

Salem State  
The Graduate School Department of English

A SILENCE BROKEN

A Manuscript in English  
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Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts  
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“THERE IS NO GREATER AGONY THAN BEARING AN UNTOLD STORY”

*Maya Angelou*

## PUTREA TREE

There once was a farm just a mile from our village  
with putrea trees like roots in a sea of clouds

We peered up into those roots  
the fingers of the sun weaving  
through its leaves and gnarls

We basked in the warmth under the putrea

With our backs against the trunk  
we surveyed small apples  
in the nets of our shirts

We didn't care for the owner --  
We simply plucked and plucked until our hands overflowed

We talked about plans to skip school  
to see the newest Bruce Lee movie

Crisp bites into the black-red soft flesh  
a flood of sweetness smothered our senses

The taste of infinite freedom

We laughed as Heng stood up  
demonstrating his best impression of  
Lee's signature moves

We threw the putrea -- booing him  
But we were interrupted  
by the farmer

ပုကျွဲပဲ

*banhchhob*

*Stop*

We scrambled up  
shoving as  
many  
of the  
small  
apples  
as we could  
into our pants  
before escaping from  
the safety of the trees

We race off towards our village  
our laughter making us spill over one another  
Our stolen fruits trickling away from us as we ran

When we could no longer see the  
floating roots like seaweeds in the horizon behind us  
we slowed down to reach into our pockets  
and my fingers closed around a stray one

A resounding crunch echoed  
but instead of sweet  
my tongue was bathed in sour

## EVACUATION\*

*The morning of April 20, 1975, the  
Khmer Rouge evacuated the  
Cambodian people from their homes.*

*Tell me why I feel this way  
I still ask -- Am I next?  
When will my day come?  
How long before I -- too --  
Am gripped within the ropes of Despair?*

His fists of -- Lead -- knocked on doors  
Alarmed faces listened to his threats: they're going to Bomb us  
He told them they need to leave  
America is coming!  
*Got to concentrate, file away*

Shadows of dark feathers  
shrouded him as he exited alone  
His blade -- Stained -- the cloth  
a Butterfly of maroon blood  
*Don't want to lose what's going down*

Vows of Betrayal:  
We can keep you -- Safe -- he Promised  
His threats of Bombing met with Resistance  
then met with a screaming silence  
*Every last detail*

Tomorrows are held in its serrated edge  
Eyes obscured by reflective lens  
Opposition clothed in military uniforms  
For those there was only -- Execution  
*I want to remember everything I'm feeling*

Tear-streaked faces searched for familiar eyes  
Fingers clawed at the air -- Unanswered  
Unending howls of the wind cried  
as children ripped from their mothers

*Should time try fading or stealing something away*

*Hold on, nothing's the same*  
Marked for this Life  
with bone-piercing memories  
that unbraided the Soul--

*\*Lyrics from "Hold On" by Carlos Santana*

THREE

made way to the next camp  
the groan of stomachs  
only company

Sweltering sun pressed  
into backs preparing for  
another six months working dawn to dusk

ទៅនឹងការស្លាប់ របស់យើង  
*chee whit jung krowie*  
*to our death*

Sweat stung eyes  
Soreness plagued arms  
Pain clung to legs

Cramps clenched toes  
Heat slumped shoulders  
15 miles to go

Tired eyes caught  
sight of a brilliant red  
Hearts froze

Done something wrong?  
Eyes lingered too long as trio of girls walked past?  
Or was it faces that betrayed resentment?

No  
Just a sole strawberry  
lingering in the leaves

A collective sigh as  
eyes shifted  
Yes?

No  
Couldn't be trusted.  
Could betray rest.

