



4-15-2005

When I Grow Up

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.14.17>

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Recommended Citation

Wren, James (2005) "When I Grow Up," *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*. Vol. 14 , Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.14.17>

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol14/iss1/17>

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James Wren
When I Grow Up

12 November, 1952

at six years old
already lord, laid alongside a few of the finer arts
crying myself fast asleep
from an adjoining room
my mother held back tears enough for us all
as she blanketed two younger siblings tight
against the chills of a cold
hard
world
and the unrepentant words
of sinecure fathers
shadows of men
men
 --pint-sized boys made for no exception,
 according to the rule book--
had to be just that,
men
real men

against such ends and odds
I would venture forward, forewarned,
on occasion and into the darkness
and
share,
"When I grow up,"
whispered between sobs,
"I'm gonna be an angel."
. . . . and somehow amidst the blur of
tear-filled nights

When I Grow Up

caustic days
I pull myself up
into personal freedom
knowing
I'll grant my own wish in that adjoining room
with a secondhand pair of wings
singed dark and deep as any moonless night already spent
mine would be

manly
 loveless and lovely
feather-light