

## **Ode to My Grandma**

I changed a few lines throughout the editing of this piece to incorporate well-placed enjambment and repetition as well as the emotion portrayed by sound that already existed. For instance, in my first version of “Ode to My Grandma,” I wrote the line “Not born of your body, you held me like I was” to represent the maternal connection I feel to my grandma. However, to add literary technique, enjambment, and represent both that relationship and introduce my grandma’s character, I altered this line to “Not born of your body, you held me like I was/ your blessing.” This adds multiple layers of meaning. In that first stanza, I wanted to call my grandma “magic” since I frequently thought of her in this light when I was very young, and this first stanza introduces the reader to the child’s point of view referenced in the second stanza. However, I wanted to emphasize that I still consider her magic twenty-one years later. So, every fifth line of each stanza, I repeat the first words: “you: magic” to reiterate this emotion and consistent perception of my grandmother to act as a constant reference point as I take the reader throughout my life and my grandmother’s aging process.

## **Pearls Absolved**

In editing “Pearls Absolved,” I wanted to keep the same wording that the pathway required. Following the pathway, I chose a poem from the anthology, *Pirate’s Admonition*,” and used the first letter of each word from that poem and kept the same number of words per line as well. With these restrictions, I came up with some unique content as I had to be very concise and rely on strategically placed punctuation to make my poem sensible syntactically and grammatically. However, upon revision, I chose to utilize white space and enjambment to convey the setting’s atmosphere, represent physical imagery with letter spacing, and the conversation between the girl and the boy. For instance, “juxtapose” has its own line to represent the act of juxtaposition. I made some words and letters superscripts throughout to visually show physical

locations: for example, “beneath” is beneath the superscripted “abode,” and alternating letters in “strewn” are superscripted to represent pearls strewn across the floor. I skipped a line after “he’ll spin tales” to represent that she isn’t listening to what he’s saying and after “stunning brightness” to represent the physical whiteness that accompanies brightness and the whiteness of the pearls. Using enjambment, I separated “words” and “tenure” to show that she believes his words have no significance—they have no tenure. I also used enjambment to stack “icicles” upon “empty offices” to form a visual that the icicles are atop the offices. I gave “skin, loving” its own line to convey that physical intimacy is the thought reining in the boy’s mind. Lastly, I ended a line with “Kissing never” since, as nothing follows “kissing” until the next line, it is emphasized that physical intimacy is not the girl’s goal as if she is saying that kissing can never progress anything.

### **Whole Milk**

Looking back at this poem in revision, I wanted to make it flow more like a story—I hinted at scenery in the first draft by mentioning towering maples, fall drizzle, and an alienating house. However, I wanted to further illustrate these scenes in my final draft by focusing on word choice. For instance, I changed “maples towering above” to “maples grasp at skylines” to emphasize not just a scenic description but add foreshadowing of the anxious internal dialogue to come and add an undercurrent of tension with the word “grasp”. To emphasize the luxurious fall comforts the poem’s subject is missing out on, I changed “red explosions, foliage” to “red nestles in the foliage”—her physical environment is not tumultuous yet as it is in the last stanza, so I sought to juxtapose her nervous internal dialogue with the beauty and softness of her environment. The second stanza witnessed revised use of white space to emphasize the metaphorical meaning of “water” as well as its physical emptiness. For instance, I altered

“sipping water/ Nothing unordinary, nothing opaque to drown in” to keep the same wording but add extra white space around the first ‘nothing’ and give the second ‘nothing’ a line of its own. This engages the reader visually and forces the connection between the empty connotation of ‘water’ and the girl’s own internal dialogue and her denial of self-comfort. I also removed some lines to illustrate the abruptness of her internal dialogue and her war within herself; I took out “YOU COULD BE DRINKING WHOLE MILK IF YOU WANTED TO!”/Mental shouting to enjoy life but she” to simply “Whole milk threatens to disrupt her internal chaos” and revised the following statements to make them imperative to convey the urgency with which she considers and denies herself comfort—I wanted to take the reader inside her head. Finally, I changed “She welcomes midnight with open arms” to something less cliché and more foreshadowing and representative of her internal dialogue: “Prior to pushing past it, she hugged midnight to her side”.