យើងនឹងត្រូវស្លាប់... យើងគ្រាន់តែ មិនដឹងថាពេល  
*yeung nung trauv slab... yeung kreante mindoeng tha pel na*  
*we will die...we just don't know when*

Feet continued on  
as silent tears streaked faces  
and growl within bellies intensified



## BREAKING THEM

Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain  
I walk the line to find the one who will break them all  
My fingers caressing the length of my machete  
My feet pacing like a heartbeat -- I must not be wasteful

I walk the line to find the one who will break them all  
Listening to the cold sweat in their quivering chests  
My feet pacing like a heartbeat -- I must not be wasteful  
One glimmer of light and I will pounce

Listening to the cold sweat in their quivering chests  
Who will it be -- I ask myself  
One glimmer of light and I will pounce  
And preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of my blade

Who will it be -- I ask myself  
The heartbeat of my pacing pauses  
Preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of my blade  
My blood-hungry eyes connecting with desperate mercy

The heartbeat of my pacing pauses  
Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain  
My now rabid eyes connecting with unachievable mercy  
My fingers caressing the length of my machete

I have found the one who will break them all

He knows I have found him  
In his eyes I see his tender heart clench his fists  
Defiance glimmering in the light of his eyes  
Testing me -- me who holds the balance of his life within the curve of my blade

Yes -- he is the one who will break them all

I pull him from the line  
He kneels before me and I see that glimmer again  
I know I need to extinguish it before it catches and they all become rotten

Showered in a blooming blossom of his blood I survey the rest of them  
Questioning their allegiance -- but my glare is left unmet

They are broken

I sit on the porch of my cabin  
Waiting to begin the walk down the line again  
To find the one who will break the new batch of  
Wildflowers in the open breath of rain --  
I must not be wasteful

## BURNED

The terror-stricken  
hearts beating against  
taut skin sounds  
through the air  
blotted only by the groan of starvation

Stillness vibrates their core

Their numb eyes  
afraid to look away watch  
as the sound of wood  
meeting skull reverberates  
through the air

Their lips sewn together with  
the thread of fear

They watch its eyes dim of life

A flicker remains

Soldiers toss it into  
the fire and extinguish it

Silence meets the  
excruciating cries  
from the flames until  
reduced to echoes through the air  
leaving but a

ការចងចាំ តែ  
*anuk savari*  
*mere memory*

## LOTUS LOST

Horizon of low-lying plains obscured  
by the velvet whisper of rice fields

Exhaustion consumed her frail frame  
Laughing faces faded in and out and  
sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

Pained eyes turned to murky waters:  
a lone lotus sat on the surface  
its petals wavering as dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her  
iron of dirt flooded her tongue  
the lotus trembled in tarnished waters

Hummingbird of his heart  
vibrated through her quivering doe chest  
dinginess clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

Screams trapped deep inside her premature body  
the strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus  
while dripping rubies blossomed upon each petal

One last push -- it was done  
the stench of stale breath lingered on her neck  
as the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots  
and incoherent chatter broke the silence  
as they disregarded the broken blossom

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her --  
nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco  
mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

ស្ងប់ស្ងាត់  
*Som sngat*  
“Be quiet”

Glistening eyes searched the muddy waters: the dusk  
claimed her last petal -- return only once the dawn had broken

## LADY WILLOW

1.5 million lives  
of 8 million--

Starved  
Diseased  
Overworked  
Executed:

ເມັດ

*Meul*

Watch

Her eyes close and  
she still sees

One  
by  
one  
his limbs extended and staked into the  
ground

Soldiers of the same breed  
faced the circle of  
silent watchers  
ensuring eyes did not wander  
from the lady or man

ເມັດ

*Meul*

Watch

The sun twinkled  
off the edge of the machete --  
a glare that haunts her eyes to this day

A raging sea  
in a teardrop  
as the whistle of the  
blade slices  
through the air --

The willow  
shook uncontrollably  
as ear-splitting screams  
reached the chasms of her mind

Life faded  
already becoming yesterday

Petals of his skin bloomed outwards  
opening up to the sweltering sun

Brilliant rubies  
maroon and black  
accented the air as  
hands pried apart the petals  
revealing its center

Life's nectar spilled into the air  
seeping into the now onyx dirt  
creeping towards the willow's roots

Cherry stains  
trickled down the willow's leaves and bark  
as life within faded  
until she too was  
yesterday

ເມັດ

*Meul*

Watch

1.5 million  
lives lost

Starved  
Diseased  
Overworked  
Executed:

Yet alive in the  
echoing wind of the willow

## DEEDS

*...Maybe it was bad deeds in our previous lives  
that had kept us apart, and so if we did  
good deeds in this life, maybe in a future  
one we could be together.  
- 2-TCCP-232  
(Tribunal hearing in Courts of Cambodia)*

