



Insanity's Horse

Drew University Art & Literature 2009 - 2010

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Drew University's Art and Literature Magazine

circa 1985

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Merion Read

Apples

Sitting at my kitchen table fifteen years ago
I arranged slices of an apple
in the shape of a pinwheel,
their flesh the color of a harvest moon.
Ada sat next to me
with a piece in her little-girl hands.
She used to lie
and tell everyone we were cousins
even when they didn't ask
and when I slept in her room
there were angels everywhere;
dolls, paintings, wooden statues,
and I was secretly jealous
because I thought she was as pretty as all of them.
She held an apple piece up to the light
and said something like,
"Did you know stars grow inside of these?"
And I shook my head,
hair falling over my wide eyes.
She tip-toed to the counter
where my mother had sliced a green apple in half,
reached up, and took it in her palm.

Outside we poured the seeds onto the grass
and waited for them to grow
and at night I watched from my window
as they shot from their roots
up into the chilly sky, blooming one by one.
I knew those stars had always been there
but there were five new ones
and those were ours.

Last night I dreamt
that the sky was full of apple halves,
the stars in their centers
pulsing like little heart beats.
I saw Ada too,
like one of those statues,
wings the color of cherry wood.
I'll only remember her like this
Amongst pale green,
Daughter of an apple seed.

Jaya Misra

Cleaning

my father is stripping in the backyard,
in front of the tomato plants
and that rusted swing set.

i can hear them talk,
the neighborhood watch,
when his uniform falls
on the grass like sunlight
into roots.

my father is naked in the backyard,
and his skin has dark, worn eyes.
the towers fell.
he has seen too much.

there are a thousand stories
in the dirt of my father's flesh.

he grabs the Clorox bottle,
the liquid tumbles fast, down
his chest, zipping across,
his stomach, faster.

the green water hose tangles
at his dusty feet, when he sees me
watching from the window, my face
against the screen.

his mouth moves – syllables
collect inside the still blue sky.
they hang against his shoulders,
breathing heavy.

my father is in the backyard,
naked, crying. i want to
kiss him against his cheek
but he might fall into the center
of the earth, swirling in its core.

John Dabrowski



Kristen Hugg

tall grass

i was barefoot.
 unaltered.
 the way I was born.
 and you,
 you were not.
 shoes you wore,
 always.
 since you learned to walk
 so much sooner than me.
 but as we strolled together
 i did not adorn myself with footwear
 (even though you offered).
 instead i let my feet break
 and bleed.

and when i had to walk away from you,
 my feet had not callused
 the way i wished they would.
 at our last walk,
 were you wearing shoes?
 i couldn't tell, the grass was so high.

Mallory Mortillaro

The Weight of Honor

Private First Class John Anthony Phillips presses his back to a sand wall, tilts his helmet over his eyes, and tries to sleep. His mind whirls. It is restless. His mind remembers. *Pfc. Brandon A. Owens died of injuries sustained from an enemy attack, October 2, 2009. 21 years old.* He is remembering the hedgehog that died in his college dorm room. And the roommate who joined that hedgehog last month.

His eyes twitch. Left to right. And back again. He tries to stop thinking about how sand tastes like he imagines Pompeii does. Concrete mixed with oil and tar. He tries to forget what a dead man's eyes look like. He tries to forget how he knows this. *Lance Corporal Troy Walker died during a combat operation in Afghanistan, October 28, 2009. 21 years old.* Sleep comes. And lasts. And goes. Four thirty two. Just one more hour would be bliss. But bliss dies in the heat of summer. It swells and explodes and the pieces scatter the ground. They can occasionally be found, like pennies heads-up. Or else they melt in the rain. Drown in tears of the sky. Or are buried alive by wind-blown dunes. This is where bliss comes to die. Bliss dies and kills its maker.

He has a dream the sky sets on fire. Torched angel wings fall on shattered clouds. *Private Cody D. Cooper killed by a makeshift bomb, December 3, 2006. 21 years old.* The blaze of glory, no of honor. Or rather, destruction without a cause. The sky is burning and his eyes burn. But not like the burn that comes from drinking bourbon straight from the bottle. Burns in a way different from the burn that comes from doing thirty eight pull-ups at the Army recruit booth in the middle of summer at a country concert to impress a bunch of drunken girls in cut-off shorts and cheap cowboy hats. They made him listen to country music. Told him it was patriotic. He jogs four miles a day in a gray t-shirt, his identity stamped across his chest in black block. The letters on the fabric become irons, branding him, marking him. *This one we keep.* He loses himself in the folds of his uniform and is never found again.

He wishes that his rifle offered salvation. But his pathway to being cannot be found at the end of a barrel. Besides, you can't hold a rifle at a 180 degree angle. One year from now he will say he's through with needing. He'll pack up shop in six boxes that he'll ship off to some old lover or brother or the Salvation Army. He'll pull a revolver out of his suitcase at a shitty over-priced motel at the Tennessee state line, aim it at his heart and wish that someone had taught him how to pray.

He wakes up thinking of ash and salvation. Wishing his hands didn't know the weight of M16.

The bullet will miss his chest, graze his left arm, leaving a scar which he'll cover up with a banner or heart or shield with the name of some girl he's convinced he's in love with.

He's crossing himself now, mumbling words to himself. *Eternity. Faith. Amen.* Are these the words? They feel unfamiliar in his mouth, unlike *well-trained, yes sir,* and *RPG.*

Does he know the weight of these words like he knows the weight of a gun? There is no one to teach him that his hands are four pounding nails, changing tires, writing letters home, kneading bread. Needing. But his hands only know death. His hands know the weight of a shovel used to bury dead cats. His hands know the weight of a coffin.. Know how hard dried earth is to crack. The difference in weight between a loaded weapon and an empty one. He closes his eyes and wills himself closer to God. He assumes the position, grasps one hand in the other. He wishes he could bottle up that loneliness he feels in the morning that starts in his ribs and pitch it into the ocean. But he feels lost and the source of the cold is lost and he feels thinks that maybe God can help, but no one has ever taught him how to pray. He wants to bury himself and be reborn. Maybe as a piece of paper where maybe someone would write instructions on how to pray...if it can be taught. He just wishes that someone had taught him how to pray. And then, he's saying words.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. How does he know this prayer? Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. He presses palm to palm as if his hands are the pathway to remembrance. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. He remembers bible class on Monday nights at St. Anne's. And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God--. Every Monday he recited books of the bible while his mom sang in the choir. Thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits. Memorized Saints and prophets. Who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. He kisses the medallion that protects his heart. If only it were made of a thicker metal. If only it didn't lie beside the brand of war. Chief Warrant Officer Frank R. James died in a helicopter crash in Tikrit, Iraq November 8, 2009. He crosses himself. Looks to the heavens. Whispers Amen.

Eden Williams

Transcended

Above me
Beyond it all
Lies nothing
And everything
As well as
A girl extends her
Hand to me
And tells me simply

I am the new transcended
And all the world has ended
What's left: a new sensation
That brings a sense of elation

We fly now
Through the clouds
And stars seem
To pass me by like
Memories
So long forgotten
Of her hand
And her voice singing

I am the new transcended
And all the world has ended
What's left: a new sensation
That brings a sense of elation

Christopher Deraney



Evan W. Dodge

A Journey Past

If you make a left turn
at the stop sign

You will pass an old playground.

Keep going.

Pass the three little girls playing catch, giggling in the sunlight.

*But, with my palm against the glass, I want to trace their outlines,
To follow the shape of their run, of their laughter in that green paradise.*

But you can't.

Pass them. Keep going

Make a right

Past the girl tiptoeing on the curbside,

But, her arms row the air furiously, her feet trip on their own souls

And she may lose her balance

I want to tell her: keep your chin up and look ahead.

Look.

Look at me.

But you shouldn't.

Keep going. You must keep going

You will pass a house filled with music.

Don't slow down.

There will be an older girl playing the piano,

The song beneath her fingers holds me behind the glass.

Keep going straight. On your right,

You will pass a martial arts studio.

