

*Dog in the Meadow*  
Leonard Baskin  
Etching on paper  
Gift of Alfred Appel, Jr., 2009



**Dog in the Meadow**  
*by Abby Millager*

Dog, you are melting down, having pricked  
your nose on a spindle of milkweed. A hundred-year tangle  
has twisted up. You were such a good dog – never bit  
or worried. And moments of glory – Leap Day Sundays,  
turkey buzzard carcasses dragged, unpunctured, from that swamp –  
did occur.

Then you were young  
and in love with yourself and the Mardi Gras dancer  
who bound your torn dew claw in her dresser scarf.

Everything was food or not food.

But, as with marriage, sometimes  
nothing kills a dog.

One day, he slips, climbing out of the pond. He neglects  
to fetch. Birds stop minding him. His tail turns  
into an artificial limb.

Practically everything tastes like metal.

(  
How a dog lowers his head, where  
he buries his bones, how  
a dog goes soft  
in a meadow...  
)

You become immune  
to all known things: brick house, cat with the velvet throat –  
the whole litter of memory, now – motes in the skeleton  
of light at rest  
in the arms of the bramble.

*Wolf Robe - Cheyenne*  
Leonard Baskin  
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**The Flower Of The Throat**  
*for my great-grandmother*

*by Maggie Rowe*

Pillars of mind, of vision, of story, of place  
frame this mystery rising on a thin stem:

though lights and shades of a face may fade  
this flower will not curl down,

though flowers in the winter wall shrink back  
and babies one by one turn blue and leave,

though coals in the stove lie thick with ash  
and fog closes over the sigh of the sea,

though all the patted cakes, knit coats, hopes, loves,  
all the fires the mother built have gone,

though she folds her little ones in lavender,  
though spring won't come.

She throws out the last crumbs, smooths the cloth to dry.  
Tender, the thin stem of her neck rises.

She leaves her winter place in a fresh dress  
tidily, her pearls boxed away.

They find her like a flower strung from a kitchen beam to dry,  
protected from winter, her mystery rising on a thin stem,

and, though the lights and shades of her face have faded,  
the flower of her throat will not curl down.



**Dear Elizabeth**

*re: works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Leonard Baskin*

*by Abby Millager*

I keep going back and forth;  
two men's renderings –  
which one loved you more?

All the first

could think: your hair,  
its coaxing dream –  
that poppy-colored coastline  
every passing ship  
must slide into

and those lips –  
silenced bees  
drowsing at the blossom end  
of winterized fruit.

Much later, this  
other man

– having stripped  
the paint away  
and saved you  
from all that beauty,  
blanched  
nose and chin  
rising like hackles  
over your death –

he etches  
your teeth.



*Death Among the Thistles*  
Leonard Baskin  
Wood engraving on paper  
Gift of Alfred Appel, Jr., 2009



*Death among the Thistles*  
by JoAnn Balingit

Out here in this leggy light

the real is trashy, luminous

altogether arbitrary

like the moon a collision

threw at our meaning

of beauty, sinking

like the face of a loved one

whose dark secret bristles

posture in November

a shade of purple I can only call

a truce with the sky

and its endless ghosts

Regarding Leonard Baskin's portrait of Wm Blake:

by Abby Millager

**I'm not listening! I am flying.**

A perilous path divides his face: the public side,  
its lucid pupil, its respectable shading —

and the Other — black river gushing  
from the Galaxy of Un-Reason. Yes

the eye is there but the eye is blind — overexposed,  
a burn, a Peephole

to the Infinite. God  
is every Man, Blake's voices say. *One thought,*

*fills immensity.*

I search my own head:

there are Pastries and Paradoxes  
and Orchestrations  
of the Angels of Hell  
I must attend to,

there are Worlds at stake,  
Powers and Energies dragging their prey  
through clumps of grass, clouds  
boiling down  
the harsh declines  
of Judgment's shoulders.

*Exuberance is Beauty;*

I find Racks and Blades and Buckets and Fires,  
and Scaffolds to swing from — I can stand the rope!

but I can't smash past  
those smeary windows  
you people hold me to.

