

## Juliet Bel, Grade 12

Harare 2002

(After "Elephants" by Carol Ann Duffy)

When I was a kid  
I imagined that when I was born  
I was not delivered by a stork  
but by the trunk of an elephant.

I could all but feel the rough skin  
wrapped so gently around me,  
the soft swaying of a trunk,  
the thuds of giant feet on the Zimbabwe plains.

I imagined they found me  
in a tree by where they would bathe,  
their skin still slick with the water  
walking over fences and fields.

I used to imagine that when they found  
someone they trusted  
to take their strange charge,  
they gave me an elephant's funeral.

I imagined they covered me  
in a loving tomb  
of palm fronds and foliage,  
a baby no longer theirs.

## Emma Cardillo, Grade 10

### Sakura

Change glides in,  
incising a slit  
into the chilly navy sky.  
The bead of luminescence  
slides through the night carpet.

Little twigs checkered into  
their own delicacy.  
April mornings curtain the light  
onto blush petals.  
Slowly,  
they slip open:  
overflowing with pigmented hope,  
rich with the sweet scents of spring.  
Enchanted by the charm of the sun,  
their cocooned little skirts open up,  
unveiling their champagne color.

## Emma Cardillo, Grade 10

### *Venetian spirit*

The month has come,  
hence the days to party have begun.  
Here we know it as a festival with crazy spaces,  
in ancient Venice it was a time of hiding faces.  
As they did, we'll walk streets with high spirits  
and glide through the city with twirls and pivots.  
Without any knowledge of who is who;  
cluelessly roaming, not discerning what's false and what's true,  
we'll talk and perceive with our eyes  
until the ecstatic party spirit dies.  
Like in the city of water, a silhouette enters:  
pitch black, creeping the streets he ventures.  
A bird like mask meant to scare away illness,  
disease in the air should have been trapped in utter stillness.  
His pointed beak stabs the livelihood of the festival,  
shutting out our speech now barely perceptible.  
His heavy mask made him a monster,  
black hat, eerie presence...they called him the plague doctor.  
A figure like that was meant to kill evil,  
push away mad spirits and all that was lethal.  
But today our life is not so;  
bodies drop dead, we come and we go.  
A plague just like that of great Venice,  
a catastrophe splitting society, to our people a menace.  
The difference between now and then,  
is the hanging shadow of ruthless death.

## Ilaria Chen, Grade 11

An orange flower

I wish you could smell  
the orange flower  
when the clouds turn cold  
It licks off the moonlight  
weight on its petals  
and sips the nutrients of gloom  
dusts the bugs who too  
napped for four sun cycles  
and drooled all over its abundant  
face

Two echoes away  
dozens of honeybees  
carrying baskets on their backs  
fly around in the black-blue fog  
Their wings circadian  
and their senses hone

Six minutes in  
the sky is painted with gold  
dust and rain  
An orange flower bathes  
in juice and sings  
to the brim

## Ilaria Chen, Grade 11

@Dr.f Faust

*If you, @Dr.f Faust, could become anyone,  
who would you become?*

I would become I myself,  
for what is the need to become  
someone else?

I @Dr.f Faust am the favorited  
son, the sun of my people  
and the song of their hearts. I,  
@Dr.f Faust, am the one on  
your screen, your eyes mine  
and mine benign like the color  
of a lit skyline- is that not enough?

I @Dr.f Faust am the persona  
of the Mona Lisa, I am the mirror  
of beauty, desire, lust: Roma.

I am the only face  
you face every day, the one  
you love, the one you like,  
swipe-right, excited.

I, yours, mine, I  
am the one to blow you  
kisses at night, I  
am your messenger  
from the skies,

I, yours, my  
hair, lips, intertwined,

I, your  
likes,

I!

...

Is that not enough?

Watch my likes grow  
like twines by night,  
watch my people  
gift me gifts delighted  
at my hiss of thanks  
and no more;  
watch my persona  
fly like a kite

bit by a dog,  
watch my hair, lips,  
intertwine like vines:  
loss of foresight.  
Watch, hear the applause  
of mine and taste the grace  
I behold, for I, and only I,  
Authorize.

@Dr.faust am I.  
Enough!

## Phoebe Ciocca, Grade 10

Ceres

I follow the aisle  
you etched between  
the green.

The pavement is soft,  
trampled flowers  
that I'll trample again  
to find you.

The wispy grass  
strokes my hands  
as I brush through it,  
as it grazed yours  
and scratched  
and hacked.

