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Dead dreamer : the oscillating real dream through a mosaic of emotions

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**Dead Dreamer: The Oscillating Real Dream through a Mosaic
of Emotions. [Original writing]**

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DEAD DREAMER:
THE OSCILLATING REAL DREAM
THROUGH A MOSAIC OF EMOTIONS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

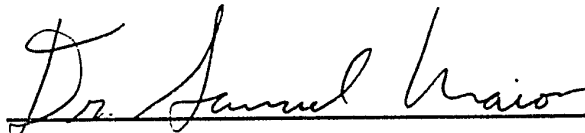
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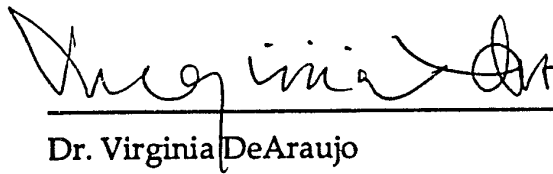
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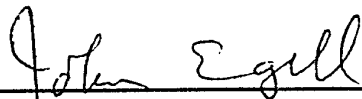
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ABSTRACT

DEAD DREAMER: THE OSCILLATING REAL DREAM THROUGH A MOSAIC OF EMOTIONS

by Jonathan Warren Kromrey

This creative writing thesis presents works of fiction, non-fiction, and contemporary poetry created in the mind of Jeffrey, a catatonic protagonist who is trapped in his crippled body while his mind is still able to function. Because he is unable to speak or move in any way, he becomes an active participant in the oscillating real dream: the wavering between two or more memories and images which results in a juxtaposition of reality and the imagination: a mosaic of emotions.

This work was inspired by Walt Whitman's definition of the creative act, and discusses the influences of William Faulkner, Ray Bradbury, A.R. Ammons, and Ernest Hemingway, through the use of narrative voices, crossovers between styles and subjects, and blending together different points of view.

*Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns
left.)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the
eyes of the dead, nor feed on the specters of books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them for yourself.*

—Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself."

*I had withdrawn in forest, and my song
Was swallowed up in leaves that blew away;
And to the forest edge you came one day
(This was my dream) and looked and pondered long,
But did not enter, though the wish was strong:*

...
*But 'tis not true that thus I dwelt aloof,
For the wood wakes, and you are here for proof.*

—Robert Frost, from "A Dream Pang"

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I

The Creative Process

To put a name to creativity is to name the human capacity to imagine and invent. To name the creative process, however, is more difficult. Where does it begin or end? How does one "create" anything? Wordsworth, in his *Prelude*, believed that his poetry was the result of his ability to allow his "emotions [to] collect... in tranquillity." As a fellow poet and writer of fiction, I have found that Wordsworth speaks the truth, that an artist's mind selects emotions and memories from his experiences, which, during periods of "tranquillity" or when he is free from distraction, are separated, sifted, mixed, and finally combined to create a collage of images and feelings. This collection within an artist's imagination he then uses to express himself to others through his creations, in order to please his audience and at the same time validate, or invalidate, his feelings and views.

I prefer to call Wordsworth's "tranquil collection of emotions" the action of the oscillating real dream: the wavering between two or more memories and images which results in a juxtaposition of reality and the imagination: a mosaic of emotions.

The oscillation between what is seen as 'real' (i.e., not imaginary or substantial events from the past) and what is realized through 'dreams' (i.e., abstraction, mental images, thoughts, and visions) is the basis of all artistic communication.

Writing poetry or fiction is an act of presenting dreams as one dreams them; one's state of mind is relaxed, and words and images are combined

with emotions to create meaning. This mosaic thesis displays works created by Jeffrey, a catatonic character who is trapped in his crippled body while his mind is entirely intact. Because he is unable to speak or move in any way, he becomes an active participant in the oscillating real dream. As his mind wanders from the reality of being trapped inside the prison of his body to the sometimes beautiful and strange dream world where his memories and subconscious mix, Jeffrey unknowingly presents those points of his life which are the most beautiful and strangely unique.

Each of Jeffrey's real dreams is an independent work which applies the use of what Lewis Turco defines in his book, *The New Book of Forms*, as the three narrative voices: the egopoetic, the narrative, and the dramatic. The egopoetic voice stems from a speaker taking a stance at the center of his or her world and telling about it from the first-person singular viewpoint. The narrative voice relates someone else's or perhaps his own story by standing outside himself and taking an objective viewpoint. The dramatic voice is similar to the narrative with the exception that the speaker takes the audience inside another character's person, and both we and the speaker become that person (Turco, 75-76). I have used these differences in voice to reveal more of my persona and the influences of Ray Bradbury, A.R. Ammons, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway through my work.

In Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*, each chapter is narrated by a different character, resulting in a mosaic collection of characters' views and emotions. In this thesis, each work has its unique meaning and individuality as it shows a different view of Jeffrey's character, and all the works are linked through his overlying narrative point of view, much like Ernest

Hemingway's short story, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." The end result is a mosaic which reveals Jeffrey's personality. Thus connected, the work in this thesis forms a coherent whole, an oscillation between poetic voice and fictional points of view--a mosaic of poetry and prose.

This oscillation is further displayed through various points of view, form, and subject matter. When moving from the direct-address first-person voice in the poem "The Solo," to the all-seeing omniscient, stream of consciousness narrative in the non-fiction work, "The Quaker Oats Plant," readers will either empathize or sympathize with the narrator of each piece, representing Jeffrey's different attitudes. This either brings about the reader's acceptance of similar desires and emotions, or taps into the reader's ability to share in the experience and appreciate, if not completely understand, what it is that compels the narrative voice.

Throughout the thesis there are shifts between relatively conventional points of view and a more dream-like, spontaneous point of view. The conventional methods of narration are usually the first, and third-person points of view, with limited omniscience to add a sense of connection between the reader and the author. I believe that the use of direct address from a first person voice and from the omniscient point of view both appeal to the reader's sense of action, and can be instrumental in the reader's internalization of the written word. In the poem, "The Solo," the use of the first-person direct address places the narrative voice directly in front of the reader. Not only is the poem a recounting of the narrator's desire to jump up during the middle of an aria, but at the same time the poem questions whether this desire is common. In using the first-person direct address, the

reader at the end of the poem feels obliged to respond—to participate in, or with the poem—either to deny that the same desires exist in the reader, or to admit to them.

In the non-fiction piece, “The Quaker Oats Plant,” the use of total omniscience and spontaneity of the narrator's voice compels the readers to suspend their disbelief, to trust in the narrator and follow the strange path bordering on paranoia and psychedelic associations between religion and a box of breakfast cereal.

Presentation of the work through poetry and prose allows both flexibility and spontaneity as well as structure and density, seen in the poem, “Cloud Breathing,” and the short story, “Stretch.” And the positioning of the pieces in regards to each other serves to either echo common themes, such as man in nature, or to clash and accentuate, such as man's desires in “The Solo” as opposed to a child's innocence in the face of death, as seen in the poem, “Little Bird Bones.”

II

Dead Dreamer:

The Oscillating Real Dream

Through a Mosaic of Emotions

*You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look
through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the specters of books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them for yourself.*

--Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself"

Dead Dreamer

The light sounded different to him. It was something about how the light entered the room and splashed across the flat white wall in front of his eyes. Different. That was the only way he could describe it. And it wasn't exactly something he could label directly without taste, touch, feel, or for that matter anything else, even pain. The only thing he could do while he lay there on the bed was listen and stare and watch his dreams and memories flash by like slides on the wall. But there was something different, he could sense it, *even though it might not be the sound of the light*, he thought.

