

Melanie Bowman BMC '12

Dove Tree

I.

A couple years ago
I wanted to get into
bonsai. (I was told it's pronounced
bone-sigh, if you want to say it right,
not bon's eye, the way
most people say it.
As if cultivating a miniature tree
were on par with stuffing your mouth
full of French pastries.)

The Dove Tree provides.
But I have not seen it in the rain,
when the bark gets black and dark
and the leaves look new again.
That contrast is bonsai.

Sometimes now
I see full-size trees as
enormous miniatures.
We look at tiny things different.
It's all delicate construction and balance.
Like when I sketch a study of your knuckle
before I draw your whole hand.
There's just
more

II.

I like the trees at home
better than the ones here.
I like the auburn fibers that
collected under my fingernails
when I picked the bark off the redwoods
at Girl Scout camp.

I like the twisty knots
and blighted leaves of the
California Ridge Oaks.
And the smell of breezy dead grass.
That's the golden part of Golden State.

I like the precariousness of
Monterey Cypress at Half Moon Bay.
All windswept and weather-beaten,
off-balance, but with strong direction.

My trees are dependable,
whereas these are flighty.
Bones and morbid one week
showy and flirtatious the next.
What are they covering up?
There's something to be said
for excitement, but I just
can't take this tumult.

III.

The Dove tree provides.
In December, when my
glassy decorations are in the attic
all wrapped up in newspaper,
she ornaments herself with
little dried-up pear nuts.
Like those display trees
in fancy department stores, whose
iron branches, leafless, support
a hundred filigree bulbs.

She provides me with
tissues in the springtime,
apologies for hay fever.
Replacements for
the shriveled winter decorations
are hidden beneath snowy kerchiefs,
a magic trick to hold my attention
when I feel claustrophobic and restive,
itchy

Nicole Lantz '12

Playing Possum

Your color, as gray as the sky who frames you
Your body, as limp as the flower in a drought
Your edge, as uninviting as the dog's snarl

Yet the quick fading winter
Forces your green blush
Betraying your secret

You had me fooled

On your shoulders
Tattered fabric in wind
I don't think you liked my dress

A Southern Castigation

The war your
mother fought
was hardly civil

She would not
appreciate your
lazy surrender
of her glory

For her friends
lost limbs and
soldiered on

Mason asks for
pride as Dixon
begs for posture

Nora Landis-Shack '13

1. FOREVER

I sit under this tree that is my tree for exactly one hour
in every hour there is an increase of something
the slowness of breathing
the sweetness at the end of a cinnamon latte
an increase in the number of blossoms on this cherry tree
every hour blooms more life more warmth more sun
this is my cherry blossom hour
I will sit here and I will begin
again and again each minute
so the hour never ends.

2. CHOCOLATE

Sweet bite-by-bite melts slowly, dragging through the seconds.
In the tip of my tongue I lose the sweetness of flower petals
forget the delicacy of magnolias in my nose
miss the crispness of the grass and the air whispering at the back of my neck.
It is replaced by soft, silky laziness coating my teeth.

I remember eating chocolate under scrub brush by the sea
hidden by the grey wet clouds that rubbed against the beach.
The air was always salty there, and always holding back
only to rush rush up again in swells hurling stinging sand.
I dropped bits of gold foil into the water around my toes.
and watched it wave out to the end of a world.

Here the only rush around me
is of April's breezes through cherry blossoms.
There is nothing to hold back but heavy sweetness
that sits like a stone in my belly and pushes me down into these roots.

Olivia Swomley '12

The Climbing Tree

I don't know how old you are,
but you are a very confused tree.
Sometimes I'd like to
smack you with my fists--
make up your mind!
You have too many trunks
in too many directions,
splayed and reaching like fingers.

The children swarm to climb
the knuckled boughs and palm
the smooth skin of your limbs,
twirling around your digits
and tracing your life lines
down to your crawling roots
that lay moored above ground
like sinuous whales.

When I first met you it was midnight.
It was autumn.
It was sticky sweet and the air was young.
You had shed your fruit,
dozens of brains the size of bowling balls.
We gathered them in the skirts of our dresses,
and hurled them against the statue--
such satisfying thwacks.
Twice as many points
to hit the bulbous nose
and let the cerebral juices ooze
across the stone faces.
It was a night of sober drunkenness
and intoxicating air.

I am younger each time I meet you.
I find handholds in your rougher trunks
and curve my spine to your bark
to watch the ivy clinging to your bough like barnacles.

Now it's spring.
The simpering cherries have flowered.
The maple by my stoop
has three green tissue leaves.

