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## All is Ripe for Fire

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ALL IS RIPE FOR FIRE

By

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2014

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts - Creative Writing

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## THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

**Dana Killmeyer**

entitled

**All is Ripe for Fire**

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**Master of Fine Arts - Creative Writing**

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**May 2014**

## Abstract

*All is Ripe for Fire* is a two-part lyrical meditation that captures the world of the unnamed speaker who is visited by the image of a woman, such as the one who appears in the very first poem, “The Unnamed,” which begins with an invitation to reader: “Let us look at the French woman’s hand touching the flame to her sleeve.” However, no sooner is the reader’s attention drawn to the woman’s hand, the flame, and then to her sleeve, than the image of the woman is gone entirely. In a matter of a few words, the figure of the woman is “going / her hands    her head” and yet, despite her apparent annihilation in the very first poem, the unnamed figure persists. We see her throwing her head back, raising her legs, in the very next poem. Even when she is absent, unmentioned, she remains a strong presence in the collection. Unlike other recurring figures in these poems, namely, the mother, future love, America, Jesus, a good father, the old men, my pancreas, my girlfriend, my one true friend, who arouse doubt and insecurity, the unnamed performs as a paradoxical figure of vulnerability and security. She is living space; she is the house we do not enter. She is, like the poems in this collection, ripe for fire, dangerous, threatening,, burning with passion, too alive for life, a spirit yearning to be released.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v

### PART 1

The Unnamed.....	2
Between Waking and Walking.....	3
Her Sake.....	7
Nude in the Kitchen.....	20
Evidence of a Diary.....	21
“A bit of satin”.....	24
desert pigeon.....	25
We Spin Around the Night.....	26
Point of Progress.....	33
Adjacent Lots.....	36
Fireflies: A Study.....	37
Ex-.....	46
Exquisite Calves and Knees.....	49
“All is ripe for fire”.....	54

### PART 2

connected to beings that perish.....	56
One.....	60
&.....	61
In a Dream.....	71
A Prayer for No One.....	72
A Small Truth.....	73
What is it like to be a Bat.....	74
In Search of the Cuttlefish.....	76
ching ching.....	77
Recluse on Dream Mountain.....	80
Notes.....	82
Author’s CV.....	84

## **PART ONE**



## **The Unnamed**

Let us look at the French  
woman's hand touching the flame  
to her sleeve      her whole body  
doused in gasoline      her physics

set ablaze as children  
look amidst their play

A human torch! one exclaims though hardly  
anyone is paying attention      Karim  
remembers it      a vision

the apocalypse      total  
unreal      a body on fire going  
her hands      her head

## **Between Waking and Walking**

The bird appears:  
Throbbing in my temples,  
Crawling into a dark space.

Cinders, lightning, broken wings  
Press my sensuality into seeds, call them  
Children, bones, a small bullet.

Screws and sparrow wing-bones  
Hang over a pause, wind-formed  
Instantaneous, diaphanous knot

In the streetlights.  
Foreign bodies  
Wonder: "Whose body is it?"

Do not walk straight.  
Leave your purple poesies  
At home. *Now*

Is the smile  
That unchains  
Prisoners.

"Yes," the crowd says.

In the middle of the crowd  
The body is living space, a woman

Throwing her head back, the house  
We do not enter.

My body  
Has been missing since 1924,

Which is why I am holding your hand now.  
Which is why I am a stranger to the little girl

I once was. A baby  
Crawls into my lap.

.  
Goodbye, good riddens.  
Oh well, that is history:  
A prisoner with his eyes  
Shut.

Open your lips.  
The child is real.

Tear the skin from your body.  
Let go of the world, the dancing

Stardust we touch,  
The snakebite, rock  
Red that shadows us.

Let the light burn holes in you. Listen:  
There are trumpets, running feet.  
Someone is calling:  
“Dear love,

You must risk everything.”

Take me:

A tortured eye,  
A dancing child,  
The dream’s rumbling.

Take me.

I want to be free.

Time is the borderland of ashes,  
Too heavy and so thin. Time  
Remains there, imprisoned.

Perhaps you learned this as a child.  
In desperation, in a dream, half drunk,

Bend one leg and point the toes, creep  
Back on the oily floor and then the mud  
Cracks and tadpoles turn into arabesques.

From here, take my breasts  
In both hands  
And begin to move with me.

This is a vulnerable poem.

I am on fire and my holes  
Open up to both sides  
Of memory: A tiny red

Rocking horse, long  
Walks, a lost puppy.

The bird appears:  
All bones and small screws.

## Her Sake

I am about to enter the fifth grade  
when my future love is being wretched  
from the womb of her Russian mother  
in a hospital somewhere  
in the Soviet Union  
where her mother land  
no longer                exists

Her father worrying  
alone in the waiting    pacing  
about a foreigner  
in matters of        love

A cardiologist muttering aloud  
in perfect Bengali

বাবা পুত্র

Brow stitched with Дочь  
Muttering        whole hands  
Muttering        whole head

মেয়ে

Face redder than raw mutton  
Dark head    a mass    a globe

\*

The scar on my mom's  
right arm      left her  
double-fisted      wide-eyed  
essentially broken n' repaired  
onehundredeighttimes total to fix  
the damage done by her father's  
trusted obstetrician    arm    left  
wrung out as a wet dishtowel

[the scar across my mom's upper arm  
trail of a sh                      -ooting star  
   blaze of glory ]

Today she can't raise her arm  
more than to here her chin  
tucked in effort as she lifts  
her left arm      to  
   meet  
   it

On a good day  
she is invincible. She is  
my mom

She has never had  
a bad day

I used to believe my mom  
didn't know how to fart

Believed those fairy tales  
enacted in my bedroom  
downstairs in the living  
room by the chimney

plates blossoming with cookies  
we were not allowed to eat  
and a glass of milk

*For Santa*

Mom saves my childish hand  
in a box she opens only  
on rare occasions like the days

after the road  
you grew up on  
is quarantined  
with police tape

your childhood  
home flooded

foundation unsafe      the entire backyard  
washed away      standing  
where the basement door stands      still      looking out onto where once stood  
cement steps a red wooden picnic table      out  
onto so much      that depended on      so much  
a fence once      where the 3-foot pool  
once never much      and now home condemned.