*This life  
next life  
we pay our dues --*

We lined up in the open  
field where the rust red sky  
melted into the horizon of our Forsaken land

My eyes wandered to the Moon:  
*Is our love strong enough for this?  
So strong that my love's eyes also see this dark night?  
See that I have no choice?*

We were gathered there that day:

We were No. 1, No. 2, No. 3...  
all the way up to No. 50  
I didn't look at the one I was paired with  
We were No. 42 -- Forever and Always  
but more like Brother & Sister than husband & wife --

With no rice thrown  
no spirits  
no celebration  
just a damp Darkness and the -- brush of our bones -- with those of Strangers  
no matching gold silks dripping with emeralds or rubies  
no shower of Flowers dipped in Blessed water--  
just Faceless partners brought together that night

Listeners at the doors and windows



expected consummation  
Eyes avoided contact and remained Faceless for the evening  
instead of searching for one another with yearning  
Features only to be revealed with the  
unyielding break of the dawn

Pardoning prayers  
along the imagined red threads of marriage  
creating unintentional bonds that only  
strengthened with the years

And one day when I see my love again  
decades after we are released from the  
Hell of the Khmer Rouge  
We will hold each other  
We will cry as we say--

In this life  
we pay our dues  
so that in the next  
we can be ours again:

And in that future  
there will be rice  
there will be laughter  
wide smiles and gold crowns  
week long celebrations  
hundreds of red thread tied around our wrists  
It will be Blessed and proper

We will not be cloaked in a shroud of Blackness  
Our eyes will meet with adoration  
and not look away in Humiliation

But for this life, I stay with No. 42  
We survive and become united by the  
Ostracization inflicted upon us --

We understand that what had been brought together to Destroy has only strengthened our bonds

## SWING CAROUSEL

I reciprocate the beaming smile on her lips: my oldest with her arm wrapped around her sister  
I watch her excited squeal erupt into a wider grin as the gears of the Swing Carousel jolt awake  
I wave back to my girls in neon green and pink -- pride in my heart and happiness in my eyes  
I try to snap a picture before they become a blur from the movement of the Swing Carousel  
I need to capture this moment -- this is what I survived for-- to see Innocence again  
I laugh with my girls as the carousel rises up from the ground and swings them further away  
I can barely make out their hair, so Black that it reflects the Sun and I realize that they are too far

My chest tightens --  
a cold Sweat radiates from my neck  
and extends down my spine  
And just like that like a Sore on the tip of my tongue  
that tweaks when I least expect it --  
I'm brought back

I hear wails of Children as they spin and spin  
piercing my heart as images flash before me:  
looming Trees that cast shadows  
as long and as dark as the night of the soul  
Bayonets pierce the velvet sky cloaked by the Moon  
Hands gripping ankles and swinging and swinging --  
my eyes frantically search for my neon-clad girls -- the faster they go the higher they reach  
Infant heads touch the ever-watching Moon  
My heart follows the swoosh of wind trailing behind the neon as they whip around and around  
Cries echo into the Blackness  
I wait for the hollow thump of bodies impacting tree trunks  
For the irreversible squelch of a body staked by the gleaming edge of the bayonet

I Wait -- my lungs on fire from baited breath -- I Wait...

But the moment passes  
My eyes adjust to the sunshine as the darkness ebbs  
Neon flashes before -- my girls are here and not in the air  
They stand before me with smiles cracked by laughter  
The burn recedes as I release my breath  
Neon squeals and laughter echo through me as I am tugged away to the next ride  
while the thump and squelch remain a dormant hangnail that won't heal

WILD ONES

i'm losing my  
balance  
on their  
eggshells --  
i'm weighted  
by my  
desire  
to be  
cage free

the mantra:  
"the only thing that can't be  
taken from you  
is your education" --  
pushed to be more & do more  
pressured to become  
someone i can no longer recognize

i am nothing more than a  
vessel of their haunted memories  
shaped by their experiences  
from so many years ago  
& i've lost  
the heart of me

can't they see?

they care too much about the others:  
"make sure you're dressed appropriately"  
& "be careful with that one --  
people will talk"  
& "look at my new \$60,000 car"

when really i could  
care less about the others:  
i don't exist to please them

i need my own experiences  
& i don't care what they say  
i don't need to be flashy  
or show off what i have  
or what i've earned  
i let my success speak with its own voice

& it's a shame  
their  
minds  
are too  
narrow  
to understand that

but for the sake of my family  
i suffocate myself  
like i've  
dived into the depths & i'm drowning  
in its teal sea  
trying to sing from the  
cage they've worked  
around me  
gasping for the freedom  
to be me

## EGG or SPRING

I sneak one from behind him, as he stands watch  
with wooden chopsticks over the boiling oil.  
I crunch into its perfectly fried caramel brown shell  
and I feel him smirk.  
I don't even care that the steam from its center singes my lips.  
This is our ritual almost every Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday.

