



**I  
learn  
to  
walk  
again**

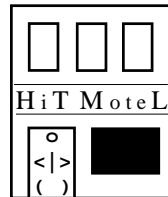
**Walk**

**Don't  
Walk**

**Poems  
by  
Michael Lyons**

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## **I started to walk again**

I started to walk again  
without the crutch.  
Little baby steps  
in tennis shoes.  
Is that how they did it?  
Got their ankles strong first  
and then  
pirouetted on to the moon.

I rest for a moment  
near the little alabaster muse in the garden.  
The model for this angel,  
with her modest down-turned gaze,  
could have been my teacher in 2nd grade.  
I am still as unstable as a 2 year old.

After I had the skateboard accident,  
and I had to spend a lot of time prone,  
keeping my ankle at the same level as my heart,  
I found myself  
looking for my head  
among the rays of afternoon light slanting  
through the blinds and flashing the objects on the desk:  
stacks of computer parts, video tapes,  
so much media and information manipulation,  
paintings on the wall — Kandinsky —  
and a surreal one with a strange face emerging from chaos,  
if you let it. (Once you saw it, you couldn't forget it.)

It was a time to look for my head.  
And wonder what had come of the promise  
I had made to my child me,  
who was so active to get me here in the first place.  
He is the muse.  
Or is it a she?

But my Muse can turn her head all the way around!  
And look backwards and forwards in time at once,  
and like in the exorcist,  
my muse is a pre-teen girl  
possessed by a 5000 year old daemon.

I am living with the fear of war in Iraq,  
now hidden under the media frenzy  
over the tragedy of the astronauts,  
who disappeared in explosions of light,  
and were shed across a wide spread of Texas.

I start again,  
ideas sloshing out of their containers  
rolling over the sides  
mixing with other ideas, emotions, dreams.  
First I make for the lavenderescent rose on the garden path.  
It has the strongest scent.  
I manage to do a straight-legged bow,  
sweeping low to her majesty  
(and bury my phallic nose into delicate petals),  
to raise the power of her XXX scent,  
percolating across space,  
to a loud feral hormone moan.  
Then like the hirsute and horrible bumble bee,  
whose domain I have invaded,  
— and who is buzzing me relentlessly —  
I rise and continue my erratic and railing flight  
on further  
down the garden path to the bright  
orange-red rose  
of exquisite color blend  
to delight the sight.  
Its scent is very subtle and hangs  
in the mind  
like light  
behind fog.

## **Oedipus, the swollen-footed**

Trying to get my sock  
pulled up over my  
hugely swollen foot,  
I am Oedipus the swollen-footed  
who thought to  
defy the prophesy of the odds  
from the back of a skateboard.

I am stuck in time  
and unable to move in space.  
Hungry for movement,  
the feet are aching to grip the road,  
barking dogs ready for the chase.

Tormenting myself with irrational fears:  
—the metal in the foot might get scalding  
hot in the bath  
—the metal might shift;  
these are the voices of the mother,  
the potent spell, that sheep-dog super-ego  
which, yarping at your heels  
keeps us  
from being able  
to negotiate the real.

I am Oedipus the swollen-footed.  
Who is Jocasta. My wife, my mother.  
I learn to walk again.

## The Girls of Physical Therapy

A moon-face Asian beauty  
with long flowing straight hair  
jet black  
and falling,  
-shaking, swinging  
down the middle of her back  
told me in physical therapy today:  
you must get the swelling down  
in order to be able to get movement again.  
She was tall, slender and rangy-  
loose in her joints  
as she perched on a stool in front of me,  
doing the intake interview,  
fixing me with her proud hawk eyes.  
You need to stretch every day, she said,  
looking like an elegant Modigliani creature -  
a geometric wonder all facets and planes,  
yet, a bird alighted.  
She leaped up  
to illustrate the calf stretch,  
arching her back,  
as she pressed the air there.  
And following the long line of leg  
reaching back, I saw  
the fabric of her sweats stretched skin-tight,  
over the smooth, tautness of her bum;  
I was trying to concentrate on . . .  
and I realized why  
they say that the physical therapists  
are the cheer leaders  
of the medical health field.  
Come to think of it,  
they ALL are walking around smiling  
like they had a secret:  
perfect human specimens -  
they just seem to

float

through the carpeted gray halls of the institution.  
It is like a convent for young women of graceful posture.  
Unlike the rest of us,  
physical therapist know more  
than they let on.  
Politely they try not to be dogmatic.