*The soul of sweet delight, can never be defil'd.*

Gluttonize! Fornicate! STOP STOPPING ME!

You don't know what God wants.



William Blake  
Leonard Baskin  
1962  
Etching on Japon paper  
Gift of Alfred Appel, Jr., 2009

## ***The Great Tree***

by JoAnn Balingit

The great tree stands in a corner of your youth, massively  
gathering rings, and sidles up close  
to your fallow birth while you are not looking

to peer down through your life  
as if over a cliff, sheer tree, more connected  
than were you much of the time

to your body, here beneath  
gazing up at the limbs  
you climbed like years

into a being you loved, anchor  
in loss and in times of plenty when  
it dropped its leaves and made you see

how provisional things were, as with fruit  
or family squandered, made you see  
life was not so good

nor yet so bad as you might think  
when its layers darkened  
and blew away. Your life

is slower now, you almost  
quiet sometimes, shedding leaves that whisper  
where they lie. Everybody knows a tree

she sooner or later returns to, no matter what  
the excuses for roaming old streets  
where the great tree was nanny, the one

who may not grow old, who blossomed  
manna you risked limbs for, climbing  
into the trunk, knees tucked to chin

in a womb, great tree  
of longing, of fledglings  
always about to fall

from the nest of feathers you dream.



*The Great Tree*  
Leonard Baskin  
1962  
Etching on paper  
Gift of Alfred Appel, Jr., 2009

*Angel of Death*

Leonard Baskin

1959

Woodcut on paper

Gift of Nina Appel, 2009

**The artist bursts in, drawing his knives**

by Maggie Rowe

He cuts the feathers that are the shoulders of the angel of death,  
the mouth that is the closed cave of the angel of death,  
the nostrils that are the oubliettes  
stuffed with black air that has our scent

The angel of death has our torso.  
He greets evil black to black wherever it has torn us,  
Shouldering in wherever flesh lies.

No shock for us behind that closed door:  
the uncovering artist has stared him down  
exposing the jet hand that is the shadow  
of the cock of the angel of death, showing us  
how those feathers have taken the veins of our lungs  
and fills themselves with our air.

At our threshold the fierce, naked,  
blessed artist imprints himself, making mortal  
those square cheeks, those netted balls,  
that white throat, those thighs.  
He is our agent. The angel's eyes roll back.



*Death Among the Thistles*  
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**From What Thistles Risen**

by L.J. Sysko



Turning its un-nimble heft,  
what the momentous whale may summon--  
raising an impossible eye, from  
blue-black inkwell to  
agate-stone sky--with  
  
what unknown language may it  
form lamentation. Blame,  
ideology, demagoguery, soldered rungs  
of an antique ladder. What frail things,  
we drift from nebulous cloud to packed bank  
  
swimming earth-bound, seeking with white-  
blinded eyes what air passes through sodden  
lashes. Expectation abounds forever.  
Water-rush past ears and blubber and bone,  
we fall to the bottom bed, sifted by our  
  
brothers, billowing inside our wild balloon.

Sea and stars, divorced, seam midnight  
to midnight. Unless  
what's leaden yields up— from frond and fossil—  
a face silhouettes beneath magma and sand,  
  
cracks, then leavens. Risen— a pink visage—  
in relief, articulate nostrilled, baby-fatted  
cheeks. Like a glinting ax among sylvan green,  
her tongue rests behind lips mouthing,  
*Wait for your story.* The craven womb

of the masses, the withered, wintered-over  
sticks and tree rubble, what forest,  
what sea, what tundra, taiga, wetland—  
what desert is this? And the words tumble,  
arcane and new, bold and meek, defenseless,

merciless. Before Time.

And fear and hope and tragedy. Before the  
rubber stamp, the ledgers, papers, numbers,  
tattoos. We're ancient. We wait the way the  
creek-stone offers its wrist to water. Mountain  
  
and valley and glacier and flame crept close

during the night and lay down  
between our feet. This is daylight  
smoking, sweating and the stars drip  
down her sides running with acrid tendrils

to the tide. Whale spray cradle,  
mud-dragged creation – *it's time,*  
*time.* Time.

The last leaf lets go  
and the moon, singing, shuts her eyes.