Pass the young woman who has just broken a board.

She holds something hard and wooden in her hands.

She is smiling. She is smiling through me.

Pass her.

Keep going. I said, Keep going

Pass them all:

For they are not you anymore.

Michelle Rosenstock

Foremother

The brim of your hat leaves a band of shadow across your eyes
 like some tribal marking,
 or the mask of a bandit.
 And that's how you think of yourself;
 something to be reckoned with,
 a woman in tailored pants,
 Given away only by the way the fabric sits tightly across your hips
 and one loose strand against a sepia cheek.

I hold you in my hands,
 Each corner of this photograph curling up,
 one chunk taken out of the border,
 shaped like half a daisy.
 I don't know you,
 But somewhere in the red cavern of my chest,
 the empty space between bones,
 I feel you like a heartbeat.

And your heart had stopped
 After only nineteen years.
 I imagine it in this picture, the pulses slowed,
 caught momentarily: a butterfly under glass.
 My grandfather's sister,
 you might have been something else too;
 a marauder leaving footprints across each continent,
 a mother with daughters that have eyes like yours.

I think, from the way hard lines formed your lips,
 you knew that soon, time would come to a halt,
 like a bird shot from the sky,
 lying still at your feet.
 I don't know you,
 but whenever I fear the sun bleeding into black sky,
 The prospect of facing it looming so stormily,
 I wonder at Time, still in flight in my veins,
 And I think:
 I'll never know you,
 But I'll do this for you.

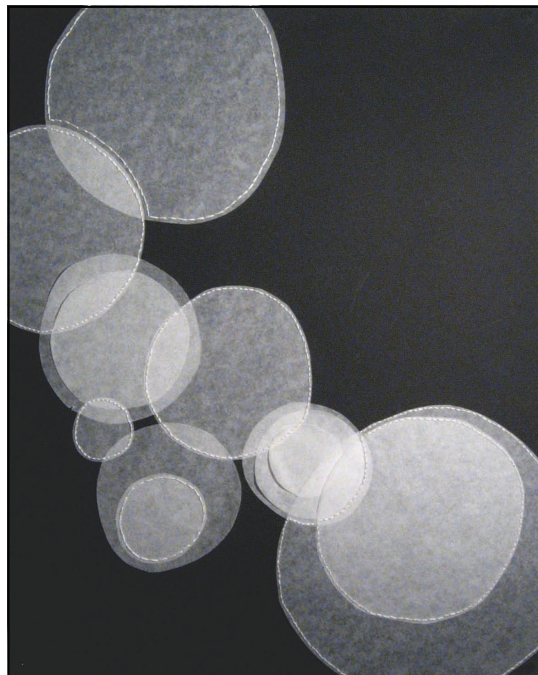
Jaya Misra

9 *My Life's Author*

You were the pinnacle of my very existence.
Before you came to me, I had no purpose,
No life.
Despondency, silence, black and white.
And then you appeared from the seemingly endless darkness
And brought new meaning to all that surrounded me.
You inspired me to read and write and breath,
Things all too complex in this vicious world,
A world laden with war and poverty and illness.
But you brought hope and meaning to that world.
You gave depth to the words of Shakespeare,
To Emerson and Dickinson and Twain.
You brought color to the sunsets and purpose to every sunrise.
You and I have flown among the stars
And stormed the terrain of this earth.
We've crossed walls and fences and water and sky.
We have met the ground brutally; such cannot be denied,
but it was your presence that allowed for perseverance.
With you, the knife's edge is dulled,
the bullet is blunted and slowed,
A bomb is but a firework in the night sky.
But now you are leaving.
I can only hope that life doesn't lose its color,
That the birds don't lose their song,
That the ocean's tides continue to rise and fall
And bring with them some sign of continuation.
Your lessons to me are as imperative
As the air I breathe,
As the blood coursing through my veins,
As this frail heart somehow beating from day to day.

I will never forget you.

Sarah Colmer



Katharine Overgaard



Lauren Collini

Without Really Thinking

Without really thinking
 My swinging tears in a sun-drenched sky
 Beneath my awkward grace
 There is a fire burning

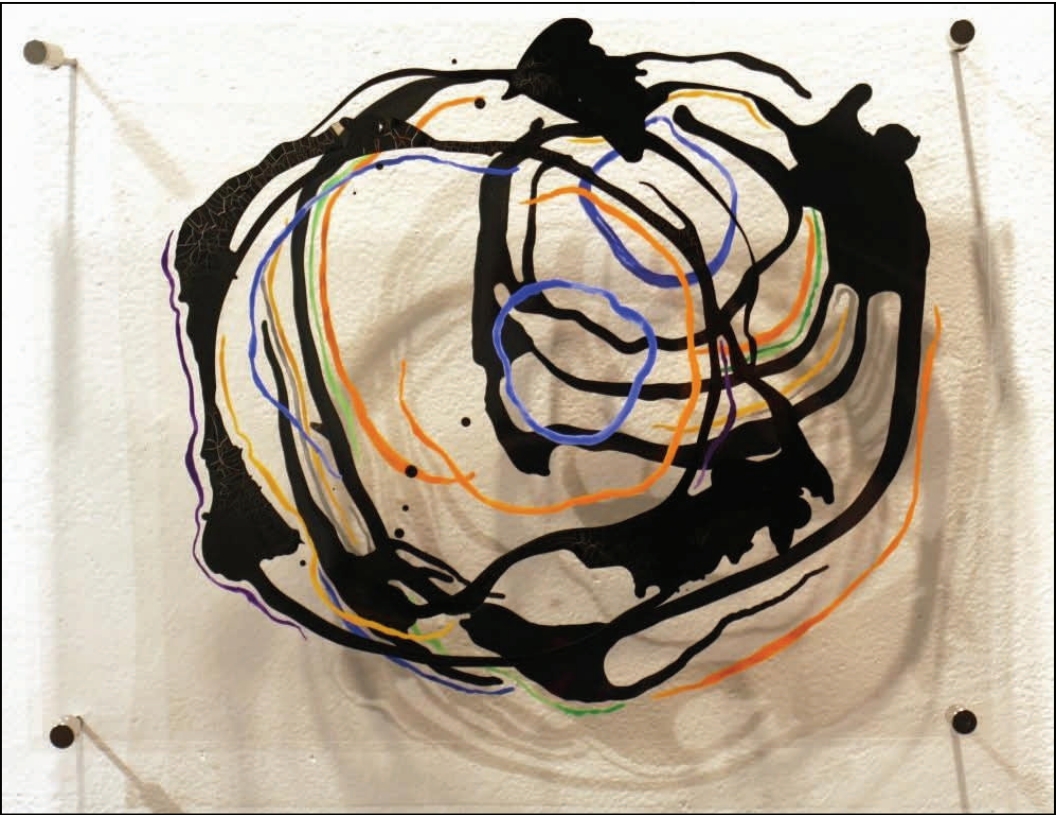
Without really thinking
 As red rose petals fall down
 Your kiss emancipates me
 Carving the envy of thrilling betrayals

