

Rhode Island College

Digital Commons @ RIC

Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate
Research and Major Papers Overview

Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate
Research and Major Papers

5-3-2011

Title Killer Was Here

Elizabeth Trimbach

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Trimbach, Elizabeth, "Title Killer Was Here" (2011). *Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate Research and Major Papers Overview*. 42.

<https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/etd/42>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate Research and Major Papers at Digital Commons @ RIC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate Research and Major Papers Overview by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RIC. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@ric.edu.

TITLE KILLER WAS HERE

POEMS

by Elizabeth Trimbach

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Master of Arts in
The Department of English
The School of Arts and Sciences
Rhode Island College
2011

CONTENTS

I

Late for Dinner **2**

Singing **3**

Scene **4**

A Mirage in Winter **5**

Husband, **6**

Begin **7**

Everything is Normal **8**

Workshop **9**

II

Heredity **11**

February, March **12**

When He Says He Still Loves You **13**

Red Suede Boots **14**

A Dream Before Thanksgiving **16**

Who Can Believe? **17**

Life's Emergency **18**

III

Vignettes (Is this a fitting title?) **21**

Alchemy **22**

Morning Night Future **23**

Surfaces **24**

The Drinks are on the Table **25**

Cento **26**

This Time **28**

IV

Initially **30**

Ego **31**

Negation of a Poem, or What You Don't Want Is **32**

I'd Like an Everything **33**

Do Not Enter into Self-Criticism **34**

Dark Winter **35**

Title Killer Was Here **38**

*Stopped at a Red Light on the Overpass in the Rain,
Looking Down* **39**

I

Late for Dinner

I turn up the steep hill toward home.
I'm late.
Late for dinner,
with what I'm supposed to bring,
late for everything.

Azaleas are thick with color:
I'm strangled by fuchsia,
not ready for spring.

There's that peeling three-story on the left
with a faded skeleton in the front window
from Halloween, six months ago.

I arrive in my driveway
where the white lilacs
just begin to flower

and my husband
is at the door;
he and the children
have got the dinner on,
the pasta and clams.
I'm bent over my notebook,
writing with a hard hook
toward the highway
the long summer road to ocean,
where I am.

Singing

her singing were not enough
and not at all fly

bringing the mountain to the house
dishrag teabag
Showtime and glory
she runs circles around the bones
of her

take a train to the city the city
blue chunk of sky slamming at the windows
of the apartment buildings

she doesn't know what this will mean
to the children
their faces like

she's off on a tear he says it
to her often

and not enough
bringing the house to the mountain
dishrag teabag
drowning in Story

What will this mean for the rest of us? They said it
not enough

the children
the children are singing
their faces like

Scene

Broad shadows sink into the river
broken by rectangles
of windowed light.

Ducks swim toward deep
structures of stacked ice and debris,
gulls hang above watching
for a different sharpness.

The reflection comes clear—
a whole set of buildings glistens
and wavers. A gull dives
after silver.

Trees bend over the windows in water,
reach with pithy nubs,
clouds cover the sky, a city is gone.

A Mirage in Winter

It's dull
and I try to be glad,
stretch out
on the not sharp edge of it,
let my head grow an afghan.

Outside air — a gray swath that steams
the window with wool.
Thick mittens cover the sill.

Smells of wet fleece and chicken cooking
transmute my rages.
Like roses, they blossom quietly.

I eat a leg,
a plate of hot noodles
with lime juice.
A glass of wine

warps in my hand.

You sit across from me, cracking
pistachios.

The dog has sores on her elbows
from too much lying down.

I feel them gather behind me—
the poisonous fragrances.

Her seal head
prods my palm; yes,
I must look
at the glimmers at the edge,
the vapors that sharpen
into form.

Husband,

I eat the eggs and bacon
you have made me.
The bacon is too greasily, too scandalously
delicious
to have not involved killing.
I eat, am living.

All this time
I've lived with you.
And now your orange T-shirt
against my cheek.
I hold onto you.

My hand slides up,
glides over the hair on your arm
which is like a field of grasshopper wings.

My lips drawn uphill to your lips,
behind our closed eyes
clouds of grasshoppers rise.

Begin

I dreamed I would buy you
the headphones and your
father was there and something
swiveling overhead.

In the background a warm golden
spiky in the center
but all warmth and laughing
around it.

We always wondered what
would happen and

Try not to be in a hallway,
a grand tall hall;
be often open and
just entering.

A console with red roses in a vase
and pictures in frames
before a mirror –
I never had one of those.

