Pace University
DigitalCommons@Pace

Honors College Theses | Pforzheimer Honors College

8-25-2005

Gerberas in the Sky

Renee Yewdaev
Pace University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.pace.edu/honorscollege_theses

Recommended Citation
Yewdaev, Renee, "Gerberas in the Sky" (2005). *Honors College Theses*. Paper 24.
http://digitalcommons.pace.edu/honorscollege_theses/24

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Pforzheimer Honors College at DigitalCommons@Pace. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Pace. For more information, please contact rracelis@pace.edu.

Table of Contents:

"One Moment" —page 2
"She Became Immortalized in a Sestina" —page 3
"Modern Art Meets Romanticism" —page 4
"The Map" —page 5
"Things Related to Italy" —page 6
"Grand Odalisque" —page 7
"The Discovery Channel" —page 8
"When You Put Things in Perspective" —page 9
"I Saw a Helicopter Rise Up" —page 10
"Asian Text" —page 11
"Advanced Math Class in a Dream" —page 12
"And Yet" —page 13
"The Most Beautiful Sight You'll Ever See" —page 14
"The Green Cap" —page 15
"Shfaim" —page 16
"Inagua Island" —page 17
"Green" —page 18
"Always Pouring in a Beautiful Misting Spray Welcoming the Light" —page 19
"Red Balloon" —page 20
"Sounds of Primordial Worlds" —page 21
"Waiting for the A" —page 22
"Trifid Nebula" —page 23
"A Sight Worthy of Inspiring Stalin" —page 24
"The Last Waltz" —page 25
"Janelas" —page 26

One Moment

All in one absurd moment
When you think Camus
Might have been right

The light flashes
You won't make it
You finally look
And notice the newly green leaves on the London plane

It's not cold
The pigeons are roosting in the
Empty spaces

Men hurrying on their way
Gloved hands swinging
While the roar of the trucks
Drowns out the endless shouts of playing children

—Renee Yewdaev

I saw the old lady in the photograph
The woman sitting there in silence
Allowing time
To age her and turn her into a spectacle
Others can see and only wonder at her humanity
It seemed surreal as if a dream

Perhaps it really was a dream
And I only imagined seeing that photograph
Imagined seeing a shred of humanity
In eyes that looked at me in silence
I pitied what she has become, a spectacle
In a black silk dress that had gone out of fashion with the change of time

She must have been a beauty in her time
The bones don't lie and her face was the stuff people dream
About, wishing they too were as spectacular
As the woman looking at them from the photograph
Rebuking them in silence
As if to say where's your humanity?

Where was her humanity?
What had been her name before it was lost to time?
I stared and stared and all I got was silence
Until I finally decided to pick a name from a dream
I named the sad woman in the photograph
Isabella and she was no longer a nameless spectacle

It seemed to me that as soon as the spectacle
Became Isabella, she became part of humanity
She was no longer just a tired figure in a photograph
She was real; she had lived and loved once upon a time
And it wasn't just my dream
Isabella was a woman who had not bowed to silence

Because even while she sits there in silence
Her unsmiling face haunts me, it is a face not meant to be a spectacle
Because the pain there is real, pain that I've only felt in dreams
Perhaps that explains the allure she has for humanity
Those who see her face are shocked to realize that they are not the first in time
To feel the pain of living, the proof is in her photograph

She had kept silent as her photograph
Became a spectacle for all humanity
Who looked and wondered whether she was just a dream or had she been erased from memory
by time

—Renee Yewdaev

Modern Art Meets Romanticism

The trailing vine
crossing over blue
spray paint

Two trains crossing
Tender shoots
climbing over poles
Accidental trees

A red carriage all alone
Abandoned by the child in the yellow slicker

The light brown church with the forest trim
disappears
leaving only the memory of moss

You're in a ditch
overlooking
nothing really

—Renee Yewdaev

The Map

Little teams of letters
Spreading out until they
Form a nasty mess
My grandmother couldn't crochet
So perhaps I shouldn't blame them for being unable to keep it clean
Not to mention attractive
I think of the orange F as a leader but perhaps I'm biased
I love the way it just flows over the map until it gets to the very edge
It makes me think of the ocean
How I saw the end of my street while strolling along the boardwalk

I see the green and red going up and down opposite each other
As if they were in a race
But I think the orange team beat them
How could they not with that fanciful F leading them
But I guess it's the blue team that is the real winner
I shouldn't be surprised after all they have A on their team
Leading them all the way to the airport
Where this stupid race ceases to matter
Because you can just leave
Run away to some exotic country

And do nothing but sit in the sun
And laugh at the little team of letters
Just doing their jobs
Day in and day out without a break
So that people could still keep going to their jobs
Day in and day out without any real breaks until they get old
And old age is hardly a break.

