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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

Department of English

College of Liberal Arts

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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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Department of English

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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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Natural Language: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Sunday Poetry and Reading Series Anthology. "Adjacent Lots." Pittsburgh: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, 2010.

Weave Magazine: "connected to beings that perish." Issue 7, 2012.

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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 &
24th Minneapolis 1st 7th 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
Gingko 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 complex wings

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

Smearred, still glowing
On the unmoving

Cementslab.

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
Smearred 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.

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

BOokS & 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

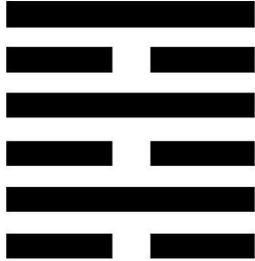
In the deep scream
In the lingering scent
In the valley's brimming rim

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 64th 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 24th 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 23th 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.