Egg Rolls -- at least that's what my dad calls them.  
For others they are Spring rolls.  
Either way, I never understood their name --  
where did the Egg or Spring come from?

I wonder if it's because of the Egg in the wrap.  
Or maybe it's more about the crispness as you  
bite into its fried flesh --  
an Undeniable Presence:  
crisp crunches that can't be  
erased from memory.  
Egg or Spring?

Maybe it's because Spring was when it all changed  
in the fields of Cambodia:  
when there were no more celebrations.  
No more showers of food.  
No more family.  
Only long hours working in the rice fields  
with an unending starvation that lasted four years.  
And haunts even decades later.  
Egg or Spring?

My father is still hungry.  
He feeds us until we are gorged.  
He never wastes even the edges of strawberries  
I wonder if he does this because he thinks it will fill him, too.  
Or if it reminds him of how lucky he is today.  
But he will always be hungry. Empty.  
Egg or Spring?

Egg it will remain for him until  
vengeance no longer yields -- Ignorance no longer reigns.

ការដឹងគុណ \*

“Keep you, we gain nothing  
Lose you, we lose nothing”

They spread through the country  
like a virus from the rice fields

Plagued for generations by  
Painful, treacherous words:  
“What is rotten must be removed”

In search of a Utopia  
they emptied our cities  
and ravaged the land

They took from us:  
Innocence was lost  
Souls were stolen  
Bonds were broken  
Flesh was tortured  
Minds were scarred

But they gave us:  
Knowledge of betrayal  
Appreciation of our loved ones  
Self-reliance to persevere  
Scars to show we lived and  
Memories to remind us that we survived

Our strength will live on in generations to come

អរគុណ

*arkoun*

thank you.

*\* kar dungkun is Khmer for gratitude*

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Poem Drafts**



Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
15 September 2016  
Poem 1: "Lotus Lost"

Exhaustion consumed her ~~frail, child-like frame~~  
As laughing faces faded in and out and  
Sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

too many adj.

myth?

She  
Her pained eyes turned to the shallow murky water  
Where a lone lotus sat on the surface,  
Its petals wavering as the dark pressed on in ?

try  
upper  
lower  
each

Hands reeking of earth smothered her  
As the iron of dirt flooded her tongue  
While the lotus trembled in the tarnished waters

I'm confused

The hummingbird beating of his heart  
Vibrated through her quivering chest  
While dingy waters clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

whose

Her screams were trapped deep inside her premature body  
The strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus  
While scarlet stains blossomed upon each petal

There was one last push and it was done  
The stench of stale breath lingered on her neck  
As the echo of leather belts clanked around her

try cutting  
some  
adjectives

The amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots  
And incoherent chatter broke the silence  
As they disregarded the broken blossom laying in the crud

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her  
The nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco  
Mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

lyric

សូមស្ងៀម  
Som sngat  
"Be quiet"

I like the other -  
wordy quality  
of these pieces,  
but the narrative  
sometimes gets  
lost in the images.

The dark waters had claimed her last petal  
And the lotus was no more

"Lotus Lost"

Poem 1, draft 2

Horizon of low-lying plains  
obscured by the velvet whisper  
of rice fields

*Try present tense?*

Exhaustion consumed her frail frame  
as laughing faces faded in and out and  
sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

Her pained eyes turned to murky waters  
where a lone lotus sat on the surface,  
its petals wavering as the dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her  
as the iron of dirt flooded her tongue  
while the lotus trembled in tarnished waters

*image?*

The hummingbird of his heart  
vibrated through her quivering doe chest  
while dinginess clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

*sentences or not?*

Her screams trapped deep inside her premature body  
the strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus  
while dripping rubies blossomed upon each petal

