



# *Windhover*

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A Journal of Christian Literature

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*Marci Rae Johnson*

## Comparable Acts of Worship

I am making an idol from my pain, golden  
and larger than life, rubbed shiny for luck

at the horn's sharp, though I have tried  
to pierce myself only from the inside

because the one who breaks the silence,  
the one who writes the poem without

metaphor without biblical allusion is never  
forgiven. God forgave the Israelites again

and again for wanting what everyone else  
had: a face to see over breakfast, the coffee

hot and mostly cream. A body in the bed.  
What he gave them was a person who spoke

using only indefinite pronouns, who hid  
in the sand the body of the man he killed

though he carved in stone though shalt not  
kill. The pen is mightier than the sword, the Lord

thinks he knows what's best for his people;  
he knows you do not need what you want.



## *Chris Boldt*

### **Art Appreciation,**

#### *Caravaggio and His School Comes to the Kimball*

When she first entered the world of Italian art,  
she often wished she'd had the kind of childhood  
(early mass, Friday fasts, nuns' sharp rulers, rosaries)  
which might have put in her an eager faith  
that swallowed whole, believed with head as well as heart,  
the stories Baroque painters spread on canvases.  
Would such a background have offered purer pleasure  
than the halting, doubt-tempered, "yes-but-I" delights,  
that first perturbed her before the smoky pictures  
in the dim churches of Piazza 'Popolo?

Four decades later, in this crowded gallery,  
amid others (out for a Sunday diversion,  
or, perhaps, as intent as she on nourishment),  
scruples no longer limit appreciation.  
No matter if paintings she approaches feature  
Francis bearing stigmata; Judith, the head  
of Holoferenes; Christopher, the weighty Babe;  
no matter if they were made to appease faith's ardor,  
or to please prelate patrons, she finds she has so schooled  
herself in reading pictures that she slips at once  
into the numinous, loses self in looking.

After so many years of rapt attendance,  
at Depositions, Judgments, Emmaus Visits,  
moments when veils were rent, the dead rose, and scales fell,  
she's prepared to find, through oils daubed on lengths of cloth,  
a way into the thin place—even, in this room,  
with its murmurings, and thoughts of early dinner.  
Her incredulity, iron skepticism,  
are readily subdued as awe meets effort,  
at any table where she shares the Holy Meal.

*R.W. Haynes*

## **Thou Preparest a Table**

If you go to Laredo, don't forget  
That flowers bloom there always, here and there,  
And if a careless eddy of cold air  
Sweeps back the dusty climate to re-set  
The timing of buds and green profusion,  
Still, look around, color peeps out quietly  
From modest corners, broken masonry,  
Gently defying winter's brief illusion.  
Each flower has its song, and they do  
Harmonize, if you can hear the clear  
Sentiment always vibrating here  
As bright stars push the lazy seasons through,  
And flowers gently force themselves to light,  
Doves compose sweet songs, and green jays fight.

## *Megan Willome*

### **Arrow**

*“If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matthew 5:30)*

So. I've decided to cut off my right ring finger.  
It doesn't have a ring on it. Not terribly useful  
now that I've given up playing piano.

It's not that big. Not that strong. Terribly infected.  
It got nicked with an arrow, one of those remarks  
carelessly thrown over the shoulder as someone walks away.

I noticed the black streaks first, knew the poison  
of those words was seeping to the bone.  
Soon it will reach the bloodstream

and I don't want to lose my whole hand over this  
certainly not consign my whole body to hell.  
So. One swift blow. Pass the whiskey.

## *Paul Michael Garrison*

### **No Longer Dead**

There was no coroner present to make the pronouncement, but nevertheless, at 9:52 on the evening of Friday, November 3, Jackson Ahrens died. The heart, which for several minutes had been busily pumping blood out onto the alley pavement, ceased, as did the brain, which had been playing the refrain *This is it* until Jackson eased into oblivion.

Jackson had always been a private person, so it seemed fitting that he should be alone at this moment, without a lot of people mucking about asking things like “Are you okay?” or “Shouldn’t someone call an ambulance?” It wouldn’t have mattered if they had; it all happened so quickly.