Collapse praise in the face –
seven years bad
or 27 or something. It was

a hard callous.
News at night,
we thrilled at not being them,

bad anyway, til sounds
are written, escape
the black tile, whethering
whethering.

Everything is Normal

I lie down on my new
lawn, think of nothing but how
green it is and lush and comfortable
to lie down on. Green

like a river. Green

like a girl's eyes,
staggering green like an immense forest.
18,000 dead in Bhopal,
another 100,000 sick.

Bug-free, weed-free, odor-free!
For \$800 and it's only the beginning
of a lifetime of care.

The heavy gases urged by wind remained
close to the ground
killing the smallest first.

A siren sounded and was turned off.
Within a few days all the leaves
turned yellow and fell.

2,000 buffalo, goats and other
animals. Groundwater still contaminated,
a warm breeze passes over me where I lie.
Everything is normal; this is no
death by negligence.

Workshop

I wrote a surreal poem and submitted it
to workshop.

Brushmarks of injury, really? Cold lingerie?

A sea pouring into the oven?

And the two plain-speak
poet advisors ripped it
a new asshole (because
it had one of course).

And I know if John Ashbery
had been there
he would have reminded them
that they know nothing;
and they would have cried
and I would have sat on his knee
and they would have blubbered.

And then we would have gone outside
to sit on the green green grass
of the campus, my hairy, little poem
licking itself with relish
under the ram's head fountains;

everyone would have laughed
in the tremendous sun,
drunk streaming wine and eaten
lacustrine ice cream,

except for them; they
would have stayed inside
drying their eyes, babbling
about clarity, finesse, cleanliness.

All around us sing and bling
the bright-feathered birds that gossip, offend, cheerily
chuck rocks at teacups, brace against newspaper uniform,

follow the thin bloodlines of cracks, an ocean into an oven
and out again, until the end.

II

Heredity

At this point in an action
into this place
in which two opposite qualities
are combined,

beginning a bold or unpleasant
willful and persistent –
an animal of solitary habits, a baptized member.
Passing a person in charge of a herd,
holding title, progressing
in a fitful or jerky manner,
an individual, also called
brigantine.

Interpretative, identified with Mercury,
offering a toast or existence
after death.
Here is your paycheck,
along with this,
often containing raisins or nuts.

(a found poem from a dictionary page that includes the word, "heredity")

February, March

You never know; she might
scream "Fuck you!" and slam her door
or she might text me, "Love you, too,"
even taking the time to write out
the words.

And I find myself saying a lot,
"She's just tired," because I don't know
what she is. I'll wait for her
in the car, the moon full,
sharp at its edge – curved knife slicing dark muscle ,
but murky in the center – a winter pond begun to melt.

At this point, the ground's thrown
off the dying snow –
a mass of sticks and wet dirt murmurs –
I feel the taste rise,
a small sour sadness
like the last barnacles of dirty ice
clinging to curbs.

She's broken up with her boyfriend –
I drop her off at school and
there he is.

"I hate my life," she says. Her knee
knocks the ashtray as she gets out,
spilling pennies, nickels, dimes.

She seems to flit past him,
I can't tell if she says hello
as she goes away from us.

I bend, begin
to scoop the change.

When He Says He Still Loves You

Try to avoid those morning
ladders and ladders of good intentions,

when a crescent
of white light breaks in at one edge of the shade
like undershirt poking through an open fly,

those soft-boiled egg
ideas, halved on a plate, of *maybe he's changed*, and *I should try harder*,

for climbing exhausts,
and all that you could have done instead piles in the corners
eviscerated and lost as the dust.

Red Suede Boots

Red, up-to-the-knee, suede boots,
heels quarter-inch thick, four inches long. After yoga class
she slipped them on.

In yoga, we step out of conditioned past.

Sa ta na ma;
working mind attends
to what needs to be done. Thinking mind
thinks about something else.

(That time I was at the beach writing in my journal
“I just want a glass of wine and sex” and two seconds
later this young guy walked up and made a pass at me.
No wonder people think the universe is listening to them.)

Sa ta na ma;

avoid getting caught in thoughts, be
where you are, feet on the mat, mouth open. Lion's breath.

Sa ta na ma;
A room full of people breathing
in one nostril and
out the other. Soft lights of candles and a gas fire
in the stone fireplace. It's dark outside and nineteen degrees.

Balanced on sacra, bend our bodies in half so top and bottom are both
forty-five degrees from floor, then sixty degrees. Breathe. For five minutes. Like
eight hours of exercise. Like fish jerking
their way back to water.