There was one last push and it was done  
the stench of stale breath lingered on her neck  
as the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots  
and incoherent chatter broke the silence  
as they disregarded the broken blossom

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her  
nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco  
mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

ស្ងៀមស្ងាត់  
Som sngat  
"Be quiet"

Glistening eyes searched the muddy waters  
but the dusk claimed her last petal  
to return only once the dawn had broken

*The narrative still gets lost  
(on me, anyway)  
Could you state the story  
in one sentence?*

Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
22 September 2016  
Poem I: "Lotus Lost", ROTATION

---

Exhaustion consumed her ~~frail, child-like frame~~  
As laughing faces faded in and out and  
Sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow *wrinkle?*

Her pained eyes turned to the shallow murky water  
Where a lone lotus sat on the surface  
Its petals wavering as the dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her  
As the iron of dirt flooded her tongue  
While the lotus trembled in the tarnished waters

The hummingbird beating of <sup>*phallic*</sup> ~~his~~ heart *no explanation of him before*  
Vibrated through her quivering chest  
While dingy waters clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

Her screams were trapped deep inside her premature body  
The strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus  
While scarlet stains blossomed upon each petal

There was one last push and it was done  
The stench of stale breath lingered on her neck  
As the echo of leather belts clanked around her

The amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots  
And incoherent chatter broke the silence  
As they disregarded the broken blossom laying in the crud

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her  
The nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco  
Mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, ~~and shame~~ choking her

សូបស្ងាត់  
Som sngat  
"Be quiet"

*stay quiet?*

The dark waters had claimed her last petal  
And the lotus was no more

LOTUS LOST

Edits with Alex's comments

Horizon of low-lying plains <sup>observed</sup>  
~~observed~~ by the velvet whisper <sup>complet here</sup>  
of rice fields

Exhaustion consumed her frail frame  
as laughing faces faded in and out and  
sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

Her pained eyes turned to murky waters  
~~was~~ a lone lotus sat on the surface  
its petals wavering as the dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her  
as the iron of dirt flooded her tongue  
while the lotus trembled in tarnished waters

~~was~~ Hummingbird of his heart  
vibrated through her quivering doe chest  
~~was~~ dinginess clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

~~was~~ Screams trapped deep inside her premature body  
the strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus  
while dripping rubies blossomed upon each petal

~~There was~~ One last push and it was done  
the stench of stale breath lingered on her neck  
as the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots  
and incoherent chatter broke the silence  
as they disregarded the broken blossom

~~He~~ spat his cigarette to the ground next to her —  
nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco  
mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

ស្ងប់ស្ងាត់  
Som sngat  
"Be quiet"

Glistening eyes searched the muddy waters <sup>the dusk</sup>  
~~but the dusk~~ claimed her last petal. <sup>complet here (cyclical)</sup>  
~~to~~ return only once, the dawn had broken.

Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
22 September 2016  
Poem 2: "The Willow"

"you"

You wipe ~~at~~ your brow and the <sup>chose</sup>  
thick dirt smudges and mingles with the sweat  
leaving a harsh line across your furrowed brow

overused

Hands are full with the rice leaves  
when you see the *kmao euy*  
sitting in the muddy water  
allowing the murkiness to embrace her  
as her hair ~~so~~ like the willow's leaves  
fall into her face

Is this a Viet Nam palm?

? Julia

a girl?

The willow behind the temple  
with its leaves brushing against the grindstone  
of the prayer's home

now the you is a willow?

"Why do you weep, willow?"

Your eyes are met with a  
gaze—an emptiness as vast as the ocean is wide

Who is  
the  
you  
here?

Her shoulder rounded and drooping  
The wind whistling through her leaves and she is brought back

ເສັດ  
Meul  
Watch

One  
by  
one  
the limbs  
are extended  
and staked into  
the ground

The willow winces and  
knuckles turn ivory like the bone

Soldiers stood to face the circle of  
silent watchers  
ensuring their eyes did not wander

ເຢັນ

*Meul*

Watch

The sun twinkled  
off the edge of the machete

He looked at her  
Eyes filled with sorrow,  
yearning, and forgiveness

As the ~~swift~~ whistle of the  
blade sliced  
through the air  
sorrow ~~was~~ quickly  
replaced by horror

