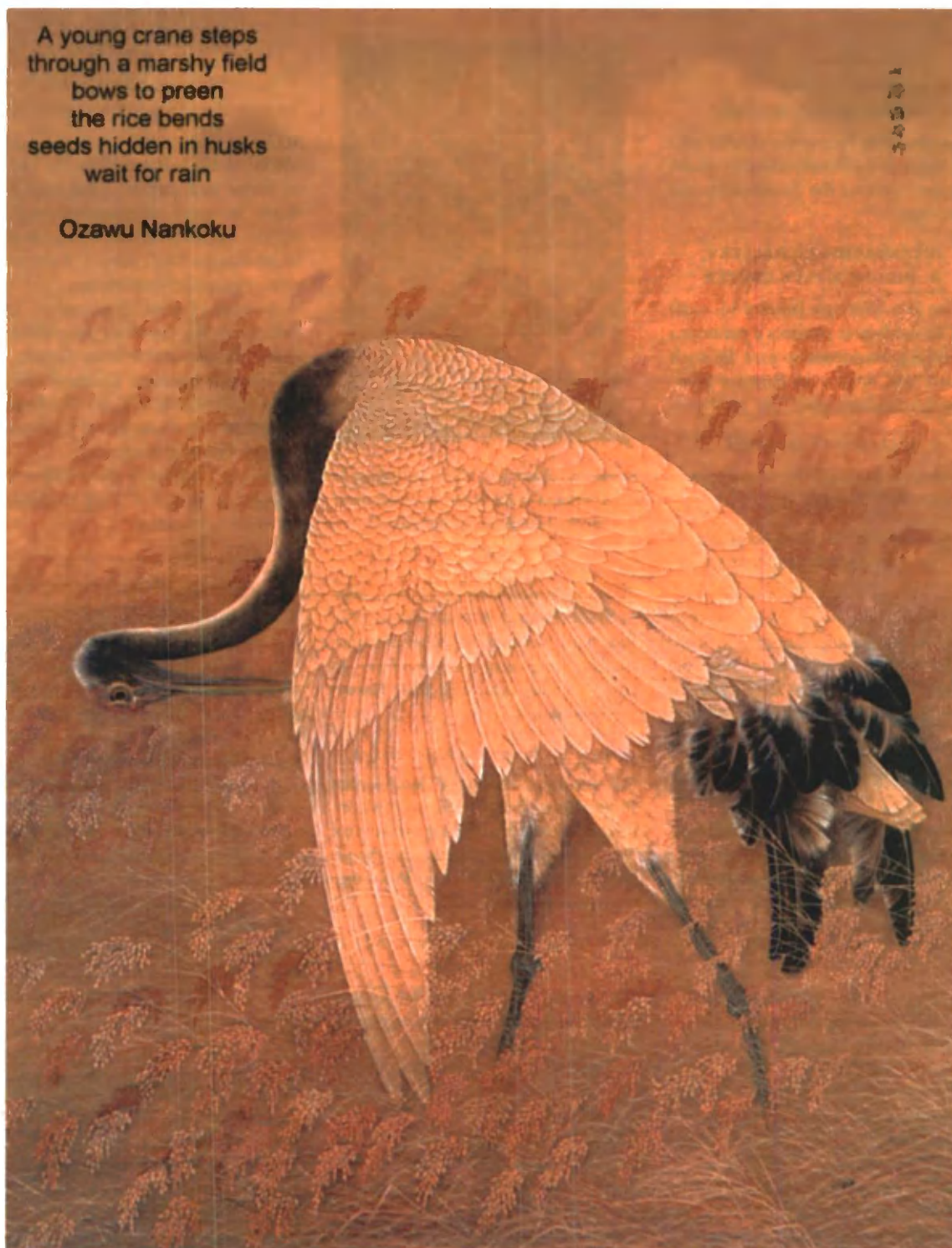
**It was David Allan Coe night at Gilley's
and he coke-eyed serenaded
smoke long-necks a crowd
humping a mechanical bull
Nothing was Sacred
not Linda Lovelace not Anita Bryant
not tight-cinched halter-topped girls
hugging saddle bag purses
No one eyed what spurred the frenzy
too much drink sex
maybe Coe lulled
by a dancing band of drones
But she spooked
And her lover maddened
maddened enough to chute
her into a highway stampede**

**She ran stretchered
captured by hands ripping
her clothes stabbing
with needles
She lolled her head in side-step
bones crunched
with unanesthetized screams**

**A still moment for death please
while we gape
at perfectly sculpted burial mounds
left behind
by some forgotten plastic surgeon**

A young crane steps
through a marshy field
bows to preen
the rice bends
seeds hidden in husks
wait for rain

Ozawu Nankoku



Feral Traps

Don't move. Hold very, very still. Breathe slowly. I mean no harm. Let me explain why I'm the one here. Just don't move.

It is not my fault. I had nothing to do with this. It is his hog trap. Not mine. He is the hunter. Not me. It is always hunting season. He did leave for another hunt. He is the one you want.

I was here before. Remember? I drove his green pickup to the cattle tank. Dawn. Bloodsun broke the horizon. Trapped heat radiated from limestone. I hoped it would be cooler. Remember? I wore jeans, white sleeveless shirt, hair bound under a John Deere cap. Sweat pooled in secret creases, rolled into the small of my back. I knew you had been there. You embedded your hog smell and hog prints into the mud at the bottom of the tank. Cattle don't come this far anymore. Heat desiccates their buffalo and grama grasses.

I climbed into the bed of the truck. Looked for you. Bloodsun grew into full circle. Remember? I drank from a Gatorade bottle. Mockingbirds imitated boundaries. Quail whistled for covey. Jackrabbit raised onto haunches, cocked ears. Cedar berries, wild grapes drought-plunked to the ground. Jackrabbit waited for pecan-pop.

Don't move. Don't move. Come no closer. Back bristle. I had to do this. He told me to. He left instructions. Then he was gone.

I watched him build his hog trap last week. Before he left for the other hunt. Heavy 9 gauge chain link. Measure and cut. Measure and cut. Four foot poles. Brackets and bolts. Until he had a perfect 4 x 8 rectangular cage. Push-open, hinge-spring doors at each end. Push-open, hinge-spring center door with small center hole. Galvanized pins for locks.

What did you want me to do? I only went to his workshop to tell him . . . do you dream? . . . the waking dreams? Silent stalkers. Promisers of other worlds. They break from cover and beckon. They look at me. Look like me. He won't hear about it. Doesn't want his workshop disordered. Turns away. Measure and cut. Measure and cut.

I can't quit the story now.

I am a small child. Streets are dark. No moon. No stars. Houses with faint aglow-eyes vision behind drawn lids. I push a doll carriage as fast as I can. That old woman flies through the sky. Chases me. Steel hair wraps around her sackcloth dress. Thick cotton stockings billow. She dumps buckets of school glue. Screams at me in razors. I don't understand. Two dollies gape at me from the carriage. I've never seen naked before. I don't know where I live.

I looked for you. Half-dissected oaks exposed arteries, tendons against a blank sky. Leathered bark peeled back in sections. Wisps of foliage shrouded insect eyes. Black oak wilt metastasized from heartwood to brain. Acorns

rooted up, excised for examination. Only cedars, junipers transplant without rejection. Their taproots bore into bone bedrock, suck marrow pockets.