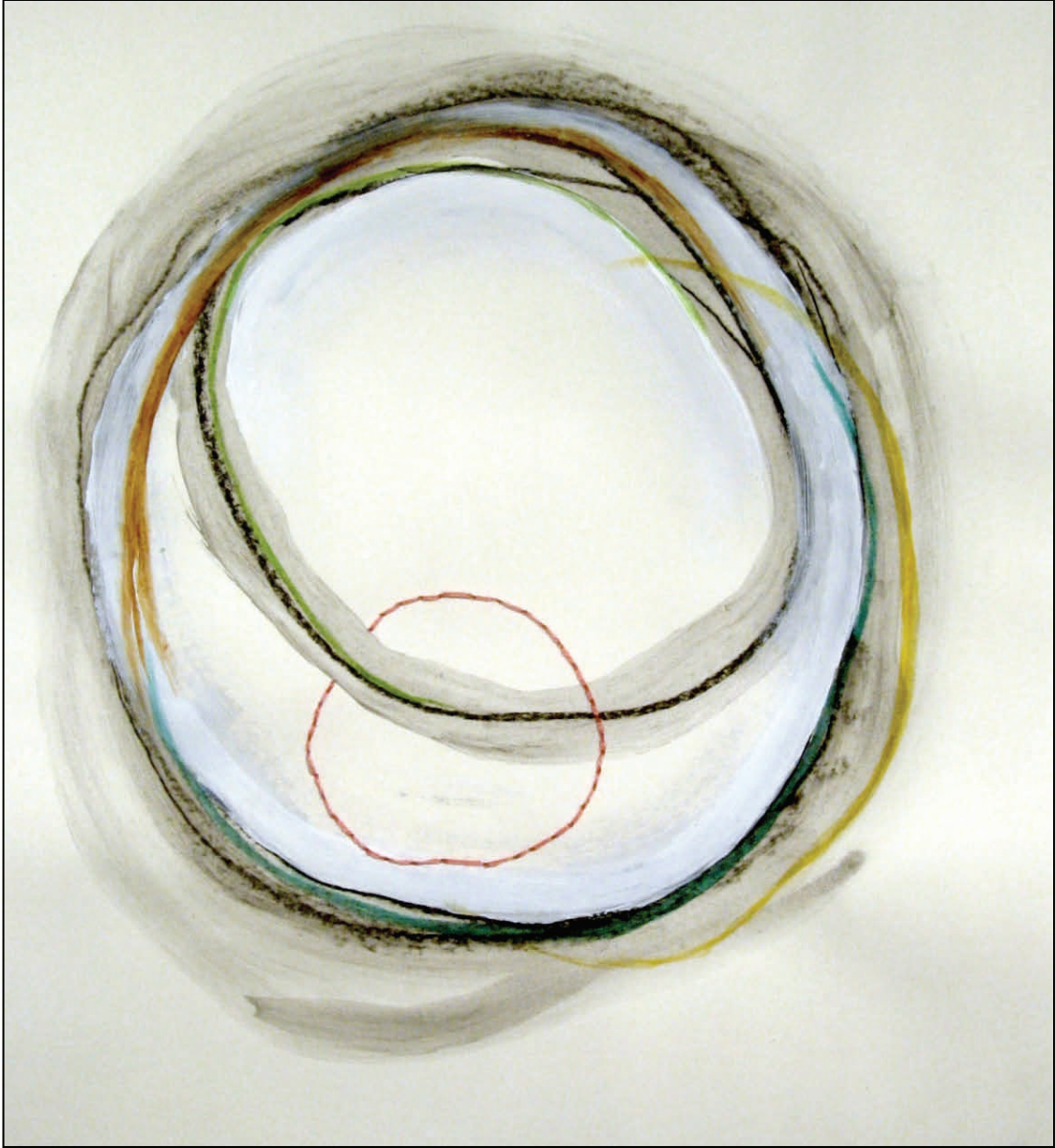
Without really thinking
 I ask you darling
 Is it the soft man in the corner?
 Who maybe the first one
 With Reprehensible sins

Without really thinking
 The moments of humble opulence
 The Threads shaping our story
 Slender silhouettes of my love for you

Without really thinking
 I will always love you

Emily Okita





Katharine Overgaard

Words

Words with true meaning
 carry the weight of a thousand acts.
 Words left unspoken sit
 internally, eternally
 corroding and dissolving
 the innards of the soul.
 Words said, but not meant
 leave sour-tasting regret
 clinging to the roof of the mouth,
 and leaking down between the teeth,
 poisoning the tongue,
 plaguing the mind.
 Words that are heard
 fulfill lips' intent, but
 Words without ears
 last only the duration of sound,
 futilely falling,
 and blending in with air's disguise.

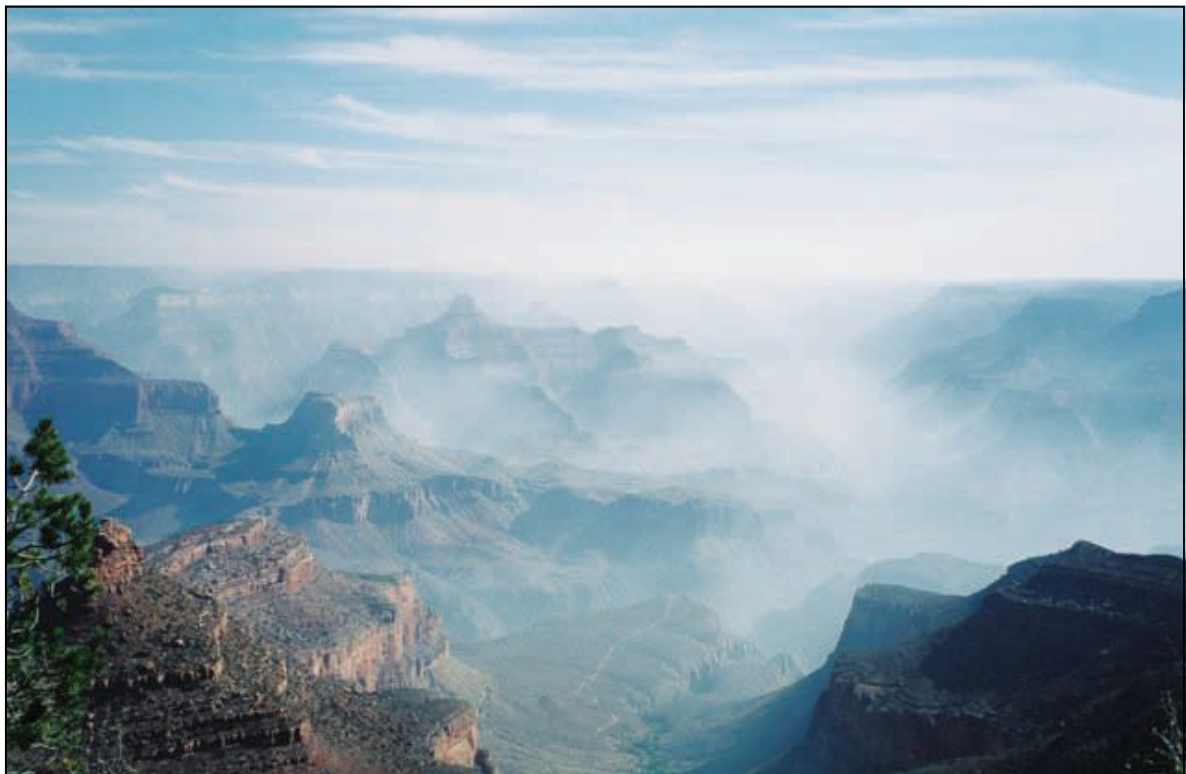
My only wish is that you can hear me

Greg Del Russo

Movement

Movement lives in the moment, ever changing
 Like a flame, it lives, it dances
 I glimpse you're glorious figure in the distance
 You move with an elegance I have not yet seen
 True loveliness in its purest form
 You dance ever closer
 Rhythm, the beating of my heart
 My tempo races when you're near
 And suddenly
 Stops
 My pulse slows
 A rest between measures
 And then you pass me by, hardly a word spoken
 The song begins again, the dance continues
 We drift away; slowly you melt into the distance
 Yet I am content, just to have seen you
 For that moment in time you were mine
 Your world focused on me for those few short words
 And I am grateful just to have heard your voice

Christopher Deraney



Cara Swan



Kelly Reckert

Lure of the Lion

You called me over
 with your dark hair
 dark eyes darting
 uncertainly.
 You like me
 Knew it shouldn't be
 as my hand cupped
 your shaking thigh.

I am even less certain.

Your eyes wildly jump open
 fanning your eye lashes
 like an impulsive embrace
 finally closing in invitation when
 my fingers find the hook of your bra.

You slip one hand around my neck
 barely touching my skin.