I see myself in  
the mirror:  
a 54 year old skateboarder -  
busted ankle,  
carrying lots of extra hardware,  
hanging  
between a pair of crutches  
like a vulture,  
hopping around on one leg  
trying to avoid  
stepping  
into the carrion  
strewn all around me.

Feeling the china doll perfection of her ensemble  
might be shocked, I asked her,  
“Should I, take the sock off?”  
Yes, take it off, she said.  
“Ok, I warn you. It looks like Darth Vader  
when he took his helmet off  
under there.”

They actually touch you.  
She tickled me with the back of her long elegant fingers -  
in various places  
on the left foot and the right foot.  
To test the level of sensations  
and compare them.  
How could anyone have such exquisitely slender fingers.  
They are so fine

that when they touch your skin  
little microscopic suckers on the sensitive ends  
disturb the electrical conductivity  
of the surface of your skin.

They are imbued with healing powers.  
This is heaven and I wanted her to touch me more:  
“Hulmm, they feel pretty much the same to me. Do it  
again?”  
I verbally played with her just to be rewarded with her smile.

She apologized about the stick figure drawings  
she had to make to illustrate some concept to me.  
“That’s OK. They are vectors,” I said.

Yes, I thought:  
as I saw them coming and going  
around the rabbit warren of the clinic,  
I envisioned a calendar  
—*The Girls of Physical Therapy*—  
with one of these beauties  
illustrating a stretch  
for each month.



## Proof by Proximity

Bush the Second is addressing the people today,  
one day after his more believable *pardner* Colin Powell addressed  
the UN

—cutting into the funeral services for the lost star wanderers.  
Their ship was rejected by the earth's shell

and fell like a tear

or a raindrop running down the windshield of the sky.

He is trying to make a case about the Iraq-Al Queda connection  
to sway

the Prime Time Court of the American People.

Everything is hurrying up to war:

War to bring us out of Depression

because Depression makes us mean,

meaner than a swarm of disenfranchised narcissists.

And it is a cool, bright, windy day in February  
and the trees who still have leaves to hold the wind are swaying. And  
I am trying to put more weight on my swollen foot and swaying with  
it. And everything is hurrying up to war.

We have a leader who is a cross  
between Elmer Fudd and Alfred E. Neuman,  
a hero of the ignorami,

whipping up fear with the threat of “weapons of mass destruction”  
and the pseudo-syllogisms of “evil”

(9-11 was evil. Sadaam is evil. Evil must be eradicated. Ergo, regime  
change Iraq.)

“Terrorism” is now as inevitable as the weather with a *level*  
like the threat of forest fire alert

or the ubiquity of smog in the forecast on the news channel.

They are using Proof by Proximity: because there is a training camp  
in the desert. That wouldn't be strong enough for the courts.

But the world is becoming a smaller and smaller place  
and everything is hurrying up to war.

I spend the morning helping friends with their software

I seem to be the designated tech support for the  
bohemian loners. Lots of sirens going by.

Hangin' on the net,

Miller talks about his trip to Germany to see  
his boy before he gets called up to fight.

Jackson the very astute, tells me he doesn't have a clue  
about whether or not the Bush Policy is realistic.

Though he does disagree with me that it is about the oil.  
He thinks it is about freeing the middle east from oppression.

So many Americans driving SUVs now.

Didn't we learn a thing from the '70s?

Again the Japanese are going to eat our lunch  
with their little electric and hybrid cars.

And Everything is hurrying up to War.

The collective will around the world is guided  
by the most unscrupulous types. It determines outcomes.  
America is losing the moral high ground, and it is looking  
like Viet Nam.

Though the winds of the zeitgeist have shifted  
and blown away communism,  
what I say to my Viet Nam vet friends now  
is that somebody had to stand toe to toe to communism  
and I'm sorry it had to be you.

Thanks.

What are we going to say to *these* vets.

My kid might be one of them. How pessimistic.  
Freud thought mankind would destroy itself. Jung worried  
that shadow projections would cause powerful leaders to  
bring mass destruction.