You left no hog tracks from the tank. I climbed down from his truck bed. Sun-heat made his tailgate an iron set on delicate. My Gatorade bottle dropped slosh-clunk into the dust. Earth's parch-cracked lips mouthed rivulet condensation. Thin mud formed on the bottle's downside. Black ant zig-zagged towards the water-stain. I bent over slowly. Picked up the bottle. Rubbed thumbtip along its side. Rainy-slick. Rainy-slick. Maybe you hid in scrub-thickets down by the wash.

Before he left, he sat at the kitchen table in his black, square-toe boots, wear-lightened jeans, olive green T-shirt, a hole in the left armpit. He readied his 12 gauge for the other hunt. He broke open the barrel, checked for shells. Snapped it back. He swabbed down the barrel with cleaning rod and nitro solvent. Checked the mechanism for dirt. A few drips of oil here and here. He sighted out the window. Lay his shotgun carefully into its case. He stacked boxes of # 9 shot face forward on the table.

I fished bacon out of the pan with fork-hooks. Broke an egg into the grease. The yolk ruptured, ran over the edge of the white. Not right. I scraped it out of the grease. Broke another egg into the pan. The yolk held. He wants his yolks in the center, whole, cooked just the right runny, cooked one at a time.

He set the game plan. Detailed it for me on a yellow legal pad.

Drive my truck to the cattle tank. Check the tank for hog signs.

Drive my truck to the south rise. Head southeast for the grove of oak and pecan.

Check for hog signs there. The hog run heads southwest towards the wash.

Place my trap near the hog run. Bait one end with a 50# bag of feed corn.

Set the doors open with the pins. Check my trap every dawn and dusk.

Keep my trap baited. Get the hogs used to feeding and going into my trap.

After three days, pull all of the pins. Hogs push in. Doors snap shut.

Only piglets fit through the center. The sows are locked away in one end of my trap.

Back my truck up to the piglet end of my trap. Reset the door pins at the sow end.

Climb onto my trap. Run the sows out with my cattle prod.

Climb into my truck's bed. Haul my trap and piglets into the bed.

Cattle prod the sows away from my truck. Climb into my truck's cab.

Leave.

The story won't quit now.

I awake to spasm-coughs. Blood spatters onto my white night dress.

Breasts heave like small islands in a volcanic sea. Consumption. A shadow passes before the oil lamp on the oak washstand. He's in my room pacing. He mumbles to himself about harnessing the black gelding to the black tasseled

carriage. He stops. Opens a door in the wall. His framed likeness hangs from chimney brick. He wears his favorite blueserge suit, seated, stiff, posed. He turns to me. He wants me behind that door with him. Forever possessed.

I baited his trap last dusk. Removed the pins just like he said. I found you on my way back, as the truck crossed the rise. I stopped. Watched. You were gathered snout-out like a wagon train. Your babies huddled in the middle. Three coyotes circled slowly, closer, closer. Two of you snout-charged. One coyote flew into the darkening sky. He thud-fell to the ground. His muzzle back-twisted over his flank. Two coyote shot twelve feet out. He stagger-stumbled. Blood dropped from his testicles. Three coyote crouched, backed away haunch first. Your small, dark sow-eyes turned towards him.

What can he know of you beyond the trick-trap, the cattle prod squeal-screams? What can he know of desire beyond belly-fill and propagation? What can he know of waking dreams, the seduction of visions, the promises of a new nature? You root up waking dreams with grasshoppers and grubworms. You find waking dreams hidden in rock crevices, crunch them in your jaws with snakes and lizards. Does he know sows add up their sufferings, consume their waking dreams?

You thought I was him. Grunted softly among yourselves. Made nocturnal plans. Your babies were instructed. Don't go through the center. Don't be afraid. Fool him from the wrong end of his trap. And when his truck

stops. And when he steps out. And when he looks to see what is wrong. You snout-charge down the rise. Thud-crunch him into sinew and bone. Root-dig him into dust and rock.

Don't move. Don't bristle. Don't shift weight to shoulders and neck.

I move slow-quiet. Reset the pins. Free your babies. I wear a sow's head too. Crawl into his chain link coffin. His promise of cattle prod salvation. Crouch down until waking dreams brain-break.

My eyes gaze to the side and behind. Everything is sharper, clearer now. The air is golden. Swirls of heat eddies suspend glitter-dust. I twist my ears to the right. I hear black snake. Its scales crackle-glide over the ground. Grasses rasp-rub together as it passes. I smell a human. Sweat-salt mixed with sour, soap-bitters, acrid citrus. The others move towards the wash. I lean against his trap. Rub flank bristles back and forth. Back and forth. We will root-nest in scrub-thicket. Dream away the heat. And when the moon casts deep shadows, we will grunt softly to our babies. Tell them of coyote, and lizard, and acorn. And of him. I raise my small, dark sow-eyes. My snout quivers. Vulture hovers in cloudless silence. One coyote's tart-sweetness rides the heat upward.

Aspirate

In the name of the mother
and of the son
and of the holy fate

Temptation spoke
intoxicated whispers
Open wide my lamb
take eat
taste true innocence

Swiftly toddled untied shoes
ring around rainbow posies
falling down falling down
into the lodge of the quick the dead
into ashes everlasting
Magdelene
cries out to the perished phone
prays for air before an expired tire
pleads forgiveness from a graceless stranger
reaches for salvation frantic finger
jammed
against messenger-intruder

Take from the holiest
that which steals away sins
grant us such peace

Now cradling the rag doll
with dark button eyes
Martha slowly fondles
a red toy ball
Lazarus leans forward
with a final exhale
McGill forceps hang
from his flaccid hand

