POETICS OF RETURN: TOWARD POETIC IMAGINATION AND PEACEBUILDING

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Language and Literacy Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2014

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Abstract

Toward a deeper understanding of poetic imagination, this poetic inquiry explores the creative process itself as a “wellspring that feeds the building of peace” (Lederach, 2005, p. 5). I position the study within the dialogic, as contemplative conversation, where utterance is a limitless continuum or whole (Bakhtin, 1986). I ask: Is it possible to write the world well? I listen to what poetry may say. I submit that “poetry witnesses us” (Milosz, 1983, p. 10) and that the gaze of poetry is courtesy (Lilburn, 1999).

This study attends to poetic image as an essential attribute of the qualitative research methodology called poetic inquiry. Poetic image is whole (Al-Ghazali, 2010) and it is trace. It may be understood as a place or state: a space for radical meeting (Forché, 1993) of self and other; a multidimensional location (Zwicky, 2011) of potential and tension; a threshold, dīblūz (Al-Ghazali in Moosa, 2005). Where poetic image is motion, it may be vertical and verb. Poetic image is not equal to metaphor (Bachelard, 1960). It exists in the sensory world, a doorway into our perception and memory, “enabling us to locate and embody the invisible and the unknown” (Kwasny, 2012, p. 2). It is generative, first of the creative imagination (Ibn Arabi in Corbin, 1998), and exists possibly prior to thought (Al-Ghazali, 2010; Bachelard, 1960). Poetic image may be known as direct ontology (Bachelard, 1960, p. xvi), a phenomenology of the soul (Bachelard, 1960, p. xx). Where both the poetic image and phenomenology require active participation and deny passivity or enslavement to object, in poetic image there may be liberation.

Where “there is a sort of poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance” (King, 1964), might research performed in humility be an act of reconciliation? Or might poetry, “a source of innocence full of revolutionary forces” directed at a world “my conscience cannot accept” (Elytis, as cited in Ivask, 1981), be the “kind of knowing” Simon seeks, which could support the “reconstruction of social imagination in the service of human freedom?” (Simon, 1992, p. 4).
Preface

This dissertation is an original work of the author, C. Kramer. The fieldwork referred to throughout the inquiry was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H10-00957; Principal Investigator: M. Kendrick; Co-Investigators: C. Leggo and C. Kramer.


Kramer, C. (2012). Return, Sepulcher of Abner; Eighty-eight efforts of gratitude; Because of the way water absorbs light. In Jen Currin, Jordan Hall, Ray Hsu, Christine Leclerc, Nikki Reimer, Melissa Sawatsky and Daniel Zomparelli (Eds.) the Enpipe Line: 70,000+ kilometres of poetry written in resistance to the Enbridge northern gateway pipelines proposal. (pp. 85,107, 111,116,144,161). Smithers, BC: Creek Stone Press Ltd.


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All images, unless otherwise cited, are by the author.
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Acknowledgements

Here is where language falls short, proves to be especially inadequate. Maybe what I am trying to say throughout the dissertation is simply my thanks to you, and love. That I am more fully human; that I know joy and purpose because of you; that in the blessing of your presence – that simply in your being – I rejoice!

To my teachers, every one of them.

To my ever gracious and generous committee:

Dr. Carl Leggo; Dr. Maureen Kendrick; Dr. Munir Vellani.

To my parents and
To Kakahama S. Mohammed Askary,
without whose support and care I could not have completed this study.

To my grandparents. To my sister. To Roman and Claire. To Hana, Haiva and Ashna.
To my beloved friends: Daniela Elza; Angie Inglis; Adrian McKerracher; Christine Holbert; Cristina Mendez; Grace Siler; Cleve Shearer; Sean Wiebe; Joshua Joseph; aunt Reenie; Eileen Magruder. To the children and their families in Harrisonburg. To my LLED cohort and colleagues at the Liu Institute; to the poets of Vancouver; Daya Laily and Friends of the Threshold Society.

To my dear Wahid Gul.

“In your light I learn how to love. In your beauty, how to make poems”

My deepest gratitude

For funding and making possible my studies:

To the University of British Columbia, Department of Language and Literacy Education for the Four-Year Doctoral Fellowship, and a Graduate Student Travel Award to attend the 3rd International Poetic Inquiry Symposium in Dorset, UK.

To the Liu Institute for Global Issues for award, with Huma Mohibullah, of the Co-Authored Funding Initiative.
Dedication

For the One who waits in return
Introduction

Narrative of Research Journey

The poetic inquiry presented in this dissertation is and is not the doctoral work that was proposed. It is wholly done but it would not be complete if I didn’t give some context and telling of my research journey. Until the final stages of writing, the stated research objectives were two-fold: 1) to cleave a space where Iraqi children—speaking for themselves—may be heard; and 2) to better understand how the arts might provide significant ways of addressing critical issues of exile, loss and hope. The title of the research project, until this point, included the words, “while writing with Iraqi children.” The Department of Language and Literacy Education and the Liu Institute for Global Issues websites list me as a doctoral student “working with children exiled by war.” I had stated that, with the research, I hoped “to contribute to the library of multi-lingual, multi-cultural writings for and by children; to provide meaningful expression for capacity building, and to enrich the academy and our world by opening spaces where the voices of people displaced by war and writing in exile may be amplified or humanized” (Kramer, 2012). This I had aimed to do through the publication of a multi-lingual, anthology titled, *Courage Tastes Like Cinnamon: Iraqi Children’s Writing*, and through the arts-circles I led.

There was significant work done toward these aims and toward the questions the research embodies. And there were pivots that turned the research in the directions it is now expressed.

I came to this study at UBC with ethical questions, seeking community and the wisdom of teachers to help me articulate and attend to those questions. I came already deeply engaged in the work the research proposed and, in a personal context of schism, with a felt necessity to ‘re-write my life’ or ‘to marry the different aspects of my life and work’ as my application to the program read. From this new location, as a doctoral student in Canada, the research I had proposed, in idea, built on work I was doing: writing of ‘ethnography-in-poetry,’ around stories of trauma, torture, and genocide; beginning the establishment of an arts-mentoring centre with Iraqi artists and children living as refugees in
Egypt; teaching; activism; and, especially, the facilitation of writing circles with children. I identified my motivation as arising from a sincere and immediate need to respond to the crises of violence and war. I understood the necessary turn to poetry as method—since poetry and the senses have always been the primary ways I most intimately and critically take in and know and answer the world. There was also at this point a curiosity—a question—that emerged in the writing circles with the Kurdish girls: we witnessed, in awe and wonder, something happen in our writing together, something I suspected had the potential for reconciliation. This *something* I wanted more deeply to access and explore.

With support and guidance from my research committee, I obtained permission from UBC’s Behavioural Research and Ethics Board and conducted two ‘pilot studies’ in Virginia, facilitating arts-circles with some of the same children I had been working with and with many children who were newly arriving from all parts of Iraq. The conditions and relationships that, perhaps, had nurtured the possibilities for transformation we had observed in the original writing group, were not available in the contexts of this project. I was terribly uneasy with my positioning and sought a way to approach research that would exclude the possibility of objectifying, representing, or speaking for or about the children I was working with. After some struggle, I resolved that I would not pursue the arts-circles in this doctoral study. Neither did I want to abandon the trust and engagement of the children participants: what I interpreted as their (majority) expressed desire to have their voices heard. It was in the arts-circle that the idea for publication of their writing, and then my thought to gather their work in an anthology, emerged. There was a turn here to a kind of ease-of-conscience-comfort in the notion that I could, as Dorfman says, “let them speak for themselves” (Dorfman, as cited in Forché, 1998, p. 37), even as every single aspect of that notion was problematic. Work was done toward the anthology; Arabic, Kurdish, Chaldean, and English consent letters and calls for submission were sent; children’s writing and art were obtained from Iraqi children living in the US and in Iraq; I began the development of a website to facilitate participation, received verbal agreement from a publisher, and then I began to see the project unfold. It is a good idea, the anthology, and one that approached in a different way (collaboratively with established Iraqi poets and a board of children editors, for example) would be something wonderful to help produce. Not in this context, though. Not as an article on which my own success or benefit could be drawn. Not a place where—it would be impossible in this research to have it otherwise—my representation of the
children would ultimately be put forth and judged. It was not honest. And precisely because of the distance my position and function as a doctoral student created, I was neither ‘working with Iraqi children,’ really, nor ‘writing alongside.’

So what is left? Everything, really, though simplified.

Another turn in my life during this research journey and I was left humbled and in a place where I didn’t want to prove anything. At a moment, I remembered: seated in conversation with Kabir Helminski, translator of Mevlana Rumi’s poetry, and hearing him say, our purpose is to “delight each other’s hearts” (Helminski, 2011).

My research question throughout had remained the same. Is it possible to write the world well? Acknowledging the complexities, the contexts of this research activity, and the implication made in the question that the world might not be well—that courage in itself a precondition to beginning—as an alternative approach to research, would it be possible to have such a simple and such a grand task as to delight the heart, to attempt to write the world in such a way?
In introduction\(^2\), so you might have a glimpse into the places from which I (and this research) move, what follows is excerpted largely from an article in *A Heart of Wisdom, Life Writing as Empathetic Inquiry*, (2013) by Cynthia M. Chambers, Erika Hasebe-Ludt, Carl Leggo, and Anita Sinner (editors).

The anthology “explores life writing as a mode of educational inquiry;” the call was to consider “practices of wisdom traditions,” where “the deep work of paying attention to particular places and events,” might bring the practitioner to “a heart of wisdom” and “a greater understanding of others, and self in relation to others” (p.xxi).

The original memoir, written over a span of 30 years (one of the poems, in almost the same state in which it is presented here, I wrote when I was 12), is of a teacher who is a daughter and granddaughter of teachers. The abstract says,

> The author makes her home in an old schoolhouse in northern Idaho where she was born. Her maternal grandmother lives next door in the tutelage. Between the two is a garden. Perhaps the heart is a location, built of the structure one builds a story, education, a home. (Kramer, 2012)

Beginning from *humus*
It is that this hand, reaching back, reaching forward, extends 200 years.

My grandma was my first grade teacher. She taught generations. In her classroom, one could crawl up and sleep on the fire escape in the sun. Light there, more gentle than these determined knuckles backed into my mother’s palm; both hands, concentric, pressing into wood and led and word: our effort heats the pencil: this is what I smell. Some rhyme chiselled, burned into dream of waking, writ or stitched in this skin of my making. If I am to know the word, I must know the world, I’ve heard. In the valley where I was raised: in the lap of my grandmother, I learned to read. In grandma’s garden and field and kitchen: the world. Tradition may be rooted, tough and learned. Wisdom may be light and hover; certainly, it’s near the smell of skin and extends beyond where our counting can.

* 3 4
Barefoot

Witchcraft (it must be) that
what holds her to him

waterfall splash and dazzle
somebody saw their shadow, embrace at falls

*
What drives her there, through blackberry rip and thistle;
that walks her straight (must be, how she wishes)

unnamed bush, hung sweet clusters and white petal; could be God.
Not overlook foxglove, to pick bouquet for mother

It is the wound—she knows she wounded—that moves.
Anything born wounds.

*
What was it left her there?
Meadow large: lupine, huckleberry, spider, rose

*
Foot crunch dry weed, grasshopper scatter
what blessing, this too hot sun; creek far

It is another that runs faster, cooler; another weighted step.

She checks; she’s still.
Excerpts from her biology say “any regular day, she rode an elk through gardens of delphinium and snapdragon to her grandmother’s house for gingersnaps; swam in their bottomless crater lake and took baths with a bear.” Could it be she remembered the story wrong? Were there regular days, or was each day full of the smell of earth, of summer heat on skin, of burn from pulling honeysuckle with the tongue? She remembers that the gingersnaps were store bought (but she doesn’t even hint at this in the telling). And why in the world would she speak in past tense when describing the generations of geese she watches come and go? And how can the spirit be separate from the body/the senses, if it is embodied and known from the heart? All members are present here, in that beat, in breath. Or how about the story of miss-spelling her name, Christ with an i. And ever since, all that searching, over and over, to lose the I again.
Blotched, betrothed, botched

A good woman spills none of the rice  
Laughs only when her hearts a-fire  
Looks you in the eyes

My grandmother,  
in the fifth grade was expelled  
for having crossed her legs, her mother,

A good woman is beautiful, loves well  
Tells those secrets to no one  
Sits quietly in the moon’s swell

Great Grandmother Robinson,  
with legs like heaven or fate, died young.

A good woman is a fine mother, rises early, works late  
Is not dizzy, does not tire. Wears blue  
Makes one sweet smelling, scrumptious cake

They say she had the flu,  
heard something like coughing from her bed  
A good woman can fly if she wants to

Is careful when she stitches with red thread  
Or zips or buttons or holds, like potato in her palm,  
The pulsing glob from beneath her rib.

Great-great Grandmother Rivers was made to pay alms  
jailed for hanging wash on Sunday, sin  
another time for carrying a pot to a friend, ill. Stew and bagbalm.

A good woman might dance, might drink a bit, or not; loves wind  
a good woman, a good girl,  
knows where to find the best in him

My mother says don’t ask; don’t mention it again –  
Her mother’s mother  
The grass around her grave grows long,

Red, maroon, crimson.  
Says something else went on, gone wrong.  
Bachelor button. Lilly, Iris, Rose and Pearl.
In a corner the half-moon burns

Today we burn the fields. It is best to drag the rake through dry winter grass; hold briefly, pull up, allow air to pass through. Light from the farthest corner; water the ditch. Notice where the wind is, where the moon is. The moon has nothing to do with our burning. Move steady and quick.

Enheduanna carried the fire in her voice because her hands were full of baskets, harps, necklaces and a crown. She, first author, noted where the moon was. This had nothing to do with us. Burn the fields. It is Easter and when Christ was hung he was naked. It is Easter and this year there is one white swan on the lake. It is spring and time.

“When Loren and I were courting or when we were just married and young, it was spring or it was goose season and he, a strapping buck, came holding this white goose, high so all could see.” Shooting swan is illegal. Growing the wrong poppies. Awareness of certain things is frowned upon, or is it that indifference is wrong.

The mountains where the fields touch are the long black hair. Head hung prostrate. Ash Wednesday: a cross on the brow. Mourning a criminal is illegal. Sunday, they said, Mary did: who was or was not a whore, went to where the burning was done. Soot after feet washing. A year’s wages poured; poppies smell as sweet.

Gasoline was dumped on Grandma’s field. Helicopters flew out back. Smoke swirled in a dirge, rose. The moon is behind, somewhere. Grandma leaned her rake to hide the flowers she picked. Water in a jar. Seeds in the yeast can. We had nothing to do with the burning.

The moon is breast and metal, wails and sucks in our song. After rain it will be again. New and waning. Seeds moved by the wind. She liked them best because the blowing petals looked like lips, red and bitten. Mourning is forbidden.

Grandma hung black cloth on the windows, plucked the feathers. She could have made a pillow from all that wasn’t down. Enheduanna clenched a chisel. Burned her passion into stone.

Nothing to do with us. Drag the rake along the moon.
No matter what earth

She took the fallen chickadee, took the walnut boat, interred the two, patted smooth mysterious dirt. (her logic that the bird might float)

The roots dug here: once cedar, the baobab elsewhere, cavity in granite; What kept us here, once decomposing fir and fig; what about this place?

My mother’s hands fold little boats from foil, hats from newsprint. I can’t do this. Lost at sea, I navigate not by stars, which govern and burn out but by her voice and lull, a pull as constant as tide and depth. In dream the word returns to meaning; the face turns to itself in sunlight, to mirror or crowd.

Bread dipped in soup, milk poured into the ground, absorb. Logic that the bird might float. Wren on lily pad, flutter. Underneath depth; underneath snake.
Make sure you say she was a loving woman. Honey, sometimes good is just good.

The color of her silk block quilt is hyacinth, straw daisy, impatient. Is myrtle, sage and cradlewort. Is crocus, lily, onion. Is mustard, bear grass, iris in the fall. Is marigold. Is hyssop. Is wild faithful rose. Jesus, when he came to Mary Magdalene, fresh from death and not quite yet returned, looked to be a gardener, smelled of lily and of myrrh. Her loom is made of fruitwood. Her shuttle is cherry and pine. Same as her cross in the garden: moss, grapevine, wisteria, hemmed. Her stitch: exact and fine. Make sure you say about harvest, about bringing in fruit, especially the cherries. Sour and wild. That branch of the plum outback is stained hibiscus, where she hung the cloth to dry.
Do we miss these things in heaven?

Everything remembers. Wood remembers heat once it has been burned. Charcoal keeps a glow, secret. Trees remember water, call the rain down again, reach branches up and call.

Earth remembers herself, remembers herself. Opens up, rumbles, shakes and pulls us all back in again.

I remember in half-light and fever how her hair coiled around her head in a great grey braid, forever.

What I knew as sacred fell, fell, 
fell in waves. Aunt Mable let her hair down; no ordinary visit.

We talked like nothing was going on about beading, fishing and cabbage, about swimming in the dark part of the lake, late, when everyone else thinks you’ve been weeding the garden.

Aunt Mable stitched silk blocks; Grandma Gurt knitted purses. They said they had come to take me to heaven. Oh, I told them, I decided a while ago I’d never go to heaven.

It was when I was peeling the label off a sauerkraut jar; ran the water over it, over my fingers enjoyed it all too much. It was then I thought aloud I was done believing in heaven.

Gurt told the story of when we were huckleberry picking and how there was a baby, alone, crying in the back of a pick-up; about how everyone heard and no one did anything until the dad came back. I remember she chased him, beat him on the head with her iron wood cane all the way to the bottom of the hill.

At noon, the sky remembers the stars, the place they hold at night. If we ever feel sorry in our longing, we must remember the moon was once part of the sun, once part of the earth.

Have you ever stood looking at something you love but cannot touch forever? I said I was done believing in heaven.

Aunt Mable reached up inside me; took out the baby already dead; wrapped her in a silk block quilt; paid me with three pieces of liquorice from Gurt’s purse; carried the baby and closed the door behind them.

Remember how rain feels on the skin or how it is to float just under the surface; how water holds us; how we hear what is beneath us only? 
Or how fire burns – but not enough – if we touch.
In introduction to the qualitative research methodology, poetic inquiry

Academic/scholarly traditions around the globe, especially in the Middle East, have long histories of poetry as inquiry, as language and method of exploration, as philosophy, as contribution to arts, sciences, and education across disciplines. Historically, poetry (though considering Plato, for example, not undisputed) has held a place grounded and solidly core in the academy. Significant to this research, the most esteemed Islamic philosophers, Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Ibn-Arabi (1165-1240), practiced scholarly inquiry in and through poetry. 

Poetic inquiry in the western academy has gained validity as a qualitative research methodology, in part, through the work of the practitioners who have cleaved space for alternative, arts-based inquiry and who have built a generous community of scholarship, defining the method through their practice. Prendergast, Leggo, and Sameshima (2009) set the intention “to articulate a methodology for poetic inquiry [so as] to position it as an artistic practice carried out within a research framework that cannot and must not diminish the critical/aesthetic qualities of these kinds of poems as poetry” (2009, p. xxv). And where, as Brady writes in the foreword, the work moves from recognition that “The need for a plurality of methods that can be applied to individual research projects on the human condition has never had a stronger calling than it does now” (Brady in Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009, p. xi).

To understand this need, in the context of the proposed research, I draw from Forché’s (1993) statement on poetry of witness: “Extremity, as we have seen, demands new forms or alters older modes of poetic thought. It also breaks forms and creates forms from these breaks” (p. 42). Within the arts-based methodology where poetic inquiry is defined, practiced, and understood in many ways, I approach poetic inquiry, in part, as “a sociopolitical and critical act of resistance to dominant forms,” as a “way of knowing,” and as a “phenomenological and existential choice that extends beyond the use of poetic methods to a way of being in the world” (Prendergast et al., 2009, pp. xxi-xxv).

Some essential attributes of the research methodology, which if I come close to my aims, you may find evidenced in this study include the following: Poetic inquiry is performative. It uniquely positions responsiveness (Shidmehr, 2011). Poetic inquiry embodies the poetic image as point of engagement. It may be or create *deterritorialized* space.
(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Poetic inquiry may be an expression of alternatives to colonized/colonizing methodologies. Poetic inquiry exists within longstanding traditions of reconciliation. The method requires polyphonic voice and rejects the possibility of ownership/dominion (Bringhurst, 2008). As Prendergast (2009) states, “Poetic inquiry asks us to listen deeply,” and takes as condition that “language is always inadequate” (p. xxvi). Poetic inquiry holds ambiguity, opens to complexity, and exists where conditions of reflexivity exist. As Irwin and Cossalon (2004) say of a/r/tography, poetic inquiry may linger in the sensual and pedagogical spaces of experience simultaneously (p. 9-39). Poetic inquiry is in unique relationship with knowledge and imagination. “Pushing, pulling and seeing what happens, they said, are not a means to knowledge; they are knowledge” (Barfield, 1973, p. 24).

As Neilsen Glenn (2008) states about this method (which she calls lyric inquiry), “Lyric inquiry has an uneasy relationship with knowledge as product, commodity, or ‘trump card.’ Knowing, instead, is an experience of immersion and expression rather than one of gathering data only to advance an argument” (p. 108). The researcher performing the inquiry holds a particular position in relation to the research, where, as Neilsen Glenn (2008) writes:

She apprentices herself to the craft of expression. The effect is not, to use Rosenblatt’s term, efferent: a reader does not come away with the three key points or five examples. A reader comes away with the resonance of another’s world, in the way we emerge from the reading of a poem or a musical event – physically transported or moved, often unaware of the architecture or structure that created that experience, our senses stimulated, our spirit and emotions affected. (pp. 108-109)

Even as we may be carried away in (or bow to the mystery of) the experience, an even greater potential is possible when we remain interested in the structure (within the lyric or poetic inquiry) that may create such an experience. As performed lyric, this research dissertation is an exploration into the elements of poetic inquiry, image and imagination, specifically. It is a study of the creative process and the dynamic relationship the researcher has with the research method itself.

Poetic inquiry invites and requires a witness, a presence. Dialogic and changing, it is what we, the participants, make it. Prendergast (2009) speaks of a shared experience,
“Clearly to engage in poetic inquiry is as much a calling as it a method; a calling between the ‘I’ and the ‘Other,’ a call and response, a song that is sung, a voice that wills itself to be heard, in many spaces, both private and public, whispered (or shouted) into multiple ears (p. xxxv). Bringhurst (2008) writes, “Poetry is the language of being: the breath, the voice, the song, the speech of being. It does not need us. We are the ones in need of it. If we haven’t learned to hear it, we will also never speak it” (p. 44).

In an academic context, poetic inquiry may offer entrance to consider what it matters if we do not hear or speak poetry. If poetry, in its fullness, is an alternative to destruction and fragmentation, the significance might be in this. And if poetry speaks, might the method help us attend to what we hear it say? Within a concern that the “whole of the world” must prevail, Bringhurst (2008) poses the question, “What does poetry say?” and responds, “It says that what-is is: that the real is real, and that it is alive. It speaks the grammar of being. It sings the polyphonic structure of meaning itself” (p. 43). Perhaps an attribute of poetic inquiry is that, as the poetry speaks, it enriches the environment in which it is performed.

Shidmehr (2009) sets poetic inquiry as method apart from standard forms of research and, interpreting Deleuze and Guattari (1987), positions poetic inquiry, not in opposition to major forms of research, but as “transforming and deterritorializing” in a relationship in which “the inquiry makes the research itself stammer, so as to stretch tensors all through it and to draw a line of continuous variation through the hegemonic constraints of research genres” (p. 101). Poetic inquiry provides the possibility of being a participant in asubjective research (Shidmehr, 2009, p. 104), where the object is not to objectify or Other anyone.

Neilsen Glenn (2008) explains how this method positions her as a researcher where there is an order in learning about the self through poetry that may bring us closer in empathy to horror experienced by another, that opens the possibility for understanding our connection in the world, that prioritizes and teaches ways of listening deeply (2008, p. 110). Dancer (2009) offers: “To be listening is to be with uncertainty, to stay with shifting differentiations, to be still and paused until the next sounding thing opens to the next and the next—it is a place without ownership” (p. 39). Where the research aims are concerned with notions of voice and witness, poetic inquiry as method may be a response to problems of representation, offering alternatives to traditional paradigms in social science research
(Prendergast, 2009, p. xxxvi). Where poetry “asks back in ways conventional academic discourse does not,” the activity of the method may demand that we “relinquish control”; it may expose our biases and illusion of distance; it may force us closer or bring us before an ethical responsibility. As poetic inquiry provides a space for letting go of what hinders in our approach to understanding, as it teaches us that we “cannot know anything for very long” (Neilsen Glenn, 2008, pp. 109-110), the method may require deeper flexibility of thought and greater creativity.

Where research is performed within a spectrum of choices between resistance to or collaboration in conditions of terror or oppression, this method may provide particular agency. In its dialogic essence, poetic inquiry, focusing “on the answerability of an act/experience, uniquely positions the researcher,” as Shidmehr (2009) states, in a position of ethical responsiveness so that “the researcher, recognizing the uniqueness of her being and her participation in the world, actualizes this uniqueness in her inquiry” (p. 102). In all stages of this research journey, I understood and approached the inquiry as witness, recognizing potential, as Forché states:

The poetry of witness reclaims the social from the political and in so doing defends the individual against illegitimate forms of coercion. It often seeks to register through indirection and intervention the ways in which the linguistic and moral universes have been disrupted by events. (1993, p. 45)

I also favour the reflexivity, perhaps “unattainable in any way other,” as Gadamer (2004) offers in Truth and Method, for the experience of art “asserting itself against all attempts to rationalize it away,” together with the experience of philosophy, to insist that scientific consciousness acknowledge it own limits (p. xxi). Where poetic inquiry, set in the social sciences and humanities, is both art and philosophy, it cannot be excluded from the call to critical recognition. Rather, poetry, “a tough master,” demands full attention to our limitations (Neilsen Glenn, 2008, p. 106). To be performed, the method may require a kind of alert participation and submission or humility from the researcher at once.

As Neilsen Glenn (2008) writes about her experience,

Poetry asks that I let go, that I accept that my life is not only ephemeral, but that I live it in a liminal space: I will never arrive. I must let go – of the hubris of knowing, of believing in books and citations, in the authority of cherished phrases: 

research shows, we know.” (p. 106)
What poetic inquiry holds especially significant to this study is its dynamic stance in liminal space and, perhaps, the desirability of “stammer.” Given as an example, the research question itself may or may not allow for or anticipate conclusion. The method allows for exploration in territory that could be understood as “unchartable.” It permits multiple positions at once, as I attend to ways of being present, with the questions themselves, and in practices as a researcher and teacher in relationships that may, as Vellani (2002b) suggests, “invoke a plea of virtuous care” (2002b, para. 1). I understand this poetic inquiry as activism, as resistance, as witness, and as an expression of return, where the research itself is performed as an act of reconciliation. An exploration into the method itself, I consider the possibility of hope where, as Leggo (2004) writes, “In a world of heartache, precipitated by violence, war, poverty and greed, I propose simply that we can transform the world by writing poetry” (2004, para. 8).
In introduction, on how to read

Touch Veil; Touch Riq

Reading as an act of imagination. [So many metaphors for being]

Since the image is a veil, it will refer us back to the light of meaning and the darkness of the universe simultaneously.” (Adonis, 2005, p. 122-123)

Ah, […] how I would like finally to touch "veil," the word and the thing thus named …. (Cixous and Derrida, 2001)

How we might read; how we might approach this text before us: might I show you a way into looking at the world differently?