You looked dead until last week,
so lazy in your awakening.
Yawning, your limbs sprawled across the earth,
your tender leaves finally fizzing out.

Your tree skin swirls
like river currents,
the trunks spiraling
down to meet the earth,
with branches etched
like the roots
below that I imagine
and so vast
you are
how old
I don't know.

Sophie Taylor '10

Cezanne-Katsura

Naked, you paint thick brown lines
up from the ground,
your brush dry
and smelling like cold mud,
pieces of canvass showing through
announcing brown and gold,
and above your bristles a dry grin.

I sit in Jake's room with a glass of gin
and a two-dollar paintbrush—
lines swim up the page
looking for your bark
and another brush cuts sky into
pinks and blues instead of ash
and the paper
too thin to hold you, curls.
This tree smells like acrylic and smoke and reheated air.

on the protractor and ride it round and round
like the carousel on Coney Island.
It was something for the big kids-
like crushed up Levis and scribbled love notes-
(quite honestly, I had no clue what it really was)
But I was a seven year old going on thirty-six
And I was stuck in a rut
Somewhere between Macdougall and Bowery
Shiny black dress, sparkling stilettos, goosebumps,
Taking long draws from a salty cigarette.
Here in limbo I waited-
the paint tasted like stale plastic,
the Clorox they sprayed the desks with made me high at naptime,
Kasey Crozlach had lice,
and I was tired of finding bite marks on my pencil.

3.
for my twenty-third birthday, he bought me pokemon cards.
did we ever really know each other?
Sure, I can recall every stroke his paintbrush ever made
On light woven canvas,
But he has no clue what tv show I watched
on that thick day in july
when steam hung from heaven over the valley
and the dust was silent.
That guy was over again (the one with the broad black
beard and the record collection and the tangled hair)
You would get lost with him,
The swirling, the spinning of time
Lost time, cyclic rhythm.
There were no trees in the desert.

4.
After a disappearance, mother would bake in the kitchen as I do now,
But my kitchen is a sticky apartment in the middle of everything and I am only a pro
at easy mac.
Her's is lost inside the woods- sage, mist,
Rock, pine- baked into her sweet potato casserole.
I miss the firmness of her body,
Skin and bones she is still and was
She was stronger than her grip
On the long wooden spoon,
Stirring and sloshing batter-
Eggs and flour, tears and grease, laughter and lightning bugs, water cooler
conversations with the neighbors.

5.

Five hundred thousand times I have kissed you
And I have memorized this room like the
strawberry ice cream I licked off of my fingers on that carousel
We rotate beneath the sheets and I find you,
At least we are together-
You in my skin, I in your smell of pine.
I like doing laundry with you,
Lugging our wrinkly clothes to the Laundromat
Where we sit hand in hand
Butts sore on bright red plastic
Watching the soap flood the mélange of colors,
Tumbling and twirling.

6.

Here I am and time is frozen here.
I stretch my hands around this bark
And wait for something stable,
You are rugged and scratchy
Against my face
But at least you are deeply rooted
Please don't fall on me
Help me stand up.

Tess Carroll '13

The Bad Mother

Yesterday I was lonely
I befriended a sweetgum tree
I will be kind to you, she murmured,
voice thin and hoarse
as dried earthworms
Her limbs stuck out like tongues
She was drunk on pondwater

I was lonely
I sat beneath my friend
the sweetgum tree
She was sleeping

and throbbing
and speaking in her sleep
I love you, she whispered
Please I need a daughter
that the pond won't claim, you see
I must pay a price for my slumber
Her fingers were dripping
children
round, wooden, and voiceless
The pond was thick with their infant marrow

I was lonely
I said *yes*,
of course
I felt her roots curl
and crack
Mud water welled between my toes

Night fell
I was lonely
I slept beneath my mother, yes
at least I tried to sleep
The pond rippled with grins
of bending trees
and she drank,
drank up her diluted children
gulped them down so hastily
she hollowed
into a wooden throat
The forest sang and stumbled
I clung to roots until my hands
sickened and throbbed

When morning came I left
I was lonely
I climbed
up the shadow of a nearby elm tree,
walked to the tips of finger-thin limbs
and then plummeted
into skies thick with earthworms

Mother wept
tears that tasted of orphans
The shadow of her outstretched hand
rotted blackly underwater
I went home

Some nights I fall asleep
to the sound of trees
swallowing
Sometimes I awaken
to the sound of rain
and earthworms fleeing the mud
and mother drinking it up
and the forest laughing at me,
a ruckus laugh
but lonely