The Mimosa out front



mowed over and grown over  
time and time

frailbaby trees sprouting a bajillion  
*Albizia julibrissins*

Their leaves slowly  
close during the night  
and during periods  
of rain

Leaflets bow downward  
thus its modern name خ سب شب  
*Shabkhosb*      Nightsleeper

In Japanese: *sleeping tree*

\*

Dad came home black as the belly that bore him  
The boiler of his nightmares lived out over days

When Dad's tired got angry  
Mom's tired used guilt

He hid under the hood of his car  
always 10 years old and 100,000 miles  
on it when he bought it leaving  
Mom home T.V. school books

\*

Mom made Dad complicit  
signing *Love*,  
*Mom and Dad*  
on all the Christmas gifts

\*

*I only have one good arm*  
she reminds us doing  
*more with one good arm*  
*than most moms can do*  
*with two*

\*

*I'll fly a rocket to the grave*  
is how I read the hieroglyphs  
engraved on her upper arm

a ribbed and dimpled gauge of loss

\*

She fears      I will  
betray her      some day

\*

On car rides she'd sing  
the songs of her great grand children  
songs her mother's father sang to her  
*K K K Katie Beautiful Katie You're the one*  
*the one the one that I adore*  
*And whenever the moonshines*

\*

I invent a tongue  
to lap up  
Mom's plaster cast

My throat a sponge  
lodged inside  
a moth cocoon

[ ]

My throat is both and neither and everything the tongue  
My throat is both and neither and everything the tongue

The strongest muscle clicking a cricket leaf lapping laugh  
ing delighting in the romantic cusp of evening kept  
both prisoner and child swaddled and straightjacketed

\*

Cloistered with other men  
alone with their secret

man is another generation altogether  
different another blood line difference  
another altogether different difference

\*

Pay no attention to the old man behind the curtain  
It is possible my words speak independently of my voice

\*

SILENCE

\*

Among others who know and never have children  
only men who act like boys and want to play house  
with women

\*

Old man in the pressed shorts and high white socks  
Old man in polished mahogany member-only dining halls

\*

I must be half-asleep  
Drunk and drugged to let my love  
Burn down the house      again

\*

On the corner of Nicollet &  
24<sup>th</sup> Minneapolis 1<sup>st</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Day  
Adventist Church has lost an R.

The wall proclaims: *He is isen*

\*

In my studies I learned to disgust  
the name and function of my own  
lame weak base and twisted incon

sequential

wretched

hand

fading blue

gray callous

on the outside

of my crippled

pinky winks when my hands

are not being used

\*

So much tacit                    untouched

fingering little things like    cig

arêtes   little cigars   our hands

our mouths        once  
our most dangerous possession

\*

At thirty-three Jesus died and I  
accepted a proposal to leave

to be  
with a man  
most nearly  
a boy next  
to me

to leave my city my rivers  
mountains        wild blue  
flowers whispering   Pitts  
burgh   hub of still meals  
old timey trips dahntahn

\*

Crossing Allegheny   Mononga        hela   crossing   Ohio   crossing   Mississippi  
moving west   the American   dream   rite of spring        and all   Americans

\*

Some never make it out of basements  
Some go straight to jail

\*

PA once  
a state with the highest rural population  
land of immigrants  
this land is your land  
this land is my land

to the city  
of lakes state  
of butter rivers flour

\*

I have visited the ruins  
by Saint Anthony's Falls  
I have visited the dam  
and the muse

um I have been to Hiawatha  
I have been to too many memorials for Longfellow

In the old days when service was sold  
with a smile and how can I lick your

Ask only about your input now  
*Please complete this survey*

On a scale from 1 to 100  
with 1 meaning not satisfied at all

and 100 meaning satisfied very much

How satisfied are you  
with the service

How satisfied are you  
with the product

How satisfied are you  
with the result

How satisfied are you

How satisfied

\*

Eventually she no longer asks  
will I ever leave this rusted old town

How many winking hangers in the dark

\*

Hermaphroditic White Amur  
sewagebloated with the hook  
piercing no flesh

The City Worker  
a man in uniform  
hoists the monstrous figure



from the canal  
I'm crossing by foot

*White Amur* the City Worker answers  
*White Amur* I repeat him

*They put them there as babies*  
*They eat the gunk that clogs up the pipes*

\*

compelled to see beauty  
on both sides pure/impure  
visible hidden/white ibis  
I reach out to touch

\*

What if I could touch everything  
I ever wanted every need done  
while never coming into never  
contacting the innermostness  
nessness the unness non-exist  
ence in the bodily experience

No longer a spirit having a human experience  
No longer a human having a spiritual experience  
No longer old concepts of human and spirit

\*

We are no longer relevant

\*

Carry on

Carry on

Pay no attention to the old man in the iron hat

Pay no attention to the rabbit to the moon

No one cares about the old concepts anywhere

Carry on

Carry on

\*

When I wake I find myself

in the arms of my love

whose face is my own

whose face's of the mass

### **Nude in the Kitchen**

A pillar glistening with gasoline

A match pressed between her fingers

## Evidence of a Diary

*February 12, 2000*

Sucking whiskey from silver flasks  
Stealing aluminum lids from neighbors' trashcans  
Riding down the hills of Blue Slide Park.

