

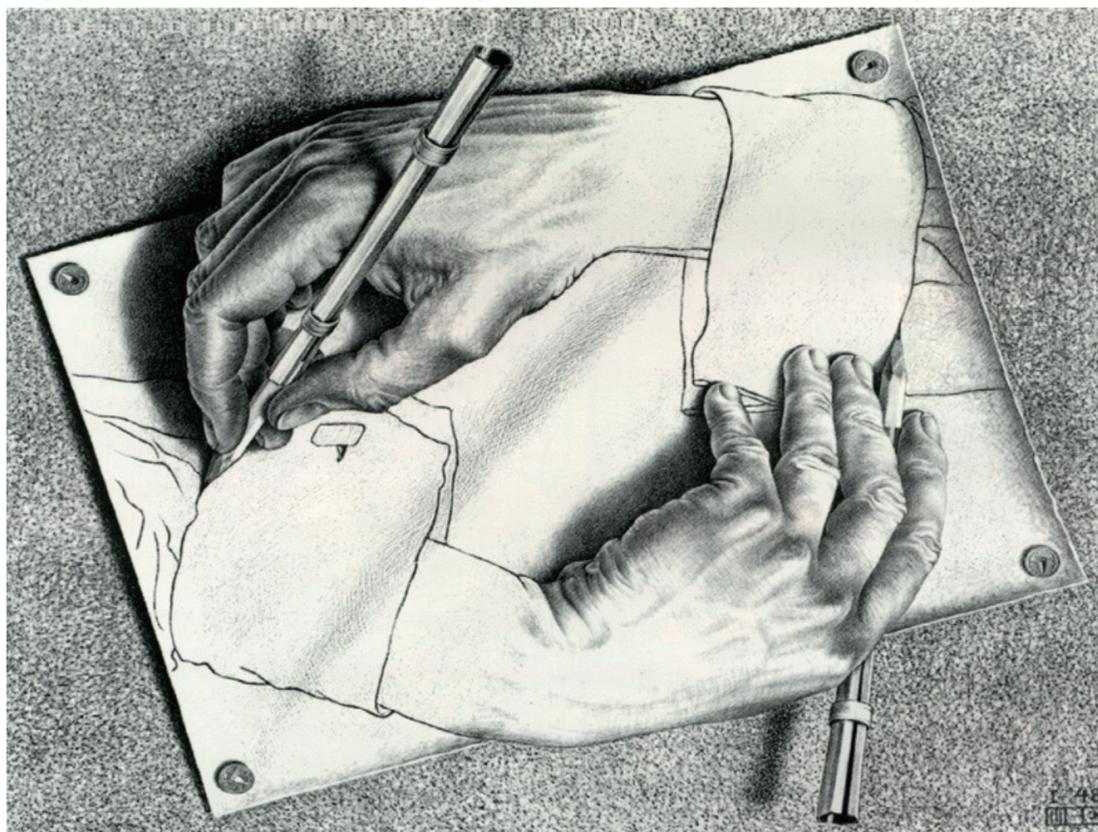
# Eleanor Tecosky-Feldman

Philadelphia, PA  
Poetry/Creative Writing  
Thesis Advisor: Peter Filkins

## A sequence of twelve poems structured like a season of an hour long television drama answering the question: how are television and poetry connected?

I am doing a creative thesis which will be an exploration of the connections between poetry and television. I will be writing a sequence of twelve poems structured like the first season of an hour long television drama. Originally I wanted to do the standard number of episodes for a TV season (22) but due to time constraints my “series” will have to be on HBO rather than FOX. Each poem will be approximately 3-4 pages in length, telling a self contained story but also advancing the larger narrative arc of the season. The poems will “break” in the same way that an hour-long TV drama does, with a teaser, four acts, and tag.

I am choosing to write in poetry rather than prose because I believe television and poetry have a lot in common. They both have the ability to distill the essence of a relationship, idea, or emotion within a few frames, or with a few words. Poetry will allow me to best approximate the way the camera can convey a feeling with little inner monologue from the characters (as one would expect in a play or novel). The formulaic aspect of television is also similar to the way poets use established forms, such as the sonnet. The audience has certain expectations, and the skillful poet and director can manipulate those expectations to make a point about the



conventions of the medium, the characters in the story, or even a social issue. Formula need not be formulaic; it can be playful, even fun. These are issues I will explore in the critical portion of my thesis, along with ideas drawn from film theory and media studies. I expect this critical portion of my thesis will be about twenty to twenty-five pages long.

Having watched many TV shows, I became interested in the way the formula of a TV show and the required repetition can be used to let the audience live alongside a character and grow with them in something approaching “real time.” The need for repetition also lets the writer take a theme and examine it from many different angles—a TV show can be a meditation on a central idea, such as

in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or a character, such as in *House*. TV shows that have continuing stories build themselves slowly, often by introducing a plot point or character, leaving it for an episode or two, and then circling back to it. This is related to the way rhyme in a stanza builds on itself, using similar sounds as an engine to drive the poem forward. For this project I will have to create a new form—one that includes the narrative structure of a teleplay, the forward motion of terza rima, and the “circling-back” motion of a sestina. I believe that the sestina takes a word and exposes different connotations and facets of it in the same way a TV show is able to expose a character by putting them in many small stories, instead of one great one. The possibilities for character development grow exponentially in this way. This is another thing I will be exploring in my thesis: what can poetry do for character?

And what is a form without a story to tell in it? While reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* I became interested in the contention Satan makes that perhaps he wasn't created by God but created himself. In Milton's poem, Satan is lying, but I wondered: what would it mean if someone *had* created him or herself? How do we “create ourselves” every day? The idea of creating oneself is powerful metaphor for the process of writing, where every character is like a different outfit the writer tries on. My protagonists will be two children whose parents, in the great tradition of parents in children's stories, are missing. But when they go on their journey try to find their parents they figure out they never *had* any. What will other people make of the children's ability to bring themselves into being? What do the children make of it? If we create ourselves, to what extent must we be responsible for ourselves? Is that always possible? I want to explore the idea that humans continually create themselves—identity is ever-evolving, and the same event or person at a different time in ones life takes on a whole new meaning. Each time we circle back, the thing we circle back to has changed, because we ourselves have changed.