True blades,  
they cut you down.

Your trail ends here.  
where you left me  
for below.

You won't come up  
again

til the moon faces me  
thrice more.

By then the flowers  
will regrow.

## Phoebe Ciocca, Grade 10

May

You're centered in their frame  
pearled gates opened  
for you  
float  
like children's bubbles

*pop*

before I reach.  
And you soar above cotton  
meadows  
that tickle my ankles-  
they call me down.

We watch you dance  
with honeyed rays.  
The sky in all its lenience  
drapes you in its  
cape.

I lie amongst white petals  
cushioned in the green.

Your laughter  
reaches out,  
hoists me in the dream.

But as I bow  
to warmth  
in this celestial ceremony

winds draw clouded curtains.

Your only trace  
a rosy blemish on my  
skin.

## **Riccardo Crocetta, Grade 9**

Sea

The water violently beats the tall body of the rocky wall,  
expanding with a scream  
retracting with a whisper.  
Again and again, every time more abrasive  
again and again, overflowing  
an exhibit as violent as death  
that seems to turn the scene into something alive  
from numb to absolute  
from perished to blossoming.

## **Riccardo Crocetta, Grade 9**

Wind

The intermittent wind keeps hitting  
it never stops,  
sometimes viciously persistent  
other times lullingly gentle  
and in the middle of the whole  
stands a mountain  
tall, able to elevate itself higher than the fog,  
it stands robust, it looks immense.  
The wind strikes and strikes,  
but it gets bogged  
and yet it strikes and strikes,  
it doesn't stop, like a mortally wounded beast desperately fighting on  
it slowly seeps into the cracks.  
The silent shrieks of the colossus breaking can be heard  
withering within  
consuming in itself  
until the mountain will be no more

## Ameli De Schepper Von Thungen-Reichenbach, Grade 9

### *Innigkeit*

Where shall I go,  
Sway,  
Stomp, when I feel utterly lost.  
How do I move,  
Speak,  
Think without having your hand in mine?  
I am lost.

My world was flat, you have now made it a  
Rhombicosidodecahedron.  
You drive me insane yet I do not know how I feel.  
I have nothing but rage and confusion coiling in my veins,  
My veins, how could I forget?  
You have turned my veins into demanding vessels,  
They siphon out all common sense,  
They simply yearn for you.

I am dancing in a field of daffodils,  
The golden flowers follow my every move,  
Longing to join my feeling of movement, of merriment.  
They eye me but I do not care.  
I am at sea. I am in the garden's koi pond.  
I am swimming between red koi,  
As they zip past me, surrounding me as if I were drowning in a fire,  
Their black dots threaten the love, the red.  
I cannot breathe, yet it is breathtaking, and I can't stop staring.  
They lure me, as English roses do to gardeners.  
You are my red carnation and my anemone,  
And all I ask of you  
Is to give me a jonquil.

## Lixuan Du, Grade 9

The original Chinese version of the poem was written by the poet Meng Haoran during the Tang Dynasty.

### 春晓

【唐】孟浩然

春眠不觉晓，处处闻啼鸟。

夜来风雨声，花落知多少。

### Spring Morning

Spring. Waken to an already bright day. All around. Tweet, tweet, the birds sing as they play.

Rain. Last night's drizzle with the gentle breeze. How many fragrant flowers did the wind seize?

## Lixuan Du, Grade 9

The End

Deafening roar softened by song  
from aeons ago  
Moon frozen and oath torn apart  
Timid rhino fret and turns to stone

Feared zero has come.

Comfort, Discomfort, Danger all gone  
Boredom, Annoyance nowhere to be found  
The time has come  
What used to be fiction is now reality\*  
Our beating heart is slowing down

Bang.

This is the End.

## Tatiana Kneale, Grade 11

### *Heaving*

I'll go to the gym once or twice in a week,  
spare two hours each time  
from the greater half I spend asleep.

Run, then stretch, then on to the floor.  
My face, fire-red in the morbid mirror.

Let the oppressive blue plastic mattresses  
be the judge of me.  
I can feel the heat of their gaze,  
from my head to my foot, upon me.

Those stacked up so orderly,  
like the tiers of the birthday cake  
that I ate,  
that's still seared in my memory.

I was three.

But it still makes its home on me.  
In the great beefy bulges of fat  
that fester on in my arms, in my thoughts,  
and on these bones I'd happily break  
if it would take some of the weight  
off this vessel I've been restricted to all my life,  
In which I'll likely die.