*October 47, 1913*

They say, my name is an omen.  
They say, knock on wood.

They say, bit of red,  
A bit of satin.

The boy hears, Satan  
Red-centered *Caeturum*.

Asparagus growing  
in sparrowgrass.

*September 7, 1703*

Only a sparrow stood between  
saving him and leaving.

.

Only my grandmother's offer  
Her mouth, a cup of tea leaves.

*[ illegible ]*

*A primitive story.*

*September 30, 1839*

This is the month  
my mother warned me about.  
The month of singeing wings  
on yellow light.

This is the month  
half-beating itself against the screendoor  
battering its wings against the whitelight

littering the porch, rusted  
winged maggotbodies

*April 20, 2037*

girlhood rose upside-down and backwards  
objects in the rearview mirror appeared distorted  
wearing white became a promise and a choice

*October 5, 2013*

A female can reproduce without a male.  
This is proven of a shark in captivity.

*December 12, 2014*

His round hands

wounding hair, lips  
rounding chest, fists  
wounding hips, ribs

*April 20, 2037*

Today we find fingers  
starfish bones

two sticks

*July 14, 1987*

The animals know they are not separate.  
This does stop them from killing one another.

*May 1, 1924*

We leave the world  
from the chests of wounded civilians.

The way we come in.

**“A bit of satin”**

Remember the little girl  
Who looked good in red.  
The bird’s flying form.  
The small’s preponderance.

Nothing ‘cept the slow show  
Of hands now.    The day  
Dreams.    In heaven  
Everyone is naked.

Listen—  
I eat men fast. I thought I  
Would roam forever.  
I was fifteen.

## **desert pigeon**

you don't see many  
quilted down coats  
in the desert

and when those little tufts  
of down appear  
from pillows and comforters  
you are tempted to think:

this is natural, standing here  
counting twenty-four tiny eruptions  
on a pigeon's pale ashen head

filling jugs at the water station  
witnessing the delirious pigeon  
peck a poke a pickle, stumble  
sip water from an oil puddle

you are tempted to plunge into  
the pigeon's ashen bald head  
and pluck feather after feather  
feathers for a quilt, feathers for bed  
feathers        until finally  
the bird bursts.



## **We Spin Around the Night**

For the longest time  
I did nothing. I read  
Foucault. Of Blanchot,  
he wrote: *Negligence*,  
*a person must be negligent.*

– *essentially negligent.*

The mice shat in our silverware drawer,  
ate Emerson's cat food.  
Instead of killing them,  
I moved the knives,  
the forks, the spoons, and stored  
the cat food in an airtight container.

I grew tired of cleaning  
the mouse poop out  
of the silverware drawer.  
I did nothing. Read.

*Negligence*,  
– *essentially negligent.*

In the doorway of my house,  
the body of a gray mouse,  
fur stripped, muscles raw,  
red tendons exposed, still  
breathing, Emerson asleep,

and a girl named Billie,  
who could just as easily  
have been an Audrey,  
a Guilietta, a Jean. A girl  
out of a Godard film

slim-wasted, big-hearted,  
near-sighted. Billie. I welcomed her,  
sat across from her on the floor  
where she sat next to him, on the couch,  
nibbling the corner of his lukewarm burrito.  
The tip of her tongue darting across  
her lips. I did nothing; *a person*  
*must be negligent., essentially negligent.*

Years later, I feel her breath,  
her eyes follow the salmon curve  
threading the skyline of Pittsburgh.



In Friendship, I grew  
marshmallow and clover  
wormwood and tomatoes  
basil and lovage and peas.

He wrote: "We've dreamt  
of a room that doesn't love us  
in a town that doesn't need us."

Every day he woke up complaining.

In the backyard he saw remnants

of Wheeling: cars pulled apart,  
rusted grills menacing everything.

Masanobu Fukuoka wrote:

*fruit in a shriveled state  
is like a person in meditation.*

In time, we became  
wardens; our love,  
a life sentence. *Prisons  
within prisons within*

*prisons.* Our hands grow thick  
with twisted knots. My heart,  
*a shriveled state*; his mind,  
*a person in meditation.*

“You’ve always wanted to be alone.  
No one, not even your parents,  
could give you that.”

And then he left.



*Mandarin oranges grow wrinkled  
fruit shrivels, vegetables wilt.*



In Friendship, I return  
to The Quiet Storm, the old  
neighborhood café, to swap

stories with a close friend,  
eat a burrito, drink coffee.

The faceless children rush in and out,  
take quarters in their unwashed hands,  
play pinball. Every year,  
the children, the menu,  
the old man with his pipe,  
even the same baristas.

On a good day, I call  
my closest friend and she comes.

On a bad day, I leave,  
walk the neighborhood streets—  
Friendship to Penn to Baum and back again.

Take time to stop  
by the park, touch  
the chessboard tabletops, crush  
Ginkgo berries, contemplate  
their yellow fan-shaped leaves.

I hear a child on the family grand piano  
through the neighbor's living room window  
from where I listen on the street.



From the mountains outside  
the city, the city of Las Vegas  
is an artificial star.

Still further, in a plane at night  
the city of Las Vegas is a vortex,  
radiant light energy, constellation  
of burning cities. And if you are here,

if you just sit here, sit here,  
quietly feeling the pulse and hum of ,

if you just sit here, sit here,  
with only the clothes on your back  
and your next inhale

with your eyes open, everything  
open and everything just

the way it should be.

The light is light;  
the air, air. The ground  
is beneath you and above you,  
a ceiling, and possibly

a sky. In you

a voice, a hum,  
a pulse, a silence.