Consequently, Jackson was also alone when he became “no longer dead,” the phrase he would come to use mentally to describe his condition. For at 9:55 on the evening of Friday, November 3, Jackson’s heart began beating again, but this time his body retained the blood that passed through it. Presumably his brain kicked in about the same time, and with a rush that defies description, Jackson came to.

He sat up rather quickly, not a wise thing to do when one has recently been dead. Feeling a little woozy, he steadied himself against the brick wall he had died next to. He was trying to get his mind around what had happened. He had been dead, of that much he was sure, and he was no longer dead. Strangely enough, he was sure of that too. He felt alongside the wall, the grit and etching of the brick providing additional, tactile evidence that he was indeed not dead.

When he gingerly made his way out onto the sidewalk, he met a piercing duet scream, courtesy of two sisters making their way to a club on Ende Street. Jackson looked down at the ragged hole in his shirt front and the wet red-black stain surrounding it. Jackson Ahrens’ moment of privacy was past. He was now barraged with questions such as “Are you okay?” and “Shouldn’t someone call an ambulance?” Other than being a little shell-shocked and having his entire posterior drenched in his own blood, he was fine, but they called an ambulance anyway.

Naturally the doctors and the police had questions, most of which Jackson answered as best he could. After throwing back several drinks too many at O’Reilley’s Bar, he had been walking to his car when he was accosted by a short male in baggy pants and a hooded sweatshirt. Jackson had been inebriated enough that he remembered little else about his assailant, other than

that he had pushed Jackson into the alley, demanded his wallet, and shot him when Jackson had not been quick enough about retrieving it.

The next day a young man named Lamont Smith was arrested when he tried to purchase a stereo system with a credit card issued to Jackson. Mr. Smith was charged with theft, assault, and attempted murder. But Jackson knew the truth: it hadn't been an attempted murder but a successful one, albeit only momentarily.

Tests eventually proved that the blood in the alley and on Jackson was his own. How he still had enough in his body to be walking around, the medical investigator couldn't figure. And while police did find a bullet in the alley and Jackson did have a circular scar in his chest, there was no fresh wound to be found. Since this already made everyone a little suspicious, Jackson decided to forego the account of his resurrection. They obviously wouldn't have understood.

One officer did write about the incident to the *National Enquirer*, and the case was the talk of both the police station and the hospital for a while; but with the ebb and flow of time, it eventually passed from memory.

At lunch the next Monday, as was his habit, Jackson joined three of his coworkers in the break room. Wendell was a short, obese man whose large square-framed glasses had lenses as thick as Coke bottles. Maury was an elongated toothpick who sported small wire-rimmed specs. Alice was somewhere between these two as concerning height, weight, and nearsightedness; and while she was quite stylish in her dress, her upswept hairdo, aquiline nose, and slightly bulging eyes, made bluer by tinted contacts, gave her a distinctively birdlike appearance.

The sluggish conversation started as it always did on Mondays. "So, did you all have a good weekend?" asked Wendell, using his index sausage to push his glasses up on his nose. Everyone grunted or muttered an obligatory reply before Maury launched into a mini-tirade about how his neighbor had let her raked leaves litter his yard.

"I can't believe how inconsiderate people are!" he concluded. Alice nodded at him by means of segueing into her own story of how she had consulted a doctor about getting LASIK surgery so she wouldn't have to wear contacts anymore, a tale that the group was no more interested in than they had been in Maury's. Next, Wendell recounted how he and his wife had joined a health club and that they were both going to lose a lot of weight and "get healthy." Jackson, Maury, and Alice warily eyed each other and the size and content of Wendell's lunch and refrained from comment.

“So, Jackie boy,” Maury said, safely redirecting the conversation, “what’d you do this weekend?”

Jackson slowly finished chewing a bite of apple before he replied, “Not much.”

At the end of the day, Wendell joined up with Jackson en route to the parking lot.

“Maury, Alice, and I are going to O’Reilly’s for a couple drinks,” Wendell said. “Wanna come?” This outing was a semi-regular occurrence, and Jackson normally would have joined, being a faithful patron of O’Reilly’s; however, this time he was disinclined to accept.