When you relax your cold
 finger tips send a signal down my spine
 alerting my hips to make haste.
 My skin on your skin.
 A strand of your dark hair
 stuck to the sweat on my chest

You barely made a sound
 when I held tightly to your thighs
 to tell you it was almost over
 Your eyes searched for a moment
 to clench a lump of blanket
 Your lips in the shape of an O

Temptation of the Lamb

16

The pace of my heart-beats
drummed like falling acorns
smashing one by one
into the pit of my stomach.
Your eyes looked into mine
and in them, reflections of two more.
It was then that I closed
my own and ignored the question
my mind was asking.

What am I doing?

Your fingers slithered like snakes
to the inside of my thighs
searching through the dark
for a response.

I turned to face the ceiling
my hand around your neck.
A sin against my body.

My hips swiveled like an
angel in the snow.
Shaking fingers like ice seared
into the heat of your back.
The inside of my head
tuned into dead air.

I remember a line from
Adrienne Rich:
“My hands are knotted in the rope
and I cannot sound the bell”.
Your long fingers dug into my skin.
My throat struggled to say NO.

Jessica Brown



Katharine Overgaard

17 **peeling oranges**

instead of describing love,
as just that, compare it
to an orange.

someone told me this,
in passing, not to me,
specifically, but on the subway,
conversations become
one united tongue.

orange love.
i want to love.
peeling back the skin,
breaking it with a knife.
a careful stab.

just so, the skin reveals
the body, what's hiding
away from plain sight.

naked, that's the truest orange,
when you slice it in the center,
letting it divide, and as it falls

is this love? taking the first bite
and the next, and that final until
all that's left is the skin.

and as i reach my subway stop,
i think to myself, no one ever keeps
the skin of an orange.

John Dabrowski



Kristen Hugg

I watched adrift on a putrid plank
That had saved me once before
'Twas the elusive Pride of the Pacific
Constructed in '74

Her bronze bells and mighty foghorn
Commanded all to make way
And the tides knelt beside her feet
To congregate as they say:

"Tis pitiful, such punishment
Bestown upon the Ancient Blue
Our vengeance creeps forth each day
And will drown this peace askew.

Their corpulence, disgusting
As they carouse all day and night
Limiting themselves to their marvels"
Alas! A human they spied in sight!

"The humans have rejected you
From their blissful celebration
Now let us stir up trouble
For complete annihilation!"

With swift currents bombarding,
The passengers fled with haste
And in one implacable calamity,
The ship was left to waste

The bronze bells won't resound
With the ship flipped on its hull
The foghorn's left to drown
As beauty is left to null.

I sobbed adrift a putrid plank
Never abandoned from the start
"Such horrors would go unnoticed
If humanity had the heart!"

Juan Carlos Gomez

Forgive Me

it was
both our hands
creating shadows on my bedroom wall
it was
our good morning kiss on the bus
it was
our history written all over your face
the night I couldn't tell you
I kissed someone else

and when I close my eyes
I can still see your sweet smile
when you sleep

I knocked on your screen door
I tried saying I'm sorry
but the woman who is not your mother
closed the door in my face

I stand over graffiti on the sidewalk
we stood here for hours one summer
night
and fought
and I forgave you.

Cara Swan

Enough

I was wrapped in the fabric my
 grandmother embroidered when
 my mother whispered ‘Zenele’
 through clenched teeth into my ear.
 My grandmother was not there
 to hold her hand as her limbs
 trembled in pain
 Zenele, Zenele, *enough*
 my mother bellowed
 covered in sweat, her heart beat,
 a drum beat , against my ribs.

She had walked down the road
 leaving my mother to struggle
 through each contraction.
Naledi, she told my mother,
 before leaving, *I will bring*
fruit for you to bite down on,
just wait.

There was a protest around my grandmother,
 as she walked towards a display of fruit.
 Babies in slings around their mothers’ backs
 began to cry— their mothers
 dismissing the tears as hunger,
 as the once clear sky became marred
 by one large white cloud.

Dikeledi! A voice shouted through the cloud
 as an elbow slammed into my grandmother’s back
 sending the fruits in every direction.
 She fell to the ground, a cushion of
 bodies to break her fall.

When the police came they found Naledi,
 her arms clutching me tightly to her waist as
 she stared at her mother laying face down
 covered in blood and mango juice.
 Zenele, Zenele, my mother cried into my head.
Enough.

Jessica Brown

When the wind blows
on the South African coast
the town knows
the Doctor is in.
He unrolls
a strip of sterile paper
long enough
to cover the surface of
Table Mountain
while tourists gape
at what appears to be
a white tablecloth of cloud
spilling elegantly down the sides.

He plunges his hands
into the Atlantic Ocean
the salt
disinfecting every inch
of skin—
nearly the last step
of scrubbing in.
His gloves are bright
white clouds
against the otherwise
clear blue sky
as he cleans the area
with Iodine.

Scalpel please
he instructs
as a sharp breeze
makes an incision,
a retractor put in place
to keep the two
folds of skin
from closing in,
he must be quick
before an infection
spreads.

They say
the doctor comes
when the Cape needs
to be cleaned—
freed from disease and
pollution.

In other words
when the state
of Africa calls for
a medical solution.
The Republic
has been suffering
for too long.

The body politic's
medical history
stands
as followed:
a persistent separation
between the
white and
grey matter
of the brain
due to the
belief that
interracial interaction
breeds conflict.

This condition had
paralyzed
the patient
for 46 years
because
without the union
of both colors—
all the parts
of the body
had ceased to function
until finally the Doctor integrated
both halves into the
central nervous system.

And so the Doctor,
with needle in hand
sewed the wound
closed
wheeling South Africa
into the Recovery wing
of Devil's Peak—
unaware of the
complications of
re-integration.

Jessica Brown

To the Guide on Robben Island

You told me that your girlfriend was pregnant
when a man shot her through the soft skin under her chin
the blood like bouncing rain drops on top of the
beating pulse of her throat.

Your son lay asleep inside her womb
before he was unwillingly evacuated from his home
her uterus much like District Six—
the forced removal
of his still developing body.

It was with this in mind that the weapon
held firmly within your hands
moved the slightest of degrees
sending the missile in an unintended direction—
an angle that would be inevitably traced to you.

High Treason
they would say in court
betrayal and countrywide conspiracy,
in other words off to Robben Island
for your fitting in the 'Bantu' identity.

And within these walls and down the hall
from Mandela you waited for liberation,
the prospect of sons,
for the release not necessarily from your cell
but from a country where mealies and water
were once rationed according to race.

Jessica Brown



The Last Vestige

Emaciation, Screaming and gasping for breath
 A scene change portrays a million fatalities who were washed away
 Evisceration is the mainstay of the arms race that no one can win
 while raised in the shadows a child is ripped from a life he wont live

this is no fiction, this is no story
 this is the end of the old fallacy
 this is no fiction, this is no story
 this is the last vestige of history
 the last vestige - slips out of reach

Hidden in the dark, never to be found

Up and away
 a last vestige collected
 time to look back
 as the meek inherit the earth
 as the weak bury the earth

Malcolm Coates

It was a dark and stormy night and I loathed it. It made my descent onto Earth all the more dramatic. As I glided down the dark alleyway, the rain licked my midnight black cloak, while the wind whirled through my bare rib cage. Oh how I hated that hollow feeling! I shrouded my hood over my skull. Those gooey, icky drops of rain sliding down my pale, white bones reminded me of blood drooping out of flesh. I remembered when I was a fleshy. I remembered every little detail of it. That was the life I longed for—not this cursed existence. The wind quickly blew these thoughts out of the hollow of my skull, while bringing in new, repulsive ones. I thought of the downright dirty job that awaited me and groaned. I hated fleshies that hated their jobs. Boo-hoo! I would not mind going to a redundant job day after day. Fleshies had nothing on me. After all, I believe I was going through more than a mid-life crisis.

As I neared the end of my destination, I slowed my pace and halted before the apartment entrance. Reluctantly hovering before the battered door, I heard snatches of a monotonous soap opera seeping into the alley. Oh how I wished to live a redundant life! Sighing, I prepared to do my job. I was bound by contract after all. There would be no messing with the Big Guy. With one thump of my glossy, black scythe, the weak door creaked itself open as I dragged my unwilling skeleton across the threshold. My unfortunate “fleshy sense” automatically led me into a dingy, disheveled living room lit only by the blue glow of a tiny television set.