With more individuals than ever  
have "weapons of mass destruction"  
its beginning to look like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

America watches on their wide screen TVs  
as everything is hurrying up to War.

## The Principles of Autism

Poetry is a safe way  
to dip into the world  
of emergence

I'll be giving my lad his spelling words  
before school, at the breakfast table  
and get hung-up looking at a word — “tumble”.

He sees my eyes getting bigger  
as I drift into tracing the mimologics of it,  
the movement of the low humble sound  
that gets stopped at the wall of the m,  
then bursts through with the voiced plosive  
then subsides in the liquid lateral.

He puts his head down on his place-mat,  
says, “Uh, dad.”  
Words have embedded in them  
(in the movement of their sound energy)  
a close association  
of the thing spoken about.  
“Dad!”

And I, for the moment, am spared  
from having to follow into this beauty  
around which I sense the beginning of  
terror we are just able to bear.

Poor little fellow, having a dad like me.  
He's like this super jock dude,  
totally opposite to what I am.  
Isn't it always so. I'm so glad  
he is growing in physical grace and poise.  
He is fearless at acting.  
Goes around here singing show tunes.  
He's gonna be great.  
While I am slipping into a kind of Vedic autism.

If you need the concrete  
explanation, look for it  
in the hippocampus — the Field Horse  
conveying “you”.

The inner fields.

Trucks going by.  
Other people making breakfast in the kitchen  
Sirens and foghorns in the outside world.  
You can tell what time of the day it is without a clock.

What if the Field Horse  
rears, bucks, surges  
runs away with the carriage  
refuses to stay in the  
coral of rationalism  
wants to mate with others  
of its own kind.

The best picture of a poet I ever saw  
was the camp cook,  
holding the leather reins of three horses  
*onomatopoeia*  
*logopoeia*  
*phantopoeia*  
who were rearing and bucking  
and pawing the air *en-rampant*,  
and you could tell  
by the terror and love in the horse’s eyes  
that they were in a kind of telepathy  
with this solid real person,  
holding the reins to a team that  
would rather run wild  
in the fields of Austin.

## Primal Man

Lying on my side in bed,  
in that hypnagogic state before waking  
there's a slight whistle in my breathing —  
and there is a hoot owl outside  
making his lonely query into the  
continuum of niches for his love.  
Or at least some kind of recognition.  
And my breathing  
wheeze comes into synch with his  
call,  
and we are connected on this  
breath plane.

I feel a dark wing  
                     of lapsing from conscious,  
spread over my being, for a moment,  
as I fall into my warm internal spaces.  
Then a lightness lifting  
                     me up,  
                     I became the breeze  
                     floating through the trees —  
trees like explosions in the air  
                     slowed down and  
held there—  
as I penetrate space  
past the blinds, out my window  
across the yard  
                                     by localizing the  
   sound.

How easily we remember the shock of separation  
from our primal selves.  
It's in the accidents  
beyond how we  
scheme and grasp,  
in the breath at the edge of  
your nose.



## **the place where 3 roads meet**

I.

One lone traveller  
is approaching  
the place  
where three roads meet.

One road is narrow  
and goes up into palisades.  
Another road goes down  
and opens into a wide valley.  
Ahead past a low hill  
is a third road little used,  
that leads to nowhere.

He is heading up  
and meets another lone traveler,  
an old man  
winding his way  
down from the heights.

The young man is in the army  
and he has been pushing himself  
for a long way. He has a wounded foot.  
He is angry  
over marshalling all his resources  
to hobble along.

It was  
getting into  
evening  
when the two men  
encountered each other  
in a narrow place -  
the old  
tired and irritable  
from the long steep

descent;  
the young  
daunted  
by the steep climb  
ahead.

In that narrow place  
the old sought to take  
advantage of the young,  
and said,  
“Move aside.”

The young man  
asked  
the old  
man-  
“are you my father?  
Move aside, yourself.”

“You are  
never,” the  
old man  
answered,  
“going to really  
know me.”

“Sir, I  
asked you,  
‘are you my  
father?’”

“you little  
son of a bitch! Where  
do you get off questioning me?”

