

Painting Depicting A Teenage Boy, Killed in 1996
(*Shot Boy* (First Revision), 1998, by Ken Currie, Laing Art Gallery)

You cannot hold him, though your arms crave to do just that. You think of his fragile heart, imagine his chest failing to rise, his ribs creeling a last cry. Imagine his vanished breath, lead making a sieve of his lungs.

You cannot soothe him, though your palms stretch out, there in the gallery, toward where he hangs, silent upon the tomb of the wall, alone. Your womb prickles with fear. It senses this catastrophic waste. You remember the feel

of your own child's mouth, latched to your breast. There is no way to nurture this ghost. The whitewashed wall is a shrine. Lay him the wreath that blooms from the sorrow in your mind. Carve his epitaph with your eyes.

He could be asleep—milky coins of eyelid close the curious peace of his face, as if he is proof of forgetfulness after death. There is no hint of violent red, for he already wept everything out, is bloodless as a psalm, frail as feathers,

framed in mist and marked by nothing but the shadow of holes upon his skin. You will bear this sorrow home, a relic in the casket of your head.