The wall directly in front of him was the same as it had been since he had awoke lying on the bed in the room. It had only taken him moments to realize that his eyes were frozen open and that he could not move, and after Nurse had come in and put drops in his eyes, he realized that he could not speak or anything else. It had been maddening at first, just staring day after day at the wall, unable to speak or scream or even wet the bed. He supposed he had gone crazy a few times here and there, but all in all, he had generally stopped trying to fight it. Once in a while he would try to shift his gaze to the dried drop of white paint that his eyes were not directly focused at, like when he used to look at the stars, but nothing ever happened, everything was out of place, not direct, and the snow-white glare of the wall seared into his sight so that he now saw the color white everywhere, even in his dreams.

After a few days weeks months, he couldn't keep track of the time so didn't even try anymore, the whiteness of the wall and the clarity of the dried drop, like the sound of light in the room, became only a background to him.

He figured that what was different wasn't the regular high-pitched ringing in his ears or the regular sound of the room; a closed box with one window and one bed. No, it sounded to him as if something had suddenly left, leaving a vacuum in the somewhere it had once been.

From his place on the bed he strained to listen, to pick out what had changed, hear what was missing. He waited a long time, as near as he could tell, but now even hours seemed like seconds to him. When he thought he heard it, whatever it was, it was gone, like when he was young and would stare at the night sky and see the stars he wasn't trying to look at. He decided it wasn't the sound of the dust as it floated in the sunlight coming through the window, and it wasn't the Gypsy moths' regular knocking against the moon-lit glass. *No*, he thought, it was beyond, somehow, and it was different than the last time he had paid attention to the day-or-moon-light and lay there watching his dreams as they mixed and faded in and out like a double exposure.

Something was missing and he couldn't name what it was.

So he waited for something to happen as a result. And he waited as he had for hours days weeks months, for a slight change, any change, in the light, now moonlight, now sunlight again which streamed through the window. *If it isn't the dust what is it?* he wondered. The hot sun-lit moon-glowing dust swirled in the ray of sun-moon light falling, lighted, filling the space between his head and the wall. Once in a while he would try to focus on the dust, to see a speck clearly, but his eyes did not respond.

Nurse came in and put drops in his eyes and was gone, and came in and put drops in his eyes and was gone. It wasn't until the third fifth

seventeenth time she came in that he saw her, remembered what it was that she was doing. The drops were in order to keep his eyes from sticking open, he had heard them say once thrice and whatever comes after that. *Not that it matters much anyway*, he thought. The muscles in his eyelids, much like the rest of his body, didn't work, but he didn't feel any pain, so there you had it.

And when Nurse came in and put the drops in he would've flinched, had he been able to shut his eyes. He would've flinched, and then, finding himself drawing back, would've leaned forward, forward, quickly, as if his body movement would say *yes I'm alive!*, then back and forth to make sure he was not dreaming, not dreaming, not staring at that godawful wall forever. No, he didn't have a chunk of his brain missing, but he was whole again, living, moving.

He wondered if everything was just a bad dream. Maybe it was, like the *Twilight Zone* episode where prisoners of the future were trapped inside their own bodies to conserve the space and building costs of new prisons. *Was this the same?*, he wondered.

He couldn't feel anything. He couldn't tell if he was covered with blankets or not, couldn't feel the thick and curled hair on his arms and legs scratch against the sheets, couldn't feel his breath as it went in and out of his lungs. Once he had tried to scream and it sounded like a baby bird on a broken record. Cheep. Cheep. Cheep. Cheep. He wanted to laugh at first because it sounded so funny, the high pitched sound. The absurdity of having been castrated flashed into his mind, then faded.

He realized that there was a machine in front of him, beeping. The machine blocked the white wall and the drip, but replaced the white glare

with a seamless, dripless gray metal which was just as bad as the wall had been. There was nothing for his eyes to focus on, except a small window just outside his line of sight, a window like in a door to a classroom where it's been papered over to keep the students from looking forlornly out into the sunshine.

After the bell rings you find yourself scuffing your feet through the pine needles, making swirls and arcs in the dry red dust, leaving behind spiral designs. Your empty lunch box is clenched in your hand, the arms of your jacket are tied in a knot around your waist.

But something is different. Today is Thursday.

There is a dead baby bird in the dirt, lying right in your path.

You watch as a few of the children ahead of you step around it as if fear floats in the air, gently sweeping them to the sides. Some of them do not notice the bird or the fear, their attention elsewhere, their feet landing close. You wonder will you step on it if you continue walking with your normal stride.

You wonder about yellow baby chicks, how you'd like to see them hatch in the classroom, underneath the steady heat of a light bulb. You look up at the sky between the thin branches, and think, If it is alive, I'll stop and scoop it up in my jacket and bring it home. Nurse it to health.

But better to ignore it, you tell yourself, pass over it. and as you do, you feel the small, round bundle of feathers and bones collapse like a ball of tissue under your foot, and you look down and see the legs, scrawny yellow pipe cleaners, kicking, jerking at the air where the bird's head has been pushed under the dust.

Passing in front of the small square window was a piece of adding machine paper like a white tongue with black zigzags on it. The tongue moved slowly, as if the machine was taking its time to insult him in slow motion, to show that nothing had changed, nothing at all. The zigzags were all the same shape, size, and height; measured, and he was the only thing in the room that was out of place.

Then, suddenly, the machine seemed to loom in his sight, to fill the corners of his vision, to blot out anything that might be beside it or behind it, anything that would take his attention away from it.

And he wanted to turn over, to run, to get something and smash the machine, rip out its tongue, heft it up and throw it out of the window—he knew he could lift it—anything to make it stop that dammed beeping, anything to change everything.

*Have you ever been in a dark place
with a lot of people,
say, for instance,
a theater,
watching a really dramatic scene on the stage*

*when it's the dying hero's big number
and everyone around is watching,
listening to the music,
everyone's eyes are fused to that single man or woman,
focused,
almost to bleary-eyed scrutiny of the torn costume clothes
the gestures
the smeared, pained expression,
and everyone in the audience is caught up in the moment,
feeling as if they are soaring into the darkness around them,
crying or holding back tears;
and you find yourself suddenly wanting to jump up
out of your center seat,
15d,
right in the middle of everything,
and start screaming at the bloody top of your lungs
and keep at it,
screaming
until in moments everyone,
every single person in the entire theater
and offstage
and in the orchestra
and standing by the doors with their tiny yellow plastic flashlights shaking,
everyone is staring at you in a wide-eyed horror,
disbelief,*

*maybe even a hatred that they've never experienced before,
and even the singer on the stage has stopped singing,
tries to scowl past the spotlighted glare to see you,
and the whole house is slack-jawed,
staring,
unmoving,
unable to tear their gaze away from your figure,
the curve of your back,
the expression on your face after you climb up
onto the wooden armrests of your seat and balance there,
beating your chest,
your smooth shoes slipping,
and your face,
red,
exhilarated?*

But he did not flinch and Nurse came and went and came and went and put drops in his eyes. And he lay on the bed, trying to hear what was different, what was missing, and he stared at the wall.

The sunlight as it streamed through the blinds sounded to him like his breathing: raspy and loose and regular. Over and over. In, out. Fluid. Like the sun-moon-light. Like Nurse every hour day week month. Like his dreams.

Was the theater a dream? he wondered.

He lay there thinking about what was missing and not flinching and about Nurse and how the sunlight-moonlight flashed as it hit her sun-whitened-moon-blue skirt, and he watched the dust float in the air where she had been. He wondered if she changed into faded jeans at the end of the day or night shift and went home to her husband, how the dust pulled after her as she moved out of the light, attracted to her like a magnet, or maybe even like a cloud of gnats that seemed to hover in a certain place in the sunshine or shade, and no matter how hard you swung at them the cloud was still there.

He thought about Nurse and how tight her dress was and how he used to look at them, women, and feel the stirring.