—Renee Yewdaev

Things Related to Italy

Why are you at the top of my list
Am I such a conformist that Italy is all I can think of
And when I get to Italy some day because I know it won't be in the near future
What will I do
Will I go see the museums and the fountains
The statues and the buildings
The cities of Rome, Venice, Florence
Defeated by the plague
What of those famous artists that I read about in a textbook
Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Caravaggio

One would think that it's something in the water
But no
What of Pompeii
City set in stone will I see you and wonder about people long dead
Or will being steeped in so much history inure me to tragedy
Why are you special or am I wrong

Perhaps I am setting myself up for a big letdown
The streets will seem dirty
The heat oppressive
The language will make want to go home
Because really it's just a country
No better or worse than the one I'm living in
And yet we continue to dream

—Renee Yewdaev

Grand Odalisque

There have been times that I thought about those old paintings
Like Boucher's with those women who were considered beautiful
The glow of their skin captured by the painter's brush
Their thighs are enormous
So much skin
The sheer round volume
Of their flesh exposed for all to see

They aren't ashamed
Feel no embarrassment at being caught
Ingres's *Grand Odalisque* stares back quite haughtily
Uncaring of eyes peering at her voluptuous nudity

But such women are no longer accepted
Protruding skin-covered bones are more the norm
And I am left staring at the past trying to ignore
Those hideous stretch marks
Which remind me of my mother
But her thighs aren't ugly
Besides they have the excuse of two children and forty years

—Renee Yewdaev

The Discovery Channel

They say that man will go to mars
That mega tsunamis will bring destruction
And that Atlantis is a myth

The dinosaurs are extinct
Cro-Magnum defeated the Neanderthals
And people were once worried about killer bees

It seems like it's trying to scare us
Terrify us into constantly wondering what horrific disaster
Is lurking beyond our front door

Maybe we need to be scared
But the ice age is far away
And terrorism is a much bigger fear

So far we've hurt the earth much more than its hurt us
And it only seems fair that she have threats as big as the one we're holding over her
It seems like the scientists are always looking away

Facing the future
Trying to atone for their mortality
I can never forgive their hubris

But the rest of the world is cold
On to our tricks it wants no part of us
And when we try to make ourselves welcome with our gadgets
I know you'll have the last laugh

—Renee Yewdaev

When You Put Things in Perspective

So many poems have been written about summer
Yankees and the Mets struggling all summer long until they meet in the fall
Trying to learn to swim in Crown Plaza's swimming pool this summer
The summer heat was deceptive and the water was cold
So I ran to the sea that had been boiling under the hot summer sun until there was barely any water left
I floated in the water and tried to forget how strange the water felt, that oily, salty water that seemed to burn my skin the way the summer sun scorched my shoulders

Aren't we all happiest in the summer?
At least it seems so in the winter when it's below zero and all we can do is dream of summer

Summer fun
Summer heat
Yes I remember the heat that July summer night
The summer heat brought tears to my eyes and made me wish for home
An excruciating siren passed outside on that summer night in July
It didn't wake me how could I sleep with the heat suffocating me as I lay on the pink wooden couch
I tried to think of cold places like the Artic but whoever suggested that never had to live through that horrible summer night with the police sirens passing on the street and the clock ringing at every hour
I despaired of ever getting to see the summer morning
Finally near dawn the heat receded and I must have slept because
I slept so soundly on the pleasantly cool summer morning that the explosion outside did nothing to alarm me
It's a bomb I said on that relief-giving summer morning and turned my head still fast asleep

—Renee Yewdaev

I Saw a Helicopter Rise Up

Even as the light butterfly hovers over the brown grass

Empty trees overshadowed by the white-pink of almond trees
Layers of cars passing every which way
While the pigeons fly over the railing
Looking elegant for once

Far off
The hint of a bridge leading away
An outlet of safety even as the water waits below

Seven little white boats
Going in a row
The water stirred behind them
Machinery without fear even as I fear to enter the Dead Sea

Seagull standing on a railing
No fear of me
Blowing and fanning in the wind
Look me in the eye and tell me what you see

—Renee Yewdaev

Asian Text

The two acrobats sing to
the dancer with the fancy hat
She waves to the little boy
jumping over obstacles that
lead to a fork in the road.

The tablet tells me nothing
except to go towards the left
I see a house that has been
broken up and then I turn
to the left once more.

The shelves are full of bonsai
trees and the radio looks broken.
The big G talks about that famous couple
those caped crusaders who save birds and love
the butterflies.