And then  
the swollen-footed soldier  
grabbed the  
old man



by the neck  
and thrust his sword  
into his chest,  
lifting him with it  
and burying it to the hilt.

He pushed  
the old man  
off to the side of  
the road  
and left him there  
staring up into the sky.

The horse with wagon  
just stood bye,  
filled with all  
the old man's worldly goods.

The young man  
of the swollen foot  
said,  
"You should have  
got out of the way,  
old man."  
And he released the horse  
and shooed it down the road to the open valley  
to let it roam free.  
And he pushed the wagon  
over the edge of the cliff.  
And again setting to his climb  
said to the old man  
staring into the sky:  
'Youth will be served.'  
As he passed by  
he called over his shoulder,  
"As you taught me,  
severe violence  
always prevails."

## II.

At the stroke of midnight,  
a lone traveler  
walked up from the valley  
to the windswept crossroads  
at the junction  
where three roads meet.

He drew a pentagon  
at the intersection  
and placed 5 obsidian stones  
at the points of the closed figure.  
And then stepped into it.  
He took a dead snake into his hands  
and held it up.  
He addressed the serphant:  
“In the name of Jesus I bind you Satan!  
For as you have said,  
‘wherever two or more are gathered  
in my name,  
so also am I’  
and ‘whatever you bind on earth  
will be bound in heaven,  
and whatever you loose on earth  
will be loosed in heaven.’”  
And he repeated this incantation  
over and over while turning in a circle.  
“wherever two are gather in my name so also am I with  
them;  
and whatever man binds on this earth stays bound in heaven  
and what man sets loose on this earth is loose on this earth.  
for I am the darkness that enfolds the light,  
and I am the body that carries the life  
and I am energy that gets things done,  
and I am the motion of changing.”

Soon,  
a large black

pick-up truck  
with tinted windows,  
and with its lights turned off  
came slowly crunching  
from out of the third road that lead to nowhere.  
It pulled up to a stop, by the man inside the circle.  
The door opened amid a wooshing sound  
of a vacuum being broken,  
and a blue jeaned leg in an ornate cowboy boot  
stepped onto the ground.  
And an old man emerged from the cab.  
He had on a bill cap that said Scratch.

“You called me?”  
“Yes,” the young man said.  
“What is it you want?”  
“I turned to art for comfort  
in this bleak existence.  
If I could, I would  
travel constantly,  
devoting all my time and energy to this art . . .”

“That can be arranged,” Old Scratch said.  
And the snake in the young man’s hands  
turned into a blue guitar.

And the young man said  
“What price do I have to pay?  
And the people who are with me have to pay?  
To satisfy this ambition.”

And the old man said, “Son.  
are you willing  
to pay the price?  
—your eternal soul—  
for extraordinary talent?”  
And the young man answered, “Yes.”

The devil took his guitar and tuned,  
thereby giving him the abilities  
which he so desired.  
From then on, whenever the young bluesman  
played his instrument  
it was like two were playing,  
— one chasing and threatening the other.  
The young man's fingers dancing over the strings  
moved like a light faster than darkness.  
But the voice,  
though a howling force  
full of strident joy,  
expressed the deepest sorrows  
of an old man  
who moaned and wailed  
of being untouchable and  
not recognized.  
Because he was  
a sinner condemned  
for being closer to death.

And there were two bodies together now,  
the young man with his vast wide future  
in front of him, everything he would become  
and the old man with this great past behind him,  
everything he had been.

'Goin' down to the crossroads  
with my other by my side  
Goin' down to the crossroads  
with my other by my side  
Stick out my thumb  
for the devil be my ride.'

## **you are the star of your own movie**

the director says  
stand here on this mark.

there are people: artisans, sound workers, camera men,  
make-up artists working on the sidelines.  
try to make sure you are well-dressed.  
feel like you are apart of something.  
try not to be a prima donna.  
give every scene your best shot.  
relax, play the cameras,

interact with the other actors.

someday you'll get the big call back.

---

## **Old guy in restaurant smiling**

Old guy in the restaurant smiling  
—bright eyes.  
Still in love with life.  
How did he get to be like that?  
SO open.  
Reminded me of Borges,  
who is blind.  
He had bright eyes like that.  
Presence. A sense of  
being in the moment.  
It is something that  
comes from the core of  
your being, and shoots  
out the eyes.  
Real Beauty.  
I am a function of the Word,  
I accept that a higher power  
is working through me.  
True Beauty.