Tell me, will they bury me?  
The friends who mocked my physiognomy,  
peeled back every layer  
of hope I'd kept as a shield  
to my unforgiving insecurities.  
Am I likely to forget that humiliation?

Not quite.

But I wonder what they can see as right  
in their nit-picking austerity  
They might even think they're helping me.  
But it isn't very comforting.  
And the pillowed-out bulge of my stomach  
is not soft  
as it ought to be.

## Tatiana Kneale, Grade 11

### *Sterile*

I like things neat.

Carefully, I keep,  
every object I own in order.

Under the surveillance  
of two unrested eyes,  
I keep trained, a world,  
in rhythm and time,  
entirely mine.

The books that line my shelves,  
from left to right,  
in colour and kind,  
and alphabetised,  
are my domain.

*Why* the cushions  
on the couch  
in my living room  
must be fluffed  
three times a day,  
I'll never know.

But, that the crude  
clump of laundry,  
freshly washed and folded  
in my living room, however new,  
will never do,

is an absolute truth.

The dawn of every day  
sees the creation  
of fresh new rituals  
for me to pursue:

take a ruler to the roses,  
so their stems might  
stand straight too.

Clandestine, I crawl  
in the wake of an habitual ideal,  
which, to chase, is to feel.

So I will continue to.

To divide up my food,  
by colour, cradling  
every bit of control I can foster.

I, the imposter,  
will keep spotless,  
a world, that listlessly,  
Tirelessly, faultlessly,

Will forever be lost to me.

## **Asia Magrone, Grade 9**

### Greens

I stand upon the unwoven grass,  
a juniper-colored grass  
that hugs my bare feet  
the rain soaks the ground on which I stand  
the holy water bathes my hair  
the gray above is clear, all the clouds have sought shelter in my mind

I sit in the growing grass  
an olive-toned grass  
the wind travels in between the naked branches  
It hides in between the blooming daisies  
the sounds wrap a blanket around my shivering heart  
the tune of the wind and the melody of the grass

I lay underneath the tall grass  
a grass covered in an emerald shine  
a grass that is now warm  
It whispers sweet words in my ears sweet words  
and whilst the sun kisses my cheeks  
the world spins as I fall asleep  
In the grass that grows.

## Asia Magrone, Grade 9

### Fields

The footsteps were many countless puddles left behind  
in the soil beneath.  
A summer's day of despair, they would call it,  
With the hot humid air floating alongside the clouds.  
Until, all at once, the inhalation of such air  
Crushes the lungs-  
Without leaving room for any feeling of mere excitement  
For a sunny summer day.  
And the feet dive into the earth once again,  
The worms and bugs whine for help,  
Their shrills deafening  
And their fainting heartbeat a distant echo.  
Your summer slippers remain dark, with the blood of the bugs.  
But You don't look behind.  
You look at the lady dancing in the field.  
She looks splendid with her braided hair, almost unreal.  
Barefoot she sways, humming a familiar sound.  
Her white dress drapes on the ground as she come closer,  
Her aura emits a vibrant sunshine of warmth  
she welcomes you in her arms  
As a mother holds her baby, she holds your head on her chest  
And fills your eyes with sleep  
As she becomes a part of your soul, forever within your skin.  
For the time has come  
For you to dance in the field.

## Amie Njie, Grade 9

### Airplanes and Half-Empty Paint Palettes

It was raining  
The day you left.  
You leave behind three half-empty  
Paint palettes--  
Or are they half full?  
From those same palettes you used  
To make those paintings--  
Telling stories that only  
Made sense in your head.  
I'll paint like you did  
Under this roof--  
Just a little different.  
I wash away the  
Reds  
And the  
Blues  
That coated your hands too-  
once.  
Your walls are now bare,  
Everything gone--  
Not even a single hair  
Not even a single tear-  
*Drop, drop, dro-*  
You're starting a new life now.  
And so am I;  
We have both turned a page.  
Though it's no longer  
The same book.

## Amie Njie, Grade 9

Vile World

A vile perfume fills the air.  
Many cannot smell it.  
Many do not seek it.  
It is the smell of greed  
the smell of hatred  
*There!*  
upon men's lips.  
Carelessly unleashed  
upon the world.  
A vile *splash!* of paint  
coats  
the ballroom walls  
where dead dancers dance  
a song full of life;  
shattering criticism  
a lion, ready to *pounce!*  
A vile color fills your eyes  
the color of lies  
the color of judgment  
as the ghost in the corner  
tells you he loves you.  
A vile order  
from that voice in your head  
shakes you awake  
for the second time  
or is it the ninth?  
For this is the world we live in-  
A vile  
*Vile*  
world.