He was quite aware that alcohol had not been the cause of his death, but he did feel that his intoxicated state had contributed, making him an easy target for the mugger. It seemed best to leave alcohol out of his new life. After all, what was the point of having a new life if you made the same mistakes?

Jackson’s atypical response made Wendell inquisitive. When he asked Jackson why he wasn’t coming, Jackson paused, waiting for the right words to come. They never did. So he simply replied, “I’ve given up booze.”

“Why?” asked Wendell, now bewildered.

Jackson opened his car door to get in and turned back to Wendell. “You know, it’s not a bad idea, Wendell. I bet booze isn’t part of that new diet you’ve started.” Wendell ducked his head and muttered that he’d think about that, but he was really thinking that Jackson was turning into a killjoy.

As time passed, Jackson found himself reentering that routine which most adults find themselves in, a cycle of days, five and two, in which there is little to distinguish one week from another.

He had been “no longer dead” for just over a year when at a Monday lunch, Alice skipped the usual conversation opener and started with “I have to tell you guys something. I’ve been telling everyone, and I want to tell you before you hear it from anyone else.”

Alice’s topics of conversation were usually limited to fashion, work, and chick flicks, and so the men expected her news to be no more startling than a recounting of her newest skirt purchase. Jackson, noticing her eyes were less blue than usual, guessed that Alice was going to own up to finally having that eye surgery, but her declaration was to be a much more momentous one.

“I died on Saturday.” Alice’s news flapped in the silent air. When no one responded, she rushed on. “I know what you’re thinking, but it’s true. I had a heart attack, and right before the paramedics got there, I died.” Alice described the event with as much detail as she could recall. “And then, all of a sudden, I

wasn't dead anymore. My heart just started beating again. I know it sounds crazy, but it's true."

The men were hesitant to say anything at first, knowing that Alice had always had a heart condition and was rather sensitive about it.

"Um, was anybody else there?" asked Wendell.

"Yes, I told you the paramedics were there. It happened at my sister's. She was there too, the whole time."

"Yeah," Jackson said as nonchalantly as possible, "the same thing happened to me a while back." Lunch came to a standstill for the second time that day. Three pairs of eyes stared at him unblinking. He then recounted the whole story of how he had died and then un-died.

The other two men assumed the derangement was simply spreading, and so Jackson, against his nature, offered what proof he could. There in the break room, he flipped his tie over his shoulder, unbuttoned the middle section of his shirt, and pulled up his undershirt to reveal the circular scar.

"It came out the back. There's a scar there too."

"I believe it," said Wendell. He took off his glasses and rubbed at his eyes.

It was all becoming a bit much for Maury. "This is stupid," he said, gathered his lunch, and left.

The others sat in silence as Jackson returned his clothing to a presentable arrangement. Finally Alice broke the silence.

"Have you told anyone else?"

"No," Jackson answered.

"This happened about a year ago?"

"Yes."

"I know you're a private person, Jackson, but really . . . how could you not? How could you not tell us? How could you not tell anyone?"

## *Miho Nonaka*

### **Purists**

Certain Sundays, I fought with doubt  
swallowing my portion of bread  
made with eggs, milk, xanthan gum

which adds the texture of sticky rice.  
I was a purist at the age of thirteen.  
Sundays, every soul needs washing, even

a medical student from Tokyo University  
worshipping next to me. I will disappoint him  
by shaking my head at the invitation

after the service, to follow him to the park,  
hand out the tracts to children and talk  
about the only Uncreated One who created us.

Behind the silver-wire glasses,  
his eyes narrow on the verge of not  
so much as vanishing as judging me

unserious. Under the ashen sky,  
gentle cosmos are no longer blooming  
in flower beds. A group of screechy kids

start playing kick-the-can, raising a cloud  
of gray. Even though I never went with him,  
I seem to have been in the scene myself:

his brittle voice speaking of the assurance  
that no created thing could harm us,  
dirty pigeons flying up and down like

popped rice in the background, and soon  
snow coming in torn bits of one blank,  
immaculate book, blurring our vision.



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