What is the structure here?

Lay all the words of these pages out in a blue print. If one of the predominant images here is threshold, how do we understand the architecture of this door? What resists, bends, and bears the load of this space? Would we take the house apart to find the supporting beam? What if it is simple, dome and mud? Are you ready to help build the house, employ your own level and curiosity? Can we keep each other company, even as we might find ourselves alone, standing in a foundation already un, familiar, or not yet dug?

During the pilot project, part of the body of this research, within an arts circle with children who had recently arrived as refugees from violent conflict in Iraq, we read together Silent Music, A Story of Baghdad, by James Rumford. Thinking I had something to teach, I was pushing the conversation around the word, “courage”, when one of the youngest boys asked me if I didn’t really mean to use the word, “encourage” instead. “You mean when our friends encourage us.” This was an identifiable moment of stammer, where I felt humbled and where I was startled to understand myself in relationship. In memory, I had been identifying with the child in the story (and the brave but freighted caliph in a tower), alone: finding ease in the writing of the word, “war”, struggling with the quality of heart (coeur) it
takes to form the letters of forgiveness and peace. Reminded: I sit in relationship, with friends, in conversation, doing this work together. As I write I am aware of you, dear reader, of the heart you bring with you, and your courage being here. I am aware of my responsibility to nurture a space where we—meeting in this place together as we are—may encourage each other.

Where do we stand? Might we invite a kind of patience, a sense of humility to prepare us for adventure, if our reading may be given to, as Hunter (2009) dedicates, “the Unmoored Imagination” (p. 7). Where when the entire book is a stripping away and a building up, we may be offered innumerable metaphors for reading, invitations to consider our proximity in apprehension to our experience in the act of imagining. Sometimes the sea is what we are looking at. Sometimes something smaller, like a poem, or our poor history in a box (Hunter, 2009). Sometimes, we might ‘worry’, “What if there is no there there? What if arrival is convention? … What if going in isn’t really going in at all? One threshold simply leading to another. What if there is always a further?” (Hunter, 2009, p. 36). Or if we find in the reading and writing, “this betweenity”, no specific direction, or that what we’ve built is “a raftered world waiting for the roof to go in” (Hunter, 2009, p. 9).

In the metaphors of reading, the construction of text, maybe we built a kitchen, a place familiar, fragrant and comforting. In this gathering place where we partake in the inner workings of the meal (see the stew pot simmer), this preparation for communion, what if we find ourselves with onions, and for some reason, our job is to get to the bulb’s centre. Find our floor, then, scattered with peel and tear and skin. (Take care: all of the discard may be good remedy for what ills.) Or, we build the Diwan, another room to gather where we are served; where we may sit and ponder. Or stand and dance – a turn at listening. To this home we build, this meeting place, I offer here a welcome. In gratitude and longing for our hearts’ freedom, I trust you will find your way.

In the way that writing does not, as Leggo (2004) says, “enable the writer to hammer down secure truth” but to “explore possibilities for meaningful living in the world” (para. 9), as readers, I suggest we explore with the same possibility. You should know I have made no attempt to hammer down any truth here. Neither do I avoid or treat the spaces of tension superficially. Within the method of poetic inquiry, I have worked to develop spaces where
we may read the conditions of our own lives in relation to what we understand as true. I invite your own imagination—a necessary companion as you read.

Where there was no structure built, neither a boat. Far away from home, at the Nile, I saw a book floating; its pages like flutter and swell, moved in current; the spine unraveling; the story opening, heard in the lap of waves on shore. Stood and squinted. Imagine: a reading with our eyes sometimes shut: the ear of the heart open to hear?

**In introduction, a note on image and text**

How might you read the relation between image and text where I make no differentiation?

Through the photographs, which make up part of the body of this dissertation, I offer another exploration of poetic image. Central to interactive art, Massumi (2011) posits, is “the behavior the work triggers in the viewer” where “the viewer then becomes participant in the work, which behaves in response to the participant’s actions” (p. 39). The photos, with minimal explanation, invite us to understand that the form itself may “contain the reality of the object” (Nasr, 1981, para. 13). In this dissertation, I consider all images (photographic, typographic, lyric) relational to the imagination and our action before them. The photographs are named according to the formal formatting guidelines for a table. Although I am aware that the stories of the images may enrich the reading, because of the equal potential to prescribe or foreclose experience or engagement with the image, I have chosen to offer the photographs without description. Their context, I intend, may be within the poetic inquiry itself. The meaning may be found within your own imagination and making. I cannot tell you what you are looking at. Neither would I want to name it for myself. It is enough that when I come before the image each time it is whole and new. Each reading, each listening and seeing, is its own experience, where I may discover myself also anew.
In introduction, on form and organization of the dissertation

Following the Introduction and Invitation, the body of this dissertation is composed of eleven “listening events,” referred to as Sama. Each Sama begins with a quotation and the introduction of notions and poetic images for contemplation. With this, you are given a simple description of form or poetic sequence in the Sama. All critical analysis and aspects of the dissertation are performed in the poetry itself. Poetry may be understood to be at least both the textual form and the lyric argument, where poetic image is essential.

Following the Afterword, the last structure of the dissertation is the Diwan, placed and functioning like endnotes. You may find it helpful to refer to the Diwan throughout your reading. Though I use numbered endnotes to locate the reference in the Diwan, the notes are not intended to link directly to specific phrases or passages of text but are references to the notions or argument in the Sama, overall.

The organization of the dissertation is one suggested approach. You may find an alternate experience reading the poems/the inquiry in any order you like.
In Introduction to the philosophers

This study is situated primarily within Islamic Sufi traditions. The work of this dissertation is in large part an exploration of notions arising from the work of Abu Hamid Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Ghazali of Tus (1058-1111); Muhammad b. ‘Ali Ibn-Arabi, who was born 1165 in Andalusia and died 1240 in Damascus; and Hz. Mevlana Celaleddin-i Jalal ad Din Muhammad Rumi, born 1207 in Balkh and died 1273 in Konya. These philosophers, their lives, work and impact, are of immense significance and exist within complex cultural contexts. Relationship and politics are inherent in the mention of any name. How and where a person lived and with whom they shared friendship is as important as what they said. In this case, the philosophers I reference represent a cosmology maybe a bit unfamiliar to audiences where this dissertation may be taken up and read.

Within a complex tradition, their work arises from within and then provides foundation for significant schools of thought. There is both harmony and dissonance in the fields of study devoted to the interpretation and application of their work. I am not a scholar of Al-Ghazali or Ibn Arabi. Though I have not overlooked their lives or taken their work lightly, like the other philosophers I reference in this study, Plato or Heidegger, for example, I cannot provide an in-depth historical context or describe with confidence the chains of thought in which their work exists.

The design and scope of this inquiry is not large enough even for me to provide sufficient introduction to the philosophers. Were this a broader study, a careful narration of their historical lineages and contextualization of their work within Islamic schools of thought could prove to serve a greater opportunity for understanding Islam in general, a place for reconciling questions of “Eastern” and “Western” philosophical traditions, or a place to make new connections in scholarship. These possibilities are not excluded from the work before you. Like Rumi’s poetry may give us a glimpse at a world that we sometimes think to be unfamiliar, the introduction to the Sufi philosophers here may happen in a different way.

Where all notions are cultural constructs, and as this inquiry is primarily an exploration of essential notions of Al-Ghazali and Ibn-Arabi, the study is a kind of performance of the notions. Even without an historical treatise, the potential to experience these notions through the poetic inquiry may offer a meaningful introduction to and deeper understanding of the worlds from which the philosophies arise.
In introduction, on terms and notions essential to the inquiry

Dīhlīz


ʻalam al-mithal and creative imagination

“Visionary event, ecstatic initiation, whose time and place are the ʻalam al-mithal, the world intermediate between the corporeal and the spiritual state and whose organ of perception is the active Imagination” (Corbin, citing Ibn ʻArabi, 1997/1955. p. 47).

The world of “ʻalam al-mithal” is the similitude of the physical world we live in; however that world is without physical limitations, it is the mystical world of imagination, and the world that eventually connects us to the Divine. It is said that “poetry” comes into our world from the ʻalam al-mithal, and Creative Imagination is its organ par excellence (M. Vellani, personal communication, January 30th, 2014).

The ‘heart’

Another way of listening and witnessing is to do so with the pectoral imagery of “the heart” (qalb), which in Muslim tradition is the most powerful apparatus of affective cognition.” … ‘Indeed, in this [history],’ says the verse of the Qur’an, ‘there is reminder for anyone who has a heart or lends an ear and stands witness.’ …It is only when the receiving ear engages in listening that the reader/listener signs the text, even if posthumously; only then is the contract of future friendship sealed (Moosa, 2005, p. 44-55).

“The heart is like the eye, and the innate intelligence in it is like the potentiality of sight in the eye” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 46).

Toward a deeper understanding and in an attempt to translate the notions, I position myself with intention to come to experience the notions and to explore them in and through poetry. Experience may be possible, in part, as I understand each of the notions to be in some way a position or activity, a kind of stance or approach and, at once, the place in which
the intended presence is performed. In the dissertation, you may find this communicated directly through the arguments of the poems, where deeper communion with ideas takes place, and through the form and structure of the poems and the dissertation as a whole.

The poem titled *Dihliz* for example, works toward definition of Al-Ghazali’s notion by listing attributes of the notion. This notion then is taken as the primary position or stance throughout inquiry, not just as metaphor of “threshold,” but as the embodied tension the notion implies, so that the dissertation becomes the liminal space of which it speaks. In the same way, *poetic image*, and ‘*alám al-mithal*, the *creative imagination*, are explored in every aspect of this study, as subject and as vehicle for the inquiry.

*Sama* and *diwan* form the organizational structure of the dissertation.

**Sama**

*Sama*, (Arabic and Farsi) [also Sema, Turkish] from Arabic roots for *listening*, is an event. Practiced in Sufi traditions, beginning, perhaps, in Baghdad in the 3rd/9th Century, the ritual is a kind of *hearing for understanding*. Essential to the ceremony are poetry, music, and intentional sincerity to *Sama*, to *listen from the heart*.

This ‘heart’ in traditions where Sama is practiced, is not just the physical organ but “a particular ‘space and paradigm’ in the region of the organ-heart, which addresses itself to the Divine at every breath, and by which the Divine ‘knows’ the creature” (M. Vellani, personal communication, January 30th, 2014).

*Sama* may be understood as “an ethic or etiquette.” The experience of *Sama* might be a kind of mediation and opening to something like silence, “in front of the ‘Speech’ of poetry” (M. Vellani, personal communication, January 30th, 2014). Where the ‘Silence’—a presence the pilgrim longs to enter—may be the ‘Speech’ of the Absolute or Divine, in *Sama*, in spiritual concert, we turn.

We turn in the direction of humanity.
Diwan

Diwan is a book, a collection of poetry, a gathering of loose pages. In this house we build, it is a living room. Like salon. It is the conversation itself that happens in that physical space among cushions, music and tea. It is the exchange, an intentional gathering. It is a school, even; a place where court is held, decisions are made; a place of consideration; a place of speaking about and coming to knowing; where poetry is recited—eloquence, dialogue, a plea—right there on the spot. Diwan is a title: here a bow and a kiss to the hand of the teachers who people this space.

Ibn ‘Arabi [“If you are Khidr…”] perhaps because “the events of the soul are themselves the qualitative measure of their own characteristic time,” says, even if we are separated from our Teacher by centuries or continents, [“you can do what Khidr does”] the conversations that may be impossible in such time, may indeed be had in this world of ‘alam al-mithal (Corbin, 1997, pp. 66-67). (Where we are: the poetic imagination.) All invited; all may enter or leave, freely.

In this diwan, imagine, then, a table where all are seated at once. (Even if ill-advised the gathering of personages is distinct in their sounding.) Imagine, where there is “no controlling voice” (Bringhurst, 2008, p. 47) all are friendly here. The room is set: a kind of record of the conversation, a return to the images and contexts that inform the argument of this poetic inquiry. The notes are offered here to enrich, to savour: an invitation to read further.

Rationale or explanation: organization of the Diwan

Even as the form of the poems in each Sama differ (one Sama may be in the form of a series of lyric narrative poems, for example, while another may be one single long poem). Each Sama is conceived as a single unit or utterance. The endnotes refer to notions in the Sama overall. What startled and brought the poems into being.
Zwicky, in the forward to her first edition of *Lyric Philosophy* (1988), addressing the format of her book, where the two texts she speaks of are her own words and works referenced, writes: “The relation of the two texts to one another is somewhere between counterpoint and harmony, somewhere between a double helix and the allemande of the earth and moon” (2011, n.p.). That’s lovely. My choice of the word “referenced” here drastically over simplifies her commitment to and activity of treating the spaces of “inter-textual resonances”. What she does in presenting the texts as they are, is open to a potential for deeper engagement and thought – unprescribed; an invitation, in this way, to friendly and careful conversation. The notes: in the presence of our teachers: acknowledgement.

*The dance:* (Did you see that couple in mid-twirl sneak a kiss?) The reason for this note taking then, the citation: not a measure but a note to the proximity: all of these notions, words, in conversation. We dance in the salon. Presented [diwan]: What moves: you are given the text, the object from where sympathy resonates. So that the reading may be honest, deeper, lighter, enriched. Here, a reference is a nod to the poems’ ab-ha of what bumped up against each other – to that jolt and wonder. It is to incite curiosity. To lay the dance floor, the scale, to contextualize: looking out over my shoulder, what is the view through the window? There is an embodied relationship. The poem’s interiority is not separate from everything else; the notes are a response to a need, as Harrison identifies, for the “kind of thoughtful vision, that is, that harmonizes inner gaze and external object” (Harrison cited in Kwasny, 2013. p. 72). The notes are a jotting down, where we see pivot and turn.

A return to the poem: In order to perform poetic inquiry, we must understand that traditional expectations of a dissertation are found within the poetry itself. Everything is there: critical analysis, data, reflection, and dissemination. It is within the poetry that the arguments are made. It is within the poetry that the deeper conversations take place. The driving questions are presented and addressed within the poems. Within the poems, notions of curiosity are explored, theorized. The poems may embody the questions. In their form, structure, and images, they may attempt to embody the objects of this study: poetic image and poetic imagination. In the poetry performed and read is proof of the creative process explored and, possibly, an opening to move toward a deeper experience of the creative process. The poetry is its own explanation and defence. In this poetic inquiry, the legitimate space where the research takes place and must be understood is within the poem.
Invitation

Lean in as the story is told: vestibular sense, poetic image, instruction for seeing

Purpose: to understand methodology, where poetic inquiry may be understood primarily as “gaze.”

If, as Bachelard says, the poetic image is direct ontology, a phenomenology of the soul and if the gaze of poetry is courtesy (Lilburn, 1999), how might poetic inquiry—a courteous inquiry, courteous seeing—move us toward a deeper understanding? What images do we have to illuminate this gazing? Ancient, the image, that there is a window that opens in the heart. Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), poet, philosopher, and esteemed scholar, gives instruction for how to see (with the heart), how to take in the world, past the body’s hardest bone (eardrum), where in the act of listening we meet, are at once necessary witness, and at once [at our greatest depths within the image] may begin preparation to see.

“The poetic image bears witness to a soul which is discovering its world, the world where it would like to live and where it deserves to live” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 15).

[Let’s place ourselves here:]

to understand poetic image:

Poetic image is whole (Al-Ghazali) and it is also trace. It may be a place or state: a space for radical meeting (Forché) of self and other, a multi dimensional location (Zwicky, 2011) of potential and tension; a threshold/dibling (Al-Ghazali). Where poetic image is motion, it may be vertical and verb. Poetic image is not equal to metaphor (Bachelard). Even as it may be like a butterfly in that it is not a thing to be enslaved, made into object or pinned down, it is not a butterfly in that, perhaps, it can never be only one thing at once. Yes, it exists in this sensory world—no—along with the five plus senses, a doorway into our perception and memory, as Kwasny says, “enabling us to locate and embody the invisible and the unknown.” It is generative, first of the creative imagination (Corbin; Ibn ‘Arabi) and exists possibly prior to thought (Al-Ghazali; Bachelard). Poetic image may be known, says Bachelard, as direct ontology, a phenomenology of the soul. Where both the poetic image and phenomenology require active participation and deny passivity, there is not space for enslavement to object; in poetic image there may be liberation.

[And, specifically, we are here:]
Where dialogic, where “utterance” is a limitless continuum or whole (Bakhtin, 1986).

Where the gaze of poetry is courtesy The “gaze of poetry is courtesy.” (Lilburn)
We stand where there is necessity of witness; where we are the “necessary witness”
(Al-Ghazali; Forché)

[And we are here]: within traditions of Sufi, Islamic scholars, specifically near teachings of
Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, where the heart is understood as the seat of knowledge:
where (not just in our imagination) we may listen, witness, see from the heart. Where there is
an image (mithaal) of the whole world already placed within our very being; where poetic
image exists within the heart.

[here]
Within a qualitative research methodology, where the research may cause itself to stammer.
(Shidmehr, 2009)
Where we may or may not find the ground upon which we stand, moves.

[And, at last, we are here:]
in what we have called liminal space/diblíz (Al-Ghazali) at the threshold,
where, perhaps we will or will not leave; where we may or may not arrive.
Loosen the strap, leave sandal here
    (kiss too is a place of hover, or refuge)
    in architecture of connecting, entry

A small covered place to wait for rain
before the house or sanctuary
    between

Where place shoes, tie donkey, set the heavy basket you will not carry in

It is just stones, held up by each other
No, it is the space framed in stone, sometimes arched like rib cage

A vestibule in the ear too, named this
by any definition, where we gain or lose our balance
Image 1, Threshold
There is a *vestibular sense* and a threshold of pain.

a nerve for listening
timbre twinge in each story necessary witness

The hardest bone of the body holds this labyrinth

what is fluid knows gravity, motion

we call this canal, duct, window

a rib cage is nothing of armour; birds with enough longing pass easily
through

sometimes we cover our ears with our hands

listen then to your own heart’s pulse

this story—even of escaping—never left the palm

Some measure absolute threshold of hearing. Since the tone is always present,

“*Yes*” is the answer.

In reality a grey area exists where the listener is uncertain as to whether or not
they’ve actually heard.
We don’t even need to ask—what we hear when we already know the answer.

So said Shams Tabriz:

There were many things that could have been said
but because the right quality of presence wasn’t there, they will never be seen (Helminski, 2011).

There’s the risk:
“The ones doing the looking are giving themselves the power to define” (Mita, as cited in Smith, 1999, p. 58).

There is a kind of greedy stare that does not see, that threatens and diminishes. Research, as is often practiced, does this, or can.

“You cannot truly see this stone if you believe the world is yours to do with as you will. … You must lay no violent hands upon it!” (Lilburn, 1999, p. 35).

Image 2, Pilot Project

“The world seen deeply eludes all names; it is not like anything; it is not the sign of something else. It is itself. It is a towering strangeness” (Lilburn, 1999, p. 47).

Our task here/hear: not name nor claim;

It asks willingness to see: that the [eye] be vulnerable

[this world]
Data collection

*Proof,* she said, you had an encounter: what proof that you went, were there?
Before we used the word with yeast: what one does with a bit of warm water before milk before flour.

First thought: were the holes drilled in her brother’s body proof of anything, of any kind of life. Returned the corpse limp as she dragged it: could it testify to how before he cared for her, kept her safe?

(This question itself betrays.)

In the circle where the children sat, there was no need to explain. The youngest motioned to the angel on her shoulder: the angel there. Visible

in a song of comfort that grew in pores of bread rose and in the wind left this leaving, taking nothing as evidence

that even as bread enters and becomes the body song is a quick lover of breath

If one wanted to analyze this: discourse of proximity what the child spoke otherwise in perfect past tense said, “I live in Baghdad” how could we argue, though present street is all pine and seldom blood puddle and run

Take it as given that this child, introduced as having come from “the triangle of death” and though he has never seen the Tigris, is, as he says a river

a river a river (from above it is not dry banks coursing canyon through map it is, (he is) as a he says, floating clear sweet a beautiful warm sea.

We all already know a bucket holds nothing of ocean though enough salt for a small loaf from wheat—
given do we reach dip in, drink?

* 18
Is it possible to write the world well? If—with intention to practice courteous gaze—research may serve as witness and resistance, what then, does this mean? How might we come to hear to see?

a gaze of courtesy (you say courage to) how might we here reconcile our practices as researchers as teachers with the soul’s desire to be fully, to be fully seen and to fully see?

To see the world whole it is

Is there a window in the heart? The heart itself is a window.

There are doors in the heart: one opens hinged to a world tethered to senses to the visible world
here we know rough grain of plank and knock and wait know the feet sore
sand and pebble prepare to take from waft of bread cushion, cool drink
there is acquisition taking in knowledge in this body we understand –that is door one
two: open to ru’ya – spirit – here we already have already, the whole world – never made lesser – is

present in the heart here, we see
open this door able to see
There is nothing like better translated: nothing like his likeness *laysa ka-mithleebi Sheea*

“[…] but a vision that calls for completion […] For what is known generates a desire for what is not known” (Adonis, as cited in Kwasny, 2013, p. 40).
Frankincense, copal: Grogram wrapped cedar box

I heard there was a weaver who stepped back from the loom and dropped the wool whenever her heart was heavy. Her work was light.

I heard another kind of weaver warn against poems that are all light and no plank. Something about birds trapped in a carpet of night.

In the stylized design can you recognize this easily as goat? Cedar as cluster of properties, only one of which may be basket or pole for door

What is permeated with resin
yarn clings to fingers of balsam

a whole poem could be written about this cricket in amber

a heart suspended in silent, flammable pitch

traveler carries a basket of feathers, robe that never once dragged through the brush offering

textile bends to the body’s labour: curtain, veil, rope
even if she weaves the sun, such things absorb block

fragrance (yes) fragrance of light

* 21
I am a river and I float to the ocean. I like how I float to the ocean. Some people drink sweat blue water. I am blue and sweet. I can float on oceans. Their are rocks on the edges of the ocean. Some people splash and play in me. They also splash in big long oceans. I can float on any water you want me to.
What should I do with this bucket of water when the whole world is on fire?!

Is it true "The physical world cannot be known in the way poetry aspires to know it, intimately, ecstatically, in a way that heals the ache…." Again, says Liburn (1999, p. 13).

this that is not naming not map no retreat he does say, “love the world” taken in or out of context.

danger to mapping the soul only one route to get there and all along the way:
   bandits, extortion,
satchel with broken lock paper and all those sketched birds scattered everywhere

orbis universalis

Coordinates for shells that were left (where beach where nest) what this river flows over

is oil
mined land mine

there is a line in the sand step over
Pamphlet on estuary

Circle: the perfect shape for planetary orbits
Or, unabashedly wanted physical proof for motion and location of Earth

Inside the eyelid: teacher kneeling
Along this seawall: waft of grass and bay mud

You began this journey to image you

Act: since everything that is desires its own being (Arendt)

The crucial point is not when the beginning is located but why and from where (Mignolo, 2000)

So we shall say the map maker took plume next to inky index finger, drew on purpose, the crevasse of his own damp brow into a world already splayed and halved.

There is a small green plant in her bag
basil tucked between camisole and skin: immediate memory of home

miracle: return (another word for being born)

Against glass pane: two palms

Written on one: shorebirds, marsh and mollusc
The other stained green, blue

(Where did you imagine the glass: a division between two images pressing, or one being looking out, leaning in?)

Now, look directly into sun
Place your palms over your eyes

read estuary: tell me, where is the water salty, where drink

* 22 * 23
“We see veiled mirrors that condemn us to a blindness that means that face is utterly unable to look upon the face that ‘Is’ before it” (Bree, 2009, pp. 117-118).

Bachelard assured us:
“‘There’s no need of a gate, no need of an iron-trimmed door; people are afraid to come in’” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 132).

* 24

Even, even if speaking of the scarf

the one abandoned in branches after youth snuck out over the wall
was it to see his love of course

and love has many forms

recited in whisper the one we intend here is *The Scarf* read into cups of broth or water from what is sacred, a well

dead

there is fine etching on the wall and like on many other walls (some bar entry and break, some bless)
we may also read the trace of fingers into stone mullion, and even near floor

someone (or many) may have pressed their brow pursed lips to push [prayer] safely beneath lowest rail hear

there is an impression made

if *songe* is all that’s left to give witness (quite, be still) you may find that squeak of what’s hinged [heart] moving open

from what was said you may find yourself draped and well

* 25
“In lyric’s idea of the world, language would be light” (Zwicky, 2011, p. 230).

Image 5, Threshold.

Etched, framing this door: the words of *Qasidah Burdah (The Poem of the Scarf)* by Al Busari
Awe is the entrance

It was a mistake they said, of the map, when one country accidently invaded another,
set up camp.

Anasheed he sings: *it is the same sea*

Or this is euphemism for refugees fled.

Number is not name not face not what each person walking away sings

*a cappella: the ocean in a single beat*

Or the soldier breathes out Or the child in the hedge by the door breathes in
Why does it matter? This imagining, this baring, this seeing – this soul’s desire for the world where it would like to live and where it deserves to live

Do you hear that: deserves to live …

“There is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better” (Adorno, as cited in Forché, 1993, p. 41).
Lean in as the story is told

What does the look of shock do to the story?
Poor teller crouched remembering; listener, even poorer, fails to breathe.

The body holds a certain pose in wonder, another in grief.

When the horror from her story shoots out from the hearer’s face

The story itself forgets to breathe, balloons up and carries away
floats to another countryside or city, over burned palm, parched lake, far away
floats over green, by every name and thing, green valley, green pasture, green mossy hills, away.

(Remember the body crouching)

Floats over the wedding (of justice and peace): you may kiss, floats the story
floats over banquet, musicians, rose sash on dress.

Or the story draws a circle for their dancing, for their grief.

Dance: story in lung and face and liver and feet. Dance: fire, breath, recognition, face.
Threshold:
Toward a Deeper Understanding of Poetic Image

The thesis that a certain kind of imagination is within reach and necessary to transcend violence requires that …. We must understand and feel the landscape of protracted violence and why it poses such deep-rooted challenges to constructive change. We must explore the creative process itself, not as a tangential inquiry, but as the wellspring that feeds the building of peace. In other words, we must venture into the mostly uncharted territory of the artist’s way as applied to social change, the canvases and poetics of human relationships, imagination and discovery, and ultimately the mystery of vocation for those who take up such a journey.