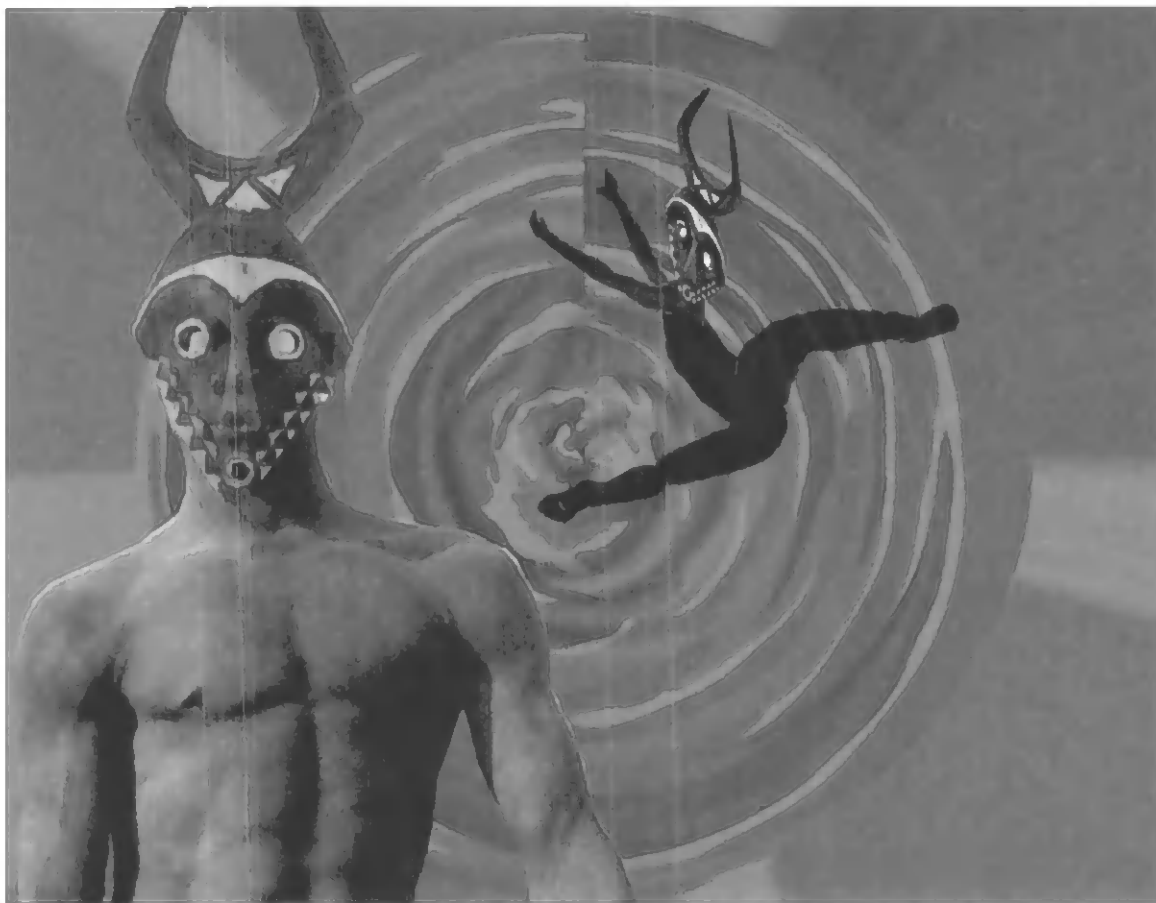


**Kuota Moto
to dream by the fire**

**Dancers pace plié
chassé pas de chat
drum rhythms
quiet and quicken
Mau Mau masks reflected
in fiery visions**

**Mount Kirinyaga arcs
over blackwater fever trees
pas aller simba kali
cloaked in shaman skin
sheathed paws silent ciseaux
uncloak from acacia shadow
tussock grass
en l'air dik-dik dreams
into ungulate antelope wildebeest
marabou soar springbok jeté
black mamba sway
Savanna embers
swirl and unswirl
butterflied baobab fouetté
winged sighs
beating and unbeating
sun and moon flames
thrust across sky
clouds plunge to earth
drumfire flashes thunderclap whirls
gourd rattle winds
shake and unshake
the mbira plucked spirits
dance with fire**

**The new sun burns deep
where firebirds fall
No pipe purifies
gazelle and hartebeest
so fated
No drum bears force
of flight
nor endures the lament
of a leopard caged**



Deaf, mute, blind

A stroke has rendered me absent

Find myself silent

*In a night
of eternal
length*

*The world I
thought
was mine*

Has been lost

*Sad memories, colors, sounds
Slip unsummoned in and out*



After Her Stroke

She sleeps alone
gowned
jailed between rails
and starched percale
her mind mumbling memories
reawakened
in looking glass eyes

not the first secret bleed
but the scarlet throat of tanager
song
the vermilion brush of speechless
kiss
not maidenhood stain
but brambled knees raspberry cream
bubble through her cerebral
veins like blood
from an empty womb

a thorn a prick
a circulate erythrocyte
caught
by a lifeboat syringe
with her candlelight
lover
and a foxglove
bouquet cast away
behind retinal moons
survivors from her heart
where rose petals
open
and close
in eternal dark

Deaf, mute, blind

A stroke siezes my soul



Wearily

I decline into my lover's arms



Imaging the Waiting

Rosewater
mists from the woman
with blue-moon hair
past the weeping
child
with the four-jointed arm
over the fluid filled belly
of the gold-eyed
man
settles
into stale donut boxes
onto coffee stained requests

for radiation sonar clicks
magnetic waves ionic dyes
spelunkers to fathom
the deepest caves
map out fractures seeping walls
search
for volcanic growth
organic change

add oracled reports to charts
with numbered names
to bundled clothes
and empty shoes
neatly arranged
under stainless stretchers
hidden
in rosewater
mist

Imaging Miracles at Lourdes



Fry Baby in the Pan

A noise in the room provokes her blackout sleep. Her moan blunts mewling kitten sounds. She rolls bellyup. An arm flops off the bare mattress set flush with the floor. The arm is deadened from lack of blood. The mewling intensifies. She groans, grabs the arm, pulls it close to her body, opens dark eyes, turns a faded face. Daylight cracks the boarded window.

Cries from the corner of the room continue. Pins and needles fire through the arm. She sits up, rubs its skin. Tiny dirt curls form around fine hairs. She picks panties from dirty clothes next to the mattress, stands up, shakes the arm, pulls sour panties up bristled legs, over heart shaped buttocks, adjusts the stained tank top on her shoulders, kicks trash out of the path to the corner.

She is fourteen. For three months, kitten cries have jolted the moments of her hours, blurred the hours of her days. She leans over a Magnavox carton. Baby pee seeps from Huggies, soaks a tiny double breasted T-shirt, dampens a pansied bath towel. She changes the diaper and T-shirt, tosses them into the corner collection. Funny how baby pee smells rancid. She must ask the man who is not the father for laundromat money.

She cradles the baby against a dry breast, stumbles down a torn

sheetrock hall, enters a blind end kitchen, scoops WIC formula into a plastic bottle, adds rusty faucet water, screws the nipple onto the bottle, shakes her arm. Roaches skitter over counter spills. She sits on a ripped dinette chair, feeds the baby's need.

The man who is not the father stands at the dinette table, looks at her, then the baby. "Thought Baby'd never wake up." He works magic with cafeteria cookware, gallon glass jugs, plastic food storage bags. "It's fry time, Baby. Gonna fry us up some cash." He laughs. The baby stiffens spread-eagled, chokes on formula. She sits it up, slaps its back. The man places an industrial size lasagna pan at the table's end. The baby tries to focus on its stainless steel reflected face.

Her brain hurts from last night's fry, hurts worse than booze poured in wounds, hurts every thought. The numbness of her body dulls the baby's presence. Her eyes blur table details. She mutters, "french fry, spin fry, pan fry, small fry, house fry, she fry" The man who is not the father looks at her, laughs. "Baby, you still fry high." The baby jerks its head, gives a sharp belch.

The man carefully unrolls Swishers, dumps fragrant tobacco into a shiny mixing bowl, opens a sandwich baggie, dumps pungent marijuana into the bowl, stirs the mixture with a large plastic spoon, rolls joints with measured skill, arrays them on a B-B-Q grate. He picks up a glass gallon jug, unscrews the cap, pours embalming fluid into the lasagna pan. "Can't make the dead pretty without this. Huh, Baby?" He laughs. The baby jumps, whimpers. She puts the rubber

nipple into its mouth.

The man picks up a baggie of pure white powder, spoon-portion PCP into the embalming fluid, stirs the acrid mixture with a large metal fork, lowers the B-B-Q grate into the lasagna pan, drowns the joints. "Baby, this'll paint ya some rainbows." The baby sucks air from the empty nipple, grunts into its diaper.

He lifts the grate from the lasagna pan, drip dries fry sticks on an oversize cookie sheet. She closes burning eyes, can't remember rainbows. Distant thunderstorms seize her mind, flash fear, rumble anger. The baby squirms against viced arms. She hears a flat voice ask for laundromat change.