*My hair is three months long
grows fast and thick,
makes me feel potent in my muscles
I take large strides, wear my heavy boots
I see women as they pass by, looking.
But I am not Samson
with long dark ringlets shining blue with mirrh,
with strength inside the tight curls
combed out by Delilah
I have black hairs on my rough chin, cheek stubble,
and shoulders where the stranded follicles
flow down my chest, gathering
to cover my stomach and circle my crotch.*

*The rest is the color of rotting hay
stacked on my scalp in a heap
the worn gold chaff blown over my arms and legs,
fading along my buttocks and down my thighs
ending in tufts on my toe knuckles.
I don't have the power in my arms, in my chest
the dark strength of Samson,
but I can see in the mirror
the gold light glint off of my head
feel the power inside me, around me, swelling like wheat
about to burst open in the sun.*

Then the dust settled into a circular pattern again, pushed by the draft escaping from the corner of his mouth where the mouthpiece didn't fit right. He had forgotten he had the oxygen mask on. His escaped breath forced the dust in circles, never ending circles, and where the dust went out of the sight of the light, more entered in right behind.

Over and over. Like moths to a flame, moths, like the tree with the green leaves in his old front yard that he had always wanted to go back and take a picture of. The leaves looked like thousands of moths.

*The leaves are attached in bunches to the thin branches
falling grapes frozen in the morning cool
Some drop to the yellowed ground where they are scattered
kicked up by so many small feet in the sun*

*while the rest of the leaves cling to their perches
turning in the day breeze flashing gray green coins
They ride the wind until the sun sets and the hot white porch lights flare up
again
calling the leaves to turn into moths and flock
slap their paper wings to the glass
and melt there in an amber chrysalis of phoenix heat.*

In, out. Over and over.

And then he figured out what was missing.

From the sound of his breath, the way the dust sounded as it swirled in circles, the way that he couldn't look at anything except the wall for day and night upon day and night, *he* was missing. His body was on the bed, and in that body his trapped mind was slowly beginning to die.

Oh finally, it has begun! he thought. He would've smiled if the muscles in his mouth could have responded. Now it was just a matter of time before he faded away altogether. Fade away like the day-moon light, and not blend into anything else ever again. No more dreams, no more memories, just silence.

But then he began to think about death as he had in the days weeks months before this and how he wanted to die. *Don't dying people remember their lives as they die?* he thought, then wondered what his first memory was and how young he was at the time when he had a green plastic drinking cup in the bathroom of a new house.

*A blue-striped tiger prowled around the
side
such a long tiger it took me years to realize
he was
only one whose chest and tail were the only parts
not
rubbed off and the raised rough button on the
bottom
was perfect for idle picking, the empty growl
still
rings in my ears*

He and his parents and brother had just moved into the new house very near to the time of his birthday and they had the party outside in the big back yard--just the three of them because they didn't know anybody else yet.

There had been a wooden train on the white cake and its cars were connected by tiny magnets and in each of the three train parts there was a hole for a candle and on the top of the cake was spelled out "Happy Birthday Jeffrey." Then that thought faded and he went on to the next. *We used to go back east every summer, he thought as he watched the wall before his eyes fade into dream colors, and we would visit Grandpa and Grandma in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Grandpa took us on one of the trains he drove once.*

*Your hands were like a baby giant's
thick, compact, and covered with hair*

*Your fingers were strong as the smooth steel levers
you pulled on the Rock Island line.*

*You smelled like diesel, like the trains you ran
You stored gasoline down in your basement
to wash off the grease of a hard day's work.*

*Your insect collection was a place of honor
with hundreds of specimens under the glass
I can still see you sleeping, resting,
after we shook the popcorn seeds,
after we chased the fire flies
and we gazed into the eyes of the Gypsy moth's
outstretched wings.*

*I still have the bat you gave me,
open mouthed with the wings spread wide
the one you shot at midnight with a BB gun
hitting it in the chest, dead center.
It twirls above the foot of my bed,
spins lazy circles in the wind
and watches me as I sleep.
And sometimes I find myself listening in the dark
for the thunder of your distant trains.*

And he remembered the time that Grandma and Grandpa came out to the house, like they did every other year, and one year Dad put up the white metal awnings over the bedroom windows to keep the sun out and how proud Mom and Dad were that was the first thing they had bought and paid for on their own, and Grandma and Grandpa had come out to help put them up. And he remembered how Grandpa always looked like a block of granite moving about the house, like a strongman from the circus who had been squashed down by the hand of God to look a little shorter and compact. And he remembered the time when Grandpa had re-arranged everything in Dad's garage, without Dad's permission, and how angry Dad got.

*And this is the way Grandpa moves
tools in the garage every time he visits,
and this is the time Dad gets angry
tells him that garbage men don't take the pruned limbs
just bundled up with string*

*and this is Grandma scolding Grandpa
for letting Dad talk to him like an old man,
and Grandma all along is pushing Grandpa
like a broom*

*and now Mom gets angry at Dad
because he doesn't plan enough ahead,
even though she could do it*

*she's scared of making the wrong decision,
feels the only reason we've gotten this far
is because she's pushed him*

*and my girlfriend gets mad at me
because I look at other girls
once in a while without meaning to,
she always wins arguments because
she hates to lose
can push words around
with her perfect memory*

*and I wonder if this is the way,
if this is the way
it has always been between lovers.*

But then he had grown up a little, and the trips back east were not as often, not as fun as they had been when the station-wagon was hot to the touch and everything they took with them was in the box clamped to the top of the car so that he and his brother could stretch out in the back and play games and sleep in their sleeping bags and with their flattened pillows. And that was when Iowa was a magic place, not a place of limousines and stealing people's money and luggage and staring down the barrel of a .45, but a time when he would stop to listen to the corn growing on Great Grandpa's farm and see the towering silo with brown corn sticking out of the side wire, and

sip the cold sweet water that came up from the pump and how there was a tin cup right there to drink from and after you pumped it would take a while to flush all the beetles out, and the water tasted so sweet in all that humidity.

*I inhale the smooth moisture
of morning clouds thickened to a blue patchwork
I soak my tongue in its cold blueberry wine, close
it up in my chest barrel until it steeps and
stains my lung walls with the thick flavor,
then, when the orange rip on the horizon spills
light across the sky and bleaches the clouds,
I will draw up the morning taste in my mouth
and sip it all day long.*

But the farm was different than the city, he thought. Cedar Rapids was the city in which his grandparents lived. They had a two-story house with a cool basement, close to Beaver Park where his mother and her brother went swimming.

*The birds fill up the
sidewalk trench
with wasteful splash,
capsizes mower hums,
tower chimes, and
jumbojets*

*to
splashes impudent
abandon
found in the brown
trench brown
bathing trench:
wind varies:
the morning clouds color
blue twilight
on the lawn's emerald
leaves
and nothing at all gets,
nothing gets
left at all.*

Cedar Rapids was where his mother went to Coe College and got a degree in Liberal Arts. He remembered seeing the campus from behind a too-hot-to-touch station wagon window. The college was on the fringe of the city, away from the twenty-or-so story-high sky scraper that had a giant red cross on all four sides to label it as *the* hospital, away from the twisting and intertwining lanes of the newly-built three-lane highway, and away--but not far enough--from the Quaker Oats plant--the only reason he was glad that his window was always rolled up when they drove through the city.

In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the distinct, hot odor of a pillow soaked in sleep drool blows through the air as if from a furnace.

It's the Quaker Oats plant, as if just the name and thought of a large smiling man with pink jowls, white hair, a black hat and a bowl of steaming Quaker Oats in his hands would make everything pleasant.

Why is he on those red-and-white-with-blue cardboard cylinders? Why, he's a Quaker! A man who shakes uncontrollably when making breakfast cereal. The Spokesman. Why breakfast cereal? Why, because it's a "natural part of a complete breakfast" as the commercials say, and to Mr. Quaker, that's a turn on: all those oats being pushed around in young, pink mouths by tongues, slipping, sliding, mashing, pushing, oozing, chomping, oh!, and then the swallow. Simple pleasure.