I crept up behind an old, mended couch and leaned over it. The old couple seated in it looked more than calm and serene in their sleep. I had no right to deprive them of sleep. I had spent enough sleepless nights on everyone’s behalf. An eternity of sleep deprivation stared me in the face with unsympathetic, burning eyes. Suddenly, notes of horror music bounced around the hollow of my skull. It was times like this my boss really irked me. I bet He thought I would find the unexpected music He zapped into my skull funny. He was above and beyond wrong—no joke intended. Amongst all my bones, I was dead sure I had no funny one. I drowned out the unwanted music with the rhythmic breathing of the fleshies before me. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. The job could be prolonged no further.

I cracked my knuckles and watched pieces of cartilage get lost amongst the strewn junk on the carpet. Lifting my scythe, the blade caught the blue light at just the wrong angle at just the wrong time. Damn me for neglecting my invisibility charm! My victim’s wife’s eyes suddenly flew open. The poor, old woman froze in horror before the “soul-snatching” demon poised to reap her husband. Judging from her grimace, I could tell every fiber of her being hated me for existing—for being real. I did not blame her—I hated myself. I was Death. I was destruction. I was a bad omen. I was the Grim Reaper. Two lives would have to be taken tonight. There could be no “tell-tale” hearts left behind. My boss would not be pleased with this err on my part.

Quickly, I silenced the rising shriek of horror seeping through the withered lips of the crinkled woman with one resounding thump of my scythe and mechanically, separated souls from bodies with a single swipe of my deadly weapon. I was a master scythe wielder and had learned from my ancient predecessor. Somewhere in the Golden Dining Hall above, he sat robed in white as an archangel, loved and accepted by all as he consumed the victuals of the celestial. He was no longer the Grim Reaper. He was no longer cursed. He was no longer hated. Unfortunately, he had blessed his heir with all those dreadful attributes. Oh how I

did not want to think at all.

Slowly, I floated up towards the heavens with the freshly spliced souls of the old lovers tucked within the folds of my swaying cloak. I felt them grope for each other in the billowing fabric floating away from my skeletal figure. The woman was sobbing and I shuddered as she blew her nose on a fistful of my cloak. Yet, she could do whatever she wanted with me. I owed her that much—she deserved that much. If only she could find somewhere in the chasm of her heart to forgive me. Instantly, I knew I was asking for too much. Who ever forgave a murderer? Lost in my own thoughts, I finally heard the faint exchange of whispers between my prisoners. Gently, the old man murmured, “I once promised I wouldn’t leave you till Death himself did us apart. Love, I intend to keep that promise.”

As I spiraled upwards, a clammy, wispy cloud brushed the soles of my bony feet. I wedged my scythe down into it and decided to hitch a ride to the Golden Gates. Squatting down with my hidden prey, pain coursed through my creaking joints. I was getting too old to be an assassin. Centuries did that to an old pile of bones like me. There were so many deaths and so many souls to reap, but only one Grim Reaper. I watched the remnants of fleshy life disappear through the translucent mist of my ride and tried my best to ignore the soft, caressing voices emanating out of the black folds of my cloak.

“*Till Death himself did us apart,*” I thought to myself. Why did not fleshies understand? I did not plan to do them apart. I did not even plan to end their mortal lives. Only the Big Guy could do that. Along with the birth of the fleshy, the death of the fleshy was also written into the Big Guy’s Preserved Tablet. He predestined both life and death—the Grim Reaper had nothing to do with it. My job was simply to reap the souls of those fleshies whose time on Earth was up and fare them to the Judgment Desk before the Golden Gates. Yet, the blame would always lie in Death himself. I was a murderer in the eyes of all fleshies. Who was I trying to deceive? I was a murderer in my own eyes and no amount of reasoning could change that.

Sighing, I leapt off the cloud and flew forth towards the glinting Golden Gates. The Angel of Judgment threw a malevolent smirk in my direction as I approached her desk. Her fiery red hair and fitted suit immediately drew in the attention of anyone that passed near the Golden Gates. Personally, as one acquainted with her obnoxious voice, the very sight of her made me shudder.

“Azriel, I heard your creaking joints miles from here. When was the last time you oiled yourself... Anyway, how did the assignment go?” She ruffled her wings expectantly and I could not keep my eye sockets off the pure, white feathers that covered every inch of them. The wings, the fleshy appearances, and the acceptance... everything about the other angels made envy boil the marrow in my bones. Why was I the only angel to look like a skeleton? Was it simply because I was Death? What a pun.

“Well, the thing is Willow... I had to reap another soul before its time. The old man’s wife caught me red handed... and well, the rule is to never leave one who has seen me behind.”

“Actually, Azriel, the rule is to never be seen in the first place. He’s not going to be happy with you,” she retorted in a tone spiked with anticipation.

With a cold smile and an icy voice I replied, “Thanks for the concern. I am sure I will hear more of it at dinner.”

With that I smoothed out the front of my cloak and watched the intertwined lovers roll out as one. Whimpering, they crawled away from my dark shadow towards the enticing

25 aura of light radiating from Willow.

“It has been a pleasure,” I muttered to them. Realizing I could not endure their cold, questioning stares, I slowly backed away.

Before I had even turned around, Willow’s crisp, clear voice announced, “Why hello! Welcome to the Judgment Desk! You are standing inches away from Paradise! Now, all I have to do is check your books of good and bad deeds and you’ll be on your way to either Heaven or Hell! Yes, Satan is as bad as all your legends portray—well, to fleshykind anyway—and God is as magnificent as you believe.”

“Why, aren’t you the cutest couple ever! ...And don’t mind the Grim Reaper. As Death, he’s forever brooding about something. The rest of us angels and the saved souls do our best to avoid him... God seems to like him though. I can’t imagine why, but God is God. In any case, if you do get admitted into Heaven, I promise you won’t be seeing much of the Grim Reaper.”

Oh how I loathed Willow and the rest of her cronies. Without another word, I swept off towards escape. Even though I was an angel, I did not actually live in Heaven. When I did venture into it, the only places I was really to be found were the Hall of Records

and—with much force from the Big Guy—the Golden Dining Hall. I took up residence about a mile away from the Golden Gates, which unfortunately meant frequent encounters with Willow both on duty and off. The Big Guy had wanted me to lodge with the rest of the angels, but I could not possibly live amongst such hate. Willow was the more congenial one of the lot. I guess the angels and the saved souls had never forgotten their reaping.

I touched down on the cloud that held my castle afloat and sighed with relief as I leaned on my scythe. Immediately, I gazed towards the colossal birch tree covering the left side of my dwelling. Its branches stretched out all over the cloud and over my castle—forever reaching towards the light emanating from Heaven. The Big Guy had planted it centuries and centuries ago when he had created fleshykind—and with it the first Grim Reaper. To Him, fleshykind’s main goal was to achieve salvation—so with life came Death. Drifting over to the great Tree of Life, I examined a few newly grown leaves sprouting off the long, healthy, immortal branches. Each leaf represented a fleshy’s lifespan—the Big Guy was very creative. Quickly, I scraped my bony fingers over the Preserved Tablet hovering before the Tree. A few withered, brown leaves were sprawled on top of it and I carefully read the names scrawled on each of them.

“*Oh what a joy. More souls to reap,*” I thought to myself. My job for today was done, but my “to-do” list for tomorrow was extensive. Every day was the same. Guilt. Reap. Guilt. Reap. Guilt. Reap. Guilt. Reap. Guilt. Eagerly, I stuck my scythe into the lock of the elongated, metal gateway of the castle and entered my haven away from Heaven.

God Himself had forged the Castle of Death for me. With one turn of my scythe, an innumerable amount of metal gears began grating against each other as the gateway slowly scraped open against the ground. As I lugged myself into the darkness, I found a young angel bowing at my feet—his nose nearly level with the ground. As if I really needed this... as if I was worthy enough.