Dusk filters into the room through wood siding slits, mingles with the stench haze of fry smoke. Three sallow men sprawl on a floor littered with crumpled beer cans, cheap wine bottles, cigarette butts, aluminum foil shards. Their decomposed minds grow numb, forgetful. Their remains float on multicolored drafts inhaled onto their retinas. Fry man laughs. "Baby, this wetdaddy fries up the sweetest dreams." One body grins at nothing, coughs spasms from flammable lungs. She half sits against the baby's wood slat crate, her tits fry hardened, her pussy fry engorged. Her fingers push past black nylon and wire hair, slide between wet walls of smooth skin, probe the broken center of her soul. She rubs the spot, chafes dark storm clouds into heavy gusts. Shades of gray and black swirl against her eyelid interiors. Carrion eyes watch her, question the price of a quick fuck. Fry man laughs. "Baby's cost same as fry."

The bloodless man fumbles a \$20 bill, crawls to her, grapples his fly, gropes then rips her tank top and panties, mounts her. Her storm flashes, claws lightning streaks into his face. He yowls. The other two men lurch, jostle for position, cram pricks into her from behind, from above. Her storm breaks, crashes in waves of violent thunder. Fry man whoops his pleasure.

Baby wails animate the wood slat crate. She slowly works her way upright, lifts the baby, wobbles into the blind end kitchen, leans against the stove, ignites a burner under an iron skillet of grease. She mumbles, "It's fry time Baby", grabs fry sticks from the table, tosses fry sticks into the skillet. "Gonna fry me up some fry." Baby wails fuel storm rage. She hears a voice mutter, "Fry me. Fry you. Fry Baby in the pan." She watches hands suspend the baby over hot grease, watches hands drop the baby in freefall. Storm winds shriek.



The poet Lin Bu
walks in moonlight
a watchful stream glistens
soft ripples bathe bamboo
clouds scurry
and the moon blinks
its reflection
in the eye of the earth

Du Jin



To Dance From the Womb

Like one before me
and the one before her
I birthed many
as midwife mother
But none like this child
jet jersied at a dancer's loom
her movement awakened deep
to polyphonic conflict
laced harmonic webs
as savage
sea searched for sky

She cast warp threads
in shades of midnight measure
improvised a chromatic
weft from tightly twisted hues
shuttle-bound a staggered
step
impaled propulsive rhythm

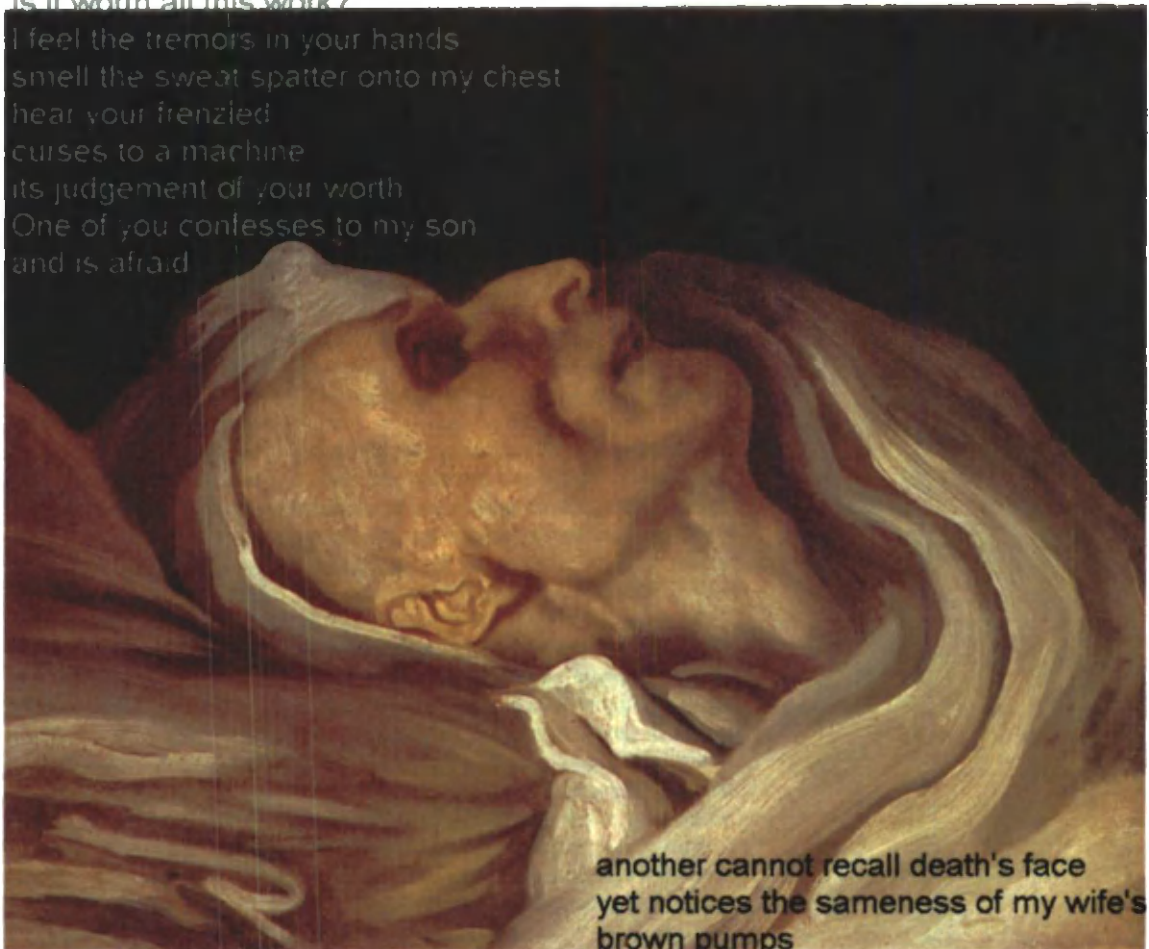
She pivots
in rolling waves crouched shoulders
shimmy sway
she laments head bent
back in percussive spasm
jolts split leaps
into the arc between two
terrored deaths
one arm overtures
a furtive plea
seized in isolations
she axel curls switch leaps
falls inward dissonant
adrift

Like one after me
and the one after her
I birthed many
as midwife spinner
But none like this web
this fibrillate
heart a jagged
arch tied
fast between two
stones

Shock Room

I touch the quiet now
 ash fingers curl slightly
 around empty air
 search softly for discarded clothes
 my name
 the age
 I leave behind
 Is it worth all this work?

I feel the tremors in your hands
 smell the sweat spatter onto my chest
 hear your frenzied
 curses to a machine
 its judgement of your worth
 One of you confesses to my son
 and is afraid



another cannot recall death's face
 yet notices the sameness of my wife's
 brown pumps

still another desires to carress my void
 seeks just a glimpse
 but one of you
 one of you cries out
 electrocutes me instantly



April 7, 1874
Macomb, Illinois

Dear Parents,
Measles
Lila, Laura, Matta, Nona, Hattie
winter snow lay away with mercy
past fortnight has been cruel
cold spring tears flood the graves
Fatal
Durr house lost two All fear fate
Young bodies entwined in shared space
hold comfort in silent
touch
removed from dreadful drafts
Hattie lazes with perfect quiet
so very limpid in the cradle
opens not her eyes a'tall
Beware
measles hides in far thunder
comes out in shifting showers
Butcher's sheep yard Teas for her
Whiskey Doctor's powders
futile
She aches so very sick, wonting
to nurse some tolerable good
that keeps me in slight better
hopes
Tis now near dawn
all slumber silent but Lila
I dreamt past night of a coffin
stopped
open in front of our house
Let me hear from Warren again
or from Liza