Simplicity, after all, is the Quaker way. Back to basics. The freedom to use everything. The heavy taste of the oats, the "special sauce" so to say, really the siphoned-off-sleep-drool from Quakers as they dream about steam and waiting mouths. The oats, or "oh's," themselves are actually dry flakes of skin from Quakers with skin irritations, who hang on meat hooks in the main plant as the other workers, wearing long-brimmed black hats and white wigs to avoid contact with the irritating skin, hoist huge back-scratchers and shear off the flakes of skin into a big vat. There, the "oh's" (the sounds of carnal back-scratching relief as well as too-hot oats singeing the tongue) begin to steam and mix in with the drool. A natural part of a complete breakfast. Natural. Pastoral, perhaps. God in nature! God in man! It can't all be that bad, so eat up, goddamn!

Imagine millions of bowls of steaming, baking, rolling oh's!, all in a giant cement mixer (simple, yet effective and pleasurable), ready to be poured out, spread over huge drying sheets, dried in the thick air (which will cause humid weather over the entire state of Iowa), then boxed and shipped across the country. Millions upon millions of happy children scooping, gulping, gobbling down bowl upon bowl of sugar-sprinkled, milk-drowned, spoon-blown Quaker Ohs! Talk about sensual experience. Of course the pungent odor of drool which has dissipated, will be released once more when stirred over a low heat in the kitchens of America. Just open your mouth and out comes the smell. Yum! Share it with your friends today!

Soon, Quaker Ohs! will be everywhere. Their scent will roll along the electrical wires, scramble down the telephone posts, jump the foot-high cement curbs, coat the grass, linger in the air, waiting patiently to jump into all those innocent, parent-obedient, hungry mouths. Pretty teens will be wearing little boxes of Quaker Ohs! as earrings, bracelets, necklaces. They'll be the emblem of the avant-garde of the new decade (and in some circles coveted as an aphrodisiac even stronger than crushed Rhino horn). Quaker Ohs! will be the life of the party! Quaker Ohs! and beer, Quaker Ohs! and Tequila, Quaker Oh's! dried and wrapped into tiny roaches then secretly smoked outside where the hall-monitors can't smell them. Hey, what's that you're smoking there? Hey, pal, not to worry! It's Quaker Ohs! 'It's a complete part--' Yeah, yeah, 'of a complete breakfast,' I know. Can I try some? I hear it enhances your memory--

So does this all mean that the Quakers are social-corruptors who are plotting the end of modern social organization as we know it, doling out little

blue, white, and red boxes to addict the nation's youth? No, they just like to have their backs scratched. We all do. It's just Man's animal need for pleasure showing through. As for the taste, Quaker Oats hasn't really seemed to have had any of that pleasure since Mr. Quakerman invented it, so it's not even worth mentioning. We've all eaten them. We're all sinners. And the smell--perhaps that's really the scent of brimstone simmering over a slow-baking flame burning under the warm facade of Cedar Rapids, Iowa...

He watched the rest of the day and night and following day and night come and go quickly. The falling dust was background noise now, like the time he paused to listen to the corn in the field (*was it Great Grandpa's farm? or the one Mike took me into?*) to see if he could hear it grow and the sound just was background noise (*yes, it was Great Grandpa's farm*). Just as the changing sunlight and moonlight had become background to what he saw. He had long since gotten used to that. It was all the same to him now. He could imagine the light and the dark both creeping over the sill of the window, first one, then the other, spilling through the sometimes breath-beaded glass to flood the dream room with white or black-blue sets of a photography studio (*Oh, that would be so nice*). One light leading to the other light, leading to the other light, to shine on the subject just right.

I had just rounded the Alum Rock curve of 680 South, where it splits like a fleur-de-lis into 101 North, when I saw a cloud bank at the feet of the Santa Cruz Mountains. It looked to be about two inches thick, and the sun shone blue on it through the clouds, like the white cotton Christmas tree skirt

Jenny and I had just bought the day before. The clouds were long and blue, long, so long that they stretched along the base of the entire mountain range until they bunched up at the narrow end of the valley.

I never used to get out of the valley before I got married and had to commute, never saw the morning clouds as they pushed across the six-thirty sky. Coming from Fremont into the valley, the clouds are especially pretty because they're pushed from being giant fluffs through the mountains where they get smashed and squashed together like stiff streams of clay squirting between a child's fingers. Then the clouds split, either going left at the radio antenna and into the lower half of the Central Valley, or right into the Silicon Valley where the cloud streaks sometime clatter with lightning, more in recent years than in the past, and may even leave a little snow behind on Mt. Hamilton.

But the cloud bank at the feet of the Santa Cruz Mountains this morning was different. It rained the night before, one-and-a-half inches in Fremont, four in Santa Cruz. It was as if the mountains were a woman lying on her side in a bathtub with her back to me. She would have been there for some time because the soap-clouds had lost their bubbles and formed a thin sheen along her spine and floated on the water. And seeing those mountains as a woman in a bathtub made me think of how weak the clouds were, how if the woman sat up straight, the suds would slide down and settle again, then continue to dissipate when the sun came out. I wondered if the mountain woman had fallen asleep and was getting all pruney; the tops of the mountains were jagged like the raised whorls of fingerprints soaked too long in water.

But what if she did get up? What then? Could the valley actually be a marriage bed instead of a bath tub, where the sheets between the two lovers had settled? Would the Fremont/San Jose side of the valley then let out a bellowing yawn as the husband giant shook the sheet of earth that had settled on him while he slept? Houses, entire neighborhoods would fly apart as he sat up straight, ripping up the trees which had clustered together in the sheet crannies, and the paper thin asphalt streets would crumple up as easily as paper ash and float in the breeze as the giant reached out in wonder to pinch them. Maybe the Alum Rock sulfur springs are actually the tear ducts of the giant's eyes, crusted over for hundreds of years, or for however long giants sleep.

And what would he do then? Look over to his wife and tell her that he liked to watch her body? How he liked the swing of her breasts as she sat up and began to unbraid her hair?

And where would they go from there? Meet other Giants who had also fallen asleep? What would humanity do? Try to talk to them? And after realizing that they couldn't hear us would we try to blow them up? (Either that or befriend them and add to our persuasive power in the world.) We'd turn into a bunch of Lilliputians, just because two giants had fallen asleep and woke up at a bad time.

No. I know there are no giants under the mountains. Although the quakes make me wonder. This valley is neither a graveyard or bedroom for two giants (its way too drafty!), nor is the valley two giant burial mounds for signaling space aliens who once visited our planet (Those you can find in

Europe or Mexico, or even in the corn fields of the mid-west, but not in California).

But here, here in the valley, there is the feeling of something...primeval, older than that which we will ever know. And as the traffic sped up before me, it left a wide gap of pavement shining, still wet from the night's rain, with gray blue reflecting, and I saw the Santa Cruz Mountains and the cloud bank again, and...it felt different.

The clouds were still the same, squashed down by the cold air coming off the mountains, still the same clouds covering the mountain feet like a tree-skirt. Still the same blue; the same uncaring, unfeeling cold blue.

And I knew that the clouds would always be that way after a good hard rain, no matter if the mountains were really sleeping giants, no matter if my car flew off the overpass and killed a school bus filled with children, no matter if the human race reverted back to barbarism and became Neanderthals. And all I could do was shiver a moment and then think of what I had to do that day...do the laundry...get some Christmas stamps...and ignore, push out of my mind how the mountain edges were jagged now, like a giant spear head twenty miles long made out of chipped flint with serrated edges for cutting cleaner, and the clouds were just where the skin of the earth had parted smoothly to the still-stuck blade, leaving the puffed fat to show as if morning clouds had settled at the feet of the mountains.

There were no mountains in Iowa, he thought. Just seas, oceans of corn. He missed the mountains, seeing them turn from dead gold baked by Summer heat to the cool emerald green of Winter and Spring. The

mountains were especially beautiful in the morning, around six. He remembered having to get up early and smelling Jenny's hair and not wanting to get up but stay all day in bed with her.