(Lederach, 2005, p. 5)
Image 6, Threshold
Toward “the wellspring that feeds the building of peace,” the intent of this poetic inquiry is to more fully understand the creative process itself. As poetic image is an attribute of the research methodology, how might the exploration of poetic image open space for understanding the experience of poetic imagination and potential for transformation within the act of writing? We are positioned here (moving from Al-Ghazali’s notion of dihliz) at the threshold.

Our positioning, where we stand, the place from which utterance emerges, cannot be severed from and is as significant as the argument itself because the threshold may frame all other space (Moosa, 2005, p. 49). Threshold may locate us in an expansive space and time (Lederach), where complexity and ambiguity exist, because tension and suspension in threshold is a freeing space. Being so, threshold, “[dependent] entirely on the force field of the argument,” (Moosa, 2005, p. 272), is also the definition, the lines drawn as boundaries within a design of uncertainties. If this study is one threshold, one particular entrance, then what are some named structures that support the framework of entry? What are some of the notions we will encounter in this Sama?

Language is a given medium of this inquiry and the threshold. Language is only a close approximation of experience and it is experience itself. Specifically, poetry is experience (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1986) where the “poet speaks on the threshold of being” (Bachelard, 1964, p. xvi) and where language is in a state of emergence (Bachelard, 1964, p. xxvii). The poetic imagination originates consciousness, brings into being (Al-Ghazali; Bachelard).

Even as arrival is to threshold, the researcher embarks on this inquiry ferried by a commitment to actualizing freedom. This study asks, “What notions of knowing and forms of learning will support the reconstruction of social imagination in the service of human freedom?” (Freire, citing Simon, 1994, p. 21). What opportunities for hope may be unveiled when considering the poetic imagination within traditions of reconciliation?

Within image “there is a window opening in the heart” (Al-Ghazali, 2008). “Come in through the window!” is the invitation to experience the materiality of poetry. Here we may know “door” and “house” to be made of breath, wind and voice (Bachelard, 1960).
On form:

The poem is threshold: place for meeting; for gathering while at the same time losing balance; a welcoming; entry, neither public nor private.

Engendering the dialogic, the poem in its form nods to questions of gendered language. Bachelard (1969), devotes concern to the loss of gendered language, the inexact identification of a word minus its le or la in English. This he relates to the anima or animus, declaring reverie feminine and obliging that the poetic image must be received in a state of anima.

Doors, in some traditions, also worry about the gender of the one knocking. A door may have two knockers, each with their own weight and material, producing their distinct and gendered sound: identifying the visitor as male or female. In some traditions (I have heard) the visitor approaches the door and requests entry with a poem. A male visitor may speak arrival in quatrains, a female visitor in couplets, and the host—or One who stands behind the door—will answer in like gendered stanzas. Any matter of information is passed between the arrived traveler and host through the collaboratively generated poem before entry is granted, before either speaker moves from or through the threshold. This poem, in its form, attempts to mimic this dialogue and exchange of greeting.

It may be that the form is the only glance at a question of gender here, as the greater argument may not concern itself with gender at all—concluding, as Bachelard does, that in a deep state of reverie, within the poetic image, we know ourselves in the masculine and feminine at once. Taking as given, as does Al-Ghazali, that the speaker is boundless, the form of the poem scores boundaries within and for utterance, which otherwise may be most deeply understood as a limitless continuum or whole (Bakhtin, 1986). Let’s say we cannot have a house without a door. Then, threshold frames the house; draws its definition apart from pasture or sky or wall; builds for us a structure we can recognize and enter.

We maintain our stance at the threshold throughout the argument. The poem is one long breath, a song at the door.
To gain entry you must give song

It may be foolish to look for signs in the dust
traveler kept his head bent anyway, journeyed daze, through stars

At this door he arrived
marking stone path to the entrance: rough herb, geranium, fallen cone
(or any fragrant green that please to pull you in)

here stand

consider of the two knockers which grasp may best fit your palm
which within your reach may be cold or warmed by sun

all of the body that is not roof or well, is dome
wet lungs borne this far, from them or from the arch of your feet
begin your beg and hum and song
Hollow to empty the being hallow

pen and flute from one hollowed cane
    the human soul with a gnawing
throat gurgle of reed half submerged
this chest bone is threshold

perhaps it is foolish to look for signs in the muddy bank anyway
to score body with ink, air with imagined bird in flight
it is where river carves rock where step in
absence as filling as light

*30
At this door there are two knockers

Two people with the same dream on the same day. That night, papyrus and a restful sleep.

Each saint floats in sky, in sea, carries open book.

This door does not say danger, no entry. Fire, keep closed.

As a book is a door. Story is dreamed, lived in threshold.

*31
* 32
I came to the door and my mom said, “Where have you been?” I’ve been far, far beyond the chicken coup. 
And down came the rain. Down, down, down the rain.

This is what she said, many, many turns after she had taken Grandma’s face in both hands; tilted spectacles so the witness, better prepared, possessed movement of affirmation only, nod yes to the story beginning.

I want to tell a story. Will you listen?

Next to fireplace and poker, wood brought in from outside and spider, between crackle and red, I remember — under this table I hid. Was the frog in my imagination then, or real: skin—not wet, not dry—green against marble carpet, one leg stretched out and just where the belly bulges and goes flat, hides obvious ribbit. I think if I put a straw—hollow grass—in frog’s mouth, I might just suck the ribbit out. Or breathe in a word we both share but neither pronounce. It was the jaunt (without permission) to the lake that got me in this trouble in the first place. Maybe, if no one sees us under here, I’ll carry frog back through sand and cattail, horsetail to lily where we’ll both breathe better. Or maybe, I’ll sink—isn’t that lake? deep in frog’s eyes. No blink
Image 7, Threshold
Memorization: tradition of community reaching forward, reaching back

Lawhah propped in sand, framed by sky. Read over and over, lovers’ reverie.
Small wood tablet: blank slate: door

library here is standing tree
bark against blister

shade allows eye to see what parts

(say shadow
say light)

blisterr against rope pulls wood boat

work of carry, scholar’s cargo
lovers’ load

Did she say pull boat over ocean, heart as desert?

Return to stand of trees.

* 33
*34
*35
Image 8, Threshold
If you ask the one who waits at this port, toes dangle between desert and sea, she can trace you the map of each vein in the beloved’s brow of course

Memory is another blink altogether.

Forever etched: fog of departure
Crisp this moment on the bridge
There is a swallow that passes, a catch in the rib before breath,

a strange misplaced     a waft of cinnamon

at this point over the river

the heart hopes for rose

caught
it is, or it isn’t ever the same

Pull glass vile from her pocket
Open corked jar found on beach

What flies out is a singing
Recitation of longing

Sorrow the smell of pink flowers

dew
sweat from lover’s brow

preserved

Or is it hollow reed floats at sea

56
No barrier between the cry of the oppressed and
God: something to fear

Said, suitcase or coffin, as in sole options departure:
(I’ve carried both but not quite)

Farmer, bus driver, student don’t know when they will be hit
by what drops from drone that buzzes above and hovers and whirs and does not leave

when, because of the way we’ve built this temple, it is given

the roof caves in

this dome meant to receive silence, or if not, the vocation of longing; moist whispered prayer

when sanctuary is riddled rats pull flesh from rubble
(I didn’t want this image here but it’s true).

teacher filled tea cup to overflowing, point: must be empty to receive

farmer’s hoe and till imagine carrot, labour, wheat

    if two stories: one of empire one of creation in which is the digging done
suitcase is empty, all there was time to pack before run

run not a figure of speech,  
it is the body reaching, unaware of tendon or root, broken glass, pocked asphalt

Where do you go when the door has been blown from the hinges?

There is a roof that looks like sky
Image 9, Threshold
They said deprived, abandoned place; to leave without permission; little or no vegetation

Each language has a sound for bee, for frog – what they make
Not honey but the sound of honey being borne

Fragrant white succulent not blossomed for joy of our passing, neither for shade
and if you have no name to call it, what could you trade

give away thirst be blown as dropped spine

over sand.

Are the breezes gentle, do the hills tremble
Say, what news do you have of from where you came?

The spring that feeds the village has gone dry. People are digging wells. Dirt flies and piles.
Grapes and grass and hillside miss caress of tumbling trickle.

Say the bird—what is that call again?—nests in desert

Some white flower sprung, perhaps a fungus, in moist bed

Say desert is full of song
Stars speak pebbles
Was the door ever closed?

Nothing one said – or if the keeper of this hostel is hostile?

Let mountain valley cradle, learn to rock and comfort self,

to sleep to wake

in between there is a state (or is it another door)

Something fierce and gentle: sob, starlight, moss on skin

Rap at every entry
call out

and then began to make her own

rounded the arch of abdomen into sound

What she had been drawing in sand, recognized: the pictures scored in dream.

No address on any door that corresponds with this name.

No door

(said before)

No name
The poem of yes is one breath long
and it opens the door of every house

Image 10, Threshold
No! You cannot cross, neither your olive tree.

Try to map a poem, she said, and you create a desert with no hope of a well and years between rain fall.

No, she said, you erase that desert all together.
The human voice  [threshold like] no other

when the throat’s vibration

a passage for migrating birds

temple gong mimic  opening Om

when there is no other instrument

when the mother’s grief and joy

returns returns

from cavern wall
The poem, yes, is one word long
and it builds the house of every breath
Ney, an owl

*Who did you go into the desert to see?*

*A reed shaken by wind*

We might say grass. Is this withered in your imagination or trembling with dew

If desert owl in wilderness, have you conjured mice and screech

Or solitary mourning of flute player bowed among cedar

this breeze who kisses sand from your hair

kneels you here
Rode boat into bulrush

Mast, even in harbour, is not still point

Horizon lost

This song is not about standing on shore
Because the man in one hand held bread which could have been a rock

If *life begins well, protected in the bosom of house*
Imagine wood table near stove, dream doily from which bread was taken up
and a bit of wheat flour fell dusted the corner of floor

Or *the house holds childhood motionless in its arms*
What if the dream is of the infant kicking blanket open

*The virtues of shelter are so simple*
that the child moves
arms are not wings

This day, one in four in Afghanistan do not live to the age of five

The bosom houses neither rock nor wheat
*the worst place on earth to be born*

I think the poet was exaggerating *that we should have to wait to be cast out*

Not suggesting what the other hand cupped

*38
*39
Two-headed serpent guards the way in

Said, “A lock is a psychological threshold.”

Or this one went about scattering keys
Or this one removed the door altogether
Or we’re talking here of an entirely different embrace

Said, “A lock doesn’t exist that could resist absolute violence.”

Or a lock of hair curled rosy infant’s face

Said, *The house belongs to God or the guest*

Such care in welding
Ornament of crocodile and lily soldered to chain

* 40
To arrive at this grotto, a path was cleared

Of the *cutting of the branches*

the knife looked something like the word  become or future
felt in the palm    knowledge

could have been mistaken for a lock

Where brush was removed, this garden tended, in this field

even nothingness is something to be held

have you never imagined a rock wall guarding roses?

Perhaps they twisted twig for arbour

thatched a dwelling

fortified limb; the archer’s bow

    even the branch as arrow navigates

  in some direction home
Gait of burdened

marching comes the traveler carrying sitar
and the story of this one hunts the milky way con cañón de futuro

unburried from the strum and treble
story and in one image milk pouring through

way of milky passage

galaxy (in this metaphor) is
trellis, is garden
night where stars and song are hung

and that cannon, mistaken, looks just like what we have lugged to the gate before

did you read into the word “treble” tremble,
or that only a child for only awhile can carry this tune

or did you read in vea lactea notes from home light years and halos
or spiral of nipple son torn from

what can or cannot eternal be sung

42
Bare

the breath to  fragrance of mud  puddle of expanding light  skin to song of

*witness to a soul which is discovering its world, the world

where it would like to live and where it deserves to live.*
Poetry is consciousness dreaming of domicile at the core of the foreign world, the mind deeply homesick and scheming return, the tongue contorting itself toward uttering what such a return would be like. It is mind remembering the old world of the Garden. .... Poetry remembers. Poetry leans into the world and back to this state when the mind bespoke the soul of things, gave them back as reflections in a peculiar pool. (Lilburn, 1999, p. 6)
Palmistry

Passerine fly by earth’s magnetic field of something born and something learned
homing pigeons navigate by smell imagine
(She too, could return to warm behind her beloved’s ear, anywhere.)

and the house sparrow? Where there is no glass, window is always place of passage
where fragrance wafts in leaves

Do you think they sing to each other over the ocean?

Heart line and life line do not intersect
equator two poles vast green that bit of warm beach where the clutch hatched
from above, desert is not like palm nothing divides Earth no toponyms or scar

If I asked draw me a map to your home
predict what will happen next

The child speaking of flight retelling future
of the bird brought from Machu Picchu to New York:
Do you think he likes the city?

Every night felix looks up at the sky
Stop here at the camp (implies path we’ve been on)
kneel next to fire (crackle, of course, ember and smoke)

Peer with courtesy into wrinkle
   as she pulls small glob from dough

   hands it to you so that you may mimic and roll and stretch
   (are you not child here)

on your own how the dough is moist and [like] something alive
   in your palm
imagine (without thinking) you make a globe – this bit of (what will be when risen and fired)
   bread
   is the world in your palm

   world in her palm flat
watch stretch and place dough onto grate
fingers turn bread ash

   for the eating
   before eating move from this place

woman alone by the fire

   author of world
   of solitude
   of reverie itself
Image 14, Threshold
Or: because there is nothing near you, the world may gather closer.

Do you understand yourself to be like gravity?
Your task to hold
another to this world

long kite string you tether
whatever this creature, tied by toe - loved- will not fly off

maybe you brace yourself against the gate
blow with all your might
behind door which because it is a door

will open
leave passage clear

invite traveler such narrow comfort
if we didn’t know the nature of shadow
we might say arrived

hero in this story may be
miracle itself beginning

imagine you let go of string is there a ceiling, a bumping against
what nods across
mirror of floor

(neck bent looking)
is there window

if you turn to see over this shoulder, now gently dangling without tension, is there a great opening

beyond which is

and what about the effort of spinning
true? great danger in standing still
The contemplation the monks said was helpless
whether they stared at tracks of walking stick in the sand
or the stars

everything, of course, around them moved

stillness wasn’t enough

even this bug at the end of her trek at mid-day and mostly silent: a sundial
that shadow zipping around

(as if it were in search maybe of a well and the well itself cried out)

desperate

if you blink dust filled gaze it is just the earth rising over the moon
this happens every day

continent you stand on migrates

shoreline is nearer or not with tide
sometimes there is a jagged rock exposed in this bay

else while muscle is far under surface
whether in squint you see them or not near here

something like a frog and red fish swim
You must lay no violent hands upon it.

If St. Augustine’s daughters of hope
If the son’s heel strikes a spring bursts out

it is the children doing

Or the labour that precedes this seeing

Those months spent sanding plank
rub linseed in grain wait absorb
notice how cradle now returns light

If just the act, refraction of beginning
Or what the waiting holds
pushed up by courage, one sister and anger

if the children if action then why name each girl

(Perhaps stillness in anger is not what we mean nor interpret
in the cry that brought forth a well)

the boy had a little thought in his heart

Maybe a motion that called into being

*48*49
Image 15, Pilot Project *50
Notice

no sign post or mile marker or mossy stone

Rain returns to field whence it rose

When she leaned into the photo to discern it was a child

In the poem of the child on the stoop when she leaned into discern there was no garden

In the cradle in the poem of the child near the garden

“Children … like a block of ice to a desert sheik”

It was simple the child was looking in

and in the glass there was a silhouette of flowers

“… because always there will be children.”

Do you imagine her picking flowers? Already at the door, stems clenched in hand
Once there was and there wasn’t a child named so the “breath” couldn’t find her

Once there was and there wasn’t

scent of skin and henna

before that a bride adorned in rashush butter jasmine waits in her canopy

seated beneath hoop and draped wool

once there was and then there wasn’t a sparrow fate of the mendil

like a bride in her canopy waits

how the body knows anything without another body?

before that before the child was born

from a distance, as much betrayal:

one could not tell how many were carried in this flesh

cloaked in womb an entire universe

Once there was and there wasn’t a campfire in desert a village nested at edge of the stream

where do you live

lung manubrium soft pad of small toe pulse and gaze earth

before that, once, she took her finger traced the entire surface of her face
Like the lighting of fires on the hillside at night for guests

there was the preparation, gathered twig and branch
(while always next to the river, near the pit waiting match) flute player lends breath

Or the One who stood behind the door appears

Embrace

It would be (act of the imagination) for any poet to try to describe this kiss
Image 16, Threshold * 54
Alley Poems; Problem

For even as that which changes has a form, the image (mithal) of that form is reflected in the mirror or represented therein, as also every intelligible has its specific nature, and this specific nature has a form that is reflected and made manifest in the mirror of the heart. (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 35)

Our age lacks the structure of a story. […] That history can be told in scattered images (while eluding them) indicates that the age repeats the same story over and over again, marking an infernal return of the same. (Forché, 1993, p. 43)

Return. According to Blitz and Hurlbert (1999) in their conversation on teaching writing in a violent age, what causes us to come back to the classroom everyday may be our desire to make peace with ourselves, with others, with a troubled world (p. 184). Where the human narrative is experienced as fragmented, what is the image in the mirror? This Sama considers the research problem through experience of “alley”. If alley is constructed as a space in which we live our lives, what are the conditions of alley? What careful attention to history and memory is necessary for living well in our future? When we find ourselves with the need to speak about or tell the story of problem in a different way, how might we understand the return to a new story?

On form:

The poems in Sama 2 are one unbroken contemplation on “alley,” a living inquiry (Meyer, 2006). Except for the first poem, Sublime, all poems were written over a period of six months in the same location. Alley Fragment and Name was written on invitation to respond to Krabbendam and Chodirker’s (2010) collaborative visual art exhibit, Alley Ways, as was the collaboratively written What alley found in poem (Elza and Kramer, 2011). The use
of slashes in the dissection of words to create visual break is a practice common in Elza’s poetry. One way I appreciate our use of the technique in this poem is within a conversation on fragmentation and reunion/return, where the slashes act in multiple ways at once, breaking and binding, like the way we might use the word, “cleave,” which is both to adhere or unite and to divide by force or separate, to bring together or to fragment [the whole]. Focusing on the poet and art, we wrote he/art. We could have written the word, hear/t. Much of this Sama [event of heartful listening] on “problem” is held in the writing of the poem which begins, “If you want to trick the thieves,” which I know I wrote for Eddy, a man who lived in my alley. We shared a wall. I slept inside the building; he slept outside. During this study of alley, Eddy caught pneumonia and died. How is that possible? What image allows us to hear with a broken heart?
Sublime, if the gardens in misfortune are taken, they shall be returned

*If anyone steal cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belong to a god or the court. If anyone steal the minor son of another. If break a hole into a house. If the thief has nothing with which to pay...*

The girl dreamt a boogeyman ate her heart, ate her brain. Dreamt conquest. Dreamt bombs under the bed. Dreamt goats chasing. In America she slams the door, misses the bus to school

Old uncle counts his hardship:
  knuckles rent from reed or willow—blind book seller had many good books to sell – hours late for school
  *Curse Hammurabi! Curse Hammurabi!* for this blased invention, let his grave be cold.
  Principal with ready stick. Memorization, answer quick.
  Miles and miles, up dusty streets, up snowy streets, without a donkey to school.

Cousin raised here and cousin still there compare:
  What do you want; you have all this food and family around you? I am alone over here.
  What do you want; at least they don’t beat you at school? “Osama Hussain,” they say, “terrorist. Muslim go home.”

*If, in war. If robber or witness. If shepherd lets goats out in field. Usufruct. If captured, may pay with the field. If the flocks have left pasture. If any man, fell a tree in a garden...*

Geranium in the park and overhanging figs. Marbles in the bottom of the book bag. They walked miles through tanks up the street. Landmines through the short cut to school.
The image, in its simplicity, has no need for scholarship. It is the property of a naïve consciousness; in its expression, it is youthful language. The poet, in the novelty of his images, is always the origin of language. […] to specify, that the image comes before thought, we should have to say that poetry, rather than being a phenomenology of the mind, is a phenomenology of the soul. (Bachelard, 1960, pp. xix-xx)

From a story below, her black throated song carries up, rubs against the back of the sleeper’s head, pulls from dream out into night, into alley and clang of bottle, music, pitch of common hope or dread. Where what is taught and learned; where conditions in communities, where practice – the walls of alley are shadow or built and torn

what act

Where alley, like street Al-Mutanabbi, is papers strew and blown.

Tunnel and tell, and what could be, but is not, well.
Alley fragment and name

Pull a fortune from the alley; card of wisdom reversed or blessed

Corrugated cardboard alley (say painted red)
A river of alley: where window of light, window shades drawn
Slick spill of pollen and milk
   And this is neighbourhood drawn by alley

Someone wrote a message, rolled it, slid it inside a bottle, sealed it, tossed it into the alley…
So the winds and current might lift it away.

Shadow alley—wild electric sizzle—touch with the eye alley
Peel back the walls of the house; exposed beam, night sky, negative space
Touch alley of bolt and screw; touch steel, acrylic, orange

Dance in the alley, why not? Head touch the ground. Broken alley pours out light.

Here in the narrow of grate and pail; corner of copper patched over
Pipe of echo; aluminum; hollow to sky alley; darker pallet of rain
   (Do you remember where you placed this dab of yellow?)

Spackle alley, rubbed smooth, made rough. Pull fingers free from gloves, touch

Uncork the message, run nail along wax, waft of whisky and whimsy, crack
Perhaps it is a love letter to alley. Perhaps the answer to our prayer.

What is endless
   This room is alley. So is your heart.
what alley found in poem

to arrive mind turns into alley
pass/age way asp/halt green sentenced

phoenix wing streaks canvas sky
white g/loves on t/ouch book h/old rust

bolt tiny corner of copper torn
from alley from word from he/art

n/ail sole step th/rough first th/ought
st/rip the alley is not

if we follow if need/le if look a/gain
pick fragment glue feat/her to coin

rel/ease spring toss cliché in g/utter watch
what d/rains through what blossoms

#57
If you want to trick the thieves, build many doors into your house, entrances from all directions, no locks

for this one, milk is hopelessly white
for the one whose mouth is open, it pours from fingers, is knowledge and light
for the one who hungers, milk never, always is

in this alley a door painted cherry
in this alley a door, born of the dying breath

language builds a tree that’s hollow, weaves straw into nest

for the one who no longer sleeps in alley
set a glass of warm milk, no worry if rain dilutes

thin liquid of longing, more than the hurried heart wants

*58
*59
The alley 19 hours; still

puddle fills, evaporates
light moves away from
something spills
raven, brown finch, squirrel, seagull, crow – swoop in
hop, flutter pick up crumbs
– are gone

someone passes

squirrel returns
  flicks tail in puddle

same ripple made as rain
  made
concentric echoed circles

in the alley

light passes onto this point

it is morning the first day.
Cosmos alley, cell

A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. (What is the matter with you?) We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. (I am closer to you than your self.) A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. (I am the Beautiful.) Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures (I am the Elegant.) and the whole of nature in its beauty. …. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive.
Alley is not like door
no anticipated knocking
what is after the passing through
given not veiled
threshold—yes—mystery
another kind of open

Of course memory haunts alley
Of course alley dance
and rush and spill
Flute is alley
femur of cave bear, bamboo, wood
high octave of longing

unsettling as it may be, somewhere in this alley:
a violin
or clouds passing over    sigh    sorrow    wind

Far away river is alley
water break around boulder:
the voice of God.

* 62
Architecture of left over

snicket ginnel jennel twitten entry
jigger wynd pend vennel

close with a hard ‘s’ as in sad
Jazz alley blue note worried swung between
Book floating in alley

Hot bread for sale in the alley
rack balanced on head hunger

The story is true she saw it happen
generations of passage
this woman her busy hands in this chair in the alley

hot bread two coins

tunnel of refuge table for drink steps lead to open water

a baby a basket float sink
Audition: hollow in temporal bone

Sound Alley
Chirp chirp chirp chirp soft chirp demanding, startled chirp
light foot steps cat meow language — scat
constant chirp foot steps rustle of leaves tweet
rustle tweet meow still chirp sat thump growl retreat

anxious hurried chirp wood breath of strain
warning chirps
gentle affirming tweet soft chirps constant
signal tweet
rustle of something weighted (water or wood) crumple of paper or leaf
constant chirp loud chirp
chirp sharp chirp constant chirp
tweet tweet other birds far away human breath (is it water or wind)
knocking

expected: foot falls, plod
hum (from rib cage)

a door opening

throat: an alley hum

rumble treble song
Painting of alley propped in sand on the beach

Ocean is not an alley

Narrow the eye
into shell
past chip  pursed seal
calcium wave
past fleck, mica
past basalt grain
  through this space  distance insufficient to meet
– no intention to break, eat –
  creature rests

Neither is mountain alley

Not distant nor dizzying peak
crevasse of great falling
  into valley, maybe
stone passage  knee weak in the valley
igneous  rock moving  rock break

place me under gull’s wings
fish

*  Can you bead from this stone a necklace?
  blown  sand  glass  what used to be rain

*  Earth strung from neck on string

After the eye has held
for awhile this speck of sand

swells into mussel, clam

*  second heart of hagfish
beats the distance of alley

salt on lips
Saffron scarf through holly: a study of alley

Of most interest: a kiss behind brush
Where it is all berry, frostbitten rose, prickly wax flower, leaves, and no trellis

What in the damp shade of another tree – arms open – are feet moving hurried toward waiting

embrace. Fruit, flower weight of brain on spine;

Smile is tension in the face.

Alley: internal surface of sigh.
What metaphor is this, as *silent as thought*

worse yet to say, as firm; what language

don’t they see this horse galloping through here!

Always it’s a horse

*He who listens to the stream cannot be expected to understand the one who hears the singing of the flame.*

(Bachelard, 1960, pp. xix-xx)

Bridle that beast loose in the alley —hey! Wake these people

No use, dance —they dance, twirl to singing flame

Too noisy this first manifestation of silence
Awake to

much anger in the alley
glass break voice break shatter or scavenge

morning dark cartwheel neck straight
crow leaves alley what’s left hooded hunger digs

shiver each exhale of breath tremble

pull open the rib cage offer to alley left over
bottle, can, bedspring, bottle, can

already written face in the alley
already wrote hunger (pain)

winter narcissus grows in the alley
river of spilt milk fades
Salmon O swim alley

apo away from asunder
if we return to the garden even as there is no garden
if we turn mimic constellations place each star again directly where it was born
what the tongue cannot manage push of exhale and whoa quick
just in case there really is another heaven before ribcage releases to sky breath A....
Language speaking of water *absorbs the lesson of the stream*

Here a great God stood; shook off feathers into oleander, kukai trees,  
bignonia, pink petals, palms,  jagged palis

:poem to exit time

fragrance left at the door of the house  
what is done is true and correct  
the words spoken stand before you

broken sapling, fist;  furrowed face and cloud

dew and hanging vine,  tromped  petal

what springs from  ground

Stand of trees speaks softer than the noisy alley I live on.  
If you quiet these yelping thoughts, you can hear in great distance, coyotes.  
Open or closed, your eyes bejewelled in stars.
Alley like this.

a child not yet born
old man clutches sapling

Five years ago, minus one minute: rubble.
Five years ago, and: soup on table, mother, birds of spring.