## Sofia Taguchi Slettehaugh, Grade 9

1878

My heart flutters like a butterfly, though I mustn't show it  
Your hands atop my crinoline, as we dance to the violins  
The crescendos and diminuendos guiding our steps  
Mauve and maroon-dressed guests won't take my eyes off of you  
Every memorized move, every word left unspoken

Though the night makes my head whirl, your eyes hold me close  
Fierce, passionate heat as we glide on our feet  
No matter what occurred a day or night ago  
Music carries us into the next spin or step  
This moment so precious, I will wish it to repeat

The chandelier glimmers, and illuminates the crowded hall  
My skirts made of muslin, skillfully crafted by artisans  
I get lost in the bottomless blue of your gaze  
Never will you fail to entrance me with your charm  
Must not be a dream, for my eyes are wide open

Pain from a petticoat or high heel will not stagger me  
Your redolence like honey, reminds me of a fleur de lis  
When one dance feels like eternity cut too short  
Please don't forget me as the stars leave the sky  
I will remember this feeling, of when our hands meet  
Though after we bow, it is turned bittersweet.

Inspired by Por Una Cabeza by Carlos Gardel and Clockwork Angel by Cassandra Clare

## Sofia Taguchi Slettehaugh, Grade 9

7

Pieces of a puzzle that don't seem to fit,  
A life from birth to death preserved with every stitch.  
When a path that is winding and broken gets chosen,  
There are two fluffy gloves that keep your heart unfrozen.  
All when a soul fears nothing, not even death,  
A melody can be made with only one breath.  
When emptiness is filled with the joy of the past,  
A red box isn't what'll make happiness last.  
While something like coffee is always around,  
Only when you smell it can memories be found.  
When an item so basic can make your eyes sting,  
A flat piece of plastic can be worth as much as a ring.  
As children we receive tiny things with tiny faces,  
We hang onto them as we discover many new places.  
See, our lives are not defined by the objects we find when cleaning,  
But they serve a purpose because our memories give them meaning.

## **Natalie Silver, Grade 11**

A spirited girl in Renaissance Florence upends a contest to design the city's greatest monument, in a female reimagining of architectural history, in which rivalry, beauty, ingenuity, and a little blue notebook, are at the forefront.

Fiammetta is the 17-year-old daughter of a renowned Florence artist, Lorenzo Ghiberti. She longs to break into the all-male world of artisans, apprentices and architects who are transforming Florence into the most beautiful city in the world.

Brunelleschi, a 22-year-old architect, has already made a name for himself. But to qualify for the history books needs to score the biggest commission Florence will ever see: The Duomo.

Giorgio, a teenaged boy who works as an apprentice for Donatello, becomes Fiammetta's accidental best friend and loyal sidekick, as they battle with the Florentine establishment.

Donatello, an already well-established artist in his 20s, and former apprentice of Ghiberti, is friends with everyone, and runs a workshop where everyone hangs out.

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The Blue Notebook - Wooden Sword Fight

INT - GHIBERTI HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Fiammetta quietly walks through the corridor. She gets to the living room, and finds Vittorio and Tommaso dueling each other with their wooden swords. Tommaso spots Fiammetta, and stops fighting Vittorio.

TOMMASO

Fiammetta!

Fiammetta winces

TOMMASO (CONT'D)

(In a posh voice)

I challenge you to a duel!

FIAMMETTA

Fine. Sir Vittorio, I require your sword.

VITTORIO

Of course, your fireness.

Vittorio hands Fiammetta his sword, and then sits down on the ground near the spot of the duel. Fiammetta and Tommaso are standing across from each other, preparing themselves for battle.

VITTORIO (CONT'D)

In the arena we have Fiammetta,  
wooooo, versus Tommaso, boooo!

TOMMASO

Hey.

VITTORIO

I mean wooo as well! Okay duelers  
ready?

FIAMMETTA

Ready.

TOMMASO

Even readyer.

VITTORIO

On your marks, get set, duel!

The two start circling each other. Tommaso lunges first.

VITTORIO

Tommaso makes the first move, and...  
misses. Fiammetta moves out of the  
way just in time.

Fiammetta makes the next move, but  
OH! Tommaso blocks her attack with  
his sword. Fiammetta's sword goes  
flying out of her hand. She is  
defenseless! Tommaso takes one  
stab, straight through her! Tommaso  
wins!