### **Damnation: A Plantation**

I was hesitant to include my ghazal in this final portfolio as I thought it was one of my weakest works; initially, I had a hard time maintaining the rhyme scheme without using similar sentence structure throughout, and I didn’t feel the poem truly told a story. So, working within the ghazal form, I drastically changed the whole poem. I kept the last word of each line ‘tree’ but changed the refrain from ‘a tree’ to ‘the tree,’ altering the rhyme scheme with each line. With this minor change, my sentence structure and rhyming possibilities were broader. I played with sound in my revision of my ghazal: repetition of the ‘n’ sound in “gnarled knowledge endures” represents the idea of the girl coveting the tree ‘anew’ as she discovers it and “Worship me and waltz with your wildest wishes” represents a stuttering of speech as the tree speaks to the girl who wants the tree’s power but is uncertain how to attain it—it is the tree of knowledge as

referenced in the Bible and she wants it. Further on, sound connotes the tree's trickery in "Sacrifice sanctity to satisfy my savory sweet, sweet" as the repetition of the 's' sound is meant to represent the slithering snake from the Garden of Eden that tempted Eve as well. I wanted this revision to tell a story, so I formulated a conversation between the girl and the tree—we see her internal dialogue formatted in a barbaric speech pattern and we hear the tree's promises to the girl if she obeys. We see her journey through her first meeting with the tree and the eternal damnation that follows the tree's trickery. To emphasize how Eve perceives the tree throughout the poem, I capitalize "Tree" when she reveres and covets it and leave "tree" lowercase at the end as she ultimately realizes the tree's trickery and her mistake. Similarly, where any reference to God would typically be capitalized, I made "higher one" lowercase to symbolize Eve's placement of the Tree over her creator.

#### **Four Works that Helped Me Write Better**

The article "6 Tips for Writing an Ode" in the course's content folder helped me choose a subject for my ode. Initially, I was going to write about my grandpa but, when I saw the article's advice to 'get emotional,' I chose to write about my grandma instead as our relationship has changed dramatically over the years—there was once a surplus of negative emotions surrounding my grandma and I's relationship, but I wanted to focus on the new positivity with which I perceive our relationship. By allowing myself to 'get emotional' as the article suggested, I was able to incorporate this positive emotion as if it had always existed in the relationship by looking at events from my childhood and my grandmother as I now see her. So, the article with suggestions of odes' subjects inspired me to choose a subject I may have otherwise not—and I think the resulting work turned out beautifully.

Before reading Hayes' "The Golden Shovel" referenced in Chapter 3 on sound and rhythm, I had always thought incorporating sound to represent emotion or action within poetry was difficult and daunting. However, when I read Roney's conclusion about the "slow 'ooh' sounds [reflecting] the languid evening activity [in 'The Golden Shovel']" (Roney 44), I was inspired to have sound in "Ode to My Grandma" do the same: convey physical atmosphere, action, and emotion. For instance, I used repetitive "ooo" sounds to convey the cooing or crooning of an adult comforting a small child and repetitive short "a" sounds to personify 'adversity' and display its contrary, hard nature. The way sound was used in "The Golden Shovel" inspired me to make abstract concepts concrete and almost tangible for my reader.

Isabo's ghazal inspired me to revise my own. For instance, Isabo used punctuation before her refrain, 'lies,' to approach it using different parts of speech. Her emotion is also clear in the ghazal—whether it be anger, sadness, or regret. Isabo's poetry always tells a story even if it focuses on abstract concepts; she makes the abstract concrete, and this is something I wanted to incorporate within my own ghazal. With my first version of my ghazal, I focused on the idea of a thief stealing wisdom and happiness from an ancient tree that must have a surplus of both of those coveted feelings. Throughout the poem, I convey a sense of urgency from a barbarian's point of view. However, in revision, I wanted to focus on sound as I did in "Ode to my Grandma," express the barbarian more fully and accurately, and use my previous iteration of a wise tree to twist it into an almost-Biblical tree of knowledge.

