

URBAN TAPESTRY

My oar dollops the water, ravel the reflection:
Bridges above me—giant warps over river,
lanes, tracks, the yarns of my childhood.
Creeks were my flosses, keeping my linings
from fraying, keeping me close
to the ways of catfish and beavers. My origins
were up there in a garden-patch bungalow
once atop that burrowing segment of superway—
Now the new tunnel, breechloaded with cars,
blasts a volley of steel across the bow
of my small boat. The half-hoop of iron bridge
steadies the warning appliqued on carbon sky.
An oil barge passes me, rocks me
under the new span, into its shadow and roar,
and I think of the old hilly thunder
prowling the pinestand across the county,
unmuffled by rows of stacked people-bins
thwarting its rounds and teasing the lightning.
The barge slides the river, a disease-bearing
shuttle, its slimy wake smearing the bend
where my slow fever swears
the bones of my old home lie. Torn memories
underweave the weft of the city,
and I've run out of thread leading to freedom.

This writing accomplished what neither reason nor rationale (including Chamber of Commerce hype) had been able to do for me. It provided a means for confronting a recurrent side effect of city life. Those who grow up and remain in the same city as it devours the props of their early years must be especially susceptible. The condition is nameless, sometimes depressing, hard to define in a society that equates more and bigger with progress. For one thing it makes us doubt some of our past predicates and perceptions upon which others are built. (Surely I didn't walk from that Interstate cloverleaf to study music in a Gothic relic where the all-glass bank now stands!) This is a vague uneasy kind of loss which may or may not need mourning, often less dramatic than loss of landscape, wildlife habitat, natural beauty. It includes loss of small buildings, roads, monuments—the patterns and textures of life around them, the weave of a place, the connectors. Change constantly picks at the weave until one day it's recognized as a kind of threat. Since I'm part of the weave it may be my own unraveling I fear. Personal freedom is mostly myth since we're all tied to our surroundings. Cutting loose merely swaps one weave for another. Thus I scraped up bits of this fabric's lint scattered in the mind, exposed them to light and finally articulation in a personal metaphor. As the disquietude was identified and combed, my place in the tapestry seemed to lie more smoothly. And despite the downturned end of the poem, the idea of a textile creation suggests there are still ways to control the design. It's pliable metaphor for many subjects.

Glenna Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville, Illinois
60565

NARRATIVE FOR THE TEN O'CLOCK NEWS

"How does it feel to be one of the lucky ones?"
Feel? Why, I'm numb, I— Get that microphone out of my face!
 How would you expect me to feel waking in the middle
 of the tracks sticky with somebody else's blood, people
 crying, jackknifed train cars, sirens— I told you—
 get that thing away from me! If you can't be of help, leave!
 No, wait.
 I will talk to you, young man.
 I used to ache to lend your victims the words
 they couldn't form from grief
 when you trapped them in their tragedies.
 Their contempt for your cameras and recorders raged
 in their eyes, the revulsion their dry mouths
 couldn't relieve, the disbelief that you could stick a probe
 inside their misery, that you could stand there and preside
 over their shaking, their nausea and fear...
 So while you glibbed and simpered over their misfortune,
 milked it for the last tear
 that might make another second's worth of viewing
 or newscopy, they had to suffer you on top of whatever
 brought you running with your trade tools and cliché questions.
 "How does it feel?"
 Look around you. People in shock can barely remember
 how to work their hands and feet.
 Do you suppose someone will pour profoundest meaning
 into your pitiful wires and boxes? Fill them
 with priceless wisdom? Injury and death plead for privacy.
 It's a time for looking away unless you're giving aid.
 But you, sir, are the vilest kind of merchant,
 peddling such things like cheap drama,
 a vehicle for toothpaste ads and used car pitches.
 Do you know what a wife is? A baby? If you'll raise
 that blanket over there you'll find one of each.
 Go ahead. It should make your reputation for unflinching
 gut-level reporting. I thank God they aren't relatives
 of mine. But they could be yours.
 If they are, I'll direct your cameras
 and ask you how you feel.

*This made
the top 10*

SUPERSTITION STANLEY WAS HIS NAME

Elongated scrawn with burro eyes in a mat of tawny hair, camouflaged for chaparral and rocky canyon as well as any coyote, he had the look of ocotillo in a drought. Mostly he dug gold or silver out of other men's mines—the Red Cloud; Old Yuma; Defiance: Oro Blanco. He glory-holed with the best nugget busters in the west, bed-rolled with dust-baggers gone rich to Phoenix long ago.

For awhile he worked the Glove near Tuscon, left there to probe the Atacosa Mountains on his own, moved on to the Apache, gambled every game in Globe, bellied every bar in Bisbee. He was born, he said, in a hollow saguaro, his ma a fox, his pa a Texas badger.