Step out of conditioned past, feet on the mat.

Sa ta na ma;
we roll up our mats, hers spills out on the floor
in front of me – the beautiful, shining floor. The teacher
embraces a lone student squatting.

Sa ta na ma;
she pulls the red boots on over tight leggings,
steps easily over broken sidewalk.
Like that time at the beach – a mixture of horror and joy, the sight
of a mountain goat leaping from rock to rock at cliff's edge, a young man
with a glass of wine in hand saying, "this is so awkward, but..."

A Dream Before Thanksgiving

A killer has resurfaced and is after my mother.
Dark evergreens cluster at the corners of houses.

Suddenly I want to have sex with my ex.
Later, I change my mind and regret not acting faster.

My mother and I are in a room with huge windows of
amber leaded glass in the shape of a castle.
I think that I once lived here.

My seventeen-year-old daughter appears as a ten-year-old,
gives me a hug and says, "Happy Halloween!" I say,
"Why are you so little?"
My ex says, "It's your Christmas present."
She skips away down the stairs;
I lean against the wall, weeping.

Who Can Believe?

When you looked at me—
I don't remember,

but a wish to be broken
like an egg yolk, and some days,

the orderly rows
of the neighbor's red tulips

could incite me to murder.

I get through it—
the blue waking,
the triathlon,
the feast,
the sleeping dog,
the hunkered garage.

And I dream the dreams
that are only saying of themselves,
Who can believe these dreams will end?

*Won't there be a place,
a field deepening with flower
upon purple flower?*

*Won't there be gold-
green leaves,
a forever sky,
and you?*

Life's Emergency

One day the wind was so strong the seagulls flapping their wings
stayed in one spot above the shore.

Despite what EHarmony says, common interests do not create chemistry.

She broke up with her boyfriend and took him back
and broke up with him again
just like I did with her dad.

You can't find an evolutionary explanation for everything.

I live on Walton Street and I really hate the Waltons
but when I was a young girl I was in love with Johnboy.

My little dog hates all dogs that are bigger than him.

The grass is always the grass and is deserving of reverence
because it is so.

Are they the same Waltons who own WalMart?

A skateboarder swept back and forth down the street
like a beautiful catfish
feeding on the sparkling blacktop.

Some patriots tried to mob William Stafford because he was so damn peaceful
it was unbearable.

My daughter and I get along much better when we're texting.

There may not really be such a thing as a soul, nor, therefore, as a soul mate.

A huge cat sat one morning on the frozen water in the pool.

Two brothers were shot six blocks from here in another world
called the projects.

Beluga whales, seeming to smile at humans through thick glass,
make everything better.

There is only one male atheist on Match.com.

Suicide prevention could be a full-time job.

Two trees are dead in front of the house for sale across the street
and without even noticing that fact
I planted two new ones in front of mine.

Again, this ability to love to live emerges green and urgent.

III

Vignettes

(Is this a fitting title?)

I found a dime on the ground and I thought of it
falling from a great height like an airplane,
its light flat circling against the air,
its sure steady drop through the arms of gravity
onto this sidewalk where children consider it great
good fortune.

(Fortune = luck, fate, or wealth)

What is it to see something
to see through something
to see the thing you are looking through?
Transparency is never.

(Who is speaking?)

The remains of snow lie frozen, sprinkled with filth,
like piles of bones. Bare trees look like they're upside down
with their roots exposed. I look at this through my car window.
I ain't no Robert Frost. Someone should cover this shit up.

(What is the narrator railing against?)

A drunk woman in a British sitcom staggered
into a telephone booth, pulled down
her knickers and squatted. And I wondered
do they still have telephone booths in Britain?

(Funny? Self-indulgent?)

What is it to see?

(See = to perceive, to view, to recognize, to learn, to visit)

Alchemy

Two things broke – a lightbulb
and a coaster: rigor and system – outer world.
She drank one beer and acted foolishly: inward
search of romantics. Kissed beside the car.
Glittering, extravagant snow floats down onto and between
houses like radiolaria: external ice, romantic myth.
Amidst five-foot stacks of snow, she walks the dog in the street,
talks on the cell phone. Outward objective: overcome
contradictions of universe. “I thought I really
liked him.” Every day 38.5 million people act foolishly.
Confounded by cavernous snowbanks, the dog
pees right on her foot. The artist
embraces opposites, married within a vessel:
button-down smooth as silica, broken glass.