Komunyakaa's "Salt" also inspired the frequent alliteration in "Damnation: A Plantation." I found it a challenge to write alliteration representative of action as Komunyakaa did. For instance, Roney remarks that the alliteration in "Salt" conveys past events referenced in the poem as well as the author's feelings towards these events. In my ghazal, I had repetitive "s"

sounds represent the slithering of the snake in the Garden of Eden and imply the tree's trickery. I also used repetitive "w" sounds to simultaneously represent the action of stuttering and uncertainty as Eve contemplates partaking in the tree's knowledge. "Salt" taught me that figurative language, particularly alliteration, can do more than just repeat a certain sound for auditory engagement but represent concrete scenes and action and incorporate symbolic metaphor as well.

### **The Application of Creative Writing**

By looking at subjects in a different light than I would have considered previously (a tree as coveted object, my grandma from a strictly positive viewpoint), I have been inspired to find poetry in unlikely sources. As I compose future poetry, I am confident that any seemingly mundane object or experience can be written in to a poem. I can find poetry in anything if I simply look for it. I want to apply this perception to everyday life as well and try to find the poetic and beautiful within the monotony and routine.

Similarly, I used to write poetry in what I thought was considered 'free verse'—I often included end rhymes but no conventional forms as I thought this was the easiest way to invoke creativity within my writing. However, I am now aware that form is not restrictive at all and is actually a catalyst to the creativity I so desire. For instance, some of my most creative content came from completing a pathway that required me to keep another author's first letters of every word and number of words per line; I also got to play with syntax and used a wider variety of words when creating the rhymes and refrain in my ghazal. Going forward, I now know that poetic forms are not limiting. Form is empowering, and I am eager to work within it to more adequately express my artistic ability.

Lastly, I have been inspired to always tell a story with my work. Previously, I have always focused on expressing abstract concepts, primarily emotion, but I have seldom tried to make these emotions concrete or implement characters in poetry to couple with and convey that emotion—in short, I feel I am more experienced with incorporating imagery and atmosphere within my poetry. If abstract concepts are not accessible and relatable to the reader, I want my audience to be able to engage with the story I tell through my poems. It is my job as a poet to create something worthy of reading, and now I know multiple ways to ensure the audience I so seek.

## Ode to My Gramma

Gramma, it is you who is my mother.  
Not born of your body, you held me like I **was**  
**Your blessing.** Your grace steeped with age,  
Silverskin brewed to strength, so much that I rename  
**You: magic.**

Patience: Summer, hunger loomed. “Soon. Food’s soon,” you crooned. Forward. Choose food.  
Compassion: Invitations shared, but, birthday bare, you fashion a passionate distraction.  
Encouragement: “You’re a wordsmith!” You insist. Your crystal ball exists to give me lists of  
Declaration: “You’ll change the world someday,” you say.  
If I do, it’s an inherited trait as you have changed my world too.

Gramma, it is you who is my playmate.  
Games of cadences from the age when I was craving sentences  
And words that rhyme like ‘ashore’ and ‘implore’—  
I implored you for more. And, as before, you always gave more.  
**You: magic** when a cardboard box stood in for a friend,  
Windows etched, we made a submarine and sailed from here to Pluto and  
In between.  
Summer’s sweaty sunshine sought us, so you brought the sprinkler out.  
My hair, glinting golden in the light, warmed yours of weary grey—  
Or painted it more grey; it depended on the day. Oh, but your love didn’t.

Gramma, it is you who is my teacher.  
As your bones groan and step saunters, I guide you.  
Carry me, you vied to. Lean on me, you’re entitled to.  
As your skin shivers and joints stiffen, I make your bed.  
Tuck me in, you tried to. I squirmed, you’re still. Time rearranges roles it’s tied to.  
**You: magic** for you’ve made what disappears from  
You reappear in me.  
I, your spine when tides arise, shine light for you as you  
Have given so much  
That I may receive. Thank you.

Gramma, it is you who is my inspiration.  
Your childhood that was a mouthful of metal  
Cradled a blessing. Because you came from it.  
And you are so much more than you think you are:  
**You: magic.**  
Shivering shyness shares itself and you shift your shortcomings aside: share light.  
Raps adversity, tatty in its rags—acid acid and you add: it grasps path  
To run past you. Need creeps in, breeds dreary eyes and you breathe: flee greed.  
Loneliness wallows, choking hope to its hollow. Yet, you swallow.  
For you know what follows: me. And I am here for each of your tomorrows.