Realizing I was glaring at him with utmost repulsion, the teenage angel launched himself at me while still in the bowing position and began defiling the hem of my cloak with kisses of servitude. Hmm... a slave with a slave... how ironic... how hypocritical... how truly repugnant ...

“Welcome, master! Your servant lies at your feet!”

“Nikko... How many times must I tell you? We are all but servants of God. We have no other master,” I droned for the umpteenth time since the young angel had entered the graveyard of my existence.

“But... but... God demanded that I serve *you*. Does that not put *you* in a position of power over *me* then, sir?”

God that boy really irked me at times. Teenagers of the twenty-first century were simply too much for my hollow skull to comprehend.

“Do you not understand that I *reaped* your soul merely six months ago? Does my being *Death himself* have no effect upon you? The moment you saw me was the last moment you lived! Does not the very *sight* of me make you cringe? I killed you! You were so young... I am your murderer... and here you are groveling at my feet! Please, do not burden me with any more guilt. You might as well tear me apart—limb-by-limb...”

“But you are not a murderer, sir. You are an angel with a task—a task God would trust with no one else. You are a farer of souls... not a killer. With life comes death... I do not hold you responsible for the end of my fleshy life. You simply carry out the word of fate.”

Exasperatedly, I cried, “God has been feeding you this nonsense about me hasn’t He! He is too merciful in His outlook of me. You must realize that He would never speak ill of His own beloved angels... even the Angel of Death. He is far too benevolent for that. But I see now, I cannot fight the word of God with a stubborn, young angel. How very foolish of me. Can you at the very least stand up and stop picking at the frayed edges of my cloak?”

Hurriedly straightening himself, Nikko flapped out his fresh, luscious wings and somehow managed to get the corner of one of them caught in my eye socket. Why did God have to force this young, clumsy, overenthusiastic, freshly reaped angel upon me? It was because I was a self-pitying, worthless pile of bones. Story of my “life”.

I honestly pitied Nikko for his unlucky streak with me. He had been handpicked by God Himself to join the limited group of lower-level angels. Yet, unlike the rest of them, he had been thrust upon the worst archangel to exist—*me*. I was to teach him the ways of the archangels and then God would deem him to be an archangel when He thought appropriate. The poor angel would never be truly ready with me as his mentor. The mere sight of me caused visible spasms amongst the others. Nikko would be hated by association.

“I am so very sorry, sir,” he blubbered as he yanked his wing out of my eye socket.

“It is no problem, Nikko. Relax. I am a skeleton... unusual things happen to me all the time.” I cracked my knuckles and chuckled as Nikko attentively watched a few loose pieces of cartilage float down to the black marble floors.

“You must be exhausted. I’ve drawn you a bath upstairs, sir.”

“Thank you, but you really do not need to worry so much about me, Nikko. What you do need to do is change that shirt of yours before I burn it to smithereens with my scythe.” He smiled sheepishly as I cringed at his “I’m with Death” t-shirt. Of all the entities to idolize...

“Yes, sir. Right away.” With that, he hurried off towards his quarters as I slowly ambled up the large, twisting staircase that led towards my own sanctuary. Step. Drag. Thump. Step. Drag. Thump. Step. Drag. Thump. Step. Drag. Thump. I lazily zapped my chamber door open with a simple wave of my scythe.

Slowly, I propped my scythe against the wall, sauntered towards my lion claw-foot bath, unrobed myself, and averted my eye sockets from staring down at my repulsive

27 skeletal form. I groaned with relief as I submerged myself into the colorless liquid that threatened to pour over the rim of the bath. The Big Guy had been clever enough to “accidentally” slip a few contented sighs and some essence of anti-remorse into the water tank hovering somewhere behind my castle. I had been clever enough—or ravenous enough—to pretend I did not have an inkling. That was the kind of relationship He and I had always shared—a need-to-know basis one. During my time in the bath, I felt absolutely weightless... I had no burden to swallow... I knew no guilt... I saw no lost souls... I bore no theoretical bloodstains.

Yet, Death could not stop forever... I clambered out of the illusion of my bath and stalked over to the large, circular bed in the middle of my chamber. Drying myself, I hastily slipped on the crisp, black cloak Nikko had laid atop the dark, satin sheets. It did me the courtesy of veiling the fiend within—the fiend I wished would vanish.

Fatigued, I spread myself across my bed and... did absolutely nothing. It was more there for comfort than for actual rest. Death did not sleep for anyone—even himself. It has been said that the sleep of reason breeds monsters. I wished I could find out what the sleep of a monster like me would breed. Strange thoughts bounced around the hollow of my skull and inevitably I was hit by the memory of how it had all started—how I had come to be the Angel of Death...

Like the Grim Reapers before me, I had once upon a long time ago been a fleshy. Ask not the names or faces of my mother, my father, or me for I cannot recall them no matter how much effort I expend. The Big Guy had zapped the more horrifying aspects of my fleshy life right out of my skull, but I had pathetically begged Him for the gift of memory. He was forever giving... I could recall every detail that He allowed me to recall. However, I could only imagine the more gruesome details He had kept from me...

Heat had been rising to unbearable levels in the cotton mill that ill-fated day. As a fleshy boy of merely fourteen, I had been dragged out of the orphan ward in the far corner of the mill.

“Up! Up... You filthy little wretch!” Mr. Barker had barked into my swollen ears. “To think I took you in at the request of those lazy paupers you called parents! I regret that decision each and every damned day! Now here, stuff your face with the fruit of my labor before that government official comes snooping around here again and accuses me of *maltreatment!* Of all the absurdities... Get to work you ungrateful boy!”

Stark naked with sleep in my eyes and dust clogging my lungs, I had been thrust in front of my work with ragged clothes clutched in one calloused fist and a meager piece of stale bread in the other—the fruit of Mr. Barker’s labor. I had learned not to speak... not to cry... not to whine... not to complain... not to resist. Speaking had only led to thorough beatings and beatings had only led to unbearable pain and pain had led to nothingness. I had loved life too much to be reduced to that nothingness.

Had I really been that burdensome to my parents? Had they really not been able to support me? Had a future with Mr. Barker seemed that bright to them? Had I fetched them a hefty enough sum? Whatever the answers and wherever they were, I had prayed to God that my parents were happy. They had blessed me with the gift of life after all...

Rough crumbs intact with my lips, I had slipped into my trousers and had began pulling the many levers surrounding me this way and that out of habit—preparing for the onrush of petty workers that would be pouring into the mill soon enough. All this trouble for a mere fifteen shillings... I had become very habituated to my environment during my six years in

the Barker Mill of nineteenth century Manchester, New Hampshire. That was my very **28** mistake.

I had hummed along the aisles—content with my lot in life. I probably should have paid more attention to my actions... to my surroundings. But fate will work its way—no matter what. Death cannot be outwitted or tricked... with games of chess or any other endeavors really. It just is not done. Whatever God has neatly inscribed into the Preserved Tablet will inevitably come to pass.

A single malfunctioning lever with a single loose bolt had thrust me face forward into one of the innumerable pieces of grating equipment lining the walls. My head had been irretrievably caught in the machinery. There had been no one and no way to stop the piston from crushing my head. All I could have done was wait for Death to come to me.

Those few seconds I had waited for the thing to come crashing down on my head had been oddly slow. I could remember staring at the dusty shafts of sunlight shining through the dirty windows. I could remember finding beauty in the warmth as the piston smashed my skull. I could remember regretting not getting to live life to an old, ripe age. I could remember the warm blood spurting out through random openings in my head. But I could not remember the pain... God would not let me remember it. He said there were some things He just could not let me bare. He said He loved me too much. I did not know why He cared so much for me. God was truly benevolent.

The Angel of Death had been waiting for me the moment I died. Neatly and without a word, he had slit my soul from my body with his mythic scythe. I had tried to cling to my body as he had tucked me into the folds of his gothic, black cloak. For the first time in years, I had opened my mouth... I had tried to beg for life...

And then, he had opened his.