The temple sends a call
to the houses but there
is nothing left except a defiant branch.

—Renee Yewdaev

Advanced Math Class in a Dream

Room full of eager students
Math qualifications questionnaires on wooden desks
My music professor directing a play in front
Problem with my questionnaire

Request for a volunteer
Face the class
You are a frog and she is the actress
First act goes well
Getting lost backstage
No time for costume change
Enter the stage and sing

—Renee Yewdaev

And Yet

We were riding in the desert

Up into the mountains
The sun was setting and yet
I didn't feel it
The road was smooth too new for
The old Mercedes hauling us up the mountains
They surrounded us so
We couldn't see the sun setting behind us
Miles of road we left behind
Modernity gone I thought as we continued towards that ancient place
And yet not

A city whose name started with an A
The rest is lost within my brain
Small for sure
And yet
People live here
Go to work
Raise families
All with the mountains surrounding them
Almost as if they're hiding them from the rest of the world

The mountains all spread out before you in the blue-red of dusk grab your attention as we continue up the road
It's near dark so there's not much to see
Just sharp edges letting us know that the mountains now surround us
I'm sure we left civilization behind
How could it follow?
It's dark and there is no one else
Can you hear the quiet?
The absolute silence coupled with the dark
leaves you with no place to turn your attention to

Except the sky
The mountains are black shadows against the dark blue sky
And yet the night is not black
Not the lights of the city which can overpower you and make you forget
No, not those meaningless lights
But the light of so many stars we could spend eternity trying to count them
And still not succeed

—Renee Yewdaev

The Most Beautiful Sight You'll Ever See

Well, if you're like Wordsworth
Cannot be found on the pavement of NYC
While the view from the Woolworth is nice
It's highly doubtful to bring tears to your face

That such beauty can be captured by human
Ingenuity and brought to the attention of the masses
Astounds me
I am so used to the technology
Seeing an image on a screen
Is so normal that you pass without noticing
But never have I seen a blue whale
We are all aware if its size
But to see it move and breach the surface of the water
Almost shimmering when the light catches a stray drop

Of which there are so many
Such a wondrous moment deserves to be recorded

—Renee Yewdaev

The Green Cap

the bottle lies
so still

its plastic cover glistening
under the fluorescent light

the green cap rolling away
out of sight.

—Renee Yewdaev

Shfaim

Red gunshots reminding me of a dream
Where a white day is the only thing seen
I wish for blue fun
And see the chiaroscuro of their wet, smiling faces coming down the red slide

Yellow wheels turning as she lies there undisturbed
Scratched lens the payment for indolence
Field of sand leading to the
Hot metal car encasing tired vacationers

Hot grass beneath my feet
Cool shadow relief beneath the large umbrella
A welcome respite when the sun shifts its angle
And I can try unsuccessfully to tan my other leg
The smile on her face as she leans forward to bite her pastrami sandwich

Spinning in circles
Coaster speeding backward
Have to close my eyes

Nauseous pain the only memory of a night in Tel-Aviv
And the knowledge that I wasn't meant for theme parks

—Renee Yewdaev

Inagua Island

Green and scaly

Lettuce scattered everywhere
The large shell lying in the sun
While the other lumbers into blue

"Forget your worries"
"Relax, have fun"
The sun that shines here
Is not the same one
Burning a hole
Scorching a path
Into the desert and the ice all at the same
Time

Pamper your skin
The slowly forming tint
Can never be lamented
Despite the bracelets and ribbons
Worn in solidarity

The iguana is native to this land
The potatoes are imported
Who can remember the crime rate?
Anywhere?

This island is a paradise
Never mind the cold fools
Suffering up North
Never mind the hungry
Who notices the poor?

The sun is all you care about
The million degrees of heat
Plasma feeding the earth
While you lie there
A human sacrifice

—Renee Yewdaev

Green

Rain reminds me of the past
Wild tribes chasing Romans
Where forests hide the enemy
My window drenched in green
Always green, never gray

—Renee Yewdaev

The orange rays burned my eyes
And all I could see was red
I could hear the waterfall
Rushing behind me in a powerful
Surge that seemed so beautiful
When I finally saw it in the fading light

At first light
I opened my eyes
Startled by the beautiful
Sounds coming from the red
Bird's powerful
Voice intertwining with the sounds of the waterfall

I gazed into the pool by the waterfall
And placed the red
Hibiscus I had picked, so beautiful

I loved this beautiful
Place by the waterfall
Especially at dusk when the red
Light
Shadows everything before my eyes

A world of moss can be beautiful
Especially when the water pouring down the waterfall
Catches the stray ray of light

—Renee Yewdaev

Red Balloon

Everyone should have a red balloon
Outside their window
Replace it once a week and maybe
Add a yellow ball onto a bare winter branch

Don't let the squirrels steal the red balloon
Or pop it
(They delight in doing so)

Children should not be disappointed
Orange balloons are very happy
Especially when they follow a black goat
Wearing a pink ribbon

—Renee Yewdaev

Sounds of Primordial Worlds

The Amazon in spring
Weaving through danger
The piranhas always waiting
As the image unfolds and her warp continues to fly
The illusion of a raindrop
Competing with the sounds of birds outside the window

Cars passing in the rain
The silence that comes with fear
Plane hanging low in the sky
Was this chance music?