The willow  
shook uncontrollably  
as ear-splitting screams  
reached ~~to~~ the ~~dark~~ chasms of her mind, watching him fade before her once more  
already becoming  
yesterday

She watched as the  
petals of his skin bloomed outwards  
opening up to the sweltering sun

*The right -  
justice's lines  
could be brought  
over -*

Brilliant ~~hues~~ of scarlet  
maroon and black  
accented the air as  
the soldier's hands pried apart the petals more  
revealing his center

His life's nectar spilled into the air  
seeping into the now onyx dirt  
creeping towards the willow's roots, ~~joining her existence~~

Becoming one

The willow's leaves and bark  
stained red as the life in her faded  
until she too was  
yesterday

You watch all of this play out in her eyes

Each time our eyes fall on her  
rounded  
drooping  
branches  
or the weeping  
leaves  
we would know horror  
cruelty  
pain

*Verb tense*

Not of the skin, but of the heart and mind

But what they ignored <sup>failed ?</sup>  
to realize was that  
he lived on within the willow,

~~His existence~~ within the heart of the willow's bark

*Many good images -  
Try more conventional  
analysis.  
Also, the narrative  
needs to be more clear.  
Willow as symbol of what  
salmon → life ?*

Poem 2

"The Willow", Draft 2

1.5 million lives  
of 8 million--

Starved  
Diseased  
Overworked  
Executed:

မြေလ

Meul

Watch

One  
by  
one  
the limbs are extended and staked into the  
ground

Soldiers of the same breed  
face the circle of  
silent watchers  
ensuring eyes do not wander

မြေလ

Meul

Watch

The sun twinkles  
off the edge of the machete

Eyes filled with raging seas  
in one tear drop

Swift whistle of  
blade slices  
through the air

The willow  
shakes uncontrollably  
as ear-splitting screams  
reach the dark chasms of the mind

*I like this refrain*

*(I think it's intruding on expectation?)*

*Could you be a little more explicit without becoming too obvious*

*I like the resonance of machete to the drum.*



Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
Poetry Workshop  
29 September 2016  
Poem 3: "Wild Ones"

Wild One(s)?

i'm losing my  
balance / good  
on your eggshells  
i'm weighted  
[by a  
love for my  
cutting edge  
craze &] ? cliché  
i want to be  
cage free

Do you want  
this  
image?

can't you see?  
I'm suffocating with you like I've dived  
into the depths of the world  
& i'm drowning in its teal sea

why  
pretty?

diff. image  
from  
drowning

Why the  
unconventional  
"right-justified?"

The emotion comes  
through —

Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
6 October 2016  
Poem 4: "Most Beautiful Ones"

*labor camp*

*persona*

Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain  
He walks the line to find the ~~best~~, most beautiful one  
Fingers caress the length of the machete  
Foot pace like a heartbeat--must not be wasteful

*His feet?*

*So ominous*

*must*

He walks the line to find the best, most beautiful one  
Listening to the cold sweat in their chests  
Foot pace like a heartbeat--must not be wasteful  
One glimmer of light and he will pounce

Listening to the cold sweat in their chests  
Who will it be?  
One glimmer of light and he will pounce  
? And preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of his blade

Who will it be?  
Heartbeat of his pacing pauses  
Preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of his blade ?  
Hungry eyes connect with desperate mercy

*It's not sure of the action here*

*with what*

*how so*

Heartbeat of his pacing pauses  
Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain  
Rabid eyes connect with unachievable mercy  
Fingers caress the length of the machete

*to take or to kill them?*

*Eudora Welty, where is the voice coming from?*

Evelynn Bulger  
Poem 5, Draft 1

**DEEDS**

...Maybe it was bad deeds in our previous lives  
that had kept us apart, and so if we did  
good deeds in this life, maybe in a future  
one we could be together.