Tommaso's sword is tucked in between Fiammetta's arm and  
side. She pulls it out, starts stumbling backwards, and  
pretends to die.

TOMMASO

Woooooohooo!

Fiammetta is still on the ground, trying to be as still  
as possible. Vittorio, concerned, goes over to make sure  
she is not actually dead. He stands next to her head and  
looks down. Nothing

VITTORIO

Fiammetta?

FIAMMETTA

BOO!

Fiammetta abruptly sits up.

VITTORIO

AAAAAHHHHHH!!!

Both Fiammetta and Tommaso start laughing hysterically.

VITTORIO

It's not funny! Stop laughing.

They don't stop. Vittorio, annoyed, goes to sit and sulk on the sofa.

FIAMMETTA

Thank you sir Tommaso, I had a splendid duel.

They shake hands.

TOMMASO

As did I, Lady Fiammetta.

FIAMMETTA

I really must be off now, good day to you both.

VITTORIO

(Quick, and still mad)

Bye.

Fiammetta walks out of the living room, and eventually into her room.

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The Blue Notebook - Therapy Session

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - AFTERNOON

Giorgio walks into the workshop, having finished his lunch break, and finds Donatello reclining on a sofa-chair. Donatello is frustrated. There are only the two of them in the workshop today. Giovanni is busy planning his wedding.

GIORGIO

What's wrong?

Giorgio takes off his bag, leaving it on the nearby table.

DONATELLO

I don't want to go to the wedding tomorrow.

GIORGIO

What?

DONATELLO

Well of course I want to go to the wedding, and I'm definitely going, after all, its Giovanni, though I still don't know how he managed to find a wife, and I'm probably going to be bawling my eyes out the whole time, --

Giorgio pulls up a chair, and sits down.

DONATELLO (CONT'D)

But, Filippo is going to be there, and I do not want to see him.

GIORGIO

Who?

DONATELLO

Brunelleschi.

Giorgio chuckles.

DONATELLO

I know it's been a month, but I'm still mad! And I'm still not over him! He had no right to break up with me, only I can do that!

GIORGIO

You were together? Like together together?

DONATELLO

Yeah, on and off for about two years, how did you not know this? Anyway, I was always the one who broke up with him, but it was only ever for short breaks. I thought we were destined to be together. I mean sure, we got on each other's nerves, and it probably was a toxic

relationship, but it was our toxic relationship! He would critique my work, because he thinks he is superior to everyone, which he is, but not the point, then I would criticise his stupid hair that's always so poofy and perfect... You know, a while ago, back when we were teenagers, which was only a couple of years ago, so not actually that long ago, anyway, we would play the most amazing pranks on our friends. One time we made this guy think he was another person. It was Filippo's idea, and it was hilarious. The guy actually believed he had turned into someone else. And then he had the audacity to break up with me! Did our trip to Rome mean nothing to him? And you know what the worst part is? The reason he broke up with me is because he started to like someone else, a girl of all people! And a month later I'm still lying here wallowing in self pity. I suppose I deserve it for breaking up with him so many times.

GIORGIO

Fiammetta.

DONATELLO

What?

GIORGIO

The girl, the one he broke up with you for, it's Fia.

Donatello sits up.

DONATELLO

What! No, it can't be Fia, I mean do they even know each other?

GIORGIO

Sort of.

DONATELLO

Anyway, even if he did like Fia, there is no way she could like him back right?

GIORGIO

No... She hates him...

Donatello lies back down.

DONATELLO

That was not a very convincing answer. I feel like you are not telling me something.

GIORGIO

Uh.. You know, I probably should get back to work, paint to mix, wood to paint, other stuff that I can't think of that also involves paint..

Giorgio gets up and starts walking backwards out of the room.

GIORGIO (CONT'D)

Yeah. Bye!

Giorgio walks out of the room.

## **Bianca Todini, Grade 10**

### **Grisaille**

Graphite sky,  
fog of pepper light  
sprinkling the silver sea.  
Tendrils of iron clouds  
blending into the graphite.  
Swirling charcoal.

The Sun emerges  
dripping in silver;  
chrome drops  
sloshing and melting  
rippling the surface.  
Molten metal.

The Sun rises higher.  
Now shining gold.  
Its silver skin shed into the sea,  
bright light breaking the graphite.

Charcoal crumbling into dust,  
smog inhaling the sky and  
exhaling it up into the clouds.  
Revealing its blue beneath.  
Now delicate and unexposed,  
as the morning light dances off its clean face.