Each time he disappeared for a year or so, the tales began again, sprung up like California poppies after the spring rain. They clung to him like cactus spines to sheepskin chaps. Whispers claimed he'd found the Dutchman near the Gila River, or someone saw him panning in the Salt and swore he smiled and vanished into sand. One home-styled seer vowed the Superstitions held secret Pueblo tribes in caves above the mine and Stan lived down below: The Lost Dutchman was the kiva hall for all Kachinas, the miner man a spirit-scout assigned to mislead searchers, to bandy them about in a pine-maze spell, raise their hair with sad soul-winds and crazed sidewinders. The recipe for legend never lacks a cook—some charros even took it back to Mexico.

Stan surfaced last in Morenci, leftover from the past like a head-frame towering the weeds of a town turned ghost. He lingered on the edge of people's knowing like narrow gauge rails going to a closed-down shaft. Sometimes he tipped a waitress' chunks of rarest wulfenite or velvet green malachite with full bull's-eyes, or royal azurite. "Arizona treasure," he would say, "Nicer than that yellow stuff. A piece of sky, a slice of spruce."

Now and then he leaned against the rough-sawn boards of the Rusty Gut Saloon, still as a chilled chuckwalla, just as sudden gone. One Tuesday night he died in bed at Bristol's Boarding House, same as any used-up man. And people kind of grieved. But no one ever believed his crystal finds were all he had; he never hid a thing.

YOU ALMOST MADE ME SORRY

Don't think I believe
you've changed.
For awhile I was impressed
with your strange skill,
your spring-loaded will
to survive, the way you flourish
despite the odds.
You seem so disadvantaged,
the archetype underdog,
under bush and porch,
under log and boot and tire.
Deprived of wing or claw
or even fin, forced to move
on basest bone design,
made to dine deformed,
unarmed, on ghastly meals
seasoned with your own rage—
I was near ready to forgive,
to reason you a victim
of legend's libel till I recalled
you're party to an ancient contract
and credit for success
is nowise yours.
For a moment last night uncoiled
beside the lily bed, your eyes
betrayed you; a freak Freudian slip
of your slit tongue and an unnatural
warmth belied your touch.
You're still very much his emissary.

October
94/27

ONCE UPON AN OFFBEAT

Just because you warmed yourself in an old beret
on the floor of the Second Hand Shop--
Just because a part-time cop
thought you looked like Maurice Chevalier
when his burglar-hunting flashlight beam
was checking out your noise--
Just because your wit and poise
cons him out of cream
and chicken and fresh-caught fish,
don't think I don't know
who you are and where you go
when you blink, stretch and vanish.

Frenchy, you're not fooling me
when April smells slant through the kitchen screen
and elastic springtime shadows lean
against the hickory.
You take your stub tail to a farther home,
silent answer on quilted spade feet
stalking an older untame beat
your blood remembers, nose in cool loam,
dew and moss-green tang, claw in spicy bark.
I can't catch you bellied in the meadow rue
but sometimes you leave a bony clue
on the zagging trails you mark.

Your friend, the cop, can usually spot a fraud
but you play the continental comic so well
you've got him badge and baggage in your spell,
you pagan appetite, big eyed and pawed!
He thinks you're an innocent fur-coated loser,
but generations back, say two or three,
a brazen bobcat climbed your family tree.
It won't be long before you're a bruiser.
You've already added full-grown rabbits to your diet
and for days I've missed that old horned owl.
Your sleep-shredding sound is no housecat's yowl;
you're also a master of quiet.

Our lawman calls you his mascot, his best one.
He doesn't see the lurk-and-lunge-at-prey
designed in your shoulder, neck and jaw at play.
Still, I'll buy your act, book you for a long run.
I know you're part savage and uncouth--
well, Frenchy, I've got wildling genes myself,
no sign of pedigree or pelf,
thank God. We'll share the strains of truth.

THEORY OF RELATIVITY: THE FELINE FACTOR

The fourth dimension
is better understood now
living with a life form
that claims the realm of clocks
and calendars as its own.
The lesson wanders home
circuitous orbits of shadow and shine
skyward tail aquiver with equations
ending in a distinctive warp
its wearer owes to lunar time
advanced in arcane ritual.

Between his multi-lives out there
my lap is a warm space station
sometimes not fully approved.
I learn minute increments
of days and nights slowly
while waiting for the sidewise approach
of distance
to rub my shins with forgiveness.

OLD WIVES THE TALES COME FROM

Crocheting string doilies, collars, antimacassars
no one wants, filling boxes, filling huge cotton prints,
sleeves sloping like tents, hooks unfastened
back of the neck, they string out
death in rocking chairs.

Daily they fatten to fill their final boxes,
paying out the slow twine, words no one hears,
advice no one needs, enlarging the old designs.

Back and forth they strain fifty-odd years of wifery
for a mite to impress the young ones
tightening against their webs and cardboard,
closing in with the last lid.