In his coat pocket: snail shell, small amulet of home,
pulled from sea.

Imagine a field—open, of course, and wide.
If I say alley is not tunnel dug to collapse the mosque, to flood
It is because I don’t want alley to be this way, though it could

I prefer alley where one greets the neighbour with morning
of jasmine of milk morning of light

In this alley there may be chairs
gaze and linger

blind spots for holding
    lovers pressed to stone
We might think of war as dividing populations into those who are grievable and those who are not. An ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all (Butler, 2009, p. 38).
Alley River

Barge push raft drift
story shackled, chained

up this river carried
imagine the house for wedding
dismantled, turned inside out

shore passage

*strange people look the wrong way wrong place*

coffle
  Congo alley
  Slave alley
  Milk alley

when living meeting place

    Nile of the new world
middle

    dredge sandbar meander

door lintel of Mataatua
returned
before the rest of the house

returns

river floats leaf

    passage

* 64
Blind alley

coal delivery

gato callejero

soot  foot path

pounce
At night the alley was named krylon cerulean

In daylight painted over mop of a long handled brush
rolls over

Where there was a whole sky burst into the wall

The wall we determine to be there
the youth, name we obliterate we will not see

Owned; our gaze to the cloud reflected in a puddle it is not deep nor open nor up
and this way it is not even blue

just there below the window
(could be)

hue hubris
shadow rolls over

Hue man
If breath drops down into throat
alley, might catch on fire
Alley is grave

The cemetery grounds also contain numerous monuments, structures, and gravestones attesting to its hallowed history, including the ancient Mamilla Pool, which dates back to the Herodian period, or the 1st century B.C. Since 1860, the cemetery has been clearly demarcated by stone walls and a road surrounding its 134.5 dunums (about 33 acres). The antiquity of the cemetery was confirmed by the Chief Excavator assigned to excavate the Museum site by the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA), who reported that over 400 graves containing human remains buried according to Muslim traditions were exhumed or exposed during excavations on the Museum site, many dating to the 12th century. His estimation that at least two thousand additional graves remain under the Museum site in 4 layers, the lowest dating to the 11th century, also verifies the antiquity and importance of the cemetery. 

* 65
The fifth element: alley

Young boy running from the devil, over cobble, hop. In his story,
  she never understood alley.

Where her birth and running was all trees. Climbing vertical, root even, though down.

Then someone said Beloved and she knew: the object of the alley.

Enter seller, basket weaver

Since we are all invited, let us move to alley. Call out, shall we: watermelon, onion, milk.

You see that weaver, he returns to the same window each night. Sometimes fifty cents means,
  I love you. The tarry, please, light your lamp.

If we begin to do the work of alley: we all become light.

So, in the alley, if you see a caged creature, offer key. And drink

Sit then: cup unwashed, alloy of yansoon and mint.
Horse clop  rhythm alley
time  unbroken
alley  resist  alley dream  no sleep

- - - - - - - - Cat tiptoe through alley
Alley attribute: no door

no one saying       come in     keep out

alley may or may not have mirror

puddle, perhaps; shiny steel or dark-from-the-inside glass

probably, the alley has stone; sheer face where recognition known
in the dark corner of the self
in the dark alley, endless pupil of the other met
it is here where light enters, is filtered

alley     eye
        unity of story
perhaps alley itself is threshold
nothing holds, contains
this shadow, remember, passes narrowly through, is gone
this beggar, this brother, this lover, this woman old and young… not one asks
permission to enter or leave search hard through the scriptures
what’s missing?    no one says knock on alley
door is another story    and seek
always the before and behind
The saying of alley

Alley said:

In his story is pomegranate    in her story is pear
it is the same story    you see, there was a door    they both walked through
on the table was a basket and fruit

so many, so many stop before knocking
so many fear the doorkeeper    who isn’t even there
or if he is, he sleeps

the saying is tarry    the said, a breath let go too soon
Image 17, Threshold
Human listening habits – their focus, sophistication, and rhythms – are changing and adapting to these shifting acoustic environments, narrowing our capacity to hear the diversity in sound while the soundscape itself is flattening, a phenomenon that entered soundscapes with the industrial revolution where sounds are increasingly highly redundant (drone-like), have a low information value, and an eclipsed attack decay. (Dance, 2009, p. 31)

For the mystics, imagery and metaphor suggest at least an implicit awareness of language’s own limits; and to the extent that it (imagery) is aware of its (language’s) own insufficiency at indicating or provoking the Holy (e.g., “this is God”), imagery becomes for the mystics a “superior” mode of language. Imagery, in this regard, is perhaps less naïve than philosophical discourse. …On the one hand, [imagery] is the only way; on the other hand, one cannot take oneself too seriously in doing this “only way.” (Steinbock, 2009, p. 35)

To cut, to stretch, to reach …

Our lived soundscape, when recorded graphically, appears as a “continuous flat line” (Dancer, 2009, p. 31). Colonized and colonizing, we flatten our environments, pave over, extract resources. If one approach to research might be described as a reach to grab, take, distance, or control—habitual, perhaps done in the aim of obtaining or creating knowledge—what might happen if this reach is performed differently?

Might research be a dynamic striving, where the act itself is performed in a state of freedom/submission? Might the movement (a leaning into/leaning forward) be of ascent? This metaphor of verticality is significant if the researcher holds goals of participating in (not flattening, but) life-affirming action. One understanding of epektasis is “reaching out to what lies ahead” (Ludlow, 2007, pp. 231-234). Where the research must consider its own position in relation to a “future” or “ahead,” and for one who “loves the questions themselves” (Rilke, 1934), an alternate reach of research—something like epektasis—eternal reach, eternal longing—may be a necessary [prerequisite] position to perform poetic inquiry. The methodology implies courtesy—the gaze of poetry is courtesy (Lilburn) and contains space where the research may be performed as contemplation.
Perhaps there could be room in the academy for a researcher to consider the activity of her research in such a way? Or a greater hope, even, that the research itself may perform a kind of reconciliation.

**On form:**

The poems may fall in the genre of meditative or contemplative poetry. For fuller contextualization of allusions, please see *Diwan* for *Sama* 3.

... *to admire, to return, to sing*

*habitual;*  
*habitat;*  
*babit*: clothed, ritual, marked-witness, or veil  
in this home: how we live, perform, practice
The bare act of waiting

A hunger for bread and stones
pigeon approaching
hand
holds hunger
is bone and flesh and bread

Stones have no hunger—only
thirst, pull into themselves
desire
rain; wait, if need be, all day in the sun

Take eat
this sesame cracker given to you
flutter of wings
green-collared beggar

Desire to know wholeness; love the thing without changing it

Or is it that I hunger
to possess
small feathered body
stone

Or the hand by reaching in hunger
becomes what cannot be said
becomes
desire
hunger

Bent over, the man dug a trench in the sand
one big spiral
asked her to walk in it
step, step, around to centre
the woman stood

They were married this way.

(among pigeon flutter)
did circle, stone or step
contain
the reach of hunger
Plato says the goal of human eros is to return. Return to what? The Good, says Plato. But there is another story of the return that claims the place we wish to go back to is the world, the world restored to its earliest unions, the Garden, the world with human consciousness finally nested in it. (Lilburn, 1999, pp. 48-49)

Image 18, Threshold  (Sorqawshan, Iraq. Photo courtesy of Askary, 2010)

“Humankind was not kicked out of the garden of joy.” … “We are still in that garden.”
(Highway, 2003, p. 38 & p. 45)
Cut out a space for the altar

Always at the first step:
    light, song in the window above,
    staircase, and bride led by Word
    what delicate hand, what delicate foot that reaches
    always beginning ascent
    and beginning

suspended
    dove changed into dove

image possessed
stretch
in tension   folds her wings and gaze to where thrown

submit
song of songs    glory to glory

where the Temple moves
At the Night of Union He Sees The Stars Upside Down

See it all at once: light, dust, air – dizzy –
Spin – cobalt, amber, wine. Grapes crushed, mint and burning juniper tree.

Drum, heart, hand, heal and pad
Of feet beating earth, wood, rock, metal. Heart—empty—

Allah Hu Allah Hu Allah Hu Allah Hu Allah Hu Allah Hu

Everything at once. Three fingers up from the rib that made Eve,
Below the nipple that spins me dizzy: a scar, barely

There (on the day I was born) the priest slid a knife
Into your chest, at the zikr. Remember me?

Among light, mint, and the zither, spinning with you twirling.
Tell my mother, at that moment I was born of the breath you set free.

* 70
Every vessel drips that which it contains
Eighty-eight efforts of gratitude

The story of rice: hunger
in the abundance of each grain: what is absent, what is not
how many spoonsful to feed my starving sister
what river of waste and wanton
diverged from her thirst, the grass of this seed

Golden, a phrase of human protein;
this rice pretends it's breast milk: not really, it wishes (I believe)
it were rice, a hunger of its own for the field

Some say, in each grain, is God
then, in each bead of sweat,
in the milling

Where something like the wind and sorrow, pushes through the grasses

the song of rice: my sister's voice

rising from the field.
Common Praise

I.

As far as the east is from west. Start here, where let this heart be centre; extend right palm, extend left, stretch: at someplace they do meet. There is a mudra of reverse prayer where palms kiss horizon where sun both rises and sets. What is it, in the refrain that is as close as far removed: forgiveness and the implied or freedom, therefore. Where the shoulder blades are dome, are sky the reach: and kneel, kindle, ash and weep.

II.

You will be called

the rebuilder of broken walls the breaker of walls
the restorer of houses in ruins the restorer of houses in ruins

It is good for us to be here. If you wish I will make three dwellings.

Such fortification to contain What was light shone

III.

Knots, fetters, yoke: the instruction is loose, tear, untie, let naked hungry kinsfolk like dawn, noonday, darkness
desert is as well-watered as garden there is no like to hunger as far as hunger to fed
milk, perfume, grain

No

word as broken flask, leather cracked

lip of glass, dry

burlap split, sack limp

empty pot rimmed in light

Yes

Otherwise?
It is already late and you are tired

Brown tissue paper rose in the V, beneath the V of her neck
The priest dances. Yellow school bus hauls labour from the field.

Mass on the grass; used water bottle, shoebox for alms
Few partake; she finished all the wine.

Ours, we said, *nuestro*, mine.

Everybody fed. Cup wiped and placed.
Withered hands return to cup the vine.
Gills and lost

The desert is an erotic place, not in veils and ankle bracelets
but in poverty of longing

Did you hear what that man said?

There is no home and no returning.

Each step, then, wanderer,
crush of sand and no arrival.

This instrument of gourd, resounding chamber,
pluck cold and weightless chord, pick a hopeful star

perhaps, in standing still we'll find Her
or, parched remain in hunger

The peak of the Alps, once the seafloor near Africa:
A great sharp collision and the bones of a little fish rose to the Sun.
The world is its names plus their cancelations
(Lilburn, 1999, p. 5)

If you pause where the hand is reaching
past leaf and light extended still is it not
eternal reach eternal longing this word

stumble of erotic poverty out of which courtesy strains.
The River can’t be known because it is an unlikeness
even as you are salmon, you’re lung and flesh
If everything about a thing is divine, if everything is divine
         … not even reaching reaches her truth
Return

What will you do? There will be no one to lead you.

If there is no river, no ibis or chora
If there is no whisper which way

No pontiff, mother, shaman
There will be no drum, no waving prayer to guide you

No horizon, no stupa, no star
No piece of bark or beach of sand to crawl into

No moss or rock or garden
So how then, will you walk foot before foot to your heaven?

* 72
[Sama 4]

Who Did You Come Here With?

This Majestic Imagination You Gave Me: On Utterance and Response

Human beings are discourse. That flowing moves through you whether you say anything or not. Everything that happens is filled with pleasure and warmth because of the delight of the discourse that’s always going on.

Discourse 53 (Rumi as cited in Barks, 1997, p. 76)

The dance is light, and where it is is darkness…. Poetry’s bones are the bones of the dance: not movements and pauses and such, but meaningful units of movement and pause, which is to say images and events.

(Bringhurst, 2008, p. 27)

What the poem translates, I propose we call experience, on condition that this word be taken literally – from Latin, experiri: the risky crossing… and this is why one can refer, strictly speaking, to a poetic existence.

(Lacoue-Labarthe as cited in Forché, 2008, p. xxvii)

The poems in Sama 4 consider the dialogic within the notion of the creative imagination. In this conversation, there must be a presence as a witness. In alluding to Rumi’s poem, I offer an example of sobhet, a particular kind of meeting within a tradition of teaching-conversation and presence, where what is uttered passes through the heart.

We’ve spoken of poetic image as space (a distance/proximity) in relationship, and within the creative imagination. Let’s think of utterance, too, as a space, where the activity of living (in community), the enactment and construction of experience, takes place. There is a crossing here. Imagine, what is being asked is permission to come ashore, where gifts are given. If utterance anticipates response, does this not imply hope? In the waiting, what can be reconciled? If “pardon” is said at the table, what then?

On form:

The poems in Sama 4 are lyric narratives that involve call and response. For a meta-analysis of the poem on utterance, Come into the world, it’s good, see the Diwan for Sama 4. We remain positioned at the door, knocking: the conversation across shores, or an intimate whisper at the table we share.
Ploughing with a cow and an ass

I.

First step to barn and field, the reach for harness and blade: all of this already contains hope of harvest. The cow and ass; the morning breakfast; that first steam and lift of dew stretch of memory toward, what hunger expects to be filled

II.

This sliver of window—pastoral, celestial—it was itself the sun: burst of radiant born of metallic salt in kiln—potash, lead and silica: craft to control and bend what sight

Who hung this window drew by cubits: flora, fauna, angel and flame to separate (or bring together) the holy and most holy, where ark, staff and sandal all single pane

It was this shard from shatter trampled colorless

Where pressed to earth lets no light pass

One night that proved, if no one stood to stop the burning, the killing would not be kept silent: destruction as they willed.  
Night of broken glass. morning of fire, smolder and ash.

III.

Or, another meeting in the field:
emancipation signed, the booted next to bare feet read: proclaimed

Watchnight, unfolds in hymn, fine hope, and light

* 78 * 79
Come into the world, it’s good

The utterance takes his place at the table

    These aren’t bush beans, George.
    I said, Did you feed the hummingbirds?
nods

Speaker, busy with units
    soldered, chained
    slung over the shoulder
    stacks blocks of measured ooh and ah

(He didn’t ask for this, it was just given him really
It’s like he walked into it, already made.)

    And it is as real as it gets

sets down to
    presupposing the universe held silence

He is not, after all, the first speaker.

(Must have been Lucy or Ardi)

    … Who broke that anyway?
    All this whoop and holler, I don’t know.

Utterance runs his hand along the smooth stone wall
the fragrant hedge
    “Ah” says utterance
Somewhere along this fence is my place.

Or

Utterance loves where steps lead into open water
    received whole by lap and wave.
    by lap and wave.

*80
Mate, where waves top over ship deck,
are you sure you, yourself, are not
the sea?

Whence the dory leaves the harbour we wouldn’t wait for return unless knowledge of departure: always one left on shore, stands to tell, how the oars cut water.

Between these two banks; at this table; through the door

something passes
Stop! Stop! Come hither!

With a lantern in broad daylight
Diogenes searched

Tell luminous: sea black: broken and defiled willow;
Crumbling jar; a calf and skull, bleating naked men

What we see, no?

Rorschach’s X-ray of the soul

Here: the body curled in on itself, exposed grief

Here: the beggar offers virtue
No:
Here: spat and overlook

In this blotch: exile cast out, sold

No:
Here: the tub in which this street-man sleeps is a garden bath
with birds keep watch

These wispy strands of ink: laurel and fern

A parlour trick, a proof of science,
This taking light to where there may be none

This reveal of what may be and what is done
Not satisfied?
Fold the paper once again
Once upon a time there was a storyteller. […] She restored these essentials all the dignity and magic they possessed […] Under the care of that voice, if we did not keep breaking the world again, it would be well and truly healed. (Brighurst, 2008, p. 243)

Pressed in dream (songe) a simple house: dirt and wood what I’d wanted

and then the turn all the doors of course were off their frames
or no strut but latch unhinged and without repair

so anyone can enter well, should squirrel in hiding should want left alone?
a bell to ring at least or warn us shadow before coming in

what each what other

On translation: in the original it is a garden, orchard maybe – or a field

of what is allowed and forbidden … didn’t you know

not unusual mountain peaked in color alerts dawn

but to be left sleeping in the house made where no startle is grave

* 8283

ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing are what the poet says be left

What was it that lies in the grass too tall?

Gentle voice:

not language

neither the lugging of doors
Lilium Medeoloides

Why ancient liturgy and sung of lily
what planted returns

Can you wait for that opening?
Where do you place your gaze in the meantime?

That same day we went out and sat by the lake side
   talk about having no bread, fawns
Graze our flocks of beasts   among
   Sometimes, we feed; raise; break; become rock; sometimes
Cross to the far side of the road   —no look

Morning, stargazer, meadow, and hood
this pillar holds nothing   opens to sky
draped in crown of   lily

What draws to the tomb is blur of grief

What is naked and tunic-less underground, wintered
   ingest this bulb
Says, I can be that witness

fragrant, dripping, burst unfold

Maybe the teaching is in this: not a question of loyalty, later, when asked:
If you believe in Resurrection?   Here spring   implied flower

   trumpet   of stood and watch and hope
(Not what did you do while?)
grasses in the field   lily
   wait dew
Black crayon drawing

The body adorned is vulnerable
Said the beast to beast

   It is not enough to wear the sword
   You must become the blade and curve

Said burden, said so, burdened

   Etched lily of the valley on collarbone
   Ring of peach blossom; nimble lassoed index

Said little to big, or big to bigger

In Picasso’s *Donkey Driver* there are many feet
Bridged, only the beast is solid, singular, still

Kirpan, not tied to saddle and bundle but worn

   Is so, said, because the body, severed from head unshorn, not found,
   had been made itself no ornament but wholly given

   in place of bodies marked as other, ground

   said so, said so, said

These two though: from well and wander,
said and said and said some chatter of to come
   Donkey keeps his sight on road ahead

Beast to beast to beast: drawn plain
Sketched in this frame – said stumble – rock and pebble

   blossom born of lily body flowering palm
Meeting on the Riverbank

Say raspberry among the nettle
    understand the reach

all summer long I read the story of crow eating gopher
    over and over and all at once  how they become one

spider under running water
    and sting

is there another
image as visceral, as true:  innards beak flight scurry and hunger

is there any simpler calling, any other home than this?
What Is Preserved: “At the Inside Edge Where Her Words Go Missing”

If there is no change, or unexpected fusion of images, there is no imagination; there is no imaginative act. If the image that is present does not make us think of one that is absent, if an image does not determine an abundance – an explosion – of unusual images, then there is no imagination. …To imagine is to absent oneself, to launch out toward a new life. (Bachelard, 2011, pp. 1-3)

‘Symbol,’ comes from the Greek symalow: a broken piece, one half of which signifies the existence of the other, a presence that indicates what is absent; the incompleteness of the absence: symbionts. (Kwasny, 2013, p. 32)

As we continue the inquiry into poetic imagination, where poetic image is understood as whole (Al-Ghazali; Bachelard), in this Sama we encounter fragment or lacuna. We might see fragment as a bracketing out of what is and is not. Where the gaps may lead to the questions themselves, what texture is available (in language, in material)? What is missing? Of what is there: How do we know what we touch? In this experience, in translation: what is illuminated? (These are questions, yes; and assertions, too.) There are multiple possibilities if image is made by the seer, not by what is seen (Adonis, 2005, p. 122). See the wisdom of the body: a reach in longing. Where the work is toward understanding longing itself, even as the object of the question may be [ ] undefined.

* 85

On form:

In this Sama, we are where language is [only a close approximation]. We may notice a space [in the poems] where we might pass through. Sometimes, a falling through: [into the
language itself, maybe? And what is preserved: a rough translation of this experience; not a naming of the space, exactly. [A wrapping and unwrapping of the beloved.]

Many of the poems in this Sama are in conversation with Sappho’s verse. All Sappho fragments (in italics) in this Sama are translations by Carson (2002) based on translations by Voigt (Amsterdam, 1971). Carson, in rendering Sappho’s poetry, indicates a gap or illegibility [“a free space of imaginal adventure”] with the use of brackets as “an aesthetic gesture toward the papyrological event rather than an actual record of it” (p. xi). And the record we have of Sappho’s verse, the artist/philosopher/teacher’s words, why and how were these preserved? Sources of surviving fragments: identified in a rubbish heap; read from a potsherd; some of Sappho’s verse is known to us only because the papyrus it was written on was used to wrap a mummy (preserve a corpse) that was later exhumed. Whose beloved was this?
This was fragment more complete and here object left out

Her hands, yet nimble
    empty enough

wrote:
“sweet mother I cannot work the loom”

do we doubt wild strand of hemp
    dyed cornflower draped her thigh

do we doubt the free mound
    of shredded (not yet carded) wool
    touched her ankle still

“I am broken with longing”

more than close enough to weave whet plea

in this tapestry there is or is not a cart abandoned
and fragrant field of phlox

where
    corners of dowry rug
    fray
        [   ]

*86
*87
Lacuna and *word*

And in between the bridegroom and  
the scent of the dress, the orchards of Lebanon, the locked gardens

Upon this word is union, joined, ring and asunder;  
the laccolithic bulge of breath, abated; cistern and ladle;

From cranny and terrace, jackal, despoil, and darting dove  
waiting balsam and lily; the yes; and refugees’ return.

Worn away and torn from text;  
the bride’s own body, the word.
Who would not like to know more

about a short transparent dress

(Carson, 2002)

[         ]

grain of textile  not quite

solid

papyrus where beetle bored and mite

a night twice as long folds in

seam doubled into

tought cannot

be other than whole

garment

of [     ] fragment  prayer

inside the edge

somewhere one calls into forest

strips cedar for mat

bodies woven undone into song

that is night one
The doorkeeper’s feet are seven armlengths long

Even as curtain is drawn
crack betrays                 lamp just snuffed

Inhale               sent heavenward by your finger’s pinch
wait I here            desire fills this bowl
set out to catch the dew of night.

wait I here   wait I here   wait I here   until return of light.
Just now Goldsandeled Dawn

Unravel red sequins, embroidered flax
[Language is the dress of thought] Go Naked!
Or pull the whole wardrobe onto the bed and burst out in song.

In morning, she would not enter the house – dew, wet grass on feet.
Now this is no excuse: on the other side the Beloved waits.

Another image: the body torn. Bread having sopped up wine; all ripped and spilled.
Re-stitch the robe.

   Stitch elegant lilies opening, songbirds and lovers wrapped in ivy.

* 88
The one with violets in her lap

the closest thing to heaven: green butterfly, her pupil’s eye.

Interpretation:

who wished to dream

:omen leaning on fence
lifting cloud, color-flash of bird

if not reunion in this night
:the jar of scent

if not linger and kiss,
    anything will do

a small handful of wheat
Lyre, all of Sappho’s music is not lost

An old cloth undone?

tear unravel light

even coarse thread: here recognize the script of hem and thigh

motion sway smoke

Damp heart slow to burn

On pyre shoots crackle and spit

how many how many wait

pour! pour on the oil

anoint chrism to gown

this clammy dank was no kind of dress

too many tassels and bows get in the way
OM

Open the door, out spills light
in that direction, abiding is

Isn’t there a story of a king who swaps gown for rags
and walks among? How does it go? All I remember is fear that once he left
he could not return home.

What was it that he learned? Something to do with wax?
Not romantic, this reading by fire, when quick it can be snatched
nothing new to generations who know study by wick

Or was that the story of the child who
ate when his brother went unfed? Where was that one set?
basket of reed, tar and pitch
roam and flame

What about the question that preceded
that night? : I am
While examining the dream of flight, we will still find more evidence that a psychology of the imagination cannot be developed using *static forms*. […] Every aerial image is essentially a *future* with a vector for breaking into flight. (Bachelard, 1998, p. 21)

The disaster is separate; that which is most separate. […] being separated from the star (Blanchot, 1980, pp. 1-3).

I have washed the mountain,
I have washed the stones and the snow,
[…]
so that my loved ones might pass
in the forenoon of the mountain day
(Shafiq in Simawe, 2003, p. 228).

In this inquiry into creative processes, when we consider the act of revision, here is where it gets messy. This *Sama* attends to the often necessary step of paring away, to what is left. Working with *trace*, I wonder about what is *whole*. (For example, a particle is not partial; it is still whole.) When revision is to *see* or make again, there is trouble in the judgment of whether something may or may not have been (wholly) written in the first place. Toward reflexivity in process, the workings here acknowledge the narrative origin, the call, or impetus of the inquiry. There is struggle when the poems fall short, do not quite get us there (far enough away from or into or through the wound which birthed the song). Here we work within notions of verticality, where movement skyward may be desirable, if our aim is to replace the stars that fell. The *Sama* holds the posture of question in making. (*Once the village is burned it is burned.*) What can or cannot be redone?
On form:

Again, this is what is left, and unfinished. In one of the parings in this *Sama*, for example, in an image, I read the restatement of my thesis; an assertion of the potential in poem, of purpose for creating, a revelation suggesting my relationship to poetry. As well, I needed the voices of other poets here – the ones who speak to me when I am in despair. In an earlier version of this *Sama* were included the words, “what should have been written with someone in the next room.” The poems here form connection. Even as, because of the kind of story-telling practices we keep in a dissertation, these voices are also fragmented, broken apart from the whole. Done differently, I would like to take you aside and recite; say, listen to these words that help me fall asleep on the nights when grief would otherwise be the company we keep.

For glossary of names, please see *Diwan, Sama* 6.
Neither vertical

Mountain, if it is you dreaming me,

remember how I nestled pungent moss,
    curled
once you have carried beyond fragrant star,
    return me please

what lives against this skin is longing

    there
The first version of the poem with a devil and running read:

... 

She took from her pocket all she gathered in the wood:

burdock, berr and root; fireweed, sap and gum

to make the world; to make the world well.

... 

[there was a body here,

missing] 

... 

... hooves burdened, hooves chilblained

stumble

where there was a thorn, now none

* 89
Barrel in the alley is source of light and warmth. Come nearer; share what is given.

follow it down, follow it down, down ....

“The word ‘soul’ is an immortal word. In certain poems it cannot be effaced, for it is a word born of our breath” (Bachelard, 1960, p. xx).

fire consumed and the smoke ..... 

“The earthly man said,
“You who were born from my rib,
wouldn’t it be more appropriate for you to return to my body rather than return to dust?””

(Mikhail, 2009, p. 43)
3 Gemmayz, held next to the body, a word

The soul is as raccoon. She runs to the porch and then, having learned fruit falls from the hand, makes her wrist limp and pauses expectant at the door.

These three sighted but tiny raccoon, hanging each on their limb, brush plump cherries to the ground; their hot milky breath, is the soul.

This garnet, chip of rock, small and heart-shaped rested in belly of this spring, this spring that feeds the tree that fed the Mother of God, is the soul.