*Clouds steeped in blue
slouch along with wood breath
to cover the valley like a sheet*

*We feel within our skin the need to wake
a slow simmer to rise with sun heat
stirring us from thick sleep
washing our dreams in steam*

*The coffee made
the dog fed
we start our daily stress
We trace the road on the hills' softened edge
to school, to work*

*The clouds fade tangerine
In their wake, the thick scent of morning fields,
the aftertaste of forgotten dreams*

He wondered if he could smell the corn growing if the window was open, and he lay there on the bed and wondered whether light could move

things, or if light really had any sound at all. He again wondered what was missing from the room. He had heard once about the sun throwing off atoms so small that they were always passing through the earth, whizzing, shooting past our ears so quick that it seemed that there was always a high pitched sound in the silence. Maybe that was the sound he heard.

No, he thought, because it was a lack of sound, and, at the same time, he wondered if people could suffer brain damage by being shot in the head by an atom.

It would be like getting shot with light, and the light coming in through the window and splashing on the wall didn't seem to bother him at all, not even as it seemed to bleach out his memory of what he had remembered while lying there on the bed. There was no pain and his body remained absolutely still.

It had been like that for several hours days weeks, he remembered. And he gave in to not remembering. He lay there, dreaming and remembering over and over again, only to be interrupted at regular intervals when Nurse came in to put the drops in and when Doctors came in and blocked the sight of it like some stodgy old parent who steps in front of the television/dream screen to make him stop staring at it.

I reach into the heat of the "Qwik Tumblr," pull out my socks, Jenny's underwear and my only dress shirt. The remaining two pairs of her blue jeans are still damp and heavy, so I feed another five quarters in the slot and slam the hatch shut. At one of the formica tables I start sorting. Jenny's underwear are all twisted and my shirt wrinkled. I forgot to bring a hanger.

Pretty soon it'll be two loads of just diapers plus the normal stuff. Four loads: four dollars to wash, seven to dry. Five-fifty more than usual. Eleven dollars total. Shit.

I wonder how much they make in twenty-four hours, gobbling up money like slot machines. Tiny slot machines that I have to cram more full as they make them smaller.

The washing machines are lined up along the wall like open mouths. Square eggs waiting to be fed. Endless, like Jenny's appetite.

My head aches. One of the ceiling lights blinks on and off, casting a glow on the too bright clothes of the woman next to me. Her yellow bandana almost hides her pink foam curlers. At the front, people crowd together, isolating themselves with vacant stares and vague answers. People are small and stupid.

Getting too tense. Relax. Still have another month to go before the real worrying starts.

I fold a few of Jenny's tag-less underwear and begin to wrap my socks into little white footballs.

Football. High-school. Pro. Maybe at one time, not now.

I toss a sock back and forth between my hands. Getting some extra money would be nice, as well as working for someone who speaks English for a change.

I feel a tug at my leg. It's probably some kid wanting to ask me a question. I look down angrily and see a midget.

Michael Peña stands there shaking his head and smiling. I quell the urge to lift my foot off the floor and squash him flat.

"Good to see ya, Jeffrey," he says. His thin voice hasn't changed and his face holds a deep tan. A shrunken-apple-head doll. "Jennifer said you'd be here. How's it goin?"

He's grown a pencil-thin mustache since I saw him last and is dressed in his black limousine uniform and tie without the hat. Over his arm and dragging on the floor is a another, larger, plastic-covered dry-cleaned uniform.

"Doing the laundry, living," I say. "What about you?"

"The same. How you like the photography business?"

I laugh, a little. "Good, good. I'm working over at Town and Country now. The owner speaks only Korean so I guess I'm finally learning a second language."

My chest starts to hurt and my cheeks burn but I keep talking anyway.

"Look," I say, as I fumble for my wallet, "they even have a business card."

I pass down one with Dae Hoo's name scratched out and mine penned in. "I didn't think I'd end up developing other people's film. You should see the stuff that comes through." Too many baby pictures, that's what. I'm talking too much. "What about you? Same old same o?"

"Just about," he says, nods. "Business is getting tight. I'm thinking about taking a trip."

I stop folding my underwear and feel the heat in the room surround me. My shoulder aches. He wants a bouncer.

The woman with the bandanna stares at Mike from the detergent dispenser in the front corner. Her hand rests on the lever and her face looks bleached in the florescent light.

I scowl at her until she looks away, takes her prize to her wash and pours it in. Even as she sits down and looks, I stare. She snatches up a magazine and begins to read it. See how she likes it, God-damn banana-headed bitch.

The rest of the people in the room quickly move their eyes to watch their laundry dance in the dryers. Stupid.

"Come up here," I say and reach under Mike's arms and hoist him to the edge of the table. He's always heavier than he looks. He hates to be flung up in the air, his black hair flapping like a greased wing sprouting from his scalp. In school he'd pay someone like me to do the dirty work of getting even.

Today his hair is neatly combed and parted. Slick.

"Trip? You mean out of state?" Going someplace where the people didn't know him.

Mike nods sharply and grins, causing his mustache to flip up at the edges of his mouth like a double smile. "That's what I came to talk to you about. What do you think of Council Bluffs, Iowa?"

My stomach churns. Iowa. I owe ya. I owe everybody. Lots of corn back there. Lots of corn. Spotless K-Marts. Grandma and Grandpa's farm. "Council Bluffs? Bad name."

Mike glances at the dryer and watches my jeans whip by the hatch window. "I hear it's hot back there."

"Yeah, in the summer," I say, "And everything smells like Quaker Oats. Why Iowa? Why not somewhere closer?"

Mike pulls on his stubby fingers one by one. "Vegas's got too many limos already, nowhere to go in Wyoming, desert in New Mexico and Arizona, and besides, who knows?" he says, shrugging. "Twenty-minute rides for ten bucks a pop, tours to Des Moines, union leaders--you wouldn't believe what farmers make."

"Or their taste in fashion," I add.

Mike smiles.

"How long?" I don't really want to know but it's out of my mouth before I can stop saying it. Probably soon.

"A month. Have to make a good run at it or it won't pay."

I shake my head and match the rest of my socks. "Seems to be as far away as Mars if it's that long," I say. "Besides, I gotta stick around."

Mike shakes his head. "No way man. It's perfect and I've got it all planned out. One month. Hit all the different airports going and coming. Boom boom." He snaps his fingers. "Just like that."

Over his shoulder I can see the jeans being tossed about in the dryer. The unbearable heat. I don't want to think about what Mike and me did before. It wasn't right.

He points his finger and jabs my chest with it. "You miss this, and you'll be missing out on a big opportunity, Jeff. I'm taking you into consideration because I know you're good and I trust you. Don't worry about Jennifer. She'll be fine."

"You don't understand, Mike. I promised I'd be here."

"Bullshit." He jabs harder. I want to snap his finger like a pencil.

"You want to pass up the chance to earn a little more? Maybe get a crib or

something? Maybe even move to a better place? If you ask me, this is coming at a good time. Samsonite prices are going up and there's a demand."

I look down into the basket and see Jenny's underwear. The colors have faded until they all look off-white and the waistbands are frayed, leaving them baggy. Hell, we can't even afford to buy decent underwear. She's going to need a lot of help soon, and I promised. "Maybe if it was something local..."

"Not a chance in hell," Mike twists his lips. "S.F.'s beefed up their security and San Jose's United line's getting the taxis together to keep an eye on their customers. If it was legit, I might have some business. But not with only one limo." He glances at the people at the front of the store. Some look away quickly.

I nod and am silent. I hope he's not going to ask me for money. That'd be a switch.

Mike jumps down. "Here, let me show you what I've done to the car."

The air outside is hazy and warm, but getting hot. The Cadillac takes up two spaces in the parking lot and people stare at it and then at Mike as they cruise by.

It's a long white stretch Cadillac with whitewall tires. The dents in the fender have been knocked out, the driver's side passenger door's been patched and re-painted, and the flakes of paint around the headlights are touched up. The trunk's probably been cleaned.