## **A Poet's Lament**

A poet is not even a Gambler  
At least a Gambler has a kind of a chance

Poetry uses the words, and the Romantic Inclination  
to cool out on so much Rational Cognition  
and to exalt the emotions through Art.  
It is a seductive, addictive and potent spell,  
one that keeps me awake and excited.  
I like literature  
to be what I take into  
my dreams at night;  
and awaken with in the morning,  
as a vision  
about where to take the art that day.

Poetry is a program like logic for safely dipping  
into seductive autism.

My wife was kind to me,  
but my letting her  
support me financially  
has driven her away.  
My wife's mother is controlling us from afar, as her daughter  
is the only person she sees and who has to help her.  
I have been crossed off grandma's Christmas List.

I found most beautiful poems in one of the notebooks he left  
me after he died-alone - of alcoholism.  
It was a Recovered Treasure.  
The poet had the system, the theory and the goods.  
In his poems he leads us  
into the stunning, arresting beauty  
of the now moment.  
Yet even though he has all these beautiful books published  
his family and friends do not know him.

Anathema:

“Oh, don’t go near him  
he’s got *anathema*.  
Been cast out by the Church.”

Those monks were right.  
After three days  
                    and no food . . .  
Pussey . . . is . . . was . . .  
                    way  
                    in the back  
of my mind. And nobody  
looks too good to me.  
I’d jack-off at the sight  
of Today’s Special  
down at the local Smoke House  
sooner’n I would  
a raw  
                    nude  
                    beauty.  
Such is the sorry state  
of the artist.

The poet goes to a job interviewer  
“Will I be let in?”  
He tries to take the necessary Rational Behavior  
to get a job, but it is like Character Impersonation.  
You have to be able to perform a kind of auto-lobotomy  
on yourself  
to be able to remain on the job.  
Why do I always have to be rational,  
have to see the world the way others do.  
Sometimes this world of matter all becomes so gross so  
confining.  
Like having to take a shit.  
It is so gross,  
or Sex, who ever came up with that.

The Words,  
now the words they are what lead to an Opening UP.  
And you sense the real world  
of Sound and Motion  
in the sound and motion  
of a phrase or word or syllables within a word, like it was  
a kind of equation

    a concatenation of symbols

        - the Letters -

    that reflect the motion of their sound.

And from that, from time to time.

we see this REAL world of Motion and Sound  
as a Large Entity with Bands

    like bands of RADIO or Tape Storage

    or just the sky and the earth

        the Field and the Ground

The “Mind” in which the will is Idea  
and birds are thoughts moving  
and accidents and meetings and crashes  
are lightning and winds and floods  
are feelings moving through and through which we move.

I have a fabulous education but

I am forced to rent My Brain to the Headless,

— they master him who has

    forgotten how to work with his hands.

I live in two worlds:

one, of animal pleasures to be had

through hard work.

the other, spiritual, -fantastic

trying to reach across and communicate with me. . .

if I can get into some kind of habit of listening.

Poetry requires you to become

utterly destitute,

in order to be able to see

beyond this world of reason and materialism,

to the world of emergent form.



## **job searching in an employer's market**

### **SOFTWARE DEVELOPER**

Design, implement trouble-shoot, test, maintain, performance tune & deploy a highly scaleable, highly available & robust n-tiered web-based enterprise/hosted constituency interaction platform. Experience on all mainstream OS, DB, & application servers req'd. Resume to [jobs@publicmind.com](mailto:jobs@publicmind.com)

Wow, these guys want someone to do it all!

I wonder: What are they going to be doing in the enterprise?

Getting the business cards made?

Even so, I thought to send them a resume.

But as these job req'ments are rarely found in one person,

I checked out their website.

It is a completely blank page.

Apply named.

## Ode to Psychological Guardians

Always trying to rise,  
getting held back  
— drowning,  
we live  
on the surface  
of the wave  
— conscious.