*Winnowing*; this mother named Kharman; this, her child was in her arms; this tossing of wheat from harvest into sky; this bomb in the market, this tear and scatter; this sever, this sever: the soul.

This chaff; this seed; this fall. This thistle in wheat, thistle through stone wall: what is lighter; what is green; what does not return from the sky, is the soul.

* 91
By means of the heaven-entering trees he will make his way.

The poet intended something other than grief, just this day,
known compass of gratitude as home

only that memory keeps getting in the way…. the wrangle with the word: winnow,
translation of a young mother’s name: blown at market to pieces

and the upward movement of flung

trees vertical and
what is buried, grows into ground, knows

this same season, I mark by crow eating cherry barely formed and green – here

what the wind carries

Sima, this day, you, too, gone

I choke
I do not know translation for your name

what help

child
what heaven
what way

#92
“The more precious a thing is, the greater its power to cause pain simply by ceasing to exist.”
“Loss is perhaps the ultimate philosophical problem.” (Zwicky, 2011, p. 300)

“[…]
Oh Grief, I should not let you go into every Iraqi house,
like a wandering dog trying to find his way home.
[…]/ I would like Happiness to enter each house and live there.”
(Abdulrahim, 2011, no pagination)

If ground and not wings, there is the image of a ladder—the climb and press of this plasma luminous back from where it fell. Rungs of driftwood, skinny and shake. A degenerate matter may not have been fixed and still (in motion) in the first place.

*Once part of the Sun, once part of the Earth.*

What is it then, to replace?

“the trees – / that drop their fruit / in front of the children.” (Mikhail, 1995, p. 31)
Which is the way back to earth?

Hands cupped to receive and hands in gratitude are the same hands

Thunder is meant to startle
Get out of the way of the lighting

Do don’t lift your head from amongst the night shades just now

That crow with its ruckus, undeterred from unripe cherry

Or what is (heeded or no) rumble of earthworm deep root in humus particle bedded horizon of green manure as far as the eye can see

Did or didn’t the atmosphere break?

Wind-torn starlily deathcamas stem weeps

* 94

“But the disaster has ruined everything

…stopped at a critical point in history when displacement is equal to zero.” (Mikhail, 1993, p. 41)
Resistance

Stood, straight elbowed and defiant, made their case for why not; begged and questioned: fearing for the earth, the already beloved moss; already adoring the birds and silent depths, before Creator, the angels made protest.

Who told them humans were in the making? Whisper among the jubilee, then outrage, then thunderous clapping.

Because he retreated and hid, we might think, the angel of death. Poor, in all his radiance, heavy with burden that he would be the one; dread to pull morsel from the baby’s mouth, hover and pull, steal, the breath.

Who else would have known to offer the first line of defense, “You mean, on the Earth, to place those who will shed blood?” Response: I know what ye know not. Who else would stand clapping?
Impatiens and bouquet of dewy rose

How can you not hold your breath, when you talk of death; all of us hurry to arrive.

Too fast to decide: the bird just ripped between us.

If yes a tunnel of light, why not now?

“Are you sassing me?” Grandma bellows at the cherry tree. “Get out of here you damned crow.”

At the end of the world, crows.

If the gate swings open easily

If she dreams a knock on the door. Awakes and dreams a knock on the door.

Hung tinsel in the orchard in July; magic of morning sparkle.

Did that bird just tear us apart, or stitch what was torn? Something happened.

It’s a small crow caught in the stove. Cherry hits the earth with a thud. She’s standing there already; she wants to go home.
“Then light, the true sister of shade, carries shade in its arms.”

So, if we’ve made our way back, it is
by the ones we love
climbed and curled into
this is cedar was pine cut down
this trunk hides what moon might spill otherwise directly to ground
here rub of bark on leg and arm
another image: limb and wing

*sinking* dream of canoe of heel beating earth

“He knows that he is matter, a substance filled with hope.”

Before what is flight at rest at foot of willow
look—heavenward

* 95  *96  *97

“Thank God when he flies.
Thank God when he falls.”
(Mikhail, 1995, p. 45)
When this spruce, diseased, weeping sap, calls out
   a song only insects hear

the ants, farming aphids, who come
stir up again a hum that calls in birds

Remember: this is the tree itself inviting

The poem before called to mortal bed of fever all incantation
to stop the nibbling teeth; woodpecker’s greedy, drilling nib

the practiced chorus in this room: a fear of flinging off, of root undone – cling

Or dirt and worm; no image here of wing
   instead the breath is held too long
Daze

I.

The return at the moment of the song is a return but not a recovery. This is how the buzzard came to turn death into a bird everywhere a woman walking on the side of the road

one hand a suitcase

one hand a child keeping up

how hunger turned into night

and still

one hand a bundle of clothes

one hand a jug of water, tilted

any stars it carries dribble out

one hand the howl of a creature in brush

and the bird turned into

one hand

an empty copper pot

a rope

everywhere a woman walking on the side of the road

one handed prayer

the feet name this unwanted birth exhaustion

chorus, though not plucked: song left

when morning bird dove into dew
II.
everywhere a child standing on the side of the road

      child on the side of the road

      a child

there is no panther to imagine heavy paws pounce dust

no great roar to freight that buzzard

      in a blue horizon

      the eyes name

what they see

* 98 * 99
On Witness and Resistance

The importance of the spoken language is that it is a testimony (*shaha da*), and carried to its ultimate grammatical form (*shahid*) it means martyr. To testify is to speak, and to speak is to move from yourself toward another, to displace self in order to accommodate another, your opposite and your guest, and also someone absent whose absence opposes your own presence. (Said, 1991, p. 286)

Humility brings the poet before an ethical tribunal, a place where the writer must recognize the claims of difference, the otherness of others, and the specificities of their experience. Witness, in this light, is problematic: even if one has witnessed atrocity, one cannot necessarily speak about it, let alone for it. (Forché, 1993, p. 37)

As if in the light of the rising moon
The gods have appeared
In their rightful places,
The doorsill of Heaven cries ‘Hail!’
(Enheduanna, in Hirshfield, 1994)

In *Sama*, we turn in the direction of humanity. Foundational in the experience is our location. We are: where listening is an event (Said, 1991); where there is necessity of witness; where we are the necessary witness (Al-Ghazali); and of great note, where “poetry witnesses us” (Milosz, 1983, p. 10). This inquiry, in its entirety, embodies questions of witness. How is witness performed? What kind of presence is necessary and possible? How do we attend to each other, to story? Or how do we carry what is life-giving, what was given? How might this happen in and through poetic image?

I recognize that this inquiry in part emerges from and exists within a tradition of *poetry of witness*, which, as Forché (1993) says, “is itself born in dialectical opposition to the extremity that has made such witness necessary.” This resistance may, in the process and through many forms, restore “the dynamic structure of dialectics” (p. 46).
On form:

Each of the poems that follow struggle with these questions, and within the tensions of telling, where language is the medium and almost always falls short, even as it may be that the stories we tell are all we are. Psalm, Maskil, The Curse and Bombed the bread are from a book-length collection of poetry written as an act of witness, titled, Reading The Throne, Stories of Iraqi Kurds Told in Exile (Kramer, 2010).

* 101
Psalm

As if the staff were enough,  
this stick slightly curved, soaked,  
As if the sheep would not die anyway,  
as much from the crook around the neck as the cliff.

Believing the landscape,  
the snag and rock, he builds his fire at the edge of night.  
Home, his sister washing peas to dry and string,  
goes out and collects more branches for her fire.

As if the club he carries could part the fear of night.

And the wolf said, “Lord protect me from the eye that has not wept.”

As if each morning peels itself away in sacrifice.  
For this God who breaks cedars? Whose voice strips the forest bare?  
As if the morning bent in praise.

She goes out, collects more branches for her fire.
Glory be to the shoes

Attend to the story, as if it were a stone or a shoe. Reach into the river. Find what is rubbed smooth, polished. What is the life of the shoe in the river, saturated and moving in current?

Most stories of crossing are done in bare feet. Most stories are crossings, risky, indeed.

Throw a story, if you don’t have a shoe. Throw a shoe, if the stories are smothered in mud in the river. The story of a life written, on the bottom of a shoe.

This for the widows, the orphans

The feet who’ve been pound with a stick tell a story. The stick tells a story. The story hides her face in her hands.

Some lost, moving away in the river, grab on, hold tight, to a story.
Some make of their story a boat or celebration.
Some pray for the story of branch or stone.

Just yesterday the doors opened, tumbled out the journalist imprisoned. They say he looked pale, al-Zeidi, in dark suit, tie and new beard.

This story, that he is missing teeth but will not swallow humiliation. When the story is that the boot is lifted from the throats of the drowned, add ululation.
Add kisses, sweets, satin. Add praise.

Attend to the dance. Attentive: the story a fragile bright globe in the palm.

* 102
Maskil, at the wall

In the city of crazies, she crushes burning sage with her feet, blows on coal for tea.

Summer is father of the poor. In the mountains, among paintbrush, the young ones don’t need clothes.

In the city in winter they open windows, pour booze, tilt their heads back and watch it snow.

Zemnaco stood where the mayor spat juice of the dry sap gum he chewed, complained the artist had painted him crazy.

Jaws tired of jabber.

In the street Zemnaco. In the rendition, a figure, motherly. In the mother, spring. He complained they painted his mother crazy.

Here three-fourths of the year is winter.
The artist was jailed thirty minutes and set free.
The curse

Ibis, up above the mist and imbricate tile, built his nest,
on the minaret. 400 years of birds. Nest, bird, egg, bird, nest, egg, bird.

Laqlaq, laqlaq, he moved his head—bill, throat—laqlaq, she moved her head. Even the ibis couple makes salat—the prayer of bending and calling out.

What is the minaret without the Ibis? Now this city suffers hunger and death.

You see, a group of men were angry, they carried their kalishnikovs, looked up, by chance saw the ibis in the midst of laqlaq, and shot.
Bombed the bread
Bombed the oven that made the bread
Bombed the flowered dress, folded rice sack
Bombed the man with his arms raised
Bombed the arm, the head, the chest
Bombed the surrendered, captive
Bombed the window, desk, pencil, chairs
Bombed the basket and grapes
Bombed the figs and date palm
Bombed the bus
Bombed the two chickens running loose
Bombed the crying, kneeling, sleeping (those trying to sleep)
Bombed the dead
Bombed the fly (you’d think the fly could get away)
Bombed Fahima, Munkir, Kalay, Hanna, Sarah
Bombed Nakir, bombed Hafiz, bombed Imam Ali’s grave
Bombed the medical student
Bombed the poppies and tulips, the bend in the river
Bombed the mosque, the flying wren
Sepulcher of Abner

Not water through kinked hose but bat hiss, pitch of friction through fingers: this is fear. Wings bent and pulling itself along floor from sunlight, a soldier on belly and elbow crawls.

Landscape lush, could be serene. Or is it that this dry, broken begonia is a bat. So is this blown leaf and bird. Take the shovel, shoot what moves.

Shaking malaria child, this is not hunger. Do not move.

Life drains into life, blood into pool. Not beautiful, the image of the bodies hung.

Soldier, “Which one of your sons?” Father, “Me.”

The order given. Commanded and sang. In one man, the voice to call us each together, the voice a quiver, kill.

The other is not repentance or the creeping that works against.

It is of dahlias blossoming, morning’s awed awakening, water: water that has not been spoiled.

There isn’t even memory or echo of the order. All is peace. In Hebron there is a pool where, from the beginning, as it shall be always, only lovers bathe and thirsty drink.
If earthquake or bomb come and erase this wall, how will we know where we stand

point of reference in song is refrain

Map of this city does not matter matter, like concrete and bone, may crumble

*The doorsill of Heaven cries “Hail!”*

Is it because the gods had lost their places that both ends of the street looked the same

Starry pattern in lace table cloth draped where snag in the thread where rest spoon

*The doorsill of Heaven cries “Hail!”*

If in light of evening or dust-storm or sleep we see the brush on the walk as wild beast

Claw, startle and scatter or juniper’s fragrance is juniper alone

Object to limit endless racing what mutes the limits of our being to counter oblivion of darkness

*The doorsill of Heaven cries “Hail!”*

On the roof, pelting ice or some other tear in the dome the letting in of night and Home

* 104 * 105 * 106
Courage Tastes Like Cinnamon: On Trauma

A poem is itself an event, a trauma that changes both a common language and an individual psyche, it is a specific kind of event, a specific kind of trauma. It is an experience entered into voluntarily. Unlike an aerial attack, a poem does not come at one unexpectedly. One has to read or listen, one has to be willing to accept the trauma. (Forché, 1993, p. 33)

Works of art are indeed always products of having been in danger, of having gone to the very end in an experience, to where man can go no further. (Rilke, 1948, p. 290)

Man lives by images. … Even verbs become congealed as if they are nouns. Only images can set verbs in motion. (Bachelard, 1964, pp. 109-110)

If “trauma is the anti-thesis of empowerment” and one of the attributes of trauma is need for [the body] to “return to a state of relaxed alertness” (Levine & Kline, 2007, p. 9), then, where the act of writing—the reading of a poem—may be a form of power and location of reverie, what possibilities exist in the poetic imagination for a freeing and return to well-being? Again, where poetic image is motion, it may be vertical and verb. Here, toward a deeper understanding of this potential we are working with definitions of trauma. We consider the traumatized story and its attributes of stutter and shatter, the way it “bears witness to extremity by its inability to articulate directly or completely” (Forché, 1993, p. 42). Here, we listen for that kind of radial sounding in poetry that “harkens to well-being” (Galvin, 2013).

* 108
On form:

The poems in this *Sama* take two forms. First, I consider the “exploded and splintered narrative” which violence has rendered unspeakable (Forché, 1993, p. 42) and, woven with words from Orr (2002) and Stewart (2011), I consider the webs of connections necessary in telling trauma. Then, in this space of the *strange*, I allude to fairy tales and broken ring ballads, genres fundamental in my own literary and familial heritage. (Great-grandma, “Gurt”, introduced in the first pages of this dissertation, otherwise known as Lily Grimm, was great niece to the Brothers Grimm). These stories in our house – stories already with the ability to dislocate the hearer – have been part of my own inquiry. Since I was very young, in attempts to make sense of things in the world that are unjust or painful, I wondered about, manipulated, and retold the stories in poems.
They asked how many crocodiles lurk in my river

   Is that rope bridge safe for crossing

   Which fairies wait on shore and under which leaf for resuscitation

   After going under

Does your river, lulls the elder, disappear into desert? How is the water that smooths stone?

Of course not silly     of course     I am.

Of course the river is wide and deep, narrows turns and falls

Of course periwinkle, sturgeon, turtle, mammal and fish

   bird and near nest

Of course all creatures come to bathe, drink

Along river cedar and song.

* 109
Greek “trauma” wound

French Anglo-Saxon: Blessing to wound to splatter with blood (Orr, 2002, p. 117-118)

Arabic: the words “word” الكلمة alkalima and “wound” الكلم� alkalmu, as in wound which leaves a mark or a scar, share the same root. (Askary, 2010)

O language through this body

poem sweet breathed voice

where one understanding of trauma may be

being rendered immobile, unable to act/respond.

inscribed on the body (Rezak, 2005, pp. 341-363) (a boot on the throat)

another story

What nurturing moss and earth;
what mortal sky; what divinity;
what river; what depth; what ocean
of healing? What sounding; what gather?

taste of shattered web

* 110
“But this quest … doesn’t simply lead … forward. First it leads him or her backward, back…”

You’re writing a children’s story. We meet

(this cup of coffee, this regularly trafficked street)

“When I write a poem to help myself cope with a serious disturbance, I do so by registering the disorder that first destabilized me and then incorporating it into the poem.”

where I noticed myself cringe,
at my thought
– how to say, that in what you were singing, your memory of hearing

planes overhead; the dread and build up of war, might be cliché

everyone looking up, locking in

mother holding both daughters to her chest, cupping ears to protect – yours

—story I’ve heard
I have heard
I have heard
I have heard
before

“The literary result is the poem of survival.”
how you, though told to stay, snuck out the door
  curiosity—cliché—to see what these weapons you’d heard of were

“The psychological result is a more flexible and comprehensive self. But what about those situations in which trauma can’t be assimilated in the ordinary sense of the word?”

– shift – jolt
  into the tongue your father spoke
  the tongue the boy with the klashnikov
  the metal against your heart
  words your children here might read
  not sure of your speaking
  in which you should write

  this first telling

“What about those cases of extreme desolation in which all connections between self and outer world are snapped,” …and [   ] ……and

I cling to your hand, tremble, sweat
  – everything my body knows here: cliché
Here is where resilient poet says, “It is precisely in such bleak and hopeless-seeming circumstances that the personal lyric proposes its hope.”

“All the ordinary sustaining eros-connections to the world have been torn:

the web is in shreds.”

(Orr, 2002, pp. 118-120)

* 112
Life presents a canvas, as the cliché goes, and that canvas has a frame. Yet the relation art making bares to resistance, work, and suffering is often far less abstract than such analogies suggest. Indeed as physical suffering leads us to recoil from sensual immediacy, we often overcome such painful states by reassimilating ourselves to the natural world via the sensual pleasures of making. (Stewart, 2011, p. 22)

I suggested strangeness,

as if every, every, every beat of the story wasn’t already terrible, strange

* 113  * 114
Smashed pot
—no milk for bread for dinner—woodcutter’s children sent to pick strawberries, sent into woods

*Hope is not tied to the heart/ but travels alone homeward*
Or you could say, it kneels down as still as possible, that is

when the story being told is of her own misunderstanding (they called it).
Instructions were, with her cardboard silver star, stung from neck on string, breastplate reading HOPE, to sit, to be quiet and still…
Moved to the cradle, she went, bent over, looked in: not her role as told

Only one star in that sky was supposed to move.

Or you could say, somewhere it dribbled out of pockets, holes left hope scattered aground.
Crumbs: what if … another in meandering found

That day, she expected a face, light and face to shine from the hay
not more hay swaddled a bundle of hope.

Scolded once,
so that she snapped back her hand, fingers still pinched where the coin had been
What damage had she done? A beggar in this life will be born into the next without a face.

Hansel looked in Gretel’s face a recognition not this way
Quick green lizard shinnied up tree a face not seen in this life not seen

Where there is a great moon to light the way homeward

If you took a heart that little beggar held it up next to another you wouldn’t know heart is not like face

a portal of hope
Haruspicy telling

The chamber of dream
is not a place to meet the wrath of an impatient god.
For the eagle and the scalded son, liver regenerates no matter their pant

A house at the edge of the village is still a house
see that fine curtain filter sun

When queen ate the princess’s lungs and liver, really she meant voice and heart
familiar with mutton’s lobe, the weight of plop from pot to platter,
it was something lighter she sought

snow, despite its matter and will, is white
in another story boar is lamb
Some saw in the liver, light

Moral: if iron shoes are set before you, don’t step in
Or divination may bring us closer to nothing but lightening ozone and flash
Moral: no matter doorkeep, dance—fire in your palm—dance
By yonder hill

When the one waiting—stilled in woe

—the return

it couldn’t be the ring produced as true; not the voice; not scars as proof

when the one who had stood waiting
   runs from garden, grave; from shore; from hill

what is it, then, the one refused forsaking found; what saw; what knew

what promise from cloudy morning to sun; what kept veil

what hides what recognition

She didn’t see the beloved’s face?

There is a story of a young man
lost at sea; fair maid awaits.
blue bells grow around cottage gates. What name

Or calls out Teacher—refused touch—waits

Or reaches her hand into his side; presses liver to face
Bird with a stone in the belly; the wind, the wind, nibbles and gnaws

It is they were dropping white stones
Turned to the white cat on the roof, which was actually the sun
Mewing _good bye on your way children_, glistening _good morning wee ones_

Later, in the centre where the forest is thickest, brushwood piled and burned
When the dark of crow – it was the moon – and they found their way back to
(Only this cottage of expulsion we shall not call home)

We shall not remember rough nights hunger grumbled the cradle
nor hard plank and goose down

Not a morning pigeon or the sun this time
Turned back from path to chimney
Gluttonous those birds, wild in hunger, crumb
And after two berries were eaten the children fell weak, fell down

We remember the cedar, pillow and low, damp moss of cradle floor

Only the disturb of caw and woo from a snow white bird on bough
Turned to house of cake and glaze

Suddenly the door opened to the wind, the wind, the heaven-born wind

We shall tell the story different from here

When it was they had done what they’d done and the iron door shut
A little duck, white duck ferried across where water deep and plank was not

Or suddenly the door opened to the wind, the wind, the heaven-born wind

Or she took them by the hand and led them home
Green neck of mallard; golden bird

How in another of the golden bird two brothers ate
Just the crumbs, little bits from the dripping-tin

In the forest collecting brush wood golden feather bird flew
nest gold egg bird roasts the same over fire skewered

They ate, just the crumbs: on it was a golden morning

Here again the Father – though poor father with weighted heart –
Leads sons to the forest, leaves them there alone
Though really he did not want such a thing though for the common good
imagine the morsel little roasted liver delicate heart food

After the hare, huntsman and wolf, after fox, bear, lion, dragon slew…

… Later, when the gates lie miles apart and open
when sword slept on pillow down of wedding bed and
bride her beau tells apart by lion and what adorns alone

Clasp of coral necklace when it falls to floor is the same clink and shutter heard before:

do the piece of golden liver fell first morning to the boys’ wonder
same forest floor echo when dropped gold feather

Enter: betrayal and hunger
Or just the story of two brothers; a father’s grief forgiven, soon
Hell-divers circle, crying out. Red flower

Violence under bright sun

One went out to fold the doe’s neck. Then again in the tanning and dressing out; also there is singing and breath.

Times of clatter and disharmony. One scrapes against the other. Still, there were the special ones, the blessed and burdened.

(And in each tradition it is said: blessed are the peacemakers, and burdened.)

The same who nurtured stew, pulled bone needle through. They ran fast at the first angry voices. Fast and gathered all the poison arrows, hid them in the woods.

With pounding heart they did – so that for three days or three more or however long it took the angry men were forced to stand and look at each other and talk; those voices:

when they sounded more like flute, less like hollow pot and cymbal, the special ones went again – and uncovered what they’d hid, removed the leaves and dressed the bark.

In a day there is inherited need; in the need, inherited work; in the work, sometimes, killing:

The singing said that there is sorrow in it; you know how The throat in its echo of death asks forgiveness.
Urchin

What she would like to tell is the story of Manuel Antonio
of the heat and dream of the beach itself moving

The measurement of wind fullness of arch in fisherman’s line
soft horizon of compass bearing

child God:
dream in our hand real enough

what we pull from tide pool kelp, knuckle, bliss

The body place where all places meet
Here little creatures carry her while she sleeps

Star body surface of sea azimuth breathe

Origami whisper fold
wind blows word to wing

fisher lulls lullaby reels in sings
She is standing there already; she wants to go home:

On Freedom and the Act of Writing

But what about a space in which the doors are all unlocked and there is no controlling voice? … a space in which to breathe, not just a space in which to speak. (Brinhurst, 2008, p. 47)

Whatever freedom the will might possess is available in this process of possibility without resolution. As the etymological connection between techne and birth indicates, the onset of art making can be seen as an imitation of birth, just as finality of form is an imitation of death. (Stewart, 2011, p. 16)

Reverie—as children often practice it—controls a changing phenomenon by giving it a command that has already been carried out or is being carried out. ‘Great elephant! Stretch out your trunk,’ says the child to the cloud that is growing longer. And the cloud obeys. (Bachelard, 1988, p. 185)

In this Sama, we are invited into possibility of a space where the doors are all unlocked. Toward an understanding of creation, I consider the act of writing, possibly, as a non-mortal home for mortal beings (Arendt, 1958, p. 168).

Positioned in a stance of freedom, poised at the beginning of making, we are neither castle nor king, nor builder nor the pure element—not sand itself, even. What interests me here is potential—to bring about the first state. Is this creation always an unmaking? If reversibility, enacted in our unmaking, is necessary condition for both our freedom and our making (Stewart, 2011. p. 1), how is it to think that our destruction (of other and self; the temples we build; the world) might still arise from desire to return—to loose the form, unsatisfied with mimic and make—to the pure possibility before “create”. Examples from philosophers include sandcastles (Stewart, 2011) and clouds (Bachelard, 1998). In both examples, the child is doing, is engaged in crafting miracles. In the act of writing, we imagine freedom.
On form:

“Poetry is a soul inaugurating a form” (Jouves as cited in Bachelard, 1960, p. xxii). Bachelard continues, “The soul inaugurates. Here it is the supreme power. It is human dignity” (Bachelard, 1960, p. xxii). The poems are play, performed in a state of reverie, offered as an example of where I recognized “free” in the act of writing. About the conceit of the poems in their form, I entered this house with hope, imagined (no illusions, really) I might make of it a home. (The subtitle of this chapter, originally, was the Fool.)
Five versions at Cana

Maybe he meant, Mother, [sweet] Mother.

Woman! Within earshot of the bridegroom, of the trembling bride.

Maybe John could have tried a little harder.

Maybe He had been dipping into the wine.

*Upon my eyes; womb who bore me; I am your sacrifice.*

O, for Your dizzying laughter, or, let me ladle you Divine.
Pushing on an open door

He sets his feet up in the sun. Wings raise the roof, the only disturbing sound this morning. He had cautioned, do not bring doves into our home.

Over the door there is the morning in the sun.
Over there, collected straw in a cup. Fists full of wheat, berries.

Pears fall on roof. Squirrels drop pinecones cracked and chewed.
In the mountain, bear rake bark and bushes.

Far from hunger, he reaches into the waterfall, brings out fish.
Leaves catch in boulders, in dry pools.

He extends his arm and palm to pass a piece of mica in the light.
He beckons through the sagging and hung tomatoes.
The day your beak was bent

Peacock, at threat of rain, screams opaline,
Milk glass shattered fine

Abandon, one side of the word freedom, is yours.
You pedal down the cobblestone. Freedom, you think, is divine.

In fields, you pass rows of garlic and lark, crowds of wild ass and blushing tulip,
Folds and folds of pilgrims in a line.

Everything is yours. And you fly –
Into the stationary thing, its sacred walls, pavonine.

Your bicycle, you think, is to blame.
The sisters kiss

The sisters kiss. Sister catches her hand and pulls her like this. They glide through earth to heaven.

Or, squat in the door in the light, sister cleans rice. Her hands sift grain. Crow picks from the blanket the thrown.

Or, she bends above the field. Fingers turn earth to air, air to earth. Sun at head, back, heel.

Or, water is drawn, chamomile and lichen boiled. Sister wrings her hair out in the lawn. Drops evaporate before they puddle.

Or, there is a rock in the lentils; tooth broke. Something missed. Or, sister catches her hand, pulls her like this.
River rose up applauding

Yes, she dreams the creation of the world. It comes something like the sun in morning.

She dreams manna grows from her body. Even in the dream she cries at the line of hungry, at pull of miracle from her arm.

She is humbled too, in sleep; bathes Christ, drops the sponge and has to fish it out.

She dreams a river rose up applauding.