2-TCCP-232\*

This life  
next life  
we pay our dues --

Line us up in the open  
field where the rust red sky  
melts into the horizon of this forsaken land

We are gathered here today:  
with no rice thrown  
no spirits  
no celebration  
just a damp darkness and a brush of our bones with those of strangers  
no gold gowns dripping with emeralds, rubies, and even more gold  
no shower of flowers dipped in blessed water--  
just faceless partners brought together today

I'm no one  
She's no one  
Together, we are no one's--  
about to be newlyweds

We are No. 1, No. 2, No. 3...  
all the way up to No. 50

Her and I we're only  
No. 42--forever and always  
but more like brother & sister than husband & wife

*Evelynn  
I wish you'd  
go for the  
situation,  
before you put  
so much into  
the style.*

*What is the  
meant to  
experience  
here?*

Evalynn Bulger  
Poem 6. Draft 1: ROTATION

*Rot.*

EVACUATION\*

*The morning of April 20, 1975, the Khmer Rouge evacuated the Cambodian people from their homes.*

1. His fists of -- Lead -- knocked on doors  
Alarmed faces listened to his threats: they're going to Bomb us  
He told them they need to leave  
America is coming!  
Got to concentrate, file away

*he ?*

Vows of Betrayal--  
We can keep you -- Safe -- he Promised  
His threats of Bombing met with Resistance  
Then met with a Screaming silence  
Every last detail

*caps?  
lyrics*

Shadows of dark Feathers  
Shrouded him as he exited alone ?  
His blade -- Stained -- the cloth  
A Butterfly of maroon Blood  
Don't want to lose what's going down

*Voices need to be  
classified...*

Tomorrows are held in its Serrated edge  
Eyes obscured by reflective lens  
Opposition clothed in military uniforms  
For those there was only -- Execution  
I want to remember everything I'm feeling

Tear-streaked faces searched for familiar eyes  
Fingers clawed at the air -- Unanswered  
Unending howls of the wind cried  
As children ripped from their Mothers  
Should time try fading or stealing something away

*W*

Tell me why I feel this way  
I still ask -- Am I next?  
When will my day come?  
How long before I -- too --  
Am gripped within the Ropes of Despair?

*how ?*

*narrator ?*

Hold on, nothing's the same  
Marked for this Life  
With Bone-piercing memories  
That unbraids the Soul--

\*Lyrics from "Hold On" by Carlos Santana

Evalynn Bulger  
Poem 7

SWING CAROUSEL

I reciprocate the beaming smile on her lips:  
my Oldest with her arm wrapped around her Sister's shoulders  
an excited squeal erupts into a wider grin as the -- Gears of the Swing Carousel jolt awake  
I wave back to her -- pride in my Heart  
I try to snap a picture before they become a Blur  
I need to capture this Moment -- this is what I Survived for-- to see Innocence again  
I laugh with my girls as the carousel rises up from the ground and swings them further away  
I can barely make out their hair, so Black that it reflects the Sun  
They are too far

My chest tightens --  
a cold Sweat radiates from my neck and extends down my spine  
And just like that like a Sore on the tip  
of my Tongue that Tweaks when I least expect it --  
I'm brought back

*I hear*  
Wails of Children as they spin and spin pierces my Heart, as images flash before me:  
Looming Trees that cast shadows as long and as dark as the night of the Soul  
Bayonets piercing the velvet sky cloaked by the pale Moon  
Hands gripping ankles and swinging and swinging  
-- my eyes frantically search for my girls --  
the faster and faster they go the  
Higher and Higher  
their infant heads reach the ever-watching Moon  
My heart follows the Swoosh of wind trailing  
behind the children as they Whip around and around  
Their Cries echoing into the Blackness, *against*  
I wait for the Hollow thump of bodies impacting tree trunks  
For the Irreversible Squelch of a body staked by the Gleaming edge of the Bayonet  
I Wait -- my lungs on fire, from *dated*  
Breath -- I Wait...

But the moment is *passes* ~~paused~~  
My stare adjusts to the Sunshine as the Darkness ebbs away  
My girls are here and ~~not in the air~~  
Standing before me with smiles, *cracked* by laughter  
The Burn recedes as I release my breath,  
-- I am tugged away to the next ride  
(while the Thump and Squelch remain -- a dormant Hangnail in my mind)

*How do you want to end?*

*I wouldn't use caps like this. They call for stress significance. (It's different in Emily D.)*

*The contrast is powerful.*

*Do a "Michelangelo" (Art me.)*

*Try adding a few lines.*

Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
10 November 2016  
Poem 8, Draft 1

EGG or SPRING

I sneak one from behind him, as he stands watch  
with wooden chopsticks over the boiling oil.  
I crunch into its perfectly fried caramel brown shell  
and I feel him smirk.  
I don't even care that the steam from its center ~~singes~~ my lips.  
This is our ritual almost every Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday.

good opening

Egg Rolls -- at least that's what my dad calls them.  
For others, they are Spring rolls.  
Either way, I never understood their name --  
where did the Egg or Spring come from?