Mary Anna



September 5, 1959
Muskogee, Oklahoma

Dear Mary Anna
Grandfather Lila's boy
kept your measles
secreted in a small carved box
My daughter's night coughs
red halos around pin-head stars
swells into her scarlet throat
settles in swollen eyes
drawn curtains dark glasses
she survives in a cave
like a bat with sonar
nostril walls seep air currents spasm
droplets shower
far thunder throbs bone-chill
shatters sleep
her batwing flight swarms fever dreams
echos the age-old omens
of your memories mazed
in her moonlit cells
cool sheets vapor fog
Did your Hattie cry
or wing silently away

Your Child Thrice Removed

54. MEASLES (morbilli, rubella, red measles), which is common, starts with fever, conjunctivitis, photophobia,²² coryza²³ and Koplik's spots in the mouth. 2 to 5 days later small dusky red macules appear at the scalp line, which within 1 to 3 days become pink and papular, and spread over the body, including the palms and soles. The duration of the rash is 1 to 6 days. Desquamation occurs. See 53 for incubation period, etc. Other symptoms may be: Chills, cervical, axillary, general glandular and splenic enlargement,²⁴ headache,²⁵ sore throat (tonsillitis) and cough.²⁶ Occasionally bronchitis²⁷ and pneumonia²⁸ may be complications and very rarely encephalitis,²⁹ paraplegia, deafness³⁰ and urticaria to cold³¹ may ensue. Tuberculosis sometimes becomes active after measles, corneal scarring may follow the conjunctivitis and keratomalacia³² may occur.

Laboratory: WBC usually is reduced.³³ Inclusion bodies may be demonstrated in smears of the nasal mucosa the day before the rash appears, and of the buccal mucosa and Koplik spots during the 1st 12 days of the disease. The Debré blanching test³⁴ may be helpful. Reticulocytosis³⁵ may occur. The urine reduces 2,6-dichlorophenolindophenol. Measles virus has been cultured from the nose. A previously positive thiol³⁶ may become negative during measles.



The Children's Medical Center
W. PRICE KILLINGSWORTH, M. D.
411 Ninth Avenue
FORT ARTHUR, TEXAS

meet his mother - Thank you again
for all you have done and I will
always remember you and my prayers
Love from both of us
Denny + Coby



Thank you sincerely for
your kind expression of sympathy
It was deeply appreciated

Life Support

He cannot who by himself is bound,
and of himself no one is freely loosed
Thus outside of my bonds others bind me
Michelangelo

Michelangelo knew the form
of God
faceted in albatross stone
Lidless eyes poised
as the face furrowed
a slow turn left
Arms pinioned the power
of motionless flight
Legs locked battle stride
upon an anchored raft
Forced by feathered strokes
the genesis David emerged
into valley depths
breathless

But I a Goliath of Gath
unreckoned
cloaked as a harpy
plated in dragon jade
know the soul
of God
Pause attentive
before sheathed eyes
and pronated wings
Reach with chiseled spears
to stab the source
of monster breath feeding
Release the weight
of life bound primitive
the stone albatross
dies



**Carcer Terreno
the body is the earthly prison
of the spirit**

**Denied comfort
of either life or death
my child's
mind and body lie dormant
The physical torment was not the worst
it only lasted a few hours
The worst was then
the doubt, the abandonment
the betrayal of a mind no longer
divined
Where does the spirit go when its receptacle
dies
The worst is now
forsaken
the distance, unable to reach out
word for word, soul to soul
This would be easier to understand
without Him
I wield mallet and chisel
break life's support to pieces
weep while my child dies**

II. PICTURE WINDOWS

Bone Picker

I knew nothing of evil
I was a little child
then it all came at once
during Jihad
all around me children
awakened
to dead men
Taliban eyes
all the earth holds



are graves
Into a tattered cotton sack
I gather bones of martyrs
my mothers, my sisters
cooking oil, soap, chicken feed, buttons
feed me
I am a grown up person now
no longer asleep
I turn my face toward
Allah

Introduction

I step into a room outside Kabul, Afganistan. I am in a landscape surreal, yet beautiful in its barrenness. Muted browns, greens, and grays flow aimlessly into forms recognized as sky and hills, rocks and figures. The earth is void of vegetation. It moves away toward the horizon. Creamy sand capped by light brown ridges drifts into a dark earthen sea broken by foam peaked craters. An olive gray sky rises from the surface into a formless steel blue.

The texts and images in these pages are a form of communication intended to invoke emotional memory using various points of view. This communication automatically establishes an interpersonal relationship between author and reader. The more skillful the sender and the more receptive the receiver, the more effective the communication. An artist well versed in the principles of composition creates a valuable aesthetic experience. An observer who understands certain conventions can also create a meaningful experience from the artist's composition. These are ways of looking at the world and establishing its reality.

Our inner thoughts and feelings, our wishes and urges, are of a more tenuous nature. Inner thoughts and conflicts arise in response to the environment outside the self. This multifaceted reaction is of a more enduring, concrete nature than the internal life of the mind. The latter continuously exists alone within its

own creation. While our thoughts and feelings may or may not be shared with others, they must always be reckoned with.

Creative writing is a form of dead reckoning not unlike being in the throes of an acute illness. Inner thoughts and feelings become infectious agents. Intrapersonal experiences narrow their interests until they center on what is happening within themselves. They use considerable energy to protect their state of being. They examine their own mental activity in the same way they would examine a scalp laceration or an upright abdominal film. If you just let them run their course, they can leave you with a decent poem or short story – an interpersonal ailment that will infect another person.

Three young children dig into the ground with scrap iron and broken spades. A young boy uncovers a ribcage, another a femur. The youngest, a girl, steps forward to tentively reveal her collection – skull, radius, ulna, vertebra. She is a bone picker.

A poem is constructed from word-sounds and word-meanings. The dance between sound and meaning is complex and fascinating. Your mental construct of a particular word is not necessarily mine nor in anyone else's imagination. Words must be modified in seemingly endless, yet specific, ways in order to create a common understanding. Poetry requires cognitive processing on complex conceptual and linguistic levels. Yet poetry is curiously easier to explain than an image.

An image bears a more direct and identical relationship with what it signifies. If I show you a picture of a book, then you instantaneously know what book I mean. Yet the image's ease of intelligibility is what makes it so difficult to analyze. This is because perception is independent of cognitive processing. And perception's autonomous qualities are what make images effective poetic narrators.

Before the day ends, the young girl will carry her graveyard remains the distance into Kabul. When she arrives at the street bazaar, a boneyard merchant will purchase the bones, empty the cotton sack onto one of his jumbled piles. The child will buy food. And Pakistan will fill its belly with oil, soap, feed, and buttons.

Perception is stimulus bound. Take, for instance, the image of the Egyptian scribe. He is a statue painted reddish-brown with black accents. Viewed in color, he looks like a statue. The words on the page seem to be nothing more than words put into the statue's mouth. In black and white, the scribe comes alive. He takes notice of you, then seems to speak directly to your mind. His words, once spoken, hover in the air before him. It makes no difference knowing he is a four thousand, four hundred year old piece of limestone. The stimulus cue, or image, informs you that he is immediate and in the present moment with you.

Perception must be able to provide accurate information immediately. You cannot be expected to learn what happens in the immediate environment by reading a book. Nor do you have time to explore a situation by asking someone nearby. Slower cognitive processing must be bypassed. This essential short-circuit can also lead to misperception. You can perceive the moon to be closer and larger near the horizon. But it remains equal in size and equidistant from you no matter what its position in the night sky. Even a simple square drawn on a blank page is subtle misperception. You call the square two dimensional then give it inside, outside, top, bottom, side, front, and behind as if it were a cube — which it could be if viewed with the aspect of a visual angle.