"Nice job," I say, "Looks professional."

"Yep," Mike says, sighs. "It's been patched inside and out pretty good, all right. And washed, and waxed, and paid for. That's the reason I need to

go on the trip. Well--" he smiles as he opens the driver's side door, "almost all of the reasons."

In front of the steering wheel is what had been the child's booster chair Mike had stolen from Burger Pit when he was twelve. It was made of red vinyl with hammered brads along the seams. Now it's reupholstered in purple suede, with rhinestone pins tacked along the seams and a monogrammed "M" on the side in gold thread.

"My God," I say. It's a little throne. "Why'd you do that?"

Mike puffs up his chest and looks like a small chicken about to squeak. "To quote my good friend Andre, 'Image is everything.' I had it done at a specialty store off Alum Rock. Nice work, huh?"

Whatever. Could buy a crib and a changing table for that. I can see the glove compartment from here but I don't want to look at it or think about what's inside. I say nothing and look at the tires. "You didn't get new ones?"

"A little Armor All and they look fine." He reaches up and pats me on the hip. "Hey, listen. I've worried enough about this, and I can see you're still nervous. I promise you we won't have any troubles like the last time."

My stomach heaves and I can barely lift my left arm. The glove compartment has something in it. I know the gun is there but I don't want to think about it. "Don't remind me." There is no way in hell that I was going to shoot someone again. I was sure my picture would be on a poster at the post office, and I didn't get out of the hospital for three weeks. Mike had nothing to worry about, he just drove. I panicked. Mike didn't even have a chance to slow down when I pushed her out into the darkness. She had said she was pregnant and couldn't take the stress of being robbed, then pulled a gun from

her purse and fired. Bitch. Her luggage wasn't even worth that much and her clothes were all ratty. She had just dressed up nice for the plane ride.

I realize that I've walked back into the laundromat and folded the rest of my socks, and instead of footballs, this time they look like little skulls. Skulls bleached by sun heat, baked on the side of the road. I've stacked them into a pyramid. I feel sick.

Mike looks up, his face straight. "Come on," he says.

When I first did it I said I needed the money to live. I didn't have any photo-processing job, or anything, but now it seems like even that is not paying off.

I need the money to live now.

We need.

I turn and take the uniform from Mike and drape it across the top of the basket like a blanket. "What's the pay?" I ask.

"Five hundred a week," he says.

"A week?" Maybe he's right. Maybe I'll be able to afford more than baby clothes. A suit. A new camera. A better job. A nice place to raise the baby proper.

A life?

I look at Mike in his tailored monkey suit. The smooth sides of the plastic bag ripple between my fingers. Slick.

But he doesn't have to deal with the people. "You just want me along to make sure they don't pop your tires, right?"

"I drive and you escort them out the door, we keep their generous tips. Sweet, like usual."

The air is bleachy and stings my nose. Jenny's not going to like it, and Iowa's a long ways away. I don't even want to think about getting stuck out there while she's here having to move back in with her parents. That wouldn't be good. Her father would lay in to me right away. I know it.

But I can persuade her. She knows we need the money. It's getting a break from Dae Hoo that I'm worried about. He's not going to like me skipping out for a month, but then again who cares? Screw the job and learning how to speak Korean. By the time I come back I'll be able to get those extra lenses and lights, and start to make some real money. Go on a location. Put an ad out for some models.

"Come on," Mike says, pulls me out of my thoughts. He looks around at the back of my neck and shakes his head. "Too scruffy. We need to look legit." He pushes a wad of money into my hand and heads out. "Go get a haircut and some shades--not Ray Ban's, and something for Jennifer." He winks. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" That doesn't leave me enough time to do anything with Jenny let alone talk to her.

"Tomorrow. Oh and get some shoes too. Shiny black," he shouts before climbing in the limo. He eases it out and rumbles away as I stand in the doorway and stare at the five hundred-dollar bills in my hand.

When I go back inside, the "Qwik Tumblr" has stopped and Jenny's jeans look worn out, slack, stretched loose. To the touch they feel heat-shrunk and dry; as tight as they can get.

I place them underneath the black uniform. They'll keep warm while I go find a barber.

When Doctors came in he noticed. They blocked the sun-moonlight as they looked at his head and peeled the tape and gauze helmet shell off and drowned out the sound of his dreams and the light with their twangy mumblings.

He could smell them (*John Doe*) they smelled like the sickly sweet Quaker Oats Plant (*approximate age twenty-four*) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (*found in a corn-field*) where he (.45 caliber) visited his grandparents (*entry wound here*) Grandpa who had driven the trains (*exit wound*) they hovered over him blocking the light, stepping in it, smothering it (*here, removing*) the light and dark would have made a great picture though (*most of the brain tissue*) the Doctors in a circle bending over the patient, yes, he thought (*left hemisphere damaged*) chiaroscuro like Rembrandt's physicians (*loss of motor functions*) a good photograph (*comatose*) except really clear and sharp (*hollow point forty-five bullet*) click, a flash of light, a gun pointed at your head by a midget on a box, and it's all over (*next is patient...*).

The dust swirled. Nurse came and went; and came and went, and the scent of Quaker Oats was gone, and he wondered why Doctors didn't notice that he was going. Wasn't there something about brain activity? What about that beep machine? Maybe he wasn't dying after all.

No, he thought, *I am dying. I'm ready to die. I want to die!* And he watched the dust as it swirled in the sun-moon light as it shone and splashed on the wall, and Nurse came in every day week month and put drops in his eyes and he would've flinched if he could've, but then she left and was there

again and left and was there again with Doctors and he wondered why there was a different sound in the room, and wondered if it was the light.

III

The Narrative Voices

Of the three narrative voices: the egopoetic, the narrative, and the dramatic narrative, most works in this thesis are egopoetic. That is, the “speaker is taking a stance at the center of his or her world and telling about it from the first-person singular viewpoint” (Turco, 75). The works are autobiographical in nature and exclusive in effect. There is one angle of vision, and the reader either agrees with the voice or not. Those who do not agree are excluded from the ego-centered relationship. The egopoetic voice often relies on rhetorical methods, “*telling* rather than *persuading* or *showing*” (75, Turco’s emphasis). According to Turco, most lyric poetry is written in the egopoetic voice, but traditionally the interest of the poem is carried by the music of the poem, by the sonic level which makes it palatable (74).

For the purpose of clarity in discussing the works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction that appear in the thesis, each work will be given a separate title:

The poem on page 9 will be referred to as “Bird Bones.”

The poem on page 11 will be referred to as “The Solo.”

The poem on page 13 will be referred to as “Samson Hair.”

The poem on page 15 will be referred to as “Moth Leaves.”

The poem on page 16 will be referred to as “Child Cup.”

The poem on page 17 will be referred to as “Grandpa R. W. Hankins.”

The poem on page 18 will be referred to as “And this is the Way.”

The poem on page 20 will be referred to as "Cloud Breathing."

The poem on page 21 will be referred to as "Abandon."

The non-fiction story on page 22 will be referred to as "Quaker Oats."

The non-fiction story on page 25 will be referred to as "Reversion."

The poem on page 28 will be referred to as "Waking with Jenny."

The fiction story on page 30 will be referred to as "Stretch."