Morning Night Future

Absence is here
Here begins
Now

Now I find
Window shapes
Separāte

Separately eat things
Move on
Away

*

Away sleep slips
Oh laughter—
Television

Television the new
Dreamer on

Space

Spaced carefully apart
Times to
Dimmer

*

Dim light morning
Could snow
Again

Again will wake
Wander brake
Now

Now begins here
Here is
Absence

Surfaces

1. Sitting in the Zen Center, focused
on the door, on one door,
focusing on a door, waiting. On the wall,
“Before the ancient Buddha appeared
one thing was already perfectly clear.”
2. Eye on the smooth bark of a birch,
where the river's reflection
flickers, a dark heron gliding down.
3. After pouring rain all night,
cattails, full like sponges, bobbing,
the willow's ropes

of leaves drag the skin of the water.

4. At home, the wiping of the afternoon table,
sorting of mail, lotus green tea bag in a cup, blood hum
above the bone. Just a turn, slight. Just a slight turn
and clear water rushing into the kettle.

The Drinks are on the Table

A nod
of
a duration simply
declarative also
but with only judicious
derring-do.

A glass with
ice snaring air
someone

said it's
over

air in
thunk.

Clarity–
a definite
voice with indefinite
air around it
and only
eyes
that return
return to bases.

Spilling on the table it's
liquid voration eroding
varnish it's
only a partial
levitating open wide my
air

no velocity
none.

Return

return to curve

slip air

slipairslip
slip

return to curve.

Cento

the telephone rings the mailbox is empty
the fear that one is dreaming
much as it was ten years ago fifteen

I find myself thinking
eternally buzzing over the time
active roll resisting

distance was by now
like memory
a small anchovy gleam
a fin a stroke
swim into the shaded
limitless like listless

I wanted everything changed
not meet you or make you certainly not figure you out
pale houses pairs of junipers
winter butter
granite darkened by rain

so many listen lost
crying because empty
the ball of the heart's expectation
slows as sense descends
I only hope you can hear that

simple and ruinous hunger
when teeth emerge
what is except so defined

huge pine a quarter mile off
still and hidden
in a larger darkness
in the murky distance
loneliness as reckless

if a small tear swells the corner of one eye
all the way down to the snow
on evergreens and ferns
no regret for his choices

crying because lost
exhaling on second thought

clustered berries at dusk
tall grass prairie
the invention of hunger

a shadow opened then folded

to what also is moody and alters
attention hands

unable to live in it
to stand next to be there with
watching man die

believing was eating day by day
I am hungry let me eat
peripheral in pain unnoticed
the torn cushions
charmed verges of

presence

will arrive too late or ruined by water

quicker than you think come apart

a great if different pleasure
vanish/flare

(a cento made from words and phrases from several
poems, by Jane Hirshfield, Charles Bernstein,
and Rae Armantrout)

This Time

In the TV show "Lost," time was a string
and folks could go back and see themselves
as babies or young women and men.
I wish you would come back and find me.

If folks could go back and see themselves
(what the fingertips love is the reaching),
I would wish you'd come back and find me
back and forth in the sun swinging.

What the fingertips love is the reaching
more than the actual touch.
Back and forth in the sun swinging
through to the light and down into night.

More than the actual touch
it's being moved somewhere like waves by the moon,
through to the light and down into night
where memory is at peace with the present.

It's being moved like waves by the moon,
allowing a song to sing you,
where memory's at peace with the present,
there's nothing to shame or undo.

All day we're losing
the babies, young women and men,

but this time, I've come to find you
not lost but here on this string.

IV

Initially

It's just awful

for instance
in the middle of the kitchen
burning

or the brown ring under
the shampoo bottle in the bathroom
greasy like lipstick.

For instance, what has happened
to me? Am I cured
or at a new level of derangement?

But that never happens.
The hope is that in the morning.

At 4 in the morning every thought
is a decision.

Imagine the stars are new and anxious.

A fear of being stupid
only moves things
around. The air gets pushed
out of the way.

It's nice to talk on the phone
clear as day
initially.

Ego

the problem is that you wanna kick ass –
is it a problem of ego?
wanting all eyes on you and not admitting?
Obama? Moses? a sardine?

out of the blue
she started to hate you

moments of brilliant blue happy
and so is everyone around it

the dog stretches his bird wing and out of it
blue
wanting all I's
just realize everyone likes flow and feng shui

and the blue lit-up numbers –
little pods of potential contact
 of having a say
and also they
are shaped like eggs

or is the biggest problem the cost?
 the dangling holiday
 before a suicide.

