

June 2006

## The Hands of Fra Angelico

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### Recommended Citation

Dove, Linda (2006) "The Hands of Fra Angelico," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 29.  
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol6/iss1/29>

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## Dove: The Hands of Fra Angelico

THE HANDS OF FRA ANGELICO

Linda Dove

*Cloisters of San Marco, Florence*

Each monk sleeps with a fresco, each cell  
a painted window. Christ's birth, baptism,  
the Harrowing of Hell, the Lamentation. *Noli  
me tangere*, Christ waves off the Magdalene  
as he hefts his hoe past palm tree and tomb.  
At night, these Dominicans contemplate  
their walls by candle flame: the shell-pinks,  
the pea-greens, lavender, orange, chartreuse.  
Gabriel's wings are a butterfly's coat, a peacock's  
folded fans. They stir the air, haloed  
with anticipation. Who will turn the angels  
white-feathered, after all? Who draws the blood?  
These wings stain prayers. The words  
whispered before them sound like song. In some  
cells, it is different. In some cells, hands flap  
around the Christ, gnat-like. Disembodied,  
they slap and fist His face. Fingers offer nails  
to whatever handyman tacks Him up. Heads  
spit, palms collect silver. None of them  
connect. They spin in space, human parts  
orbiting a godhead's dreams.