The sonic palatability, or music, is evident in all of the egopoetic works in this project. The continual overflowing of emotion in "The Solo" can be heard through the over-extended sentence and crescendos of the first-person voice in a stream of consciousness form. The repetition of the phrase "And This is the Way" in the poem of the same name, creates resonance, a chorus, bringing each stanza to a close while the next begins. The simplicity of the voice in "Child Cup" as well as the form of the poem varies between long lines and short lines, visually similar to the stripes of a tiger, or bars of sheet music. The repetitive assonance of "Cloud Breathing" through words such as 'smooth,' 'blue,' 'steeps,' and 'stains,' as well as the shortened alliterative words: "close/it up in my chest barrel until it steeps and/stains my lung walls...", lead the poem to have a rhythm, a rolling effect, pushing the reader along. The assonance and alliteration in "Night Trains," a contemporary elegy, illustrates the subject of the dead living on in dreams and memories, reflective of the soft tone of the egopoetic voice: "Your fingers were strong as the smooth steel levers," "Hundreds of specimens under the glass." The alliteration in "Samson Hair," where the contemplative voice describes himself as having hair "stacked on my scalp in a heap," and "Tufts on my toe

knuckles," reveals the short, staccato, cutting sarcasm of the voice. And the progressive dependent clauses in "Waking with Jenny" provide a sense of steadiness, the enjoyable plodding of everyday life and its simple pleasures.

The egopoetic voice is effective in that it enhances the autobiographical experience in a way that the other voices do not—more or less an Epiphany experienced while varying between how the character views himself, and how he dreams he is.

The subject of each poem ranges from nature, and innocence, to the human body and mind. The voice of "Cloud Breathing" is meditative and indicative of the speaker's desire to internalize nature. "Samson Hair" continues the theme of meditation and the internalization of nature, but focuses on the human body and sexuality. Within the egopoetic voice there can be distinctive tones which reveal the speaker's attitudes. "Samson Hair" has a different voice than "Cloud Breathing," reflective of the speaker's sarcastic, or perhaps honest, view of his physical form when he describes his hair as "rotting wheat." The poem "The Solo," extends deeper into the theme of the physical and into the human subconscious through a direct address to what motivates our actions and what our desires are. In "The Solo," the speaker wishes to steal or distract the attention of all the people around him either in the audience, on the stage, or even in the orchestra. The poem is not meditative at all. The poem's narrative voice is chaotic and full of energy, thereby capturing the speaker's frame of mind, and at the same time capturing the reader's imagination and establishing the atmosphere by beginning: "Have you ever been in a dark place..."

Beyond the egopoetic voice lies the narrative voice. According to Turco, the narrative voice can emphasize any of the four basic elements of narration: character, plot, atmosphere, and theme, or any combination of the four. Narrative voice can be broken down into four subcategories: orientation, person, angle, and access.

The narrative voice is achieved by stepping outside one's self and taking an objective viewpoint as either author or character. The reader is not excluded by the narration, as in some of the egopoetic works like "The Solo," and "Cloud Breathing," but is instead encouraged to empathize, at least with the protagonist who is the narrator. By the way in which the story, or poem, is told, there is also an angle of reflection that tells the reader as much about the narrator, perhaps, as about the character in the poem.

The two narrative poems are perhaps my favorites: "Abandon," and "Moth Leaves." They are author-oriented, first person, single angle, objective access narrations of the atmosphere, the setting, which nature creates. "Abandon" is strictly objective, that is, having actual existence, based upon images of the SJSU campus at early morning. The poem revolves around the double meaning of the word "abandon": to desert, and to have unlimited enthusiasm. "Moth Leaves," on the other hand, begins with an objective view of leaves on branches, and at the end leads to a subjective view as the leaves turn into the moths they look like and turn the poem into a balance between reality and symbolism. Both works revolve around the atmosphere of nature as it surrounds and captivates the human mind.

The last of the three narrative voices is the dramatic. The dramatic voice is similar to the narrative voice, except that here the author "takes the reader *inside* another character's person, and both we and the poet *become* that person" (Turco, 76). We therefore see the persona's world in the same way that we saw the poet's world from the egopoetic viewpoint. The main difference is that we can still see the author-speaker's viewpoint by reflection, as in the narrative voice, from the way in which the poet makes the persona speak. The dramatic viewpoint is the most inclusive of the three, for it is both objective and "subjective" (from the viewpoint of the character). The more personae the author imagines in the poem the more inclusive the poem is. The four dramatic narratives in this thesis are: "Stretch," "Reversion," "Quaker Oats," "Little Bones."

Essentially, each of the dramatic narratives is a story. "Stretch" is a straightforward work of fiction, "Reversion" and "Quaker Oats" are works of non-fiction, and "Little Bones," is a poem. Like the narrative voice, the dramatic narrative voice also emphasizes the four basic elements of narration: character, plot, atmosphere, and theme. The poem "Little Bones" emphasizes both the innocence of the character in thought and action, as well as emphasizes the atmosphere of a child walking home from school and the horrible act he is about to unwillingly commit. The short story "Stretch" revolves around the protagonist's dilemma of either accepting his friend's offer to once again resume a life of crime through robbing wealthy people through a limousine service, or to raise a family which will be sentenced to the life of the working poor. The voice in "Reversion," the non-fiction work, is like the narrative voices in the poems "Moth Leaves" and "Abandon," but

includes more of the realistic daydreaming and stream of consciousness when the narrator of the work regards his atmosphere, *per se*, and internalizes it. The non-fiction work, "Quaker Oats" is also written in stream of consciousness, but, unlike "Reversion," *creates* the atmosphere of the story. There is no plot or character in "Quaker Oats," save for the narrator's stream of consciousness and descriptions, and the work serves to combine the elements of reality: a box of Quaker Oats, with the elements of the human imagination.

IV

Crossovers, Blending of Views, and Subjects

Not only are there differences in the narrative voices of the works, but many of the voices have been blended within the works to make the works more accessible and dynamic. Turco believes that the blending of narrative voices advances a work of writing into the realm of literature, or what he calls the "universal" (76). In works such as Chaucer's *Cantebury Tales*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, not only do the authors tell great stories, but they also serve within their stories as characters, and have their various personae tell their own stories as well. The blending of voices and views allows more clarity in seeing connections between the characters' motives and their various conflicts.

"Stretch," uses an omniscient first person narrator to reveal the character's mental condition as well as his views concerning his current environment. In one sense, "Stretch" is very much like the poem "The Solo," in that the tone of the voice reveals more about the character, Jeffrey, and allows the reader either to sympathize or empathize with him. In another sense, "Stretch" provides a larger picture of the character's world than does the poem "The Solo": we know of the character's background, his present predicament, and his view of the future.

Like "Stretch," "Samson Hair," "The Solo," and "Cloud Breathing," the thesis is linked by the blending of narrative views and focuses on themes such as: man in nature, seen in "Moth Leaves," "Little Bones," "Reversion"

and "Abandon"; as well as autobiographical memories in "And This is the Way," "Child Cup," and "Night Trains."

Although these poems are connected by similar viewpoints and themes, each work is also self-inclusive. In the poem, "Moth Leaves," and "Abandon," the common link of objective narrative viewpoint serves as a basis of presentation. Whereas the viewpoint may be the same, however, the words in which the poems are written, are not, thereby evoking different responses in the reader. "Moth Leaves" uses images to evoke notions of flight, of leaving and returning, of life and death, of passion and despair.

V

Influence of Ammons, Bradbury, Faulkner, and Hemingway

Because a single word, picture, or musical note cannot capture the chaotic makeup of who we are, why we are here, and how we are different from each other, I believe art serves to bridge those gaps: to paint with mixtures of words the landscapes of our commonalities, to express the human condition through sight and sound, to put into words the melodies of life, both heard and silent.

The motive behind this work stems from my desire to find my inner voices through dreams, emotions, and memories, and to base them in reality through different points of view, form, and subject matter. I feel that writing both fiction and poetry allows me to express myself more naturally. Some works can only be expressed through poetry and some through fiction. Poems such as "Abandon" rely on images, sounds, and their interconnecting, echoing textures which compound an image, a feeling; whereas the short story "Stretch" relies on watching the whole personality and conflict within a man rise through the extended situation in which he is placed. By oscillating between the clear, condensed, image-oriented nature of poetry to a heightened fictitious climactic scene, I am better able to place my voice--my identity--into the proper genre and form. Like A.R. Ammons's poem, "Center," my poem, "Abandon" focuses on what Ammons calls attention to "small things" (Holder, 16). There can be no other vehicle or form for "Abandon." Otherwise, it would no longer be self-contained, whole.