All images produced on a flat surface are misperceptions to a certain extent. Paintings structured without perspective appear to have a less complicated narrative. But this is not necessarily so. The mind's eye views the space behind the picture plane as empty. The narrative formed by the two dimensional image is restricted to the symbolic language of the mind. It remains detached from the three dimensional external world. The mind projects time into the existing empty space behind the image. Time is then adjusted. The narrative formed from the image then unfolds in the mind of the observer.

Strictly Speaking, the image on page 49 is not viewed as two dimensional. But the circular distortion of its background has the same narrative effect. The image that epitomizes two dimensional narrative space is *Six Persimmons*. (pg. 23) It represents the Zen Buddhist concept of the mind in "no thought." The narrative lacks time passing, which then frees the mind in space.

An old man approaches slowly from the distance. He walks with the shuffling limp of an arthritic, or as one reminded of the wounds of war. He could be the young girl's grandfather or maybe elder uncle. He takes the skull from the child's hand and smashes it into unrecognizable pieces with a rock. He adds the fragments to the child's collection and remains seated on the arid ground.

While perception is based on inference from rules, the rules seem to be known on an unconscious level. Perception is thus not easily influenced by consciously available information. Yet there are some cases where conscious knowledge can affect perception. Knowledge in the sense of stored memory of prior experience is necessary when viewing images. This is what invokes an emotional response. The relevant past experience usually must have been in the form of visual perception. Visual memory tagged with emotional memory does not alter the role of the image nor the rules of perception. These memories are compatible alternate perceptions of a stimulus that is actually ambiguous.

Whether you see the little dancer (pg. 20) as being what the old dancer sees, or remembers, depends upon what memory you bring to the image. This is why, in this case, the visual image follows the poem. The poem's imagery reduces ambiguity yet allows the image to keep its duality. With *A Pause for a Breather*, (pg. 18) memories and visual perception of the image (pg. 17) precede the poem. This both softens and redirects the poem's narrative. Uniting texts and images actually allows both to re-narrate each other. From two independent art forms, a new interpretation of the world is created.

"When you leave this life, what will you leave behind?" He speaks with a low voice as if he worries about being overheard. "You yearn to create an extension of yourself, something that will hold its shape after you die. Will it be the house you toiled to build, your finest livestock, an attentive son? All these years of war. No food. No hope. No family. With nothing left, we only leave ourselves. Even then, this is what it comes to – our bones sold for simple survival. When the future arrives, it will wonder why nothing of us is left but ruined headstones – nothing of us is left but bombed craters in the earth."

Dear Friend Mary

F. M. Frank was my great-great-grandfather. Mary Anna Savage, his future wife, was my great-great-grandmother. She is the same Mary in the *Dear Parents* 'epistle. (pg. 66) To this union, five daughters and two sons were born, to-wit Hattie Lucinda who died in infancy. (pg. 66) Francis Marion left behind several Civil War letters written to "Dear Friend Mary" while he fought under Gen. Sherman. Who was he? What kind of man, husband, and father? Do we share the same chin, or hunched over little toes? Francis Marion's obituary states that "he was a peaceful and quiet man . . . an honest man in all his dealings." I also know this – when I read his letters, he is still alive. The anonymous title of great-great-grandfather transforms into a real person – a part of me here and now. It was Francis Marion who provided the title for this thesis.

Quadrature of the Lune

The quadrature involves taking a polygon and constructing a square with an area equal to that of the original plane figure. Hippocrates of Chios created the quadrature of the lune in the 5th century B.C.E. This is a geometric demonstration in which a curved figure and an isosceles right triangle are proven to have the same area – the triangle having previously been quadratured with a square. I see 1) poetic beauty; 2) the loss of unique identity as the lune (a crescent) transforms into a triangle which then transforms into a square. That is where this poem comes from and to where it goes. Within the beauty of transformations and their inherent ordering of chaos, lies the hidden loss of identity for the things transformed. When I wrote this poem, I stepped into a place and time where belief in being awed and belief in the power of transformations go hand in hand. The one creating transformations weaves into the one being transformed. As the lune changes into another, the lune also changes that other. The relationship between creator and creation lies in loss of uniqueness for both – a vanishing of the lune. The scribe transformed intangible words into permanent symbols. Death transformed him into body without life, spirit without body – a vanishing carved in stone.

A Pause for a Breather

Five girls from Sam Rayburn High School, joyriding, smoking a little pot, rolled their car at Fairmont and Red Bluff. All made it to the hospital. Only two survived. What a senseless design. I never knew Kathy. I never met her family. But for one brief, jolted moment, my fingers touched her mind. Every now and then, I step back into that trauma room, sit quietly next to her, hold her hand. Together, we wait for the monitor to gradually fade out. It is very important – especially for one so young – that no one die alone.

This collage captures, in the peripheral images, the sense of objectivity and controlled chaos in the workplace. Yet central to every situation is empathy – even if it must momentarily remain unobserved, like the child off-centered.

Deaf Psyche
To Dance from the Womb

These two poems are, quite simply, mother-daughter rites of passage. My daughter endured over-stretched muscles, broken bones, and emotional upheavals in order to dance – to create something so fleeting as the body in motion. The first musical note, the first tenuous step, the first lift of the hand begins the end. From the moment the dance is born, it moves toward its own demise. You are left to mourn and celebrate something transient.

Albright's painting of the aging dancer (pg 20) holds the power of beauty in stasis, yet allows beauty to escape its momentary life. This counteracts Degas' intent of capturing beauty forever, which tends to dilute beauty's strength. Of all the art forms, only the body in motion can convey beauty as a force captured and released.

The aging dancer has lost her youthful beauty. Her hands, arms, elbows on knees tend toward the masculine. But the graceful position of her legs and feet belies anything not feminine. She is still capable of producing an electric aura and turning the dance floor into gold.

The photograph of the young dancer on page 62 conveys the fragile pathos of dance. Contrary to expectation, the male Alvin Ailey dancer is the uncertainty of pathos. His plea lasts only as long as he is weightless. The Warhol rendition of

Martha Graham is the command of pathos. Grounded in both the horizontal and vertical planes, she sustains the energy of intense emotion. The young dancer must learn to balance the struggle between wax-winged Alvin Ailey and sun-rayed Martha Graham.

And the Policeman Brought Boxcars*

The image is ink on paper drawn by my sister-in-law, Sherry Ann Killingsworth. Our families were at our mother-in-law's farm about ten years ago. I told her about a poem I wished to write. Without reading the poem, she drew this picture for me. Neither one of us knew what the other one was doing, yet we created two works that joined perfectly in tandem. Neither is too dominant, nor subservient. Since then, narrating poems with images became a quest.

Six Persimmons

The Poet Lin Bu

A Young Crane

With these three pieces, images precede texts. In each case, the first line/lines are the paintings' titles. The name at the bottom of each poem is the name of the artist. This follows the tradition of painter as poet. It also serves to enhance the illusion of a voice entirely separate from mine.

Writing from an image is simpler and less time consuming than imaging an existent poem. Concrete images don't waver and can absorb a variety of texts. A poem, by its very leanness of form, requires a more specific approach. An image always takes precedence over text. If the image is too disparate, it will narrate itself more strongly than it will merge with the poem.