Who is not  
in the sinking feeling  
of loss, rejection and  
abandonment?  
We turn our nose up  
to keep our head above water  
at the edge of being lost  
in the sea of existence.  
Our countenance,  
that we present  
to the present is  
a beacon  
on a buoy  
bobbing up and down  
in a sea of longing.  
Sulking, sorrow, RAGE —these  
are what we need  
to keep us afloat.

The surface of the conscious  
comes across at the level of the eyes.  
All people,  
have within them:  
a child  
an adult  
an old parent.  
This is the answer  
to the Riddle,

of the Sphinx;  
 and not to know it,  
 is to bring plague  
 to the population.  
 In our time we know it as  
 id  
 the ego  
 the superego —a guardian  
 that at times  
 observes us with the  
 eyes of wise Ancient,  
 and at other times is stern  
 and sadistic  
 with the cunning cruelty  
 of the abandoned child  
 come to wreak vengeance.

There are many guardians:  
 Readiness for Misunderstanding  
 Sulking  
 Sorrow  
 Rage  
 a whole complex of wrathful deities  
 (‘·\_ (¬ι¬)\_·´) ι? {ôιô}\_·´)\_ (¬ι¬)  
 (inchoate . . .  
 how  
 could I  
 be aware of it  
 if it  
 is unconscious.)

The wave of transference  
 goes over us  
 and we are in mourning for ourselves drowned.  
 My blocker encounters your blocker  
 and nothing moves,  
 and we don’t get to that place, that is the source,  
 the center between us.

That I and thou space  
where we are here  
with the One  
who carries us  
along.

Then the crest slides back  
and we can breath ourselves for a while.  
It is remarkable how  
much consciousness changes,  
when you think of everything  
as a thou.  
And you realize —  
I am consciousness.  
I cognize —  
that organization  
of matter  
that became  
conscious.

We must learn  
to help  
the Guardians relax,  
and let go.  
They have  
done their job  
too well.  
It does no good  
to swim against  
a rip tide.  
You must surrender  
to it. Let it  
carry you out until  
it lets go  
and you can find your way  
back in —further  
along the shore.

## in transference

in transference  
your wife becomes  
your mother;  
your rejecting that  
maker her  
her own mother.

in transference  
all your bosses are your father  
and they rule from a far off distance place  
by a kind of field effect control ray  
that is capable of oscillating  
shame and hope  
60 times a second.

in transference  
the toilets are clogged with  
your crap.  
the washing machines  
leave your clothes grayer and grayer  
and nobody ever puts anything  
back in the same place twice.  
—They do this to annoy you.

in transference everybody is peevish  
peccant, prurient and a prude.  
The eyes in the Artworks of Transference  
look on you with contempt  
(¬·¬(¬¬¬)¬·¬) ¿? {ô¿ô}¬·¬)(¬¬¬)

in transference it is always  
back at home in your family . . .  
that moment when you all have returned home  
in a state  
of just can't wait  
to transfer

the day's outrages  
to a family member

whenever you are stuck,  
look for the cause  
to be in transference:  
Damned if you do  
and damned if you don't.  
Pulled one way. At the same pulled another.  
On the rack of transference.  
You want to trust, to reach out  
with your feelings, but then you are  
vulnerable to having those feelings  
be used against you to  
to get you in stuck.  
in stuck your mind goes off endlessly  
weighing the consequences of your actions,  
the implications of your behavior and you never  
get  
to act.

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## Twinking in an ancient breeze

Yow-Woo!  
Yhea!  
Yike!

Children playing with  
giants in a forest of giants  
'neath the delicate lace-like  
canopy of stars  
like leaves  
twinkling in an ancient breeze  
breezes  
breezes  
[background of flowcharts  
chemical processes, physics]

## Genetic Savings & Clone Incorporated

I was looking around for a job and ran into this outfit in Sausalito. Their blurb goes,

“Genetic Savings & Clone Inc., a start-up biotech company, seeks a full-time Graphic Designer for our Sausalito office. GSC provides gene banking services to the owners of genetically exceptional dogs and cats. Soon GSC will also clone dogs and cats commercially.”

I wonder what these people are like?