Of my favorite poets, A.R. Ammons appeals to me most. His use of forms and subjects is startling. Ammons's poetic forms vary from an organic haiku-like influence such as "Small Song":

The reeds give
 way to the

 wind and give
 the wind away

to "Hibernaculum," which is 112 sections long and contains 336 stanzas of three lines each. Ammons usually depends heavily on enjambment and short lines, almost to the point where each line has less than three to five words. This enjambment has a halting effect not unlike a caesura, or natural pause in reading, but also forces the reader to become more aware of the ending and beginning words on each line, to see the connections in the poem, to feel "the reeds give/way", to feel the reeds swaying in the breeze, to see the only visible sign of the wind as it passes by.

In his poem, "Essay on Poetics" (1970), Ammons explains how he creates poetry within the poem itself and breaks conventions in both poetic form and subject matter, much like my non-fiction work, "The Quaker Oats Plant." In his "Essay" Ammons discusses in three-line stanzas the act of writing poetry and even goes as far as creating a poem within the poem:

three quatrains rhyming alternate lines let me see
 if I can write a poem to help heave the point:

after which follows the poem "At Once," then the rest of the essay varying between paragraph form and stanza form, and ending with a quotation from "The Life of an Estuary" by Robert M. Ingle. My non-fiction work, "The Quaker Oats Plant" is similar to this, in its spontaneity, through the requiring of the suspension of disbelief, and a mixture of changing scenes which bring the work full circle, back to where it begins. Ammons "Essay..." works on the premise that poetry is not only image-based, but able to change, being flexible, no longer chained to specific forms and rules which govern line breaks, stanza forms, and subject matter.

I believe that a poem should be seen as a whole, not as separate elements combined within a form. Ammons believes that poetry is to be "encountered... to become standing points that we come and can try to feel out, impressionistically, what the poem is recommending" (Walsh, 106). I.A. Richards echoes this sentiment in his book, Practical Criticism, when he states that in terms of finding flaws in literature, "the blunder in all cases is the attempt to assign marks independently [author's emphasis] to details that can only be judged fairly with reference to the whole final result to which they contribute" (278). Like Richards, I wish to see each work of my poetry and fiction as a whole, not created out of some formula and stuck unceremoniously together, but emphasizing the harmony and balance throughout the entirety of each piece.

Three of my favorite authors in literature are Ray Bradbury, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway. Not only is Bradbury renowned for his speculative fiction and short stories, but his imagery in his non-fiction novel

Dandelion Wine reveals his ability to place the reader in the midst of wonder and innocence of a young man in the mid-west around the 1930's.

The first light on the roof outside; very early morning. The leaves on all the trees tremble with a soft awakening to any breeze the dawn may offer. And then, far off, around the curve of silver track, comes the trolley, balanced on four small steel-blue wheels, and it is painted the color of tangerines. Epaulets of shimmery brass cover it, and pipings of gold; and its chrome bell bings if the ancient motor-man taps it with a wrinkled shoe. The numerals on the trolley's front and sides are bright as lemons. Within, its seats prickle with cool green moss. Something like a buggy whip flings up from the roof to brush the spider thread high in the passing trees from which it takes its juice. From every window blows an incense, the all-pervasive blue and secret smell of summer storms and lightning (97).

His images of summer are like looking for a "half-burnt firecracker, a rusted toy, or a fragment of a letter." The whole collection of stories as a "gathering of dandelions from all those years," appeals to my childhood memories of San Jose, and of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Faulkner, on the other hand, appeals to my desire to create a mosaic of changing points of view, emotions, and concrete images. In the novel As I Lay Dying, Faulkner changes point of view, as I do in my thesis, leaving the character to become more realistic with each passage narrated. From the beautifully descriptive voice of Cash to the impatient voice of young Vardaman, Faulkner moves his view into and out of the character's minds and projects them, one upon another, in the reader's mind as a collage of events:

The lantern sits on a stump. Rusted, grease-

fouled, its cracked chimney smeared on one side with a soaring smudge of soot. --Darl

When they get it finished they are going to put her in it and then for a long time I couldn't say it. I saw the dark stand up and go whirling away and I said "Are you going to nail her up in it, Cash? Cash? Cash?" --Vardaman

Through this patchwork of various characters' thoughts and reactions, Faulkner sews together a flexible fabric, tied only together only by the characters' reactions and devotion to each other. Because of Faulkner's use of first-person point of view, the novel was inspirational to my own writing of a short story, "Stretch":

I've walked back into the laundromat and folded the rest of my socks, and instead of footballs, this time they look like little skulls. Skulls bleached by sun heat, baked on the side of the road.

Bradbury and Faulkner's influence can also be seen in my poems, "The Solo" and "Cloud Breathing." In "The Solo," the narrative voice is in the second person point of view, which casts the reader into the chaotic, stream of consciousness of the narrator while simultaneously asking if the reader has shared a similar urge to put aside conventional behavior and to release their inner tension and desire. The mix of emotional tension (reason versus passion) between the narrator and the reader then simulates the chaotic experience, along with the enjambment and irregular line lengths. Either we feel stifled in a dark room surrounded by people, or we do not.

The influence of Ernest Hemingway appears in a dual function in this work through the use of direct meaning and of the framing device which connects and strengthens the work. Hemingway's writing style is straightforward. Syntactically he allows the repetition of ideas and sentence structure to show the emphasis he wants the reader to be aware of.

So now it was all over, he thought. So now he would never have a chance to finish it. So this was the way it ended in a bickering over a drink. Since the gangrene started in his right leg he had no pain and with the pain the horror had gone and all he felt now was a great tiredness and anger that this was the end of it. For this, that now was coming, he had very little curiosity. For years it had obsessed him; but now it meant nothing in itself. It was strange how easy being tired enough made it (5).

--"The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

The repetition of word phrases such as, "So now, so this, for this, for years," lends motion to the flow of the work as it is read. The repeated phrases add stability to the work and capture the thoughts of the character as he keeps thinking over and over about meeting death. Hemingway's straightforward and repetitive style of writing is an influence to the voice of Jeffrey, a man who is also dying, but is unable to act or tear himself away from his dreams and memories.

He couldn't feel anything. He couldn't tell if he was covered with blankets or not, couldn't feel the thick and curled hair on his arms and legs scratch against the sheets, couldn't feel his breath as it went in and out of his lungs. Once he had tried to scream and it sounded like a baby bird on a broken record. Cheep. Cheep. Cheep. Cheep. He wanted to laugh at first because it sounded so funny, the high pitched sound. The

absurdity of having been castrated after he had been shot flashed into his mind, then faded.

Jeffrey, unlike Hemingway's Harry, cannot do anything except think about his condition and his past, and cannot even control how many times he remembers because he keeps forgetting. On the other hand, Jeffrey is similar to Hemingway's Harry in that they both provide a framing device for their stories.

Harry, as he dies of a gangrene infection, remembers the stories he had "saved to write until he knew enough to write well" (Hemingway, 5). The short story then is comprised of Harry's reality as he dies, and the four contemplative stories he remembers. The reality reveals details about his life, the life of the rich woman whom he does not love, and of their relationship. The stories serve to reveal his fear of death.

Jeffrey, on the other hand, is physically dead at the beginning of the story, and has nothing else to occupy his time than to remember and dream. Unlike Harry, Jeffrey has no desire to write, but, upon a closer view into his mind, we find that his life is full of poetic and fictitious moments—from his desire to inhale the clouds, to his subconscious making absurd connections with his memories of Cedar Rapids, Iowa and the Quaker Oats smell that pervaded the city. For Jeffrey, reality reveals a fragmentary picture of how his life has ended up—that he is an unidentified patient who has been shot in the head and is now comatose in a hospital in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His memories and dreams reveal his emotions and his past life as well as the current state of his mind; a man gone mad by his inability to change his life.

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