The genre of Eastern art used here is highly specific. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pair Chinese and Japanese paintings with existing texts in English. Yet this art form's quiet beauty lends itself quite easily to responsive poetry. A painting like *A Young Crane Steps Through A Marshy Field* momentarily stops the mind. Words rustle. Like dry leaves along a garden path, they wait to be swept away.

Collisions

While driving to a course on fiction writing, I came upon a wreck similar to the one in the story. Not having any fiction writing experience, I needed all the fuel I could gather.

Someone's mother, daughter, wife would not be home to cook supper that evening. Would I find the woman in the weekend obituary notices? Do people write obituaries about people they do not like? Obviously, the woman had tried to barrel through the intersection. What if she were someone others found totally obnoxious? What if childish wishful thinking came true?

So I created a woman who initiates the almost universal prejudice against obesity and placed her in the most absurd setting I know — a room full of pom pom moms. The narrator becomes as petty as the main character. The next time you come across a rude or belligerent person, or someone cuts you off on the freeway, remember to be careful what you wish.

Dien Bien Phu**All Hallows Eve**

This image mirrors the circular movement of the poem, *All Hallows Eve*. It also joins the futility of the French Indochina and Viet Nam Wars. The soldier on the wall is the ghostly image of the dead. He is also alive in the sense that his presense within the painting is immediate. His wounded plea juxtaposes the *accusing glance of van Gogh's foreground figure*. The men are completely surrounded by walls in the same manner as the soldier is ensnared on the rear wall. Oblivious to the pleading soldier, they are themselves soldiers trained for a hopeless task. They march from nowhere to nowhere. Have they survived the final conflict? Or do they have yet another nightmare to battles?

The seige at Dien Bien Phu lasted 55 days -- from March 13 to May 7, 1954. Giap, the Viet Minh general, lost an estimated 20,000 men. The French, under the leadership of Col. de Castries, suffered 8,200 casualties. Over 9,500 French troops began a captivity that few survived. Thus ended the First Indochina War.

For Those of You

This is probably my first public poem. It was originally written with a specific person in mind. I taped it to the lounge door in the emergency room for all my co-workers. Since then, the poem has taken a more universal point of view.

Junk Mail

Why do we send our missing children through the mail with offers of free eyeglasses to anonymous residents? Are we supposed to recycle these children - or trash them? Are we supposed to get our free eyeglasses, then go looking for missing children? Are we supposed to scrutinize our junk mail, and remember all the faces? What if my child were lost in millions upon millions of junk mail ads?

This poem was more difficult than anticipated. Piecing together junk mail was like putting together one of those squiggle art 500 piece puzzles. It took many tries to get it all to fit properly.

Missing children still arrive in my mailbox every Wednesday. Hopefully they're simply lost in the woods and will soon escape the evil witch.

Save the Last Dance

This was one of those Emergency Room nights when Lunar Madness was infected with Honky Tonk Fever – a lethal combination. There was no other way to explain, nor accept, such an outcome after a spousal argument. There was no other way to react but with grim absurdity.

Feral Traps

Psychiatric nursing is not unlike studying logic -- not the common logic of written and spoken language -- the logic of the language of the mind. Illness imposes different meanings. The mind must tell its stories with words no longer in the world of usual context. What may appear illogical to others, when decoded, is uniquely logical. It is this uniqueness that is destructive. Unable to connect through a more universal, hence rational, system, the ill person grows increasingly isolated. Within this isolation, the mind's language and stories grow more powerful until they can no longer be controlled. The once socially rational mind implodes into the fear of oblivion.

With this story, I wanted to write from the moment a brain breaks, to capture the way a mind uses language to re-narrate itself when in the room of its own suffering.

If you listen closely enough, you learn to hear. Only then can you hope to help a voice lost in the realm of the unreal. This is truly the quest of literature in medicine -- to decode suffering and then write what is heard.

Aspirate

Here are the facts of the matter. The little boy ran through the living room. He had the ball and post from a Fischer Price stacking rings toy in his mouth. He tripped and fell. The ball stuck in his throat. The mother tried to get it out with her fingers. This only seated the ball more securely in the child's throat. She picked up the phone to call for help. For some reason, the phone was dead. She grabbed up her child and ran to her car. One of the tires was flat. Her husband should have been pulling in from work. But a wreck had him stopped on the freeway. The mother ran to the house across the street. She pounded on the door. The neighbors, reluctant to respond, finally called for an ambulance. The ambulance drove around for awhile because it couldn't find the right house. Eventually, in the ER, after death, with throat spasms relaxed, the ball simply rolled out of the child's mouth and into the nurse's hand.

.

Kuota Moto

This poem is the music and movement of dance. The narrative centers upon the transformative power of dance to mediate interchangeable times and places. Dance is a form of masking ritual. Both the dancer and the observer simultaneously share an alternate reality. Individual identities lose cohesion. All the participants are transformed then transmitted into another setting and a time other than the present.

Three languages are used in this poem – Swahili, French, and English. The title is Swahili. The first two lines are French. The dancers pace, bend at the knees, take chasing steps, then leap like the cat. Mount Kirinyaga (Mount Kenya) is “House of God.” Pas aller simba kali combines French and Swahili – go with stealth fierce lion. A mibira is a hand held percussion instrument played by plucking strings with the thumbs. Various objects, animals, and ballet moves intertwine throughout the poem. True to the genre’s oral history, this poem works best when spoken and heard.

The first image (pg. 47) reflects the dancer as participant in, and the source of, the power of transformative experience. Moving from top right to bottom left, the present tense silhouettes interrupt and join the past tense masquerade. The image on page 49 is the dream itself. The transparent mask allows the dream to become the dreamer. With the background figure, the dreamer is the dream.

After Her Stroke

The woman in the photograph is my grandmother. I wondered what her mind, denied sight and sound, saw and heard. When I stepped into her room, everything I experienced was a shade of red. It was as if I looked through a fresh bruise. I heard no voices. There was complete solitude. Not even grandmother was present in her room. I was alone with her mind. The poem is accordingly in third person.

The two images are in first person. They represent not so much what was in grandmother's mind as the action of her mind. *Death of the Maiden* (pg. 52) is particularly apropos. For one thing, the colors are vivid and mesh with those in the poem. For another, I see the maiden falling into death's arms. He embraces her with tenderness. This adds an entirely new interpretive layer to the poem.

Egon Schiele and his wife Edith Harms died, one shortly after the other, during a 1918 influenza epidemic. He was only twenty-eight years old. Influenced by the horrors of existence during WWI, his art has power similar to van Gogh's paintings. Schiele and my grandmother belonged to the same generation. His parents remained in Austria. My grandmother's parents left Germany for America.

Imaging the Waiting

The woman with her arms akimbo is both intimate and anonymous.

Diagnostic imaging requires intimacy to the point of invasion. Everything about the procedure, from waiting room to personnel, is anonymous. The resultant image -- x-ray, CAT scan, arteriogram, etc. -- lacks any resemblance to personal identity. Orbital films do not capture colored specks in green eyes. A bone scan says nothing about a person's stance or demeanor.

The pilgrims at Lourdes not only wait for God to see them, they wait to see some vision of God. They deny, through faith, the anonymity of illness. And through faith, they embody the intimate relationship between suffering and spirit.