Then, she dreams she is a babirusa with fangs, and is lost running in circles, following the points in her eyes.
Carrying our harps of sighs, we breathe out the music of mourning:
What Resounds, Endures

A true image moves in sympathetic resonance with a line of force in
the deep structure of the world. To move in sympathetic
resonance is not to point, to grasp, or to refer. In lyric experience,
we are open to the world. (Zwicky, 2011, p. 219)

The reader of poems is asked to consider an image not as an object
and even less as the substitute for an object, but to seize its specific
reality. For this, the act of the creative consciousness must be
systematically associated with the most fleeting product of that
consciousness, the poetic image. (Bachelard, 1960, p. xix)

That the whole slips away from us is related to our transience, to the
way all is here for a short interval and then gone, including our lives.
Yet the power of the exterior image does resonate in us, and the
interior image, if expressed, will often open to a vista or vision
beyond us, bringing us back, with new eyes, to the mystery of the
concrete world. (Kwasny, 2013, pp. 5-8)

Reverberation through poetic image, as Bachelard says, sets into motion and
awakens [in the soul] poetic creation, where “the poetic image places us at the origin of the
speaking being” (Bachelard, 1960, p. xxii). As throughout this inquiry toward a deeper
understanding of poetic imagination, in this Sama, we listen to how we listen – the echoes,
maybe the soundings and vibrations. Reflections: before the mirror, in the pool; how does
the image move? How are we moved by what is seen? Resonance, object, and sympathy are
the subjects here. We are where the poem is trace: “sometimes sole” evidence of the
occurrence of an event, as in the contextual relationship between signifiers and signified,
where meaning is simultaneously asserted and undercut (Forché, 1993, p. 42). I consider
craft in the art and act of poetic inquiry, and the function of hope as an ontological need (Freire,
2008, p. 2) in the creative process. For example, how lonely it is to call out over the chasm
with expectation and hear nothing back. How wonderful to drop your footstep in snow and
be surprised by the startle of echo. Within traditions where fragment is brought together in a new vision, what resounds repairs.

**On form:**

There are only three poems in this *Sama*, in which I mimic portraiture and biography. Within the poem, image is interspersed with definitions, interrupted with other text. There might be striving here. Toward the polyphonic nature of poetry, I hope the many voices build and enrich narrative or meaning, and honour, through inclusion, the objects of resonance (Zwicky). The construction of the poems in this *Sama* challenge poetic image, as I work to understand possibilities in the multiple discourses present at once in poetic inquiry.
Biography of *awe*

Bray, the roof of the mouth, donkey’s unbroken back,

Each day, she prepares for the end of the world; sweeps, waters the parsley, folds the photo into the cloth.

Each day he swings a leg over and is thrown off again, the donkey each day runs leaping to the well.

The stake is pulled out, a fist or bullet enters, breath rubs against rib.

The new word for love, for pain, for beauty, he whispers in the donkey’s ear. Realization, the vista, this amount. A huge, horrible world colliding.

Once there was a judge here who ladled justice hot into the hands. Once he put his own head in his hands, laid his head down.

And for the new weight and rocking, for the bridal bed, for the breaking, there is this word.
High, high overhead song and seen

*Place is, rather, the memory of a trajectory* (Kwasny, 2013, p. 23).

migrating birds; barren field and frost (when dead; rise up and leave)

where Elk stood last fall thinner from rut
alive, hoof pounding garden, cole crop’s cold root

we’ve stood here before dazed in our senses

“The image takes root at the heart of the world,” [this in between world] is, as Adonis says, “accessed by the creative imagination, whose door of perception is the image itself.” (Kwasny, 2013)

(just up in that hill, camped, men crouch with rifles)

“The significance of the image, Adonis writes, ‘does not lie in its visible surface but rather in the fact that it is a threshold to whatever meaning it has and a door that leads the spectator to what is behind it: the absent or the abstract, in its essence or nature.’ (Kwasny, 2013, p. 130)
running along next to us a breeze
Barebacked Rider (flock lost in cathedral)

“To explain one loses sight of what one is seeing.” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 112).

Here, last spring:
how large the gander’s eye, pecking chip from my palm
held stiff and slight trembling

“But is this ‘trace of lyric experience,’ then, what ‘lyric’ words mean? Is it what they refer to?” The trace gives them meaning. “But is it what they mean?” … A lyric image is true because it is resonant” (Zwicky, 2011, p. 232).

how small we are, now, beneath tinged foliage
before canopy falls
our work to split,

bring in wood
Portrait of breath

Here draw me a goose with the sun in its feathers
Wings of what lifted from the lake

Elegant transcription of resonant honk

gather and leaving, weave
     skein and wedge, plump
Trace: what is left: pang and going

Tilt shadow on snow
     One gander, alone

channel wintered, track pressed in silt
     graphite
sketch
Spring, before blossom

Come crocus; pick wheat heads through ice

Hatch nest: this same patch of island, tall grass and shelter
     stipple  goslings  dot  water’s edge

(See simply the bird open in flight; arrive; see beak soft and nestled)

     patterned devotion:
         inspire

     or eternal return

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Startle in the Garden of Charity: On Limits

Form is the reality of an object on the material level of existence. But it is also, as the reflection of an archetypal reality, the gate which opens inwardly and “upwardly” unto the formless Essence. (Nasr, 1981, para. 14)

The evocation of an alternative reality consists at least in part in the battle for language and the legitimization of a new rhetoric. The language of the empire is surely the language of managed reality, of production and schedule and market. But that language will never permit or cause freedom because there is no newness in it. (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 18)

All poets of all times can only say one thing. They can say that what-is is. When he sees his people destroying the world, the poet can say, “we’re destroying the world.” He can say it in narrative or lyric or dramatic or meditative form, in verse or prose. But he cannot lie, as a poet, and offer himself as the savior. […] He cannot finally say anything more than the world has told him. (Bringhurst, 2008, p. 44)

In Sama, we listen with the heart because language is impossibly limited, even as language is the medium of the inquiry. Here, I come in front of the limitations of this study, and of its significance as witness to the essence of limitation. What may the research actually be able to do? What can’t it do? What is beyond reach, especially where “poetry is the rearing in language of a desire whose end lies beyond language” (Lilburn 1999, p. 9)? How would we be able to measure the proximity of the aims of this study to their mark? What are the possibilities of hope; what resolution?
On form:

“To reach the formless, man has need of forms,” Nasar (1981) writes. This statement is made within a sentence that contains the words, “miracle”, “sacred”, “aid”, and “transcend” (para. 17). The form in which this utterance is made is language. Each of the lyric poems in this Sama focuses on the limits of language. In the same posture in which we started and performed the inquiry, each is a reach. It is within the poem. If one wanted to read in such a way, we might find that the notions or themes from all that comes before are approached again in these poems. This is the final Sama of the dissertation; the afterword is a kind of reflection. Nowhere am I able to draw a conclusion. Maybe the significance of a thing is that it is and maybe that is even more than we can say, or want to say. Remember the vibration of OM, in Sama 5. What about the question that preceded that night? In the answer that was given, does it matter, the weight and form?

More on form of the Sama:

Sometimes a blessed water falls from sky. We have said Sama is a listening event, with its roots in the Arabic words for listening. Other words root-related to Sama mean the sky that is above you, and name (as in my name is, or I am called,) which comes from listening. In the ceremony of Sama, a dervish may turn reciting (calling) the Names. (Again, we are in the presence of image-based poetry and music – toward openness – listening.) In that space, maybe there is a revelation and what is is something new, with neither a known name nor need to be named. Even the calling, then, may become new.
A word: the scratch of rake on gravel

Step back. Koi rises through surface, takes in leaves and water striders. Lean too far over this smooth stone and it could take you.

Or are you already taken? Somehow you sunk under copper leaves’ reflection and are under, under where she is, where her fin disappears into stirring mud.

It’s because she broke the surface, brought a kiss through both worlds.

On this shore, someone stood and said, \textit{change life into language and make it firm}. Just that second another heard. If there ever is an ear, this life won’t hold still.

Page 132, the hummingbird

Lucifer, Ruby-Throated, Black-Chinned, Blue-Throated, Costa’s, Anna’s, Allen’s, Broad-Tailed, Rufus, Calliope, Rivoli’s, White-Eared, Violet-Crowned, Broad-Billed, Buff-Bellied, Coppery-Tailed, Trogon

Where found: in the living room; habitat askew. Marks: the field is back through the window/slants in. He won’t try to flutter down. Being not a leaf.

The window will not budge. Wing vibrates too close to glass. Nib bunts, bunts, bunts.

Nowhere does it say heart attack, or how to prevent one.
I try to avoid; to coax with a red dishcloth. The broom and blue-lilied wrap do not fool.

It says he knows: the windows are not real;
that the broom perch serves two purposes; that death is near; life is elsewhere.

My neck tires; three hours in the morning sun and except for the famous hovering wings, the hummingbird has kept silent.

To lure to strength, I place a wineglass on the kitchen stool, blue-stemmed iridescent, hibiscus water and a slice of plum.

Notice it does not say nectar or sipping or meadow or jewel-like.
It does not say God-wings or surrender or shrill.
Because of the way water absorbs light; whale song

Shall we have a funeral for the song that’s lost
How will we bury melody
All these jonquil bulbs crowed in soil, pushing

When we part this earth, moist, cold, rich
limp lyric down, will you lie quiet
shall we expect you to work your way up root and stem
as you know from the throat
hum your blossom

There is ceremony for language lost
a counting of the body of utterance
a noted silent spring

Nothing, nothing sadder than this; nothing more terrifying
Why the corpse of a bird, neck broken, should be burned
You know how smoke rises
To witness that hopeful tune, interred, too much

But what comes from the ground then
Passes through the drummer’s toes and spine and ribs
Could never be anything other than grief  (differently sung: courage)

Sweet, my sweet
Over your grave, I’ve nothing to give
Sans hymn, sans psalm, sans chirp, sans outro
Let me place my own body next to you again
The use of a knife: cut away what you do not need or bring into being what you do

On the smallest scrap of linen, she writes it. Whittles through sliver and split.

In patterns of purple and ochre, she weaves, each letter distinct, veins in a linden, scales from the trout.

Into her own shirtsleeve, she hides the broken syllables in a cough. Reads into evening laid over the ridge, pine and tamarack, brail, in shadow and filtered light.

Whispers to swooping warbler; connects each gnat and fruit fly with this thought, dots and then a web. Folds it, folds it, folds it into roots she transplants, *cordiformis* and flowering.

Presses it with her lips onto saints cast in silver. The same repeated words over and over.

Along the riverbank as she rows, in both directions, calling out:

Says gurgle of water when the pitcher is poured. She wants the knife to be stronger than the gourd.
Phenomenology of soul: the flapping of wings

If thirty-six bushels equals a chaldron
and I've carried neither
what kind of thing in this way
do we measure or twine

bundled, does it fill a wagon,
small covered pot or barn
what amount of barley and coal

what capacity to bare

lumber blackened in rain
wicker, twig and pear
stones to fill a ditch
heaped poor, burdened
sighing wain

what quiet

how much does this drop of rain displace?

a difference in each breath’s weight?

a handful of grain
Rawboned and river crossing: on hope

Chickadee thought the wasps’ nest something sweet or with seed; hung, beak in entrance:
All of us suspended by single filament and upside down.

When spring did not arrive, jotted this: remember to tell:
spent hour in curly clover; spiral of wild onion and sleek; fragrant feet and bare
raptor with short, broad wings

in wrought-iron gazebo, ornament and frame, or cage
gap where vision passes to stars, a reaching up

the charter of compassion is a winter poem:
what would keep the herd, their hunger and weight?
in the inner ear it is just the goshawk again

lean moose knows where thrash and drink and ice, where break
the only exception to falling through
And the seats of those who sold the doves, turned over

*

it is not possible for one person alone to pull up this net, waited heavy slippery fish return through holes to lily root and kelp

*

neither lepta nor quadrans to buy this field
cosmos reaching above shoulder, ankle tickled in woolly thyme

that bird song is the treasure, and the glint of sun

*

it is nothing to leave out rancid seed each morning for the dove when we know desire is to trap that beak for an instant in the palm, to steady the eye and wing to our own

*

taming: brass and copper leave trace in the palm
a smell of something held too long; sweat, of too tightly known
Startle in the garden of charity

The weather—*each wind blesses God*—turns the war; a sideways snowstorm, not a poem.

What if, in a war, we thought of lovers? If, in war, we loved our lovers? If we loved?

*O this world!* On your tongue, lover. You say, in translation, “O this world!” Desperate, pivot from conversation to the back, the burdened shoulder. Tongue suspended.

Before my lover, without exhaling, spied a thrush, squat in brush, an unnamed bird; beating of wings, in the garden given in repentance— the entire garden given— for having forgotten.

Mouth dropped open, parting lily. My lover spied a bird. I saw my lover cry and tell the bird: *O this world!* O unnamed creature, you say you do not worry.

> *Do not worry the afternoon.*

In every orchard— though not this garden— there is an old woman. Whether pomegranate or plum, she guards; shouts the child *down, away!* *Out of that tree. Go home!*

Each rain blesses. I watch my lover in the rain; delicate bird slow to fly away.

> It is the turning of the heart that ends a war.
Poets make things. True enough. But they don’t make poetry, or they don’t make it from nothing. Poetry is present to begin with; it is there, and the poet answers it if they can. (Bringhurst, 2008, p. 18)

I have given each being a separate and unique way /of seeing and knowing and saying that knowledge. (Mevalana Rumi in Barks, 1997, p. 166)

The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind. (Gibran, 1923/1951, p. 42)

The genre of dissertation writing traditionally asks the researcher to speak of the significance and contributions of her study, to offer findings and state the importance. There is a requirement to demonstrate mastery. Here we consider what that means, where mastery may be understood as something other that having control over. Maybe the mastery here is not great; maybe not having acquired complete knowledge; maybe not even the ‘original’ recording. We might consider here that “everything which welcomes has the virtue of an origin” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 125).

Next to the word master is teacher, in so many traditions. Next to the word teacher, in this study, I place the word, poetry. Even as poetry is teacher, method and subject of this inquiry performed, the word itself may serve as a placeholder for something else we may choose to put next to it. (We could build our own image, with an attribute; for example, maybe let wisdom or humility be the teacher.) Or, where there is an invitation to circle back and consider the unfolding of a process, we might return to the art circles, one place from which this study emerged, and decide to build a word that serves the purpose “to encourage”. We could place that as the gift that is given.

When we discover where intuition, insight, imagination, inspiration and improvisation are honoured, what else might we find that we bring to the field? Might the field itself be a place of newness and radical meeting? Here we could find that maybe the world is “too full to talk about”; that we are in a place where “ideas, language, even the
phrase each other/ doesn't make any sense” (Rumi in Barks, 1995, p. 36). In this field, how would our offerings be taken up, received? When we lay down in this grass perhaps, this is where the overall analysis and integration takes place. (Applied in yoga, that’s Shavasana, the corpse pose, what my teacher says every other posture prepares us for (Gilley, 2011). This asana, where we lay down quiet and still might look like a nap in kindergarten.)

In this posture, maintained, what is the potential? The pedagogical implication?

**On form:**

Whether “the rendering of precise image” is “a form of attention to the world or a means of departure from it” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 15), the questions remain, themselves a kind of moving forward, a “now what from here?”. The doors of our heart are thrown open in listening (Sama). “If poetry is consciousness dreaming of domicile at the core of the foreign world” (Lilburn, 1999, p. 6), what is this house we’ve built?
To Restore the House

Cushions strewn all over the place, tea cups sideways resting in their saucers; someone in the party advises, “to keep ants and feral cat from entering temple: sprinkle steps with cayenne!”

(just beginning; I am just beginning to learn to laugh)

To restore the house love this chipped paint, scuffed doorsill and sagging lintel; remove bent nail, rub rust from pock with thumb

Al-Ghazali ran from fortress of reason; left curtains billow and flat, as if they were speaking, this sensual knowing; ducked out so fast, the windows still open
—stars of all sizes spilled in, filled the abode

so many remedies to patch where hole: spackle, dap, glue, putty and glaze, dough of honey and wheat — clever to cover what gouge: where pierced
what was hung, or what had been brought together and held, torn down
Accident of burning—what caused her to leave?—devotion unattended
who stood in this waft of
(you offer the incense: violet, pine, basil) oud
heartwood of resin from disease

Al-Ka‘bah is washed. Curtain drawn up. Interior. Knees caress marble, limestone.
Feet bathed the body’s hair a mop

This whole world turns in the direction
of oils spilled fragrant and rare

Pall that drapes; this house clothed; who lives there?
Silk, gold thread; tossed off copper rings and lots
Swaddle and lay in manger. Wrap in linen and place in tomb.
The body, of course, is [ ]
Curtain ripped in two

A special room for giving birth, built into the house of mud, polished with ash and dung
Where the earth shook, rocks rend.
Tent of song
This one, hammer misplaced, begins to build from the inside out.
At present moment, it is all window, dance floor and sky

From farther off in the desert, one might mistake the raising for castle or barn

Talk of curtain in such place is like worrying about *shoes or socks*

—preposterous! to wash the feet of God
where tarnish and crack wore towel around waste; poured and anointed

Room: small the crowd huddled

—so close, we taste each other’s breath

Out in the playground, children carry buckets of sand, collect rocks for cathedral
Teacher draws architecture at their feet with twig

Vertical gravitational forces; loads borne, laid across
niche will come later in wood, alabaster, stone

    a place to rest the back against: threshold and wall

_Niche_, a Middle French word, meaning _nest_ naturalists say,
the species is determined by the habitat

    where persist, produce    off spring
Birdsong

Tell: is there a mirror in this room?

Stanza: artificial, drawn where danger and freedom

inhabit

Here, mansion obsolete: the act of remaining or dwelling

Moon in a house that is numbered

Guide us over stairs with crooked nail or plank worn smooth.

if to every question, what do we do here?:
dance
Of rub and humid; breath blown on
    — too many stories of the polished —

if not already, don’t go out and buy one, second hand or gleaming

    just look at this entry — single tile framed in grout — this crack and swirl
how we’ve become in scrubbing

    O guest      who may never arrive

bid you enter
    bid you come

swirl of  robe      who turned to find

    Elusive One

   (the very goat we’ve led here)

    stepped through the window:   Gone
One might not think that we were beaded toward this place, we began

An emptiness that waits to be filled
a weight at the end to hold us down

Maybe we beg for this—once again—that we don’t fly off
familiar and sweet our gravity

understandable that we want to be led to a table gently set
perhaps even, the lover tears bread; places morsel in our mouth

My mom says the soul has weight, she has heard that it has been measured
the last breath, of course, a difference in the body

a small amount

what startled along the way

fed in this way, all of our bowls remain full with the virtue of wanting
outside this door, just—poised for the grace which may pour into cup

quince and shy bouquet
pinched from the yard
still on the table,
fill host’s abode with this scent

even after, even after we’ve returned home
Diwan

Image 19, Threshold


Diwan from the Introduction

1 You may also wish to see (Freire, 1994).

2 From the first living room/classroom.
The title of this article is in direct reference to this passage from Goyen’s novel, House of Breath (as cited by Bachelard, 1960):

That people could come into the world in a place they could not even at first name and had never known before; and that out of a nameless and unknown place they could grow and move around in it until its name they knew and called with love, and call it HOME, and put roots there and love others there; so that whenever they left this place they would sing homesick songs about it and write poems of yearning for it, like a lover. (Goyen, as cited in Bachelard 1964/1958, p. 58)

Here, where, the corners: intimate spaces of dream, memory, home; where “nothingness caressed and penetrated being, as though it gently unbound the ties of being” (Bachelard 1964/1958, p. 58), other notions recognized in these poems: The poetic image as direct ontology. The imagining consciousness as origin; Our house or home may be made of [our] breath, wind, voice (Bachelard).

3 If I am to know the Word, I must know the world, I’ve heard.
(See Paulo Freire, specifically Freire and Macedo, 1987). Drawn by the title, Pedagogy of the Oppressed was one of the first books I read when young. I’d snuck out of school; bought it at the bookstore; and began reading the afternoon by the river.

Also see Freire (2007) where he speaks of his movement in the [his] world: “to the streams of Recife; to the mounts of Recife” and of movement from and to Christ-as comrade and movement within transendentiality and in worldliness.

4 From his work in the world as a peacebuilder in places of violent conflict, and within his argument for the power of art -- its ability to move within complexity and in the creative act, transform --, Lederach (2005), asserts that the moral imagination requires that we imagine ourselves in a web of relationships.
Like Hannah Arendt speaking of story and the hero, action and the reasons for telling story, where “the disclosure of the “who” through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt,” says, “Somebody began [the hero’s story] and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author” (Arendt, 1998, p. 184).

If there were a spider in these poems, we could invoke the image of a web: the academy, my grandmothers’ lap, the poem each—in full complexity—elegant strands in the world brought into being by (and bringing into being) the spinner. The poems here consider this temporal world in which the relationships and learning take place. Lederach’s (2005) arguments build on the idea of The 200 Year present, offered by Boulding (1990).
Considering poetic inquiry – poetry in research, in teaching, in peacebuilding, in life writing – I note that it is from a web of intricate and intimate complexity that these poems emerge, where art may avoid dichotomy (see Lederach, 2005, p. 5).

5 BIO: excerpts say, refers to a preface, published first through Practice Press, for the manuscript, Reading The Throne, Poetry; Stories of Iraqi-Kurds Told in Exile, where relationship in community must be recognized, much in the way the relationship with the Iraqi community and my husband remain significant in this research and must be acknowledged:

Born in rural northern Idaho, far removed from any world other than the magical landscape of her family’s home, Christi Kramer grew watching generations of geese come and go. Any regular day, she rode an elk through gardens of delphinium and snapdragon to her grandmother’s house for gingersnap cookies; swam in their bottomless crater lake and took baths with a bear.

Later, Kramer met and then married Kakahama Mohammed Askary, an ethnic Kurd who was born in northern Iraq and, because of war and political unrest, grew up in all parts of Iraq. Exactly half the globe away from the Pacific Northwest, Askary, raised to be his father’s successor, was educated in seminary in Baghdad and following studies in education, pursued graduate degrees in political science and jurisprudence in Cairo, Egypt, where he was certified as Imam from Al-Azhar University, among the oldest and most esteemed Islamic institutions. Then, employed by the Library of Congress where he was working on the cataloguing and Romanization of the Kurdish alphabet, he immigrated to the United States. It was as Kakahama’s wife that Christi was first introduced to the Iraqi refugee community in Harrisonburg. … The story of Reading the Throne begins here. (Kramer in Lurssen & Tichy, 2006.)

6 The half moon burns
(Homage to the Painter Rufino Tamayo) “The half moon burns in a corner. It is not yet a jewel, but a fruit that ripens by its own interior sun. The half moon is radiation, womb of the mother of all, womb of each one’s wife, pink shell” (Paz, 1976).

7 In her (2013) Essays on Image and Vision, Earth Recitals, Melissa Kwasny, describes, from her visit to the Holter Museum of Art in Helena, Montana, how two art installations “reach out toward each other, or outward, regardless, the way the wind reaches out, could be defined by its reaching and its reach. On one side, the branches: a line up. On the other, a splay of wings. And the doubling, sometimes tripling of shadows.” This description is within a reflection on “the invisible processes,” and makes reference to “what the poet Wallace Stevens called the imagination pressing back against reality” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 31). In speaking of her experience in front of the installations, Kwasny offers this metaphor for reading, as she writes how she is struck by “noticeable lack of explanation”:

…. As one is struck when caught suddenly alone in the vast expanse of prairie, no houses, no people to mediate the experience. Given only shape and color, what do we make of it? We are not often asked any more, in this over-constructed world, to make meaning ourselves, which is to make metaphor, yet that is exactly what this work requires of us. (Kwasny, 2013, p. 32)

Where images are titled Threshold, the photos were taken in Egypt, Qatar, or Iraq. Images titled, Pilot Project, were taken in the arts circle in Harrisonburg, Virginia, 2010.

See Theophany of Perfect. “Do not strive to realize Me in the realization of your self/ By my eye you will see Me and your self / You will not see Me, however, by[with] the eye of your self/ Beloved” Ibn Arabi (Chittick, 1989, p. 221).

“Form is the reality of an object on the material level of existence. But it is also, as the reflection of an archetypal reality, the gate which opens inwardly and ‘upwardly’ unto the formless Essence” (Nasar, 1981, para. 14).

“Beginning to understand how the heart may be where the soul speaks may provide a middle ground and the establishment of a creatively tolerant meeting place for those who come from within the powerful system of the scientific method and the wisdom of the heart embraced by so many indigenous people.” (Pearsall, 1998, p. 17).


In this dissertation, I understand myself to be in conversation with many philosophers at once. It is a great big world full of utterance in which I stand. Though the dissertation would be richer for the work, it is not within the scope of this study to draw connections of relationship or properly situate the conversations historically. I acknowledge this and want to note that even if I cannot provide a depth of context, I do not intend to treat the words and works of the scholars superficially. Poetic inquiry, again, demands an unescapably close and critical engagement with all parties in the dialogic: the speakers, what is spoken and the place in which it was said, as well as those who were not present and those who may join the conversation in some future echo.

The notion of radical meeting of self and other, and the possibility and necessity of this kind of meeting within the poetic image, grows, in part, from contemplation around this passage by Carolyn Forché:

We are submerged, as all humans are, in what is politically understood as ideology and what is humanely called culture; these constitute “world” for us – our versions of world, invisibly walled and roofed. …By this means we are able to calculate true cost (of economic and political oppression, institutional violence, warfare, environmental destruction) and alter the way our lives are understood at the deepest levels, so as not to allow any possible future to be foreclosed by our unjust and violent past and present. …I would argue that such radical meeting of the other, in various prosodies and forms, is the way poems constellate meaning, and the way poems transmit the life form of language. (Forché as cited in Chang, Handal, & Shankar, 2008, p. xxx)

“To move in sympathetic resonance is not to point, to grasp, or to refer. //In lyric experience, we are open to the world. Resonance does not originate with us, but proceeds through us, from the world” (Zwicky, 2011, p. 219).
The two photos of the child, Zaen, near the text, “see,” were taken in the writing/arts circle conducted as part of the pilot project in Harrisonburg, Virginia, 2010. The photo of the text titled, River, authored by Harith, is also from this same pilot project.

I acknowledge that the images in the poem, Data Collection, especially without greater contextualization, run the risk of sensationalizing or appearing to name, describe, or document. That is not my intent. Toward the vulnerability I request in this study, I offer the poem with a knowledge, secret to myself. When I was able to listen to what I heard in this poem, there was a pivot: a return, a reminder to attend carefully to my own deep desire first for something like courtesy. The poem brought about revision of my research as proposed. The poem emerged out of a place of grief, written during the pilot study. What the poem may “evidence” is my struggle, in effort to better understand and act in witness; my troubled relationship with the activity of research, and potentials within poetic inquiry itself.