“I am Muerto the Angel of Death, young soul. Fear me not. I am here to fare you to the Judgment Desk above. If you have lived a life without sin, then come without dread friend,” he had whispered into my ear.

“But, sir. If you would be so kind enough... May I have some more moments of life? May you give me the gift of feeling blood coursing through my veins again... of feeling my heart beat within my bare chest?”

“I am not the giver of life. Oh no, the master of us all resides in Heaven.”

He had stared at me with utmost compassion as I watched Mr. Barker examine my gory body. Mr. Barker had truly been an unrepentant man. He had one thing to say about my Death.

“What a waste of effort. Hopefully, God can get better use out of that filth.” And with that, he had simply thrown my day’s earnings upon my body—three pence. Then, Muerto had placed his bony hand on my shoulder.

“Time is up, young one.”

Just like that, I was flown up to the Judgment Desk. Just like that, Maryam—the then secretary—had admitted me to Heaven. Just like that, Muerto had become my archangel trainer. Just like that, I had become the Grim Reaper-to-be. Just like that, I had hauled in hate with my very entrance into Heaven.

I shivered out of my little reverie as I heard a faint knock on my chamber door.

“Sir? The dinner bells will be ringing soon...” Nikko hesitantly announced. The boy probably thought I was going mad—all locked up in my room and what not.

I wished with all my might I could save him from the path he had embarked upon. As

29 I grudgingly opened my door, the said bells rang every arduous thought out of my fractured skull for the moment. Right now it was just archangel and trainee headed out for a flight to Heaven. Nothing abnormal about that... Right?

Sana Riaz

Touch

she has wolf eyes, i notice
as we slink up the staircase,
our creaking knees in unison
with the crackle of rainwater.

the family portraits from the alps
wave with their ski masked faces,
i notice, when she cups my hand,
thunder crawls down my spine.

twisting the door knob, a snap.
the dark denim of her jeans, buttons
and straps, snapping. the faint pink
on the walls gazes with soft eyes, i notice

skin, beauty mark constellations
weaving together, dipping low.
the ballerina on the jewelry
box pirouettes near the windowsill

in the purple light, she pouts
at the half bent moon when she
catches my bottom lip. i notice
the paper crane on her desk, swaying

with the wind from the half open window,
the damp smoke on the crumpled clothes
travels underneath my skin, i notice,
when her head grazes my skinny chest, plummeting

faster, and rising again, the sun taps
the window. the ballerina still dancing
to her silence, the walls pinker now,
blushing, when we wake.

John Dabrowski

The Woman Awakens

The Story of a Woman Who Awakens from Mastectomy Surgery

In the dreamy, tranquil warmth of first awareness

Her fears are banished

Her mortality now distant

She is empowered by her triumph

Her heart soars on the wings of new hope

As the woman awakens.

Was it real, this silent foe

That threatened her plans and dreams?

Like a vivid child's dream

That conjures a dreaded fear of an unseen enemy

Her enemy has been overcome

As the woman awakens

She is whole and unspoiled

She struggles against the dreamy state

Anxious to return to life's journey

Yet murmuring just outside her awareness

Are haunting words that mar her victory

As the woman awakens

Voices fail to console her

As clarity returns and the dream vanishes

Her fleeting triumph a tearful memory

She realizes her loss as those closest attempt comfort

And she once again faces her mortality

As the woman awakens

Deborah Nuber

I'm told that Walt Whitman read and re-read the bible countless times throughout his childhood, and the rhythm of the King James' is certainly present in the poetry of his adulthood. My childhood is not so noble, but it bears no less an impact on my subsequent life.

I fondly recall summer nights of my childhood. Nights most children my age never saw. My mother was a night owl, and so I came to know the nights as well. Yes, we spent days at parks and went on walks. She made me sandwiches, and I swam at the local pool. But, simply put, that wasn't what defined our relationship. When the rest of the family went to sleep is when my mother and I were in our element. I would sneak downstairs after having been put to bed and cuddle my way on to the couch, guided only by the glow of the television and my mother's cigarette, all the while ignoring her half hearted protests concerning how late it was as she handed me a buttered cracker. Our first show was *Cheers*. I don't remember a single episode plot, but I also can't help but get sentimental each time someone references it. Concerning when the whole ritual began, I can't say, because it started happening so young. The only reference point I have is that I am told my first word was "*Norm*". I can't say for sure, but I'm pretty sure my father half resents it to this day.

As I got older and *Cheers* reruns became less and less appealing, a cultural phenomenon took place; which- for better or worse; I am eternally indebted to for my personal development, court room television. My mother and I would watch case after case and argue the legitimacy of each side until sunrise. As time went on I got to know the different personalities of my favorite courtroom stars. I would cringe as a ditzy girl avoided eye contact with Judge Judy or a dead beat dad made excuses in front of Judge Mathis. By the time I was twelve years old I knew what set off each robed role model better than they knew themselves.

Through high school I would defend my court room television as fervently as most pubescent boys defend the legitimacy of pro wrestling. Mimicking the oral prowess of Harvey Levin, I acknowledged that it wasn't a real court proceeding but rather a process of arbitration. I even managed to bluff an understanding of what arbitration was when necessary. Time went on and the defense of my obsession became more practiced and skillful.

In my freshman year of college I not only continued my routine of late night calorie and cable consumption, but also managed to find a gathering of fellow late night zombies to binge along side. Naturally, our initial bonds derived from late night sub social existence were also what lead to near fisticuffs on a nightly basis. None of us who stayed up late and watched television had any respect for what the others considered legitimate late night entertainment. Even the shows we all loved no one could agree about. One of my friends would adore *Blanch* while the other fancied *Rose*. I personally could care less for the *Golden Girls*, but if I were to engage in such degrading banter I would point out that *Sophia* was clearly the hunched backbone of the group, outranking the other three with seniority, wit, and ability to eat cheese cake.

Night after night we would get together in one room or another and watch the television programming of the majority if not the most persistent minority. Everyone hated the kid who wanted to watch *Happy Days* or *Night Court*, but at least someone had a problem with everyone.

A common favorite among late night TV watchers was, is, and shows no signs of ceasing to be *COPS*. It's filmed on location with the men and women of law enforcement. It is the original reality television show. It aired Saturday March 11, 1989 and has continued

through seasons like a meth addict through bullet wounds. A perennial power house-which **32** too frequently happened to be on at the same time as my favorite court room television.

Judge Judy or Mathis, hell I would settle for the sassy less orthodox Marilyn Milian- Anything besides the monotony of *COPS*. A black guy has drugs, a white guy with a mullet hits his girlfriend, and one or both of them is shirtless- I get it. My arguments would mimick the aforementioned or degrade to accusations of *COPS* being nothing more than poop on film depending on the flavor of the smoke in the room.