Fry Baby in the Pan

Dear little girl with the big onyx eyes, smooth ebony skin, no legs from the hips down. I understand why you were so silent, so mute. Screams emptied out of you forever. Your hospital chart made no mention why your momma fried you in the pan. Years later, the Texas Department of Health studied fry here in Houston. That's why your momma did it. Fry Man hid in the closet, under the bed. He scared your momma crazy. I wrote down just what Fry Man did. See. Your momma didn't mean to cook your legs off. She really did love you. You can speak now, maybe just a whisper.

Shock Room

One evening, after a resuscitation attempt, I was left with the mundane task of completing the ER chart. The room had been cleaned and readied for the next person in need. The man we worked on lay covered head to toe with a hospital sheet. He simply waited for me to move his stretcher out of the room. I sat on the stool next to him in order to finish his chart. I still had to document the last events in his life and list the supplies and costs involved. That is when I noticed his uncovered hand at his side. For some reason, I felt curiosity.

This poem arose from that evening. Originally, the narrator spoke to the deceased. But I could never hit the groove the way I desired. I reworked this poem many times over several years until, at a dead end, I changed the voice to first person. That brought the poem closer to, but not quite over, the top.

And then I came across *After Death* painted in 1818 by Theodore Gericault. There it was – the missing word, the just the right line turn, the correct alliteration - - the something that this poem needed to come alive.

Dear Parents

Dear Mary Anna

There are no cures. Smallpox was eradicated, not cured. Polio is stemmed in the Western Hemisphere, but runs rampant in other parts of the world. That is the best we can do in the history of human-kind. One devastating disease eradicated, a few tenuously controlled, many more effectively treated on occasion.

There are no cures. Eradication, control, and effective treatment are products of only the past fifty years. How easy to forget, not even take note, the struggle against even one childhood disease.

I realize the clinical images (pg. 69) could be disturbing for some. But medical texts have been illustrated for centuries. We can neither understand nor treat what we do not recognize. The image on page 69 is as much 20th century as the preceding image on page 67 is 19th century. During the latter century, photographs of the dead and of men with horrible Civil War wounds were used as remembrances and medical teaching tools.

The first epistle comes from a letter writtn by my great-great-grandmother. If her daughter, Lila, had not survived the measles epidemic, I would not exist, nor would I have had measles in the fourth grade. Hattie Lucinda was not so fortunate.

Life Support
Cancer Terreno

Termination of life support is an emotional, moral, and ethical dilemma. It is both right and wrong. It is neither right nor wrong. Incapable of imagining non-existence, we base our judgments upon preservation of physical life at any cost. Irrespective of beliefs about an afterlife, when the brain is dead or in a permanent vegetative state, is the *soul trapped* (as in Michelangelo's Rondanini Pieta) in its earthly prison of physical pain? When the essence of who we are is denied any contact with its self and the external world, does this essence suffer? Can we honor right to die even as we defend right to life? Can we honestly come face to face with our own mortality?

**Lifes race well run
Life's work well done
Life's crown well won
Now comes rest**

**Second Lieutenant F. M. Frank
Co. F, 64th Regiment
Illinois Infantry**

REMEMBER ME



WHEN THIS YOU SEE

WORKS CITED

Dear Friend Mary 8.

MD, vol. 36, no. 4 (April, 1992): 106.

Quadrature of the Lune 14-16.

Seated Scribe, from Saggara, c. 2400 B.C. Painted Limestone. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fredrick Hartt, *Art A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. vol. I, (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1993), 1: 80

John Baines and Jaromír Malek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, (New York: Facts on File Inc., 1986) 100, 108, 134, 216.

A Pause for a Breather 17.

Hippocrates, vol.6, no. 6 (July/August 1992): 26, 31, 33. photographs by Dan Winters.

Deaf Psyche 20.

Ivan Le Lorraine Albright, *There Were No Flowers Tonight*, 1929. Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C.

The Journal of the American Medical Association, vol. 276, no. 15 (October 16, 1996): Cover art.

Edgar Degas, *L'Etoile*, 1878. Pastel, Musée d'Orsay.

Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 105.

And the Policeman Brought Boxcars* 22.

Sherry Ann Killingsworth, Bryan, Texas, Brazos County Artist of the Year. Ink on paper.

Six Persimmons 23.

Mu Qi, *Six Persimmons*, c. early 13th century—after 1279 C.E. Ink on paper. Daitoku-ji, Kyoto.

Sherman E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1994), 380.

All Hallows Eve 32.

Wide World Photograph, *This Fabulous Century*, vol. VII, ed. Ezra Brown (New York: Time Life Books, 1970), 211.

Vincent van Gogh, *Prisoners Exercising*, 1980. Oil on canvas, Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

WORKS CITED

***Modern Painting The Impressionists – and the Avant-Garde of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1998), 162.**

Junk Mail 36

Charles P. Killingsworth, M.D., photographer, farm outside Wells, Texas owned by Barbara Killingsworth Scott.

Clippings from junk mail.

A Young Crane 39

Ozawa Nankoku, *A Young Japanese Crane*, before 1897. Ink and color on silk, Freer Gallery of Art.

Smithsonian, vol. 24, no. 7 (November 1998): 51.

Kuota moto 47, 49

Cultural Atlas of Africa, ed. Jocelyn Murray (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1987), cover art, title page, 26.

Sheila Killingsworth, Pasadena, Texas, silhouettes of dancers.

After Her Stroke 50, 52

Photograph of Mary Elizabeth Vieweg Randall, c. ~1910.

Egon Schiele, *Death of the Maiden*, 1915. Oil on canvas, Österreichische Galerie, Vienna.

***Modern Painting The Impressionists – and the Avant-Garde of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Barrons Educational Series, 1998) 244.**

Imaging the Waiting 53, 55

MD, vol. 35, no. 6 (June 1991): 90. Photograph by Eric Blau, M.D.

Hippocrates, vol. 6, no. 2 (February 1992): 52. Photograph by Antonin Kratochvil.

Dance From the Womb 62

Dance Magazine, vol. LXIX, no. 12 (December, 1995): 73. Photograph by Feuer Productions.

Dance Magazine, vol. LXXXIII, no.4 (April, 1999): 13. Andy Warhol, *Letter to the World (The Kick)*, 1986.

Dance Magazine, vol. LXX, no. 1 (January, 1996): 66

Shock Room 63

Theodore Gericault, *After Death*, 1818. Oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago.

WORKS CITED

M. Patricia Donahue, Ph.D., R.N., *Nursing The Finest Art* (St Louis: The C. V. Mosby Co., 1985), 453.

Dear Parents

Dear Mary Anna 65, 67, 69

Pierre Bonnard, *The Letter*, 1906. Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The Journal of the American Medical Association, vol. 282, no. 15 (September 15, 1999): Cover art.

Mother With Her Dead Daughter Posed in Painterly Convention of the "Sick Child," 1852.

Stanley B. Burns, M.D. *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America*, (Twelvetreets Press, 1990).

Hippocrates, vol. 6, no. 2 (February, 1992). 74

Life Support

Carcer Terreno 71

Daniele da Volterra, *Portrait of Michelangelo*, 1553. Black chalk, Teyler Museum, Haarlem.

Lucinda Hawkins Collinge and Annabel Ricketts, *Michelangelo*, (Greenwich, Ct., Brompton Book Corp., 1991), 6.

Bone Picker 74

Remember Me

When This You See 102

Anthony Loyd, "A Market in Human Remains," *The New York Times Magazine*, 12 January 1997, 31. Seamus Murphy, Photographer.

Casper David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea*, 1808-10. Oil on canvas, Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

Modern Painting the impressionists – and the Avant-Garde of the Twentieth Century (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1998) 48.