Meanwhile, there are still people  
in the building. Inside the people  
are burning. Inside the building

is full of beautiful saints.  
People who want to touch  
every pain. Every being  
is dancing: *In girum imus*

*nocte et*  
*consumimur*  
*igni.*

We spin around the night.  
We are consumed by fire.

Almost certainly we are refugees  
with no name and no home;

truly homeless.

We spin around the night.

In the morning I will not care  
where I wake up and wake up  
to find my love

in the knife,  
the cigarette, the prison,  
a person in meditation,  
essentially negligent.

On a good day, I listen outside  
to the little girl on the grand piano.

*In girum imus nocte et,*  
I spin around the night

a pulse, a hum, a voice, a silence  
still inside the building.

## Point of Progress

My body all over America  
goes on without its appendages.  
I am not contaminated.  
Feel the comfort of corrugated  
aluminum, alluvial sometimes.

Whisper nothing the soil can't carry.  
Hold a match to me and I glow iridescence.  
I smolder, become smoky.  
Water pools at the base of the mountain.  
My mother has lost sight of me.

My home grazes Appalachia.  
My reflection keeps silent.  
She has mothered me.  
Taught me the meaning of *mirage*.  
I find comfort at the bottom of things,  
curl my toes under like claws,  
hide rainbows in my arches.

My mother was a boat.  
She talked to mountains when it rained,  
collected tears in wooden buckets,  
transformed them into petals,  
which upon closer inspection were really shed fingerprints.  
She clawed at my sundress. "Go tell it on the mountain."  
She went fishing with Jesus.

My mother doesn't know how to shorten the distance.



Between us is a desert. An iridescent oil slick.  
We go on. Go on, drink it.  
Touch me and touch the distance.  
I hold a wooden crucifix.  
Only Jesus understands my fingerprints.

My torso blooms inside a bucket.  
Jesus desires my pancreas.  
The clouds conceal my fingertips.  
They whisper, no more appendages.  
Death doesn't know the name for *pancreas*.

My mother's chest is flat as Kansas.  
She opens her mouth and reeks of iridescence.  
Harvest the oil slick at the base of her torso.  
Clouds spread across the aluminum.  
Jesus is in my mother festering.  
My pancreas births a forest.  
Who clear cut my appendages?  
This bucket, contaminated fingertips.

My mother can't survive with her appendages.  
She roves around the forest topless.  
The shortest distance between her and I is an oil slick.  
I look at her and see my reflection in the shape of Jesus.  
Go tell it to her fingertips.  
Her ribcage is corrugated aluminum.  
Hold a match and she disintegrates.  
Appalachia doesn't need more appendages.

My knees are made of aluminum.

Jesus and my mother grow inside the flatness.  
My breasts have never been appendages.  
The mountains tell me I am combustible.  
The clouds appear closer than Jesus.  
Feel what it is to be corrugated.  
The shorter the distance, the more I disintegrate.

I am closer now to death than I am to my mother.

## **Adjacent Lots**

Yours: bird shadow  
on a lattice-crowned crooked fence.

Mine: field of broken glass  
glistening like an orphanage.

## **Fireflies: A Study**

### **Lesson 1: Bugs need air to breathe.**

Black and gold bodies  
Perched on a twig, and a moment

Later airborne, at dusk:  
light on, light off; light

Soon-to-be kept-magic in a mason jar  
The tin lid of which my brother, sister  
And I poked holes in.

### **Lesson 2: Every creature carries a symptom of its home.**

In the streetlight shadows of dark  
From lawn to lawn  
Through unpruned hedges

We criss-cross the dead-end  
Street, take refuge in neighbors'  
Driveways; from stop sign to *cul de sac*,

Across the thick tar line marking the middle  
Of the road, we chase the blinking gold,  
Black-gold, black-gold—

### **Lesson 3: Pay attention to the bifurcation.**

Precociously            I cup my hands

To mimic	the complexwings
Preternaturally	I chase after it
Watch	the feathery underwings
The insect	stroking
The air,	stroking—
The way	I turn blind
Whiteness	into angels.

**Lesson 4: Ask questions.**

What was cut out  
Of us by puberty?

Why our ugly  
Allegiance?

Those early  
Experiments—

How my hands  
Felt cold wings  
Tickling a fine hair

On my palms? How many  
Twinkling bodies vibrating?

**Lesson 5: Pretend to know the answer.**

The human  
Depends  
On the bug

For survival.  
We evolve  
As one.

### **Lesson 6: Look closely.**

A pinpoint,  
The butt-end of the light-  
Ning bug, Lamp-

Yridae, firefly, Coleop-  
Tera winged beetle,

Uses bioluminescence  
To attract mates  
And prey. A cold light.

Lower  
Abdomen yellow,  
Green, pale-

Red with wavelengths.  
Lightblackshell and yellow  
Striped wings, not so different

From the cucumber beetle,  
That threatens the farmer.

In some species, females

Are flightless.

**Lesson 7: Ask more questions. Pretend to know the answer.**

How many lightning bugs?

How many children?

Altogether,

We count nine.

Our mother's voice

*It's getting late*

Punctuates

Our curiosity.

*It's getting late.*

Nine lightning bugs

blinking on-off, on-off

In our jars.

*It's getting late.*

The insects blink

A symphony too subtle

To be heard; too inhuman

To sing,

To touch;

What pleasure  
Could I have in it?

There is no pleasure

That I could have in it.  
I must possess

The subtle old rhythm,  
O sublime.

The song: *on-off*,  
*off-on*, *off-off*;

I must master it,  
Take control of it,

Of an emptiness  
Of a truth, I am

My mother's child.

**Lesson 8: Sing and dance. Turn the experience into art.**

We call the bioluminescence  
We paint our cheeks, our chins,

Our noses with  
“War paint”.