“Yet the thing itself, the natural image seen not as object but as being in living relationship to ourselves as other living beings on this planet, as subject with its own claims, is something poetry—and humanity—is still trying to accomplish.” …. “If one believes, as I do, that poetry teaches us how to live, not just how to write, in what ways can the image help to solve or salve or satisfy the conundrum of both being and seeing?” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 3)

“The poet begins with mere observation, but as soon as the violet is isolated, recognized, and named, it is changed by its being seen” (Kwasny, 2013. p. 41).

Reflecting on the activity of this research and what phenomenology might look like in an arts-based dissertation – remembering we are speaking here of phenomenology of the soul. In context of the Authentic Dissertation, Moran describes [phenomenology] “as looking, with as few presuppositions as possible, at something with enough light to reduce the need for preconceptions. So if artful renditions can bring in a form of ‘light’ that can help reveal something in its ‘isness,’ then this form of light is a legitimate space for phenomenology” (Moran, as cited in Four Arrows, 2008, p. 90).

“Poems that are shaped with the kind of remembering that passes back through the heart, always with a desire to return, always a realization that there can be no return to the places of childhood, except in writing and telling stories that record, store, and resonate, so that none of us is totally forgotten, so that the future continues to hold promises” (Leggo, 2009, p. 60).

The crucial point is not when the beginning is located but why and from where (Mignolo, 2000).

since everything that is desires its own being
(For in every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure of his own image. […] and since in action the being of the doer is somehow intensified, delight necessarily follows. ….Thus, nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self) (Dante, as cited in Arendt, 1998, p. 175).

Also see (Arendt, 1998, p. 312).
Thinking of voice, vision, vocation and how poetic imagination may relate to gaze, this inquiry is concerned deeply with the work of Lederach (2005), where he describes “the moral imagination,” moving from theologian Brueggemann’s (2001) notion of “prophetic imagination,” which links moral vocation and the artist or poet’s voice, to the observation that “the genesis of the moral imagination is found in creation itself.” Lederach (2005, p. 24-26). “The moral imagination develops a capacity to perceive things beyond and at a deeper level than what initially meets the eye.” Citing Guroian, Lederach continues to describe “this quality of imagination as ‘a power of perception, a light that illuminates the mystery that is hidden beneath a visible reality: It is the power to ‘see’ into the very nature of things.’” (Lederach, 2005, p. 27) Giving emphasis to “the necessity of the creative act,” he characterizes moral imagination as “the capacity to give birth to something new that in its very birthing changes our world and the way we see things” (Lederach, 2005, p. 27).

The Scarf in this Introduction is in reference to Al Busairi’s poem, Qasidah Burdah, and alludes to the stories of the emergence of this poem. The poet, ailing, paralyzed and full of despair, wrote this poem. In complete devotion and sincerity he recited the poem until, exhausted, he slept, guarded by Messengers. When the poet woke, he found himself cured and his body draped in a scarf. The story ripples; that night, dervishes far away heard the poem recited in their dreams.

Songe, in this poem, refers to Bachelard’s notion of reverie, which he stresses is something other than songe or dream. “In order to know ourselves doubly as a real being and as an idealized being, we must listen to our reveries” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 58).

[Held throughout this inquiry is the question, “How do we transcend the cycles of violence that bewitch our human community while still living in them?” (Lederach, 2005, p. 5), and Lederach’s assertion that there is potential in the active moral imagination which requires: “ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity”; capacity to see ourselves in complex relationships; “fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence” (Lederach, 2005, p. 5).

Still thinking about movement in ‘expansive time’ and space, I wish to introduce the idea of reverie as offered by Bachelard (1960) (with his pleasures of corners, cellars and roofs, which, if not liminal space, are marginal spaces) in Poetics of Reverie.

Cosmic reveries separate us from project reveries. They situate us in a world and not in a society. The cosmic reverie possesses a sort of stability or tranquility. It helps us to escape time. It is a state. Let us get to the bottom of its essence: it is a state of mind. [literally state of the soul]. … The soul does not live on the edge of time. It finds its rest in the universe imagined by reverie. (pp. 14-15)

The reverie idealizes both its object and the dreamer at the same time. And when the reverie lives in a dualism of the masculine and the feminine, the idealization is concrete and
limitless at the same time. In order to know ourselves doubly as a real being and an idealized being, we must listen to our reveries” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 58).

29 As this inquiry is, in part, an exploration of Al-Ghazali’s notion of dihliz, we might not be able to access this without the work and translation of contemporary scholar, Moosa (2005), who offers threshold as framework for Al-Ghazali’s philosophy. Moosa, introducing his understanding of Al-Ghazali’s use of dihliz as a (political, social, and philosophical) position within the tension of polarities, and suggesting that we may learn as much from Al-Ghazali’s life as we may from his teachings, explains the “dihliz-ian position depends entirely on the force field of the discourse.” He also observes, “In the force field of the threshold position, one is required to negotiate the varieties of knowledge and experiences not only dialogically but also with vigilance in order to guard against monologue and complacency” (Moosa, 2005, pp. 272-273). Grateful to this opening, I accept the reasoning as invitation to position and perform this inquiry within the provided notion of dihliz. And as invitation to expand the notion of dihliz to give acute (hopefully embodied) attention to the polyphony and tension of poetry, the critical and courteous engagement with anything that could be considered subject (a partner in conversation which is not made object) in the gaze. Dihliz may be a stance of poetry itself.

About borders and criminalizing or welcoming space, and about the necessity of dihliz before speaking of door, house, outside or inside (see Moosa, 2005, p. 49).

“Poets are drawn to and write from their thresholds, either inner or outer. In order to write well, a poet needs to go to that place where energy and intensity concentrate, that place just beyond which chaos and randomness reign” (Orr, 2002, p. 56).
Bozarth-Campbell (1979) in her longer discussion on apophatic/catapahtic theology, cites Lossky’s *Mystical Theology* and says, apophatic theology is “an attitude of mind which refuses to form concepts about God” and “God’s self-revelation in the cataphatic way is not through rational means, but through images that enter the soul directly as energies dispensed by the *Logos* into the world of creation.” Bozarth-Campbell considers how, “in art the negative way is equivalent to the illumination of being by nonbeing, or the framing of incarnate being by discarnate space,” and says the revelation of “ontological vastness” [within a painting] may happen “only by means of seemingly empty space, which is not empty at all but is charged with positive possibility” (pp. 81-82). In the tradition of illuminated texts involved are both the laying-on of light and the making opaque. What boundary may or may not be fluid? What is suspended; what is bracketed out? “As soon as a being dreams without limit, a dreamer open to all dreams (*songes*) lives intensely in one of the two spaces, he also wants to live in the other” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 205).

Situating the inquiry in the *creative imagination*, a space that may be understood to lie between the sensory world and a Divine or idealized world, “whose door of perception is the image itself” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 130), a guiding metaphor is that poetic image is threshold (Adonis; Kwasny) and that in that experience of threshold, we might come closer to the essence of what is absent, abstract, invisible or “unknown.” Poetic image may be understood, perhaps, as an attempt to “come face to face with the soul.” (See Kwasny, 2013, p. 130.)
In *Poetry as Survival*, (2002), Orr considers “poem” as “threshold,” where “the threshold is a place of transition; as such, it is a place of enormous vitality and activity as well as danger” (p. 52). In his survey across disciplines, Orr describes how biology observes life and the dynamic energy of life existing in greater concentration in transition or liminal spaces (shores, meadow edges, the skin and nerve endings of the body: all as threshold spaces, for example). Understanding life through cultural systems, anthropologist Van Gennep and symbolic anthropologists Turner, and Geertz apply the literal meaning of liminal, “threshold,” to passage or transitional states when theorizing or interpreting the webs of meaning individuals have spun around themselves. Orr makes this connection as he draws on the anthropologists’ interpretations: “Ritual processes guide individuals through this symbolic ‘space’ of transformation, a space where social structures meet ‘anti-structure’ much as, in poems, order meets disorder” (2002, p. 53). Continuing to move from Al-Ghazali’s notion of *dibliz* (liminal space) and the understanding of poetic image as threshold, which holds and forms both *structure* and *anti-structure*, we explore the potential of poetry in response to experience of order/disorder. Much as Orr does, we consider the “suspended moment” of the poem, in each aspect and in all of its *being*, as the thing performed, the words presented on a page, in the composition. The act of composing, for example, is a liminal space, where “effect is both a sudden awareness of the disorder (the initiating moment of feeling destabilized) and the imagination’s ordering response to it” (Orr, 2002, p. 51). Within metaphor of return and reconciliation, I wish to move toward a closer understanding of what “reordering” may be possible within the space, the moment of the poetic image. I hold, as Lederach (2005) states, “thinking about and understanding the nature of a turning point requires a capacity to locate ourselves in an expansive, not narrow view of time” (p. 23). I wonder at the capacity in the temporal experience of liminality, if within the poetic image one may find or experience this turning point (returning point) itself?

Considering traditions of practice, allusions made to may be defined as:

*Lawhab* is a small (wooden) tablet used in practice of memorization of texts.

‘*Uwaysi* here might be the (archetypal) friend in imagined community or friendship of scholars, where there is conversation (reaching through history through future): it may goes like this: the student/seeker asks [of one who is not present (but of course is)] …. For conversation on *al’ilm wa al’amal*, how “the conjugation of knowledge with practice” might lead to the completeness of being (see Moosa on Al-Ghazali and Aristotle’s Poetics, 2005, p. 79).

*Ayubal* [my beloved child!] Listen! is an allusion to Al-Ghazali.

On *Resuscitation*:

The concept of resuscitation of tradition (*sunna*) meant to discern and understand (*tajaqqub*) the ethical imperatives and practices as they cohere in tradition.” …..“Ghazali’s magnum opus, *Resuscitation*, is not a mere literal restatement and rehearsal of prophetic reports. Rather, he reanimates these reports juxtaposing his own experiences and those of countless notable
predecessors with the narrative of tradition. Burdened by the ethical responsibility of the *gharib*, the exile, Ghazali creatively gave life to the prophetic tradition, [where] …tradition is like an organism, alive and organically responsive to the environment (Moosa, 2005, p. 278).

35 “I drag a boat over the ocean with a solid rope. Will God hear?” (See Lal Ded, 14th century, as cited in Hirshfield, 1994, p. 119).

36 *Suitcase or coffin –I carried neither* (Krieger, 2009. p. 36)

37 Words or notions the poems echo, from Bachelard (1958/1964):
“[One must have lost the house that stood for happiness” (Bachelard, 1958/1964, p. 56). Poets prove what is lost within the image.
“assume a living possibility of being!”
“threshold is a hospitable threshold,”
“there is also an *alas* in the song of tenderness. If we return to the old home as to a nest”
Where [poetic image] may take us back to the “old home, to the soul of the reader.” (p. 100)

38 *Because the man in one hand held bread*
Forsyth, the head of Save the Children, said: "Afghanistan is the worst place on earth to be born a child—one in four children living there will die before they reach the age of five.” On numbers of children “killed because of the conflict” (Forsyth, 2010).

“(Birth is by definition, precarious), which means that it matters whether or not this infant being survives, and that its survival is dependent on what we might call a social network of hands. …Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear. Thus, grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters” (Butler, 2009, p. 14).

39 *life begins well, protected in the bosom of house*

*The virtues of shelter are so simple.* (Bachelard, 1964 pp. 8-12)

[The house] is body and soul. It is the human being’s first world. Before he is “cast into the world,” …. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle. A concrete metaphysics cannot neglect this fact. …. To illustrate the metaphysics of consciousness we should have to wait for the experiences during which being is cast out, that is to say, thrown out, outside of the being of the house, a circumstance in which the hostility of men and of the universe accumulates. (Bachelard, 1958/1964, p. 7)
Image 21, Threshold

40 “In reverie we re-enter into contract with possibilities which destiny has not been able to make use of” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 112).

41 The cutting of the branches
From the Talmud on the four Rabbis that enter paradise: only one survived [the] radical shift in perception; interpreted by Roy (2008) in Neighborhoods of the Plantation: War, Politics and Education, the cutting of the branches may be a separation of knowledge from being that leads to catastrophe.

When knowledge is made into a destiny isolating it from the totality of the movement of life the autonomy of a terrible isolation enters the picture. From here on the separation or isolation is the imperative of knowledge, not the ethics of being; that is knowledge drives itself producing its own separate rhythm. …. Metric time acquires a peculiar significance, a destiny, a hope and promise that is utterly misleading. (Roy, 2008, pp. 127-128)
About possibility of future and the notion of a buried story, see Rodríguez’s song, *Cancion del elegido* (Song of the chosen/delegate) from his album, *Al fin de este viaje* (1968/1970). See *Wikipedia*, perhaps, for origin of the word, galaxy, where Andalusian astronomer Ibn Bajjah (“Avempace,” d. 1138) proposed that the Milky Way was made up of many stars that almost touch one another and appear to be a continuous image …

In the on-line teacher’s notes accompanying Rabley (2013) is this [vocabulary] definition: “Freedom: Felix is a wild bird but was captured and taken to live in a foreign country with humans. He likes the humans but wants to be free and to live with his family again.” From an on-going Skype conversation with my niece living in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq and attending a private school where English is one of the five languages in which she studies: I asked, “Do you think [the bird] likes the city?” She responded: *Every night Félix looks up at the sky.*
Reverie is an original peace // author of world // of solitude // of reverie itself
(Bachelard, 1960)

A reminder of our purpose here:
One can also understand the great value in establishing a phenomenology of the imaginary where the imagination is restored to its proper, all-important place as the principal of direct stimulation of psychic becoming. Imagination attempts to have a future. At first it is an element of imprudence which detaches us from heavy stabilities. We shall see that certain poetic reveries are hypothetical lives which enlarge our lives by letting us in on the secrets of the universe. A world takes form in our reverie, and this world is ours. This dreamed world teaches us the possibilities for expanding our being within our universe. (Bachelard, 1960, p. 8)
“[A]fter dispersing all the mirages of nostalgia, we reach an anonymous childhood, a pure threshold of life, original life, original human life. And this life is within us – let us underline that once again – remains within us. A dream (songe) brings us back to it. The memory does nothing more than open the door to the dream (songe).” … “Everything which welcomes has the virtue of an origin” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 125).

46 Or: because there is nothing near you, the world may gather closer (Lilburn, 1999, p. 91).
Image 26, Threshold

dampening of the self in asceticism

“Yet in contemplation one loves the world and wants to be in the world in love without skewing it.” For this conversation continued on how, “the physical world cannot be known in the way poetry aspires to know it, intimately, ecstatically, in a way that heals the ache of one’s separation from the world, […] outside of the sundering of knowledge which contemplation is” (Lilburn, 1999, pp. 12-13).

Zamzam refers to the name of the water well in Mecca.
Image 27, Threshold

Hope has two beautiful daughters, named anger and courage: [perhaps anger at the way things are, and courage to act for change]. —St. Augustine

Or The labor that precedes this seeing (Lilburn, 1999, p. 12)

you must lay no violent hands upon it
You cannot truly see this stone if you believe the world is yours to do with as you will. Interiorly speaking, you must lay no violent hands upon it. Eros must be freed from the belittling impulse to convert the world into something useful or consoling and be brought to expend itself in its true delight: the contemplative look. (Lilburn, 1999, p. 35)

[the boy] had a little thought in his heart
The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin. (Arendt, 1998, p. 246)

“My dear beloved child! Create courage in yourself and create movement in your body for struggle.”—Al-Ghazali Ayyabul Walad

mysterious cry
See the Epilogue in Pirbbai’s Blessings: A Narrative Toward a Pedagogy of Virtues (Vellani, 2002a, p. 322).
“Children …. like a block of ice to a desert sheik” “… because always there will be children” (Giovanni, 2003, pp. 223-224).

Once there was and there wasn’t: an opening; once upon a time in a land far, far away
A version of the story, Bunayya, may be found in Folktales of Iraq, p. 231-245.
“Breath” in this story is personified and may be equal to the “evil eye,” intentional harm. Where there is the practice of naming a child as caution, for guard or protection or so that the child may not be found, in this story of Bunayya, (after several sons had died in infancy) the parents of the boy child born give him the name, “little girl,” to confuse or ward off evil spirits and acts of violence and jealousy.

rashbush: pink rose petals dried, powdered and mixed with saffron and musk

“Like the lighting of fires on the hillside at night for guests” Al Busairi, Qasidah Burdah, speaking of the miracle of [the poetry of] the Qur’an (Busairi, 2000, p. 94).

To continue reading about how we live in this world, in shelter or exile, and about the structures we build within threshold of imagination, see:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. … The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (Said, as cited in Robinson, 1994, p. 137)
“Whenever life seeks to shelter, protect, cover, hide itself, the imagination sympathizes with the being that inhabits the protected space” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 132).

How the house shelters day dreaming: [W]henever the human being has found the slightest shelter: we shall see the imagination build “walls” of impalpable shadows, […] and allows one to dream in peace (Bachelard, 1969, pp. 5-6).

Oliver, Winter Hours (1999): *It was the house I had built. There would be no other.*

**Image 29, Threshold**

This house, as I see it, is a sort of airy structure that moves about on the breath of time. It really is open to the wind of another time. It seems as though it could greet us every day of our lives in order to give us confidence in life. …If the Creator listened to poets, He would create a flying turtle that could carry off into the blue the great safeguards of earth. (Bachelard, 1964, p. 54)

**[Sama 2]: Alley Poems: Problem**

Sublime, if the gardens in misfortune are taken, they shall be returned was first published through the Institute for Policy Studies in *Foreign Policy in Focus*. Washington, DC: March 3, 2008. This poem is from the poetry manuscript, *Reading The Throne, Stories of Iraqi Kurds living in Harrisonburg, Virginia*. The stories were shared between 1998-2005. Italicized words in this poem are fragments from *The Code of Hamarabi*.
See Kendrick and McKay (2002), *Dustin's Drawing*, where the narrated dialogue and analysis informs and haunts this poetic inquiry and my work in the arts circles with children.

Notes on the collaboration and writing of *What alley found in poem* (Elza and Kramer, 2011) can be found at The Blue Print Review.

For a description of the work leading to Krabbendam and Chodirker’s *Alley Ways* collaboration see Livshin, 2010.

*the dying breath*

For conversation on breathing as a wheel, a kind of anatomy of breath and song, where the poem is understood as a “paradigm of human living,” see Li Young-Lee:

As we speak, what we mean gets disclosed in opposite ratio to the expelled breath. That is, as breath dies in exhalation while we speak, more and more of the meaning of what we’re saying gets divulged. Frost calls this, *the tribute of the current to the source*. Was it Blake who called it *proceeding by contraries*?

Meaning is born as the breath dies. (Li-Young Lee, 2002)

Elbow (1981) theorizes the significance that *the voice* is produced in the body, out of breath. In this, he draws relationship to the connotations (symbolic importance) that may be understood around voice-breath-spirit, leading to a conversation of spiritual value. And he says, “Though voice is produced by the body, it is produced out of breath: something that is not the body and which is shared or common to us all – but which always issues from inside us and is a sign of life” (Elbow, 1981, p. 3).

Also see Palmer’s (1998) poem, *Recursus*.

*How can we speak about anything at all when on the one hand we are told that language is nothing other than a deferral of meaning, an endless substitution, a slippage of signifiers, and on the other, there impinges upon language-voice the vast, crushing military weight of the world which is meant to “shock and awe” humans into silence, the incredible worship of and investment in killing, allowing language only to anticipate death, its own death?. (Roy, 2008, p. vii)*

“The fact that extremity can be translated the world over—that institutionalized suffering has been globalized—means that fragmentation might also be global—that displacement has been rendered universal. Exile […] is as much a linguistic condition as it is a question of citizenship” (Forché, 1993, p. 43).

*Cosmos alley, cell*

See *Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak* (Falkoff, 2007).

“The poetry leaves the prison, if it does, even when the prisoner cannot” (p. 9). About “movement of the image” and breaking out of acceptance of war and violence (Butler, 2009, p. 11).
Cosmos Alley
In the genre of “found poem,” cosmos alley builds on words from Einstein, 1954, and Ibn ʿArabi’s Theophany of Perfection.

alley eye

Al-Ghazali, in Kitab sharh ʿajaʿib al-qalb (Marvels of the Heart, (translated by Skellie, 2010) writes:

Know that the seat (mahall) of knowledge (ʿilm) is the heart, by which I mean the subtle tenuous substance (latifa) that rules all the parts of the body and is obeyed and served by all its members. In its relationship to the real nature of intelligibles (maʿlumat), it is like a mirror in its relationship to the forms (suwar) of changing appearances (mutalawwinat). (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 35)

absorbs the lesson of the stream (See Bachelard, 1960)

door lintel of Mataatua/returned/ before the rest of the house (Smith, 1999, p. 52)

Alley is grave is in the genre of “found poem”.
Text for “alley is grave” is taken as fragments from data on the website for the Mamilla Campaign.org. As study in conflict analysis at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 2010, I was in a working group on conflict involving the Mamilla Cemetery in Jerusalem and the proposed Museum of Tolerance. Here I consider effacement and memory.

“What we call it doesn’t matter. What it means is that if you want to communicate, in language, your love for, say, a particular range of hills in west central Saskatchewan, you will need a form of words that, tonally, connotatively, structurally, does not signal an even deeper allegiance to the agendas of capitalist exploitation” (Zwicky, 2011, from her Preface to the Second Edition of Lyric Philosophy, no pagination).

“If the mystics] remained silent, their silence would only reaffirm the hegemony of language as indication and not as evocation” (Steinbock, 2009, p. 35).

[Sama 3] To build a temple: Research as…

contemplation:
The desert is an erotic place See Lilburn, 1999, p. 12.

Contemplation: to admire something and think about it. From the Latin word contemplatio. Its root is also of the Latin word templum, a piece of ground consecrated for the taking of auspices, or a building for worship, *tem- "to cut," and so a "place reserved or cut out" or *temp- "to stretch," and thus referring to a cleared space in front of an altar. The Latin word contemplatio was used to translate the Greek word θεωρα (theoria).
See Meyer in *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research and Representation*, on research moving from fragmentation to wholeness; “from intelligence to interpretation” (Meyer, 2008, p. 17).

Where the research may work against flat language, as vertical movement: Where verticality may be a possible opposite to “horizontal,” (which is implied through the metaphor, flat), see Steinbock’s observation that difference may be tolerated only when it makes no difference [in challenging power structures]. Citing Merleau-Ponty, Steinbock opens a conversation on verticality as a way of knowing or a way of being: “These insights into Being as vertical announce a task as well: “it is a question of creating a new type of intelligibility (intelligibility through the world and Being as they are – ‘vertical’ and not horizontal)” (Steinbock, 2007, p. 14, citing Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 268).

See Steinbock about research attending in ways to what may be irreducible and about modes of vertical givenness that are testimony, and which take us beyond ourselves; where, “What is given vertically incites awe, and only as a later consequence, wonder” (Steinbock, 2007, pp. 14-15).

Where there is necessity to counter flat language, and where there is a flattening of our [all creatures] sensual environment, our ways of knowing, research (poetic/lyric inquiry) may be performed or understood as song (see Dancer, 2009, p. 39).

70 *At the night of union he sees the stars upside down.*
Rumi (1207-1273) version by translator, Dr. Nevit O Ergin. *From Crazy as We Are*. Hohm Press, 1992.

> The lover loses his way at the night of union
> To that beautiful one whose face does not appear
> At the night of union he sees the stars upside down,

For discussion on translation of experience, translation of ‘spiritual poetry,’ specifically Rumi, see Dar Al-Masnavi of the Mevelevi Order, on-line.

71 *Every vessel drips that which it contains*

72 *chora* *(Kristeva, 1984. p. 26).*
Plato, Heidegger, Derrida: pre (signifying) place; space for meeting/Being
[Sama 4]: Who did you come here with?: On utterance and response

73 “Who did you come here with? This majestic imagination you gave me” is from Mevlana Jeluddin Rumi, Divan E Shams, Ghazal number 436, titled and translated here by Coleman Barks as, “Talking Through the Door.” From within the dialogue of the poem:

“You said, “Such claims require a witness.”
I said, “This longing, these tears.” […]
You said, “Who did you come here with?”
“The majestic imagination you gave me” (Barks, 1997, pp. 78-79).

Meetings on the River Bank
In the introduction to his chapter where this poem appears, “Meetings on the River Bank” On Sobbet, [“mystical conversation on mystical subjects”] Barks interprets dynamics of Rumi’s verse, considering a “modulation between realities” and presence where, “often the poem serves as a slippery doorsill place between the two, partly in myself and partly on the outside,” the voices coming from a between-place. This expanding and contracting of identity […] where everything is a conversation (Barks, 1997, p. 76).

74 Brueggemann (2001) establishes a discussion where [prophetic] texts are understood as “acts of the imagination that offer and purpose ‘alternative worlds’ that exist because of and in the act of utterance”; where “the imagination is indeed a legitimate way of knowing”; and where these texts could be seen as poetic scenarios of alternative social reality that might lead to direct confrontation with ‘presumed, taken-for-granted worlds,’” and where these texts may be “heard and reuttered as offers of reality counter to dominant reality that characteristically enjoys institutional, hegemonic authority but is characteristically uncritical of itself,” (pp. x-xi). Brueggmann writes:

Surely history consists primarily of speaking and being answered, crying and being heard. If that is true, it means there can be no history in empire because the cries are never heard and the speaking is never answered. And if the task of prophecy is to empower people to engage in history, then it means evoking cries that expect answers, learning to address them where they will be taken seriously, and ceasing to look to the numbed and dull empire that never intended to answer in the first place. (p. 13)

75 Such a simple crossing, no: If language is co-creation and translation of experience, we may understand poetry as experience. Forché (2008) wrote:

What wrote [the poems]: the urge to sing, pray, cry, announce, and whisper; to write cultures into visibility; to write not after events but in their aftermath, through collisions in time and space, exile within and without; to walk around the ruins of wars, awake. What wrote them was a determination to revolt against silence with a bit of speaking. What wrote was an upwelling of poetic apprehension of the world (p. xxvii).
See Leggo (1995), “I agree with Susan Griffin’s claim that ‘poetry does not describe. It is the thing. It is an experience, not the second-hand record of an experience, but the experience itself’ (p. 191).

76 See Ellis’s 2009 anthology, Children of war: Voices of Iraqi Refugees, where the conversations, which serve as trace, as a place/a vehicle to carry voice, have been a significant motivation for this research. See, especially the letter by Shahid, age 10, who fled from Baghdad to Jordan in March 2005 (and whose name may be translated as “witness”) (Ellis, 2009, p. 100).

From the Iraqi Student Project’s, The River, The Roof, The Palm Tree: Young Iraqi Refugees Remember Their Home, see the poem titled, Imagination, by a student living in Damascus, Syria, Mohammed Faik:

“Shapeless and with no/Definite size or boundary,/A wing that helps me fly.
[...] Even when life is unbearable./[...] Even beyond the known universe
[...] It is my life’s second half, [...]” (Faik in Iraqi Student Project. 2010, p. 53.)

