

Prompt: Write an Ode

Ode to Skin by Pepita Soto

Skin turns on all my senses.

My own skin is softly fragrant, but sometimes outright smelly. I often thought that as Americans we are obsessed with NO SMELL. When I began to reject the NO SMELL, I truly cannot pinpoint. I believe that even as a quite young child I loved both the silkiness AND the smell of my mother's hair. And my father's tobacco smell - comfort smells.

I was a thumb sucker until I was 6. In my first-grade classroom, I obviously could not suck me thumb, but I remember sneaking into the coat closet for a quick suck of that smelly thumb - AAHH! Both the feel and the smell brought me such comfort!

Another memory from that time - the skin smell of another first grader, James Reed, the only other non-white child in my UWS elementary school, was so alluring. Did I find a soul smell at such a tender age?

Should I even delve into the smells of my adolescence? Why not? At 16 I imagined myself a full-fledged adult, smelling the cigarette smoke left by my clandestinely smoked Parliaments. I remember smelling my own arm and finding a sensual pleasure in the sweaty, soapy, creamy smell of my own body...

This sensory alertness seems to have either waned or metamorphed as years have passed. Now I am more attuned to the smells of food, flowers, and friends.