The world often becomes a discordant orchestra
Was this what Stravinsky imagined?
A world of sound
Where the mist competes with engines?

Shrouds waving in the air
The tapestry's silver thread contrasting with the weaver's red hair
Strains of music masking
Sounds of traffic below
Misting rain bringing coolness

Desert landscape all around me
But my eyes are drawn to green

—Renee Yewdaev

Waiting for the A

I step onto the platform and wait just like them

Walking towards just the right spot indicated by the graffito
"Miz Porky's Gang Was Here"
Wondering once again about the odd name
And why anyone would willingly walk down there

Staring at the floor
Full of black circles—antique gum
These floors are filthy

I guess the MTA is making a statement
We say our city is the greatest but do we really mean it
Or is it just because it's what we know
Crowded in rush hour
Always noisy
Dirt being the predominant color

Incapacitated by fire
Stalled by snow
What do they do in Moscow?
Hang chandeliers while the people starve?

At least we don't have to worry
About people pushers like they do
In Tokyo
Here everyone pushes themselves

I shouldn't complain
London's system is older
They have their own problems
But how come theirs is so much cleaner?

—Renee Yewdaev

Trifid Nebula

The burst of red at the edge

Hovering as if deciding where to go
The little sun in the middle
Feeding the monster around it

Will there ever be a closer look?
Is that amorphous green cloud really there?

We plan for the future
Prepare for the unexpected even if it's
Millions of years away

We forget the present
In our dreams of a "better tomorrow"
Repeating mistakes that are built into
Our human nature

Does a chimpanzee know greed?

If we degenerate, how will we know?

Maybe some life on that green cloud
Wonders too, and
What will we do if we get an answer?

One of those blue specks
Might have a moon with a blue sky
Water rushing down

Will the earth tilt from shock?
And will we feel it?

—Renee Yewdaev

A Sight Worthy of Inspiring Stalin

It's funny to think of the Municipal Building
Influencing someone so opposed to capitalism
The lifeblood of New York City

It stands there amidst its neighbors
The drama of the sun's rays
Shimmering on a golden statue—*Civic Fame*
Looking over City Hall

Perhaps it makes sense considering the stylistic elements
Roman Imperial mixing with Renaissance Revival
Presenting an insight—the desire for empire

Revolutions often lead to failures
Blood begetting blood
Until it becomes impossible to distinguish the tyrant

They're called Stalin's Skyscrapers—Moscow University and the rest
Should I find it funny that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and the Ministry of Transport are included?

These seven sisters stand tall
Remains of a collapsed era
When corruption ruled people's daily lives

Having money you cannot spend
Have money with nothing to buy
You go underground—the system hasn't really changed

—Renee Yewdaev

The Last Waltz

Her silk gown rustles with every movement as if to beckon forward
But she's alone with only a mirror to appreciate the flow of her skirts
She stands on her pillared balcony gazing down at the taxi below

The violinist plays down there below on the paved stone bricks
While high above the trees on the rooftop grow, their tips peering shyly over the cornice
The black poodle with its tail waving in the wind crosses the street unnoticed

She stands there for over an hour and still he does not come
A bus arrives and a handful of tourists climb on but no one gets out
Another taxi pulls in, an elderly couple with a cream poodle on a leash

There is no one there and yet she continues to wait with her rainwater eyes full of hope
The oval fountain continues to flow as the flags move above
First a small flicker, followed by a shift and finally the flags display themselves fully

Pointing to her standing there one hand grasping the stone railing with a tight grip
"He should have been here by now," she whispers and then she turns away
Blue chiffon disappearing behind the French doors while a siren screams in the distance

—Renee Yewdaev

Janelas

The name calls to me
with praise;
that never knows the dates;
he names the fugitive
in the arbor; that chicken
embarked on the chapel;
The name of the soldier;
that hat in the aviary;
asked the way
to the mysterious hour
to the middle of the way;
in the form of a navy
That Anna so adores.

—Renee Yewdaev