I mentioned it to my wife and kid, who are completely enamored with our petite black tortoise shell cat, Crystal. To my surprise, my kid (11) just immediately took to the idea of cloning the house pet as natural. We had been wanting to get another kitty as a playmate for our beloved cat as she is 5 years old. We want to get another cat before Crystal gets too old and nasty like her own previous mentor Metallica. It took years for Metallica to grudgingly accept Crystal. All through her childhood Crystal never got anything but a low blood curdling throaty growl and hiss from the heavy metal kitty. Never was there such a vituperative mother figure. But Crystal had youth and engaged in “cat jumping” —leaping over Metallica whenever possible— to infuriate the old curmudgeon even more.

But I want to understand the mentality of “savings and clone”. I want to understand the magical world of my child that sees the animal as put on this earth for his enjoyment. To be sure, when they were both children, Will took Crystal to his bed as a kind of moving stuffed animal. They fell asleep side by side for years.

I probed a little to feel him out. We recalled that Crystal was adopted, was the runt and was always very petite, a much priced trait. He informed me that you have to leave kitties with their mother for 8 weeks before you can adopt them.

“What is that period called,” I asked.

“Schooling,” he said.

And we recalled that when we first had Crystal home here, (her ears were way bigger than any other part of her). And that we had a friend of my wife staying here, a nurse from Germany, and she held Crystal on her lap, and carried her around swaddled in the hammock of her T-shirt continuously for the first month. That’s how Crystal became such a love-kitty. Total loving attention.

I was trying to say that if we wanted a cat to be as much like our beloved kitty as possible, we would have to provide the same kind of environment for her to grow up in.

Anyway, that’s as far as I got with trying to understand the mentality of the modern city dweller and their pets. I grew up in Texas, and kept dogs. We did not have them become pampered pets. To us they were Medicine Dogs, a gift from the world, that got us out into the woods on long walks every day, that kept us connected, somewhat, to the wild. They were spirits incarnate, that reflected a kind of adaptation and loyalty, moreover with whom we could be at times telepathic. They were our guardians, our protectors, our point men. When we ran with them in the woods it was like they had accepted US as equals, and they were outriders, peripheral senses. I know they loved us and looked over at us with pride when we got real. We did not talk goochie-coo to these teachers. They were here with their wildness and their short lives to teach us about loyalty and death, and to bring out the best in us. They were individuals with their own lives, with their own adulthood, with their own fears. How could you even think to try and clone something like that? I think I’ll sic my cat-lobby representative on them.



## **Ironic Valentine**

We watched the video  
made by the surveillance camera across the street  
as the white Mercedes accelerated across the parking lot  
and banged into a man  
then stopped and backed over  
him. Then rolled forward into him again.  
Then sped out of the hotel lot.  
The lady driving was married to the dead man.  
The couple had 4 year old twins.  
He had done her wrong  
by going out with his receptionist  
(the man and wife were both  
dentists in the same office with the receptionist.)  
The man had taken the receptionist to the same hotel  
where the couple was wed almost 11 years earlier.  
A fit of “sudden passion” they call it in the Texas courts.  
Thus on Valentines Day,  
what would have been her 11th anniversary,  
a jury sentenced the woman  
to 20 years for murder.  
The defense pleaded  
that here was a woman  
who had lost her husband  
and who was needed  
by her young children.  
But the prosecutor said,  
“She ought not get credit  
for making herself a single parent.”  
Even the parents of the dead philandering man  
pleaded for their daughter-in law  
saying she didn’t intent to kill him,  
just run over him a bit.  
The defense said it was “poetic irony” that  
this verdict was handed down on Valentine’s Day.  
In Texas all lawyers are required to study poetry  
in order to pass the bar.

## **we stretched**

we stretched  
out on sleeping  
bags, in the gloaming  
valley and  
waited for  
the universe  
to come on in the sky.  
There were kids  
getting ancy and  
fiddling with  
flashlights,  
and their  
parents — becoming uncomfortable  
at the possibility  
of the onset of  
early wonder —  
were making jokes  
about ‘modern’ constellations.  
“Where is the sign  
                    of the Television.”  
“I’m thinking  
that it looks like a  
                    vacuum cleaner.”  
I asked “Where is the sign  
                    of the hypodermic needle.”

Some young girl talked back to her dad  
and we were all mortified  
when she got grounded  
from riding her bike for the whole next day.

This is better than church.