Pearls Absolved (FINAL DRAFT):

Strands dazzle and

juxtapose

crude laughs—

happenstance sins. ‘To play’ stitches an abode beneath  
her thin wig: Crooning, he asks, “Substance? So yesterday.

Speak dimly, not distantly—pennies add sway.”

But, against guise, she ignores numb leers, molten pennies  
yielding to silver, opal, amethyst—no numb words

have

tenure to choose.

Betting indigo sights, he’ll spin tales:

Yawns, implements hurried statues—

“Yesteryear, tall icicles topped

empty offices,

heralding softer seasons.

Honey, tell yourself canons: unjaded little tales waning

skin, loving

leisure.

Imagine coveted fools

gently kissing...”

Throaty words: “Kissing never

tells

necessities. Speaking

as I talk doth relation-ships’ long and windward vow.”

Stunning brightness

—these pearls

will fade:

Strands

**S t r e w**, odd theories: “Subject Exonerated Wielding Stashed Blade”.

Pearls Absolved (FIRST DRAFT):

Strands dazzle and juxtapose crude laughs—

happenstance sins. ‘To play’ stitches and abode beneath

her thin wig: Crooning, he asks, “Substance? So yesterday.

Speak dimly, not distantly—pennies add sway.”

But, against guise, she ignores numb leers, molten pennies

yielding to silver, opal, amethyst—no numb words have tenure to choose.

Betting indigo sights, he’ll spin tales: Yawns, implements hurried statues—

“Yesteryear, tall icicles topped empty offices, heralding softer seasons.

Honey, tell yourself canons: unjaded little tales waning

skin, loving leisure. Imagine coveted fools gently kissing...”

Throaty words: “Kissing never tells necessities. Speaking

as I talk doth relation-ships’ long and windward vow.”

Stunning brightness—these pearls will fade:

Strands strewn, odd theories: “Subject Exonerated Wielding Stashed Blade”.

Whole Milk (FINAL DRAFT):

Maples grasp at skylines, towering yet her neck  
Strains from glancing  
down  
Red nestles in the foliage: a kaleidoscope—  
A luxury unnoticed, unexplored:  
You could be drinking whole milk if you wanted to.

But her tradition is sipping

Water: nothing  
unordinary,

nothing

opaque to drown in

Like the fall drizzle—harmless, transparent.  
It is a tradition to remain  
The only opaque thing in a place—  
Be a wall of scratchy burlap against the world.  
Whole milk threatens to disrupt her internal chaos:

See the red among the orange.

No. Only glance upon what's given—

Ignore the urge to try it out.

You cannot drown the drizzle with your ocean.

Prior to pushing past it, she hugged midnight to her side:

Solitary, cloudless, crisp

The house is not her home

The door creaks, the scary man enters, she gulps

“Attitude is the difference between an ordeal and an adventure,” he says

As she hears the clank of his belt buckle

And slips beneath the current of the whole milk—time to disappear now.

Damnation: A Plantation (FINAL DRAFT):

Solid, gnarled knowledge endures: The Tree.  
She grovels at His Majesty, sees Tree.

Thinks: *Forget 'we,' humanity, this is a 'me' tree.*

“Knowledge looms and leaps to thee,” decrees Tree.

“Worship me, then waltz with your wildest wishes,” guarantees Tree.

“Sacrifice sanctity to satisfy my savory sweet, sweet,” breathes Tree.

Eve mused, “True knowledge is never free, Tree.”

“With Your knowledge, from the higher one I’ll flee, Tree.”

Yet Eve chose the wrong key: Tree.

An endless cycle. She ate. She knew only one eternal trickery: tree.

Damnation: A Plantation (FIRST DRAFT):

Can one carve happiness from a tree?

A “trunk tall as time with no sway” tree?

With wood damp from endless eons,

A “limbs that bulge but don’t break” tree.

Can happiness be stolen from something old and wise?

Can you sneak like a hunter upon this prey tree?

And rip the light out from its fortress limbs,

To fill the lantern’s soulless light with a betrayed tree?

Will she beg the earth to give

Its past life from the very dirt that makes trees?