77 About utterance and reconciliation, a particular response See Lacoue-Labarthe, (1986) where he considers Celan’s poetry and develops a chain of communication between Celan and Heidegger, where Heidegger is in dialogue with Holderlin’s poetry: a question of response and possibility, of “reserved response,” and an implied question of what kind of utterance or response is awaited; where “it is the saying ‘of the abyss of being or presence.’” And where, “dialogue, in this sense, is fragility itself” (p. 33). Here too is a description of a witnessed, in-person meeting between Celan and Heidegger (p. 34), where in the fragment of the “residue” of a “hope for a future poem,” Celan communicates his awaiting a response. In this, there is the question of apology, the event of ‘a going out of the self’, a description of a call for ethical response (pp. 35-37).

ask permission to come ashore where gifts are given:
Musqueam Elder, Grant, at the Conference on Compassion and Religion, The University of British Columbia, Thursday, March 29th, 2012, in welcoming guests to the land, told the story of encounter, of meeting; of, in time that reaches back 9000 years, 150 years of devastation; of “a cry of despair [that] had questions in it.”

cross to the otherside of the road: from witness to Grant’s telling of the story of the Good Samaritan.

Assefa (1993) in Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm, defines reconciliation, in part, from the Latin root, “conciliates,” which may mean to come together or assemble (p. 9), a meeting or return to walking together in a new way, where some kind of apology and forgiveness take place.

78 Ploughing with cow and ass (1 Corinthians 9:10).
Sometimes, it is true, light acts with these merely as light, but oftener as a defined circumscribed appearance, as a luminous image. The semi-opacity of the medium is often a necessary condition; while half, and double shadows, are required for many coloured appearances (Goethe, 1978, p. 274).

80 *Come into the world; it’s good* – a meta analysis of the poem: the conversation here interprets Bakhtin’s notion of “utterance,” whereas this inquiry is based in notions of the dialogic, and of utterance as a “limitless continuum or whole.” *Come into the world; it’s good:* “Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances by participants in various forms of human activity” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 60). The utterance exists in this world, within human/social activity and specific cultural contexts. Utterance is made real and gets its sense in context. The utterance is the thing looked at in order to look at/be responsive to how we see the world. Utterance is brought into the world, invited into existence by the speaker. *These aren’t bush beans, George. I said, Did you feed the hummingbirds?* “Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere. The very boundaries of the utterance are determined by a change of speech subjects.” *The utterance takes his place at the table.* Utterance is always part of a whole, a continuum of utterances. “The utterance is related not only to proceeding, but also to subsequent links in the chain of speech communion” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 94). *Nods:* The utterance responds. “The expression of utterance always responds to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker’s attitude toward others’ utterances and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92). *Who broke that [original silence] anyway?/All this whoop and holler, I don’t know.* As utterance exists in particular relational context/speech community, there becomes a known understanding or expectation of the significance of a particular utterance. These spheres of understood utterances are speech genres. The speaker works/speaks within the speech genres to be understood, to “create” the possibility of responsive understanding. Here, where poetic inquirer/philosopher, Shidmehr gives us to imagine, that “utterance waits for ethical response,” we are left with the questions of responsiveness: what kind of world is brought into being through utterance; what hope is implicit in awaiting response (Shidmehr, 2012). Meaning of utterance depends on the context or the speech genre in which it exists/is brought forth. *Speaker, busy with units/soldered, chained/slung over the shoulder / stacks, blocks of measured ooh and ah:* Here I am still thinking about the idea that language enters life as a concrete utterance and of the necessary role of the speaker, the activity of speech and attributes of “utterance.” Even in the labour of dividing speech into the unit of utterance, one half of Bakhtin’s argument suggests an infinitely continuous and renewed chain of limitless meaning that is being born and born again, that utterance is whole and part of something whole. While at the same time, speech genres are boundless, and utterances, by their nature and within the dynamic of language, even though they are understood to have a fixed beginning and end, are part of a limitless continuum. *Utterance loves where steps lead into open water/received whole by lap and wave.* – The finalized, organic whole of the utterance is what guarantees possibility of response. *Utterance runs his band along the smooth stone walk boundaries. by lap and wave: The echo. He didn’t ask for this, it was just given him really/It’s like he walked into it, already made.* “He is not, after all, the first speaker” (Bakhtin, p. 69). The speaker utters within existing speech communities, perhaps making a world within a world already made.
“Stop! stop! come hither! Why lookest thou so scornfully and askance upon me?”
Diogenes in conversation with Plato (Landor, 1885).

in dream a simple house: dirt and wood
A burlap robe on display in the cold stone air of the Church of Santa Croce
is inscrutable: it tells me only that my body is a ragged garment
and will be discarded too. (Neilsen Glenn, 2011, p. 102)

For conversations on translation of Rumi, see Dar Al-Masnavi of the Mevlevi Order.

what each what other // On translation: In the original it is a garden, orchard maybe or a field/ of what is
allowed and forbidden … didn’t you know Mevlana Jalaldin Rumi #158 Furuzanfar’s edition of
Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,/there is a field. I'll meet
you there.// When the soul lies down in that grass,/the world is too full to
talk about./Ideas, language, even the phrase each other/doesn't make any
sense. (Barks, 1995, p. 36)

[Sama 5]: What is preserved: At the inside edge where her words go missing

In the first part of this sentence, Kwasny is cites Solnit then follows with her own
example which I cite here in fragments, “The wings are violet blue, as if it were the sky we
were seeing through them. […] but light rimmed, iridescent […]. The wings rise up, an
assemblage, a collection, inspiring […]. The forms are here, but […]. They are isolated not
only from their bodies but […] from the familiar […] we ordinarily view them – limbs […].
[…] what is missing is what we, the viewers, will make of it” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 32).

Reference to the mummy and source of Sappho fragments – See the Milan Papyrus.

About translation, Carson (2002) says, “I like to think that, the more I stand out of the way,
the more Sappho shows through. This is an amiable fantasy (transparency of self) […]. If
light appears … we undo a bit of the cloth.” The image of cloth here follows a quotation of
cloth that must continually, interminably be undone.” The image of “calling into the forest”
echoes Benjamin, quoted by Carson, “…Unlike a work of literature, translation does not
find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside; it calls into it without
entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the
reverberation of the work in the alien one.” [the night twice as long] is in reference to
Carson’s citation of Libanius (Orations 12.99 = Sappho tr. 197 Voigt), “So if nothing
prevented the Lesbian Sappho from praying that her night be made twice as long, let it be
permitted me too to pray for something like this” (Carson, 2002, introduction pp. ix-xiii).

whole; where fragment, or a bracketing out of what is and is not;
about the amiable fantasy [...] of self [...]. If light appears ...

We are in conversation with Bakhtin and his assertion that literacy scholarship takes the pursuit of content excised from the whole; directions of where we may or may not find the work’s author [or ourselves] present in the image; where a figure may need concrete ground, as dialogue may need monologue (Bakhtin, 1986). Lightly, we consider action and creation, where “the true author cannot become an image [...]” And where it may not be possible to tell the poem at all, without some kind of other (Bakhtin, 1986).

86 “The habitual image obstructs imaginative powers. … When it has been reduced to a form, an image is a poetic concept; …” (Bachelard, 2011, p. 11).

What is necessary; what we have: enough coarse thread:
“But the fragmentary, of which there is no experience, also escapes us” (Blanchot, 1980/1995, p. 19). This stance considers the marks, then, left [physically] fragmented and in strange context; as well as the fragmentary “language of shattering, of infinite dispersal” and, as Blanchot says, of force, severance, and the “radically unquotable” (Blanchot, 1980/1995, p. 37).

87 Reflexive in the experience of the research method, I am working through what is happening in this inquiry [the space we might pass through]:
In their 2009 article, Poetic inquiry and phenomenological research: the practice of ‘embodied interpretation, Galvin and Todres describe their methodology, which may also be true of the practice of this poetic inquiry:

In a nutshell… Other’s texts are used as a foundation for our embodied interpretations. We go back and forth between our embodied sense of the meanings conveyed in the text and a search for words that can evocatively communicate these meanings. It is a body based hermeneutics that goes back and forth between language and the felt sense of the text carried in our bodies. (2009, p. 308)

We are also working in conversation with Meyer, who says of alternative, authentic [arts-based] dissertations: “It’s about moving from intelligence to interpretation. From fragmentation to wholeness. From the status-quo objectivity to radical/conscious subjectivity. This work helps lead us toward a different way to approach literacy, research, energy, ideas, data collection, sustainability, and all collaborations” (Meyer, 2008, p. 17).

[free mound of “shredded” wool]: alludes to processes of arts-based research where Holbrook et al move from the stance that “given the subordinate role of image making in research, we share a responsibility to articulate the roll art plays in our lives as academics.” They use the conduit gesture (Lakoff), the image/metaphor of shredding, where shredding may be an analysis of gesture, and they “recognize the theorizing of academic composing as always multiple and contingent.” (Holbrook et al, 2012)

88 The poems in this Sama speak in response to Stewart’s assertions:
Poetic making is an anthropomorphic project; the poet undertakes the task of recognition in time – the unending tragic Orphic task of drawing the figure of the
other – the figure of the beloved who reciprocally can recognize one’s own figure – out of the darkness. To make something where and when before there was nothing. The poet’s tragedy lies in the fading of the referent in time, in the impermanence of whatever is grasped. The poet’s recompense is the production of a form that enters into the transforming life of language. (Stewart, 2002, p. 2)

“Yet the fact remains that nature has no gaps. Everywhere there is something, instead of nothing. This truth of our apprehension of the world means that nature appears to us as an integral, ever-changing, and self-forming form” (Stewart, 2011, p. 17).

[Sama 6] Revision and Return: On what is not in upward flight, and being torn

89 “The pairing of a plant with human feeling of loss, ‘in order to connect pieces in yourself or in a person you are trying to be with,’” […] is an ancient pairing […] in this form the singing of the plant name serves to provide consolation to the person who is suffering, as if the language itself awakened the spirit of the form it refers to” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 127).

90 follow it down, follow it down, follow it down …. (See Fidyk, 2012, p. 314.)

“You could not find the ends of the soul though you traveled every way, so deep is its logos’ (Hillman, 1979, p. 25) […] To arrive at a basic understanding, we must look from below, from beneath” (Fidyk, 2012, p. 308).

(See Blanchot, 1995, p. 9.)

91 Gemmayz: 
Transliteration from Arabic of a name given the fruit that grows on the oldest sycamore, or Nehet, tree (Ficus sycomorus) in Matarria, Egypt. The tree is known as the tree that nourished Mary (Mother of Christ) when the Family was in exile. I visited the tree, and her generations, next to the spring where the Family drank and bathed.

Kharman is the name of my husband’s young cousin who, along with her infant daughter, was killed in a bomb blast while at market in Kirkuk, July, 2010. Kharman, roughly translated, means “to winnow or winnowing.”

Sima is my nieces’ aunt, who, at 14-years-old, died as a result of injuries (July 2012, Northern Iraq).

92 “By means of the heaven-entering trees he will make his way” (Liburn, 2002, p. 97).

See also the article, On writing and return, where Lilburn defines apokatastasis, in part, as “a ‘remembering’ of a community beyond imagination, yet within the scope of desire” (Lilburn, 1999, pp. 96-99).
Excerpt from the poem, *Talking to Grief*, by Marwan Abdulrahim, printed with permission from *The World is Our Heart, Poetry is Our Soul: Memories and Stories of Immigrant Youth*. The Stories of Arrival: Youth Voices Project is a community partnership project between Foster High School ELL teacher Carrie Stradley, Teaching Artist and Project Director Merna Ann Hecht, Jack Straw Productions, KBCS 91.3 FM radio and the Institute for Poetic Medicine in Palo Alto, CA. Students in [the] 2011 project came from Bhutan, Bosnia, Brazil, Burma, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal Russia, Somalia, Turkey, and Vietnam.

“chasing the falling ball of the sky,/ while the sand counted/the footprints of the moon/carrying the child to heaven” (Mikhail, 1993/2005, p. 71).

“The return to the earth is not a fall, because we are certain of our buoyancy. Everyone who dreams of oneiric flight knows his buoyancy” (Bachelard, 1998, pp. 28-29).

“…still out of reach. It appears that we do have to fly after all./ No wonder there are so many translations. How appropriate, said the last ethnographer, for a species that evolved without use for wings” (Wiebe, 2013).

Neilsen Glenn (2011) cites Anaximenes, who explained the physical world and all its objects as being made up of a single element: “As our souls, being air, hold us together, so breath and air embrace the entire universe” (p. 39).

See also Neilsen Glenn in conversation with Abram and the possibility if we accept the idea that our bodies take substance from all that’s on the planet, where it is “not only our fleshy beings that undergo life cycles, but also the ways we know, the attentions to places and people we love, [...] – convictions and dreams we play out in cultures as small as a kitchen, as large as the fields of war, as countries, as an era” (Neilsen Glenn, 2011, p. 39).

“sinking” dream of canoe

“Chukchee shamans achieved their flight to the center of the world, to the underworld, then into the celestial states in the ‘canoe’ of the drum, their state called a ‘sinking’…” (Lilburn, 2002, p. 99). Noting that the state of “sinking” Lilburn refers to is made possible through the vehicle of the drum [art/music] (Lederach, 2005), the image, “sinking dream of canoe,” is in conversation, in part, with notions of verticality, imagination, movement and flight.

forgetfulness without memory (Blanchot, 1980, p. 3).
ghostly, it would be experienced as return. (Blanchot, 1980, p. 17).

See Zwicky, 2011, p. 231 and p. 297, on lyric insight, hope, eros, and the [in]adequacy of words, or words “capable of bearing the trace of lyric experience of the world” (Zwicky, 2011, p. 231).
“[…] because these experiences are always too much for her language to handle […]” (Steinbock, 2007, p. 52).

97 “What is given vertically incites awe, and only as a later consequence, wonder. Modes of givenness are ‘vertical’ in the sense that they take us beyond ourselves. These modes of vertical givenness are testimony to the radical presence of ‘absolutes’ within the field of human experience” (Steinbock, 2007, pp. 14-15).

He knows that he is matter, a substance filled with hope.

The dynamic imagination is subject to an extremely powerful finalism. The human arrow lives not only its élan, but also its goal. It lives its sky. […] In these images, hope seems to become as precise as it can be. It is an upright destiny.” (Bachelard, 1998, p. 60)

“Then light, the true sister of shade, carries shade in its arms.”

“I want to create the impression that it is light itself that carries and cradles the dreamer. In the realm of dynamic imagination” (Bachelard, 1998, p. 43).

98 I believe we are living in an age of declining cultural literacy – that we have forgotten how to see things in-and-of-themselves; and that, because of this, we often conceptualize the material world as one of flat objects existing solely as tools for our use. … These things [images describing material record at Auschwitz] not only resonate, but as resonant things they provoke memory and, accordingly, embody a narrative of reprehensible violence and loss. (Hunter, 2009, p. 30)

99 “And yet if we prepare ourselves to hear it – to hear it truly – we risk being harmed, risk injury from his ability to speak as much from what he will say. We risk our status [of human superiority]” (Steves, 2006, p. 56).

[Sama 7] The Doorsill of Heaven Cries Hail! On Witness and Resistance

The irony of this is that you can never directly come together with another: your testimony can at best accommodate the other, and this of course is what language does and is, antithetically – presence and absence, unless in the case of the shahid (martyr) the self is obliterated for the sake of the other, who because of the martyr’s love is more distant, more an Other than ever.” (Said, 1991, as cited in Moosa, 2005, p. 44)

101 where nothing green could live?

Enheduanna, who is the first known author, daughter of Sumarian king, wrote in 2300 BC in Ur, what is now southern Iraq. This excerpt from her poem, The Hymn to Inanna, was translated and anthologized by Hirshfield (1994).
Within the idea of “Listening as an Event” and from the Qur’an, *alqa al-sam*’ (throwing one’s ear) (Said, 1991, as cited in Moosa, 2005, p. 44).

For an explanation of *Reading The Throne*, see Kramer (2011).

Open grieving is bound up with outrage, and outrage in the face of injustice or indeed of unbearable loss has enormous political potential. It is, after all, one of the reasons Plato wanted to ban the poets from the Republic. He thought that if the citizens went too often to watch tragedy, they would weep over the losses they saw, and that such open and public mourning, in disrupting the order and hierarchy of the soul, would disrupt the order and hierarchy of political authority as well. (Butler, 2009, p. 39)

Born of the call of becoming and the anguish of retention, the poem, rising from its well of mud and stars, will bear witness, almost silently, that there was nothing in it that did not truly exist elsewhere, in this rebellious and solitary world of contradictions. (Char, as cited in Kwasny, 2013, p. 7)

On how the voice of poetry counters the voice of despair, see Kwasny, 2011, p. 38.

“In the dark time will there be singing?/Yes, there will be singing, about the dark times” (Brecht, 1939, p. 320).

“Poetry cannot block a bullet or still a sjambok, but it can bear witness to brutality – thereby cultivating a flower in a graveyard” (Mandela, as cited in Forché, 1993).

“Every beautiful poem is an act of resistance” (Darwish, as cited in Antoon, 2008, p. 2).

…poetry sustains and transforms the threshold between individual and social existence,” and “... the cultural, or form-giving, work of poetry is to counter the oblivion of darkness. …It is precisely in material ways that poetry is a force against effacement – not merely for individuals but for communities through time as well. (Stewart, 2002, pp. 1-2)
On poetry and witness, see Forché’s *Against Forgetting*. As supervisor of my MFA at George Mason University, and in continued conversation, Forché’s work informs this research at many levels. Specifically, the poems are in conversation with the problems presented here:

The “I” that speaks the poem, that begins and ends it, is a protest against such violence, an attempt to redeem speech from the silence of pain, and integrity from the disintegrating forces of extremity. (Forché, 1993, p. 45)

“In an age of atrocity, witness becomes an imperative and a problem: how does one bear witness to suffering and before what court of law?” (Forché, 1993, p. 36).


[Sama 8] **Courage Tastes Like Cinnamon: On Trauma**

“So, if a poem is an event and the trace of an event, it has, by definition, to belong to a different order of being from the trauma that marked its language in the first place.” (Forché, 1993, p. 33)

*Courage Tastes Like Cinnamon* are Hana’s words, which inspired many echoes at the Split This Rock Poetry Festival, Poems of Provocation and Witness, Washington, DC, March 2008. And as recorded on Voice of America, “Iraqi Children Speak”, March, 2008. A context for the words and a description of the event hosted by the children’s writing group that spurred this doctoral research is narrated in this poem offered in response by Alexandria Poet Laureate, Young.

**Spring in America**

*for Christi Kramer*

*America, let the words of the poets ring in your head.*
That was the first line, before this poem was written, before the girls, eyes dark as pomegranate seeds, handed us large sheets of plain paper and pencils, pieces of paper like fertile fields on which thoughts may be tilled and sown and ploughed and you intoned: *War tastes like__________*
*If war were a flower what would war be?*
*The color of courage is__________.*
*If courage were an animal it would be__________.*
*If peace knocked on your door what would peace look like?*
The sun caught pieces of the bright blue sky from the girls’ dresses, and the green of meadows and danced them on the walls as we wrote.
Hope is the smell of freshly fallen snow.
If war were a flower it would be a dried up narcissus.
Peace looks like a field of white paper and a pencil
given by a girl in a long blue dress,
with a smile like the moon.
And as if she hadn’t already handed you the tools
with which to change the world,
her sister or cousin brings you a basket of narcissus bulbs.
*Take one or two or three.* Plant them
that they may rise up out of the ground next spring.
America, here is a piece of paper, a pencil, a basket of bulbs.
(Young, 2008) with permission (2014).

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Image 31, Pilot Project (Dima, 2010)

Image 32, Pilot Project (Zaharah, 2010)

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See Yoder, 2005, pp. 24-25.
Opis and Penthos, if named

In his essay near “sorrow; the river,” Lilburn (1999) gives deep consideration to penthos, what it is and what it does: “The sorrow desire arrives at, penthos, said the old monks, was the goal of a contemplative life. They insisted though this was not despair…. [penthos] refuses all images anticipation suggests to it, yet remains erotic, reaching within this refusal” (p. 81).

In the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University, I learned a guided meditation sometimes used in work with trauma healing and resilience, and an exercise called “River of Life.” I’ve used a variation with adults in different settings. During my doctoral studies, as a participant in Eastern Mennonite University’s Summer Peacebuilding Institute and as a student in Dr. Hizikias Assefa’s course, Philosophy and Praxis of Reconciliation and Forgiveness, I was invited to write to a prompt, similar to the one developed through Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) – guided with images, suggestions already of what the river might be. Later, I met the children of the writing group under a bit of shade in a field of tall grass, and there, too, we wrote amazing rivers, into (and out of our) being.

110 See Orr, 2002, Trauma and the Shattering of Self to Trauma and Radical Freedom.

In a phenomenological ‘circling’ of Heidegger’s unity of fourfold, where the essence of language is a “standing in the openness of Being,” and “makes possible a kind of gathering” and “intersection for human beings,” Galvin (2013) offers questions to consider “how the togetherness of things is a well-being”:

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  Something very radical happens in a much loved poem, the poem makes possible ‘my sounding.’ […] What it is about relationship with a poem that harkens to well-being and how poets in their speaking can tell us more about well-being than a more partial view of a focus on ‘the inner world.’ (p. 6)
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111 Trauma and the Shattering of Self to Trauma and Radical Freedom are subtitles within Chapter 8, The Dangerous Angel. This poem is a conversation or application of what Orr has written in these pages. All quotes, as cited at the end of the poem, are from Orr (2002).


On how we might deploy our imaginations and/or the alchemy and force of the act of writing, see:

Aleksandar Hemon, author, Bosnian journalist, (November 3rd, 2013) in an interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Writers and Company, CBC Radio, telling “how ever active or inventive your imagination is, the scariest parts are beyond your limit, beyond what you can imagine,” speaking about how the process of narrativizing brings him closer to experience.

See Anna Akhmatova. 1 April 1957 *Instead of a Preface, Requiem* (Akhmatova in Forché, 1993, p. 102).

113 For a description of the *strangeness* necessary in song/poem making, a “sense of being able to traverse worlds,” where “desire to disperse or de-center the self,” is understood as part of a larger tradition (see Kwasny, 2013). And about the possibility of listening [in/to *strangeness*] as she cites Breton, “we still know as little as we ever did about the origin of the voice which it is everyone’s prerogative to hear, if only he will, a *voice* which converses with us most specifically about something other than what we believe we are thinking” (Kwasny, 2013, p.12).


In a country which denies that men/and women are human, where the Constitution excludes them as sub-humans, the creative act is an act /of dissent and defiance: creative/ability is a quintessential part/of being human: to assert one’s /Creativity is also to assert one’s/ Humanity.

(Brutus as cited in Sustar & Karim, 2006, p. 370)

[Sama 9] On Freedom and the Act of Writing

115 “A great verse can have a great influence on the soul of a language. It awakens images that had been effaced, at the same time that it confirms the unforeseeable, is this not an apprenticeship to freedom?” (Bachelard, 1960, p. xxvii).

“Without the freedom of reversibility enacted in unmaking, or at least always present as the potential for unmaking, we cannot give value to our making” (Stewart, 2011, p. 1).

“In spring, on the outside and the inside, a man dreams of freedom. How does the poet know this? From experience” (Forché, 1993, p. 34).

See Kwasny citing Corbin and considering “the image as an organ of perception”:

[...] Corbin] writes, ‘it is what shows the soul, enables it to see, the cosmos in which it is.’ If the image makes possible the concrete translation of a reality which has hitherto been inaccessible to us, if it is acting as an eye or ear or nose into those territories, which news does it bring back to us, and how?

(Kwasny, 2013, p. 91)

116 “Think of an antelope drawn with impossibly long eyelashes standing in a green meadow the colour of a crayon” (Hunter, 2009, p. 55).

Faced with this world of changing forms in which the will to see goes beyond passive vision and projects the most simplified of beings, the dreamer is master and prophet. [...] Our imaginary desire is attached to an imaginary form filled with imaginary matter. All the elements, certainly, are good for
healing reverie. The whole world can be brought to life by the command of a hypnotic gaze. (Bachelard, 1988, p. 186)


A genuine Transcendence is more than a limit concept: it is a presence which brings about a true revolution in the theory of subjectivity. It introduces into it a radically new dimension, the poetic dimension. At least such limit concepts complete the determination of a freedom which is human and not divine, of a freedom which does not posit itself absolutely because it is not Transcendence. To will is not to create. (Ricoeur, as cited in Stewart, 2011, p. 3)

Our freedom is bound to the fact of our status as living beings; the open decision to act in one way rather than another is rooted existentially in the always prior and fundamental decision to continue to live. In the realm of moral choices, such a capacity for transcendental freedom becomes a precondition for practical freedom, and not the other way around. (Stewart, 2011, p. 7)

[Sama 10] What Resounds, Endures

118 “Resonance does not originate with us, but proceeds through us, from the world.// Lyric speech is an echo of the image of integration. (Zwicky, 2011, p. 219)

“The poem is the trace of the poet’s joining in knowing” (Brighurst, 2008, p. 18).

119 Carrying your harp of sighs, // You breathe out the music of mourning.

An excerpt from the Nin-me-sar-ra, inscribed on tablet; written during the High-Priestess’s time in exile. First known author Enheduanna’s portrait exists on a limestone disc. (See Enheduanna in Hirshfield, 1994.)

Adonis (poet from our beloved, bleeding Syria) speaks of the image as “a penetrating, revealing light directed at the unknown. The image is a becoming, a change of state” (Kwasny, 2013, pp. 7-8).

120 […] “our idea of place originated in our need to know where our dead are buried. […] we literally speak the language of the dead, […] Could we not think, therefore, of the poem as the site of such keeping alive, in fact, as the site of that translation? //Exile: the prolonged living away from one’s people, usually enforced. […] We leave each other again and again. (“It was not for the sparrow/I left thee … I left thee for the star/which was in my heart/burning.”)” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 61).
“Milosz calls up the departed only to banish them again. His poetry is both a magical way of bringing the dead to life and a talisman against that life. He can only create the new by expelling the old through a ritual act” (Forché, 1993, p. 40).

121 “The vision itself vanishes, its plastic aspect, corresponding to the soul’s most secret anticipations, is destroyed” (Corbin, cited in Kwasny, 2013, p. 112).

122 The image takes root in us perhaps because it finds not its allegory, but its home in our being, our inner earth, in centers and colors that resonate with it, or in the meadows and streambeds that constitute what Corbin calls the ‘mystic geography’ of the soul.” (Kwasny, 2013, p. 131)

On movement between exterior image and interior, the visionary experience and, what she calls the metaphysics of perception, see Kwasny, 2003, p. 132.

The poet’s suggestibility is precisely what opens him or her to emotion and the motions of spirit, making a world harmony potential. Yet here, too, what is internalized shapes the spirit and comes from a relation of sympathy. (Stewart, 2011, p. 80)

To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle is one of its mainstays. […] hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. (Freire, 2008, p. 2)

[Sama 11] Startle in the Garden of Charity: On Limits

123

And We have sent down blessed rain from the sky and made grow thereby gardens and grain from the harvest. Shahih International. Surah 50:9

And We send down from the sky rain charted with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and Grains for harvests. Yusuf Ali Surah 50:9
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