I wonder if it's because of the Egg used to close the wrap.  
Or maybe it's more about the crispness of it as you  
bite into its fried flesh --  
an Undeniable Presence.

→ connection -- ?  
Is my father refusing  
to call up spring?  
because of memory?  
(but me)

Or maybe it's because Spring was when it all changed: in  
when there were no more celebrations.  
No more showers of food.  
No more family.  
Only long hours working in the rice fields  
with an insatiable starvation that lasted four years.  
And haunts even decades later.

→ connection?  
Father seems to reject  
the "spring"  
idea --

My father is still hungry.  
He feeds us until we are gorged.  
Never wasting <sup>so</sup> even the edges of strawberries I cut off to get rid of the leaves.  
I wonder if he does this because he thinks it will fill him, too.  
Or if it reminds him of how very lucky he is today.  
But he will always be hungry. Empty.

Satiated only when Vengeance no longer waits and -- Ignorance no longer Reigns.

←  
stranger  
verbs?

Very close.  
I did the  
grounding.

\*meeting with Alex, 34s 12/8

By Sun  
of the document  
of all  
poetry

YEW

Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
Poem 9: ROTATION 3

\*paper is double-sided\*

PUTREA TREE

very episodic

There once was a farm just a mile from our village  
with putrea trees like roots in a sea of clouds ♡

nets of the sea above

We peered up into those roots  
the fingers of the sun ~~piercing~~ <sup>omit</sup>  
through its leaves and gnarls ♡

mixed metaphor - NOT really working  
play around

We basked in the warmth of safety under the putrea

With our backs against the trunk  
we surveyed our collection of small apples  
in the nets of our shirts ♡

We didn't care for the owner --  
We simply plucked and plucked until our hands were overflowing

We talked about our plans to skip school  
to go see the newest Bruce Lee movie playing

Crisp bites into the black-red soft flesh  
a flood of sweetness smothering our senses

It tasted of infinite freedom

We laughed as Heng stood up  
demonstrating his best impression of  
Lee's signature moves

We threw the putrea -- booing him  
But we were interrupted  
by the farmer

ហង្ស  
banhchhob  
Stop

We scrambled up  
shoving as  
many  
of the  
small  
apples  
we could  
into our pants  
before escaping from  
the safety of the trees

*eliminate habitual*  
We'd race off towards our village

*keep* ~~our laughter making us spill over one another~~  
Our stolen fruits trickling away from us as we ran

*→ when*  
We could no longer see the  
tops of the trees in the horizon behind us  
we slowed down to reach into our pockets  
~~in search of one last fruit~~  
and my fingers closed around a stray one

*tree roots*  
↓  
*play sound*

[ A resounding crunch echoes  
but instead of sweet  
my tongue is bathed in sour

*giving plot development*

*joyous mood  
sense of foreboding  
w/out context*



Evalynn Bulger  
Dr. Ann Taylor  
Poem 9: ROTATION 3

*\*paper is double-sided\**

PUTREA TREE

There once was a farm just a mile from our village  
with putrea trees like roots in a sea of clouds

We peered up into those roots  
the fingers of the sun piercing  
through its leaves and gnarls

*imagery?*

*father's voice?*

We basked in the warmth of safety under the putrea

With our backs against the trunk  
we surveyed our ~~collection of~~ small apples  
in the nets of our shirts

We didn't care for the owner --  
We simply plucked and plucked until our hands were overflowing

*overflowed*

We talked about ~~our~~ plans to skip school  
to ~~go~~ see the newest Bruce Lee movie playing

Crisp bites into the black-red soft flesh  
a flood of sweetness smothering our senses

*Is the putrea an apple tree?  
I like the "similarity"  
of the action*

It tasted of ~~infinite~~ freedom

We laughed as Heng stood up  
demonstrating his best impression of  
Lee's signature moves

We threw the putrea -- booing him  
But we were interrupted  
by the farmer

បញ្ចប់

*banhchhob*

*Stop*