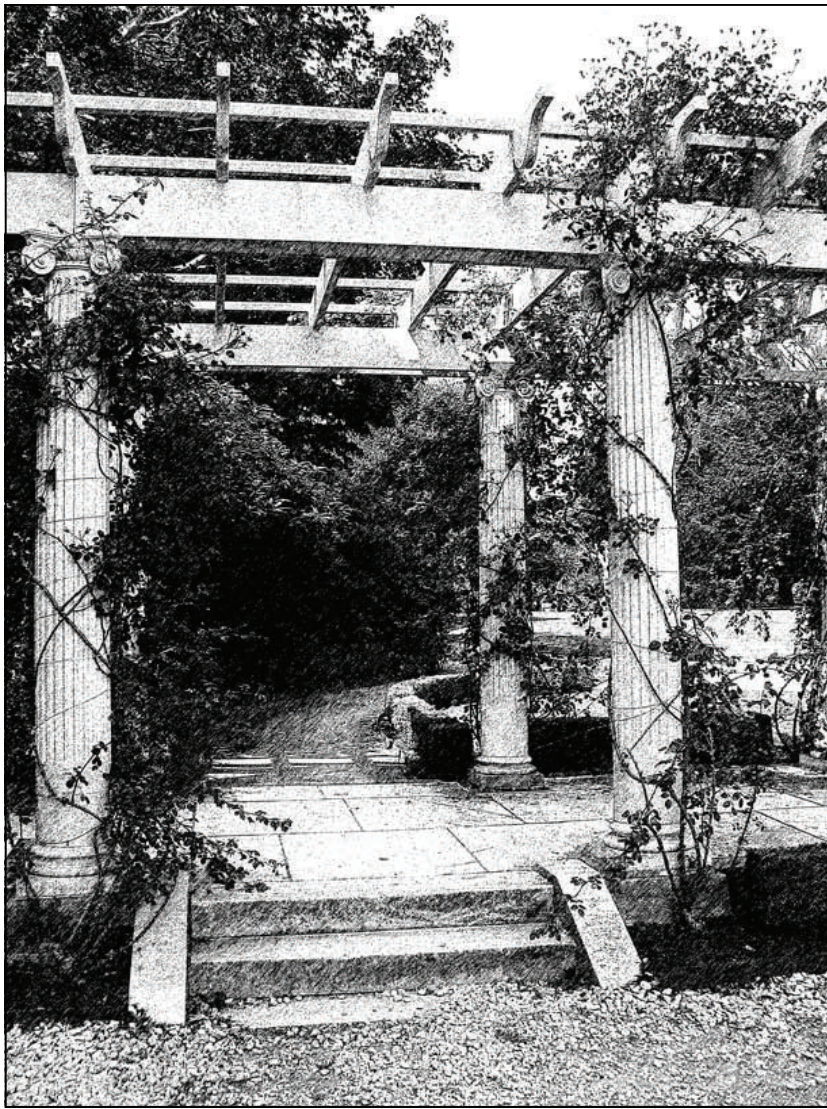
I considered the creators of *COPS* to be doing a disservice to society by misrepresenting stereotypes on television. On one night such as those described above arguing a point much like those also described above, someone pointed out that court television was no more than an extension of law enforcement television and we couldn't have one without the other. Mid tirade as I ripped at my adversary for not realizing that none of the television courtrooms could try criminal proceedings I began to draw connections between the two types of programming which turned my world upside down. *COPS* had portrayed stereotypes of different races within the lower classes for years, but courtroom television had been doing the same thing to the middle class nearly as long.

Judy Sheindlin wasn't just a hard headed woman. She was the Jewish grandmother who disliked rudeness and referenced her own grandmother frequently. She was the hardest on dumb white girls in their teens and twenties, or it at least seemed that way since there were so many in her courtroom. Judge Mathis wasn't just an easy going Judge, he was the affluent African American man who had overcome the diversity of gangs and drugs in Detroit, pulling himself up by his own bootstraps, and bearing a striking resemblance to a watered down friendly version of Malcolm X. I searched for the exception to my television idols as I recalled one of the rappers Judge Mathis let perform during a hearing, but there wasn't one. Mills Lane was just another conservative white male from Georgia who had been in the marines and ushered out justice wrapped in southern confidence. I realized Judge Milian with her Latin fire, spoke in Spanglish to her disproportionate number of Hispanic litigants. It was all a sham.

I had accepted the gentrification of middle class television justice as ignorantly as hipsters who visit Harlem- and I fucking hate hipsters.

Walt Whitman ended up being a deist, rejecting the absolute singularity of the religion which first thrusts the bible under his nose, and I ended up losing faith in the great equality of courtroom television. I still watch the *People's Court* or any of my other favorites from time to time, much the same way I'm sure Mr. Whitman read over the bible in his later years. He eventually even wrote his own bible, so perhaps not is all lost. Perhaps I can make my own reality television. My *Television of Myself*.

Jim Felix



Kristen Hugg



Sara Gendel

Unthwarted by Leisure

Last eve' I came upon my Walk
 Which said to me in baneful talk,
 "Do carry on,
 The day has gone
 And do not sit to write and squawk!"

I stood up in exasperation,
 Heeding to the consultation.
 Perchance I see,
 Oh could it be?
 My one and only Adoration!

"My Love, my Dear, why do you linger?"
 Said my Darling unto me,
 "You stay too long
 In thought and song
 And do not work, nor lift a finger!"

"This poem's my work!" I quick defended,
 "All these Abstracts I've befriended.
 It takes a long time
 To convince them to rhyme,
 And my story's not half-way ended!"

Then suddenly Leisure showed up on the scene.
 "Why do you say this? Why are you mean?
 Can't you see that she works hard most every day?
 Those Words and those Meters get into the way!"
 He said this to shield me from Love's too-harsh glances.
 With Tweedle and Dum
 And a bottle of rum
 He sat down to enjoy my advances.

Katelyn Noland

Ripples of Her Tears

As the piercing whistle sounds its last, a conductor signals near
Yet, she stands, adorned with crimson blossoms she holds so dear
Church bells now chime their endless tones of grave depart
With echoes of his voice still lingering, striking her heart

She carves a name upon the rime of the bitter air
Such trance, such grief, as her trembling foot hits the first stair
If only she could kiss those cheeks once more, blessed with perfection
Nothing but a whisper now on a train without direction

Such is the black veil that mocks those tear-stained eyes
Would this garment, perched with gloom, lead to her demise?
Alas! The lively throb arrives to its sure delay
Even the rain hums its lullaby on this forsaken day

Ripples of her tears dance tenderly upon the shore
Speaking a tale of misery, knowing she can take no more
She spreads his ashes beneath the coves, feeding that gaping sea
Only to think for a moment, where will my heart now be?

Nicole Kuruszko

On The Death of Moths

It was useless to try to do anything. One could only watch the extraordinary efforts made by those tiny legs against an oncoming doom which could, had it chosen, have submerged an entire city, not merely a city, but masses of human beings; nothing, I knew had any chance against death. – Virginia Woolf

I raise the body of a moth
In my palms,

and hold it out under the light like an offering,
his lashes peeled back above his eyes,
drops of hard onyx that speak of nothing.
Wings encircle like a funeral shroud,
a mummy within its sarcophagus.

There was no flame that engulfed him,
The spine, the raised ears.
There was no pool of wax that melted
and hardened around appendages.

This death was not so momentous,
It was quiet as the dusty corner
where the fluttering soul was expelled so willingly.
There was no dance, no try for what was beyond the window screen.

Upon the glass of the window
Appears specks of white,
Arms and legs like leaf veins,
the sound of rustling paper.

Another moth emerges,
Then more,
Through a tear in the screen,
there is one relentless wing, then the other.

I feel them move up to the ceiling lamp
past my cupped hands
where their defeated brother lies.
I watch the electricity reflect
across the swerving backs.
They are helpless like he was;
this is the natural progression of things,
their black eyes for the last time, painted in light.

Jaya Misra

EDITOR'S NOTE

As I look through the pages of *Insanity's Horse*, I can't help but think about how over the past four years it has expanded and grown so much. The size and shape has changed, student artwork has begun to appear on the cover, and the magazine has almost doubled in length. While the submissions have remained in the realm of the arts, we have begun to see more short stories, science-fiction pieces, as well as more paintings and drawings.

But I think most importantly, we have worked at gathering students from all aspects of Drew's writing community together, including students from the Graduate School as well. If you flip through these pages, you can see some of their works interspersed with those of the undergraduate school. They add new perspective and experience and represent who we are as a writing community more fully than before.

None of these changes have happened overnight, and certainly not all during this current issue. It has been a process, starting with previous staffs and contributors. For their desire to see change and for opening the doors to further growth, these are the people who should be thanked first and foremost. Thanks to all who have contributed and helped this issue become the fantastic work that it is. It is your submissions that make the magazine what is; we are nothing without your amazing talents. And thank you so much to the staff, for your hard work, dedication, and your incredible creativity.

If you get a chance, go to the library, or perhaps through your own collection of past issues, and check out the progression for yourself. I hope that in a few years you will continue to see great change and growth, even maybe a lengthy magazine. As the creative arts expand on campus, and the community grows closer and more involved, who knows where *Insanity's Horse* will go?

Samantha Pritchard





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