Frayed sheaths
used awhile by knife-voiced kin
who own everything in focus
outside the net of squares and wheels.

On humid suburban evenings, on some deserted
concrete patio, they group like toadstools,
picking at the threads of the days' patterns,
unraveling their mouths,
honing their only weapons.

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Top 670
(397 poems)

REPERTORY

Sea wind is a bright wind,
a bleached white wind even in the dark.
It has a satin-shiny plane, a glinting edge.
It's shaped like a boomerang.

Sea wind is a searcher that never gives up,
examining the cut of your clothes, the color
of your hair. Street-wise, it hassles and hustles.

Fridays it's a witch win^d, imprecating
from the mouth of covens, banking riddles off rocks,
trailing mischief through your^{eye}/lashes.

Sea wind is a broken song
fallen through the treble staff, snagged
on ragged edges, flapping discontent.

It's a summer stalker, sneaking through crevices,
insinuating, breaking and entering, hurling epithets.
It wakes you and rakes you, intimate as sin,
indifferent as it goes, nobody's confidant.

Some nights it's a thief, heisting half the moon
for ransom, promising things it can't deliver
and taking what you have.

Just because you hold it in a sail
don't think it has reformed.

TROMPE L'OEIL

It means deception of the eye,
this unique art form
making us believe nonexistent things.
Your den's north wall appears
as bookshelves of brightly bound classics,
a bust of Homer, Ming censers, brass pots
trailing ivy and florescence.
The clever painter lies, then provides
real scent of roses to satisfy the nose.
But the hand that tries to grasp a volume
of verse or feel jade's carved coolness
resents being made a fool. And still the eye
insists, forcing another confrontation
with flatness. So must I resolve you
in the brain's right and left privacies,
in the unlighted offshoots
that don't remember facts.
Another artist has blue'd your eyes
with faithfulness and burnished your skin
with sweet shades. Sometimes my hand
finds heat and roundness much more
than a match for illusions of sight.
No place wanting softness or substance
goes empty. Yet I know I'll touch again
that one-dimension hardness,
try to hold the light that isn't there,
face that depthless smile.
And all your old false colors
will shame me for my blindness.

35C

2nd place
This is sure to be a
winner in another contest -
maybe another of ours.
It is a fine poem.

FISCAL ADDRESS TO OURSELF

25A

This meeting will now come to order. As Chairman of the Board, I refuse to be threatened, refuse to be a figurehead without real authority, and refuse to permit foreign interests to infiltrate my carefully designed system. With proper input and firm guidance, we can continue as a well integrated body. Ergo, the liver will perform as programmed, effective immediately, the gut will stop being hyper, the heart will continue to function according to the general plan, and all employees will be well advised to remember who is in charge.

It has also been noted that there is a certain covert recalcitrance and sloth in top management reaching all the way to the Board. Stockholders tend to become nervous over absenteeism. Major decisions should not be resolved by proxy. Some members exhibit a nilly-nally approach to problems. Others do not have a bottom-line grasp of procedure. Forgetfulness is a major issue. All these things result in lost business, slow-downs, nonproductivity. Constant attendance is vital to prevent short circuits in the in-house communications network. Understand, all of you— I have no intention of resigning.

THE BOTTOM LINE AT THE UPTOWN SESTINA STAR STUDIO

25B

We're talent scouting for six words
Elite enough to pose six times
Exposed in loose-end bas-relief,
And again in the last scene's core.
What verve they'll need, what windshield nerve!
Dun & Bradstreet should list such worth!

Once hired, we pay by market worth
Less agency percent. Some words
Hit big then burn out fast; the nerve
Of one pronoun is raw at times.
Adjectives get frayed to the core.
We may provide pills for relief.

Here at Central Casting, relief
Only comes with proven net worth.
We look for pith, a solid core
Of guts when we audition words.
It takes muscle and wit these times,
Know-how to punch or tweak a nerve.

Soft female endings lacking nerve
Must rely on comic relief.
Even if they bounce with the times,
They still must serve a sentence worth
Its space, and top all other words.
Heights wilt cliches with hollow core.

It's a jungle, baby. Sweet-core
Vowels and sucrose-drip pall nerve-
Ends eighties-wired for mach-four words.
You just won't do! Go on relief.
We've got to get our Webster's worth,
Can't shine with shades of former times.

Next? No imitations, please. Times
Rage. Shock is in, even hard-core
Truth can steal center stage, now worth
As much as fiction when peeled nerve
Plays the lead. Bored fans find relief
In violence voicing-over words.

You has-been words, at certain times
You're pure relief for jaded core
And bungled nerve. You may have worth.

THE POTTER OF THE RED HILLS

My hands are ancient:
 Older than the painter's, that stick-man
 who lost his best dimension in a cave,
 older than the lightning god's gift.
 Older than the hands of the wood worker
 and the stone carver who made man a hunter.
 Man was born a gatherer. He was