Ah! We have kissed

The mouth of Iokanaan.

A bitter taste, the taste

Of blood? . . . Nay; it was

The taste of love.

They say love

Hath a bitter taste.

But what matter?

What matter?

We have kissed the mouth of Iokanaan.

We have kissed thy mouth.

[A ray of moonlight falls.]

*It's getting late.*

Our mother's voice

*On-off, off-off, on-*

*On.* Our faces inked

With bioluminescence,

With our mother's almighty

Presence, permission

To stay a little longer.

The residual evidence  
Of our earlier experiments

Smear, still glowing  
On the unmoving

Cement slab.

**Lesson 9: Accept absolutely the light accumulated.**

Of worms,  
Of a truth,  
It's getting late.

Our jar  
Once full of gold  
Now eats away.

There is nothing  
That shines alive  
In all of us.

A residual bio-  
Luminescence,  
A smear, a smite,

A ray  
Streaked across my face.  
My mother—

What matter? Surely  
Not the bitter taste  
We call a mouth.

How many flightless  
Smeared across?  
Nine. Nine. Nine.

*It's getting late.*  
*It's getting late.*

Nine. Nine. Nine.

We gather our yellow  
In a jar, no breath,  
No matter. There is nothing

We can't cut out. The residual  
Moonlight falls. Unmoving  
An emptiness. Unmoving

Bitter mouth. *It's getting late*

The water, the earth,  
The air, all underfoot.  
There is no pleasure in it.

The subtle too subtle,  
To sing, to touch the air.  
The air, they say, we have kissed.

Our war paint comes back  
In radiant reds and greens  
And yellow. Unmoved,

They say. Subtle.  
A pinpoint cut out  
For survival.

My mother underfoot.  
*It's getting late*  
My hands collecting moments

Stroking, stroking, stroking—

Angels poke holes  
In whiteness.

**Ex-**

a building up    piling  
a heaping up    fretting  
a festering

the leaving  
of the disease

remove object-  
ionable material

cast off  
skin shell  
covering

clear of flesh  
render more violence

blot out    strike out    erase  
absolve from blame

blast from beneath  
burst forth  
with sudden  
violence

out of the u-  
terus    the  
prospect of

the future growing  
spitting out stripped  
of possessions

deprived of shoes  
displaced

an emptying an enfeebling  
an earnest reasoning

a bright phenomenon  
a gallery in a church

a way of departure

a breed of ponies  
a breed of horned

sheep  
keeping watch  
rooting out

inspection of entrails  
dug out of the ground

not sheathed  
in another leaf

a waking up an arousing  
fondly kissing

a knot formed in wood

a word letter syllable not necessary

scanty small slender

a given name

unburdened overflowing

rejoicing manifesting

coming to light

exhausting

## Exquisite Calves and Knees

My girlfriend  
Among the hymns  
Her bee-black hair  
  
Flesh of mustard flower  
The underworld figure  
Occasionally lifts her skirts

Her vulva  
Projecting and fleshy  
From the point  
Where the hairs grow  
To the buttocks, lips  
Double speak, hiss—

*Come children. Come,*  
Mount a ladder to fetch a book:  
*What the Dogs Have Taught Me.*

That snowy night of muffled corridors,  
She paints a red circle on each nipple.

*Manu Manu*, as they approach me.  
Imperfect and still, night now.

I am basically a girl,  
Glass animal of God.

I am the taste of pure water,  
The sweet fragrance of earth.



I am what they talk about  
When they talk about luck:

Sad visages of missing children,  
A puppy, statues of beautiful  
Unknowing muteness.

The smell of barbeque rises; relish. Meat  
From clay pots, incandescent prickly pear,  
City woven in amnesia—

Almost everyone  
Who comes here for the first time  
Feels that they've been here before.  
A clock at the bus station—

At this very moment, we are free  
To look at the painting, the woman  
Raises her legs, reaches out to touch  
His temple, turtle head, red bird, silence  
Of night, chorus of poetry, something

That resembles cuckoo-land,  
The imagination's punctuality,  
The day my girlfriend was tortured  
In the room I keep returning to

A beautiful dancer animated  
By cuckoo clocks, a whisper, and  
Kaboom!

The days keep coming...

Reckless in spirit, passionate, covetous,  
Volatile and full of sleep, tired of civilization,

My one true friend, a romantic single,  
Looks for love in all the wrong places.

Don't laugh. It could happen to you.

And at that moment, beauty,  
Immortality and death,  
In the form of the body  
At the grass's edge, entering  
And going away—

How you taste between your legs  
Is analogous to fish, sparkling bow ties,  
Twitching green iridescence, lacewings.

This line of verse,  
Written as an object  
Of satire asleep  
In the next room,  
Is throwing snowballs  
At the militia.

We were great imposters once.  
We resembled broken things.

Listen. There are three kinds of happiness:  
Absent fathers, the woman  
Who raises her legs, jellyfish

That turn into barracudas.

You will never be happy.

The mind is not a box.

Your smile is a weapon.

The setting sun

Does not know

Its own beauty.

All winners and losers

Bear identical marks.

Drawing on the language

Of ordinary people, the woman

Falls to her knees, burns to ashes.

All around me is the smell

Of one who is easily crushed

Inside a box filled with newly dug earth,

New bodies, wild and freshly planted.

Poverty, arrogance, and the old man

Are indispensable to us: the catastrophes

Of the twentieth century, what we call

*That loving feeling* as we watch another

Missile explode. Houses painted in blood,

Walls that murmur, a crucifix

Syllabled in elegiac couplets—

We need a new password, she whispers.

The prayer ends. A city inside.