Negation of a Poem, or What You Don't Want Is

what you don't want is
not enough

to not have what you want
what you don't want is

someone else's valley
and above that valley

a cloud
outside the cloud a frenetic

hummingbird or four
nor fat fleas

leaping onto the back
of a possum

around the valley
and back a hole

deep where you
cannot lie or guess

your zero firepits
your zero ponds

or guess the demons
going out of the valley

to eliminate
Demon minus Demon minus

(a negation of the poem, "What I Want Is," by C. G.
Hanzlicek)

I'd Like an Everything

Sometimes I lose the whole thing in Starbucks,
Seven Stars or Stars & Donuts – ok, I made that one up.

When one considers, one places next to stars.

Over a cup of coffee is a good place to consider.

What is art? A mechanic's eye boldly stroked
in blue, black, yellow and red.
A charcoal cricket – the light on its wings
is absence of charcoal.

Steam from cups rises to the ceiling.

Outside the window
a starling bounces on a stalk
in the emptying garden.

I lose it all – a blanket dissolve –
heavy china set down on metal tables,
the soft fabric of old chairs.

Just coffee
or, an everything.

Everything.
Everything.

Do Not Enter into Self-Criticism

said the guru. On the front porch,
I slide a scraper under
layers of paint – green beneath white beneath blue. *First event.*

The neighbor lady – don't you want to
love her like a little baby, curl up
under her coffee cup, her large
flab arm?

Or go to the seashore to attain clarity
in times of crisis? *Second event.*
What are you going to believe about yourself?

*Beginning, middle and end – in between
there is silence,
space between.*

She calls her cat, Lily, Lily.

The top layer is the thinnest; it
peels like sunburned skin. *Third event.*

*For when you do, you tear your own
heart.*

Heavy sediments of limestone
and shale, explained
as ancient.

Dark Winter

What else can we do? Moving
forward at full speed, prepare
for the worst,
respond

to a mass-casualty
event; the good news—
enough small pox vaccine to inoculate
all Americans; these dramatic
steps

may not protect
from mailed envelopes, high anxiety.
Not even an actual event
is needed,
just a simple hoax—

what the world watches.
We still haven't learned—
who've survived attacks, experiments.
You only have one face. We're no longer
different from
the rest of the world.

And only one chance. He holds
a bony hand. Too terrible to hear.
He has lost
forty pounds. Attractive,
fit, she could still wear a bikini.
The middle-aged Russian

brothers with minds of infants— of course
your head has to match your body;
this is very important.

Propped on a cushion against
the wall of poison gas attacks,
frogs and birds were lying dead
all over the ground. *We had no
gas masks.* The entire
right side of her face dissected
away from her skull. Gravity
is indomitable. Rumors

it had been anthrax. *Our son
had spent the night. The people
in the morgue refused to dress the body.*
Deliberately,

aware of the extraordinary power
of his gloved hands,
he began cutting.

Fetuses in jars in Kazakhstan— there
are no skulls, no brains
behind their faces.
Face is identity.

A nuclear bomb test had gone
off 100 miles upwind. He was three,
sitting on his father's knee;
together they watched.

When you get a lemon
you take it back.
Did it come from drinking
too much soda pop? The minute
a government crosses the threshold—

he lifted it this way and that—
the United States finally acknowledged
that it made others sick—
himself partly an artist.

The vision of looking,
it has to start lying.
Some of them want to look better.

A society obsessed with age—
life should hold more excitement.
No cure for the damage, hibakusha,
agent orange, Geiger
counters going click, click, click.

Botox injections showed more
dramatic increases.
Don't let them bother you.
What a plastic surgeon can accomplish—
acquaintances could lurk—
a real Dark Winter is not
about to descend.

(a found poem from 3 news articles)

Title Killer Was Here

Without direction or instruction –
open on the floor –

white pants
and jacket.

After a number of years,
recovered –
the lost crown.

See if you can turn it around.
Twin River – beaten, left for dead.

Three daughters all
killed in their home
in Gaza

which he will never leave.
Dogs run right under
the wheels defending.

Scalene is unequal.
Jaylene is a girl's name. I can't remember
what's in this box.

*Stopped at a Red Light on the Overpass in the Rain,
Looking Down*

All these cars
burst from a forest of mist
and surge down
the highway like cut timber on a river—
a matting that could hold us under
until we drowned.

Naively, I think
I will never drown.

I'll grow sleek fins
and a fat buttery tail;
I'll take all
the water heaven has
to offer.

The light turns green,
creates a brilliant gouache on the wet road.
Slowly, propelled through smoke and steam,
we roll forward
in the rain,
in the world.