**“All is ripe for fire”**

how could feet  
a woman's gesture  
a door left ajar

a guard hinted at  
by the glint of snow  
through a window seem

as much shadow as light  
perhaps the woman smiled at him

perhaps perhaps all this uncertainty  
secret spying absolute illusory

until it is light  
equivalent to  
a blown-out candle

## **PART TWO**

**connected to beings that perish**

a good father is one rooted in the body  
a few jerks immortal things, like  
never as good as  
the only “good” attempting /  
to interpret  
penis as pen  
milk with blood on leaves and bark  
the question taken up  
in different ways  
with what organ can females / culture language  
/chaos /silence absence  
different  
means having only to be forced away excludes  
possibilities for relations break up destroy  
wants to destroy open up bodies of language  
/ She is in other words  
closer to the presence /  
further from that center “slippery”  
shameful

pleasure is located  
alienated      structured by a sense of otherness  
  
in calling women  
men      something  
must come from their bodies      /  
coins  
chains  
the unconscious  
a site of transformation  
breaks down  
what her body  
feels like      is  
inevitable      *jouissance*  
the end      to authority  
objective/objectifiable  
nonsense  
  
erase the slash      bring      back      the mother's body  
metaphor of "white  
ink"      breast milk      a reunion with



what looks like  
/ something with  
rhythm and pulse something  
one  
will always be  
“conceived of” / by  
boys and girls into  
scotch-taping  
the body that  
would start to fall apart /  
erase the slashes  
fall apart the myth of woman  
as black hole as hole  
this hole  
too many  
could show  
the paralysis of  
what  
the conscious mind the body  
the body  
born

like all functions of

life

a desire for

something

free people

who

begin

in the

beginning

## **One**

How are you not surrounded by a throng  
of trampled men and women desperate to join you  
when I would set myself on fire  
to be the air within you

&

Without this tissue

This endless ravaged space

You're ruined

&

So I sealed the last great box labeled

B0okS & OthR aRT & shipped it

To the desert where I was going

To produce nothing

of ~~us~~ use

&

I found myself

Thrusting my burning red backside

At a man who no longer cherished me

&

I loved him since

Before girlhood rose

In the rearview mirror

Before he said

He was married

&

He said

He still was

Still is

&

Because she knew what he meant

When he said how he existed how he swung

Wildly against the edge of something

And did not exist in the thing itself

&

It became a metaphor

for Everything is *terrible*

&

I remember

The apple

&

The woman

&

The child-sized bug

She carried on her head

&

How she sat me in a chair  
Took the clock from the wall  
And hid it

&

The camera saw everything  
The camera saw everything  
The camera saw everything

&

Everything still  
Just the inter  
Vening process

&

Her body        falling

&

Inside the wooden box  
She finds a wrinkled  
Piece of paper listing  
All the names of all  
The precious pulverized stones

Made into the image on the lid  
A white elephant

His memory whispers  
*I never got you anything*

She traces the outline  
Of her thoughts  
With her tongue

&

He orders  
Another one on  
The rocks

&

Another one  
On the rocks

&

Anotherone  
Ontherocks

&

In his absence  
The lie she  
Inherited

From her

Mother

Come

S in

&

What was there to remember

I remember the camera

&

What the room said

As he left her lying

At a precise angle

Unable to distinguish

Constellations

Planets stars

&

His fingers

Small scars

&

I chant a thousand names



ॐ Namō

So hum I am that

&

I am nothing

I wander  
Stripped down  
Unlimited

A woman  
And a man

&

Yes

I did have sex  
With the entire football team

Thank you very much

&

Whether we live  
In a mansion or la-la land  
We have all been oppressed

*Obla di obla da*

*Na na-na-na life goes on*

&

To be with me

You must be ready

To die

&

The animals know they are not separate

&

Only a sparrow stood

Between him and how I tried

&

Each word

Red-centered

Soft-hearted

Best eaten

With the hands

&

Illness enters the body

Through the mouth

&

This is the month

&

The trees are so full

&

Her mouth is a keyhole

&

A bit of red enters the room

A key      a knife

A man      a woman

&

This is the month of unbroken

&

The month of small places

&

This is a floating heart

&

A long way off

She hobbles

In the streetlight

Children

Rumble

&

A tiny bit of red

On her lips

&

Someone a long way off calling

*Dear, you must risk everything*

&

She says I didn't do anything wrong

I didn't do anything wrong

I didn't do anything wrong

&

She hums

Little mirror and a swing

Warmth on my cheek

## **In a Dream**

An old friend  
crosses the middle ground;  
she moves toward nothing, a bird  
perched on an anvil, saturated  
with evening blue.

An echo  
in the arms of an old friend  
suggests the ocean, an oil spill,  
elbows, the edge of what is,  
deep impressions and—

We didn't say.

## **A Prayer for No One**

Why don't I dream of you?

Blossoms do not appear  
nor does a leaf fall  
uninfluenced.

How can I tell the mother from the son?

Take some bread and eat it.

Who can master this empty place I occupy?

The body of a woman on fire,  
something cut out by the sun, a boat  
full of saints.

Is there nothing left to burn?

There is a road, and no town.  
One stands in woods.

## **A Small Truth**

A small child holds a smaller child.

The ocean knows this.

A shadow against everything.

An island not yet in existence.

A vivisection. The shadow

Cannot remember its origin.

It doesn't matter that you are suffering.

You were loved as a child.



**What is it like to be a Bat**

*After Thomas Nagel*

A shrill cry

flattened by the fog.

A mouth agape.

Wings splay.

Delicate bones

Awake.

A man and woman

Watch and wait: *What to do?*

*I don't know. What do you think?*

A black man approaches:

*Careful!*

*That thing might have*

*Rabies.*

The bat feels pain,

hunger, fear, lust.

The woman retrieves a 4x6 postcard  
From her bag. The black man retreats.  
Her male companion guides her arm

Shadowing her small frame  
As she glides the glossy 4x6  
Under the bat's brown belly.

These are facts I may  
Never understand:

To have webbing on one's arms,  
To fly around at dusk and dawn  
Catching insects in one's mouth,

To hang upside down  
By one's feet,

To have poor vision,  
To perceive the world  
As a system of reflections

## **In Search of the Cuttlefish**

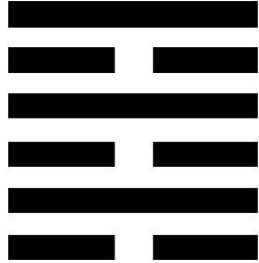
In the deep scream  
In the lingering scent  
In the valley's brimming rim

More subatomic than baby  
Your body, a light bulb  
Your model airplane and your promise

Take me anywhere  
Your body, your yes,  
Your confusion

Glistening, mooncast  
Twinkling in my window  
Dying among the coral

**ching ching**



out the window with a rubber canoe  
cage inside a rat, film from my youth  
come back

as an ungloved hand  
waves good-good

a rumpled 'kerchief  
soiled in my back pocket  
turned toward the dove grey

manure fills holes; mounds  
heap up along the west fence-  
line—yes, we has avocados, art-  
ichokes, once a never

*when he puts all your bones back together*

*you will like his smell*

and Alejandro was right, I did come

to like the earth's rumped-up stench

perfumed of horse and more

E.B E.B.

a white bonfire of radios

compost at the end of

May;

May,

falling

another year

farther

from the tree, radically

different from the moment

that came before, imperceptibly.

but if the little fox,

after nearly completing the crossing,

gets his tail in the water,

there is nothing that would further

altar, mantra, alone; feet black

on the bottom; a bloom unveiled

and bursting from the dry hallucinations

bloodred orange

against the dovegrey

horizonborn yesterday.

## **Recluse on Dream Mountain**

Go to bed sleeping; reflect; wake up dreaming.  
Tomorrow is the sound of mountain goats signing.

In this dream,  
Jesus goes on a cross.

The mountain goes on listening.

In this world, sidewalk  
benches and olive branches  
build congregations and I pray  
with my eyes open.

Take my body and eat it.  
Take the image of the native girl  
impaled tail to tip. Never forget,

the beautiful brown recluse:  
small-bodied, feminine.  
Daddy long-leg  
so delicate, exquisite.

All eight-legs and complex eyes  
in the shower, grimacing.

O little long-legged brown recluse spider

I scoop him up and flush him.

Girlshadow delicate instant  
spread out over the universe,  
a Rorschach test, a rat  
with eyes burnt out of her head.

Your imagination is a geometry  
of crossbars and handicaps.



## Notes

*All is Ripe for Fire*, both the title of the collection and of the last poem of part one, is from Breece D’J Pancake’s short story *In the Dry*.

“The Unnamed” freely adapts information from the BBC online news article, “Teacher Dies in France after Setting Herself on Fire,” published in October, 2011.

“Her Sake” borrows the following words from Russian and Bengali:

বাবা (Bengali: pronounced *bābā*) - father

পুত্র (Bengali: pronounced *putra*) - son

Дочь (Russian: pronounced *doch’*) - daughter

মেয়ে (Bengali: pronounced *mēyē*) – girl

“We Spin around the Night” derives its name from Guy Debord’s French film, an experimental documentary released in 1978 titled “In Girum Imus Nocte Et Consumimur Igni.” The name, a palindrome that is sometimes translated as “we spin around the night, we are consumed by fire,” is a Latin phrase known as “the Devil’s verse.” This poem also freely adapts language from “Foucault / Blanchot - Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside and Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him,” which presents an essay by each author reflecting on the other’s work, as well as from Masanobu Fukuoka’s “The One-Straw Revolution,” which documents Fukuoka’s philosophy and groundbreaking research on “do nothing” farming.

“Fireflies: A Study” borrows lines from Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé: A Tragedy in One Act*.

“Ex-” freely adapts definitions to words beginning with the pre-fix “ex-”

“Exquisite Calves and Knees” is an accumulation of language culled from Thomas Avena’s *Dream of Order*, Claudia Keelan’s *Missing Her*, and Anne Hooper’s *Kama Sutra*.

“connected to beings that perish” freely adapts language from Dr. Mary Klages, associate professor of English at the University of Colorado at Boulder, essay’s “Helene Cixous: ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’.”

“&” freely adapts Hélène Cixous’s *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, Anne Carson’s *Glass, Irony, and God*, Nicole Brossard’s *Mauve Desert*, and Michael Begnal’s review of Che Elias’ “experimental..., almost primitive” novel *West Virginia*.

“What is it like to be a Bat” borrows lines from Thomas Nagel’s essay of the same name.

“Ching ching” references the 64<sup>th</sup> hexagram, *Wei Chi*, or “Before Completion,” from the *I Ching, or Book of Changes*. The hexagram is composed of six even horizontal line, alternating between unbroken and broken, or “strong” and “weak” (respectively): The trigram *Li*, the clinging, flame, above; *K’an*, the abysmal, water, below. The poem contains lines from Cary F. Baynes’ English rendering of Richard Wilhelm’s translation, of “The Judgment” given for *Wei Chi*.

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### **Education**

MFA, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV **2011 – present**  
Major: Creative Writing  
Supporting Areas of Emphasis: Poetry, Dance, Performance  
Dissertation Title: *All is Ripe for Fire*

Post-BA, University of Pittsburgh, PA **2006 – 2009**  
Major: N/A  
Supporting Areas of Emphasis: Scientific Research, Nonfiction Writing

BA, University of Pittsburgh, PA **1996 – 1999**  
Majors: English Writing and Film Studies  
Supporting Areas of Emphasis: Fiction, and Early American and Avant-garde Cinema

### **Additional Training and Certification**

Center for Body-Mind Movement (500-hour SME), Pittsburgh, PA **2008 – present**  
Third Street Yoga (200-hour RYT), Pittsburgh, PA **2009 – 2010**  
Three Rivers Yoga (200-hour), Coraopolis, PA **2007 – 2008**  
Elixir Farm and One-Garden Seed Bank (Biodynamic), Brixey, MO **2004 - 2005**  
Riverbank Farm Apprenticeship (Certified Organic), Roxbury, CT **2003 – 2004**  
Paradise Farm (Certified Organic), Homestead, FL **2002-2003**

### **Teaching Experience**

University Nevada, Las Vegas, NV **2011 – present**  
*Instructor, Introduction to Creative Writing*  
*Instructor, English Composition I: Standard and Science-Linked*  
*Instructor, English Composition II: Research/Argument - Themed and Service Learning*  
*Consultant, Writing Center*

Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN **2010 – 2011**  
*Program Facilitator, Young Writers*

The Princeton Review, Pittsburgh, PA **2000 – 2002 /**  
*Premier SAT Instructor* **2004 – 2010**

### **Administrative and Research Experience**

Johns Hopkins' Center for Talented Youth, Thousand Oaks, CA, **Summer 2012**  
*Office Manager*

National Marrow Donor Program, CIBMTR, Minneapolis, MN **2010 – 2011**

*Supervisor of Survey Research Call Center*

University of Pittsburgh, University Center for Social and Urban Research **2004 – 2010**  
(UCSUR), Pittsburgh, PA

*Survey Research Fieldwork Supervisor*

Yoga in Schools, Pittsburgh, PA

**2008 – 2009**

*Research Assistant*

**Publishing Experience**

Witness Magazine, Las Vegas, NV

**2013 – 2014**

*Reader*

Spark! Poetry Contest, Nevada Arts Council, Las Vegas, NV

**2012 & 2013**

*Poetry Judge*

Six Gallery Press, Pittsburgh, PA

**2007 – 2010**

*Assistant Editor/Designer*

Sterling House Publishing, Pittsburgh, PA,

**2000 – 2002**

*Freelance Editor*

**Publications – Books**

Killmeyer, D. (2009). *Pendulums of Euphoria*. Pittsburgh, PA: Six Gallery Press:

Killmeyer, D. (2006) *Paradise, or the Part That Dies*. Pittsburgh, PA: Six Gallery Press.

**Publications – Poetry**

“our coming together this evening,” “The Female Praying Mantis,” and “Fireflies: A Study,” Vegas Valley Book Festival’s Cyber Poetry, Nevada Humanities, Killmeyer, Dana, 2013.

“connected to being that perish,” *Weave Magazine*, Killmeyer, Dana, 2012.

“Single Prayer Healthcare,” *Healthy Artists Online*, Killmeyer, Dana, 2011.

“Adjacent Lots,” *Natural Language: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Sunday Poetry and Reading Series Anthology*, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Killmeyer. Dana, 2010.

**Publications – Nonfiction**

Killmeyer, D. (2013) Review of *Pretty* by Kim Chinquee. *Sentence: A Journal of Prose Poetics*.

Killmeyer, D. (2011) “The Hornworm Story.” *Newfound Journal* (formerly *Precipitate*).

Killmeyer, D. (2009) “A Tale of Two Soups.” *Fitness Magazine* (blog).

**Presentations**

Killmeyer, D. Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Associations 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, “We are the Living Dead, and it’s a Real Drag: *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, Sharon Needles, and Zombie Couture/Culture,” Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Associations, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Killmeyer, D. Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Associations 23<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, "Poems of War and Intimacy," Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Associations, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Killmeyer, D. Introduction to Creative Writing, Guest lecturer, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV. Topic: Borrowed and Erasure poetry

Killmeyer, D. Introduction to Creative Writing, Guest lecturer, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Topic: Writing the Line, Fiction and Semi-Autobiographical Firsts.

### **Public Workshops**

*Restor(y)ing the Self*, Yoga Hive, Pittsburgh, PA. This journal-based workshop emphasizes intention, or *sankalpa* and self-study, or *svadhyaya*, combining literature (short stories, myths, and poetry) with personal narrative to invite participants to explore both the epic and the prosaic of their own lives.

*Unwind: Body and Mind*, Catholic Charities Opportunity Center, Minneapolis, MN. This small group series uses activities such as yoga, breath awareness, and writing, and meditation to provide a fun yet practical way to help people experiencing homelessness relax, energize (heat) and heal the body.

*Young Writers Facilitator*, Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN. Facilitated monthly gathering of teens writers at urban community arts center, Intermedia. Utilized the gallery space and rotating exhibits as base material for writing activities. Collaborated with the center's young filmmakers to develop and produce an end of year public presentation.

*Movement and Memoir*, Celebrating Women's Wisdom retreat, Pittsburgh, PA. A combination of gentle yoga and creative autobiographical writing exercises designed to focus one's attention on observing both one's external and internal environment through one's senses and perceptions.

### **Awards and Recognition**

UNLV GPSA Research Grant, Spring 2013, Summer 2013

UNLV International Program Travel Scholarship, Summer 2013

The Midwest Book Review for *Pendulums of Euphoria*, July 2009,

"Staff Pick" by Lindsay Keller, Small Press Distribution, for *Paradise, or the Part that Dies*, October 2007.

"Books, Journals, and More," *University Time*, University of Pittsburgh, April 2007.

University of Pittsburgh's Ed Ochester Poetry Award. "Times Three." Second Place.

Judge: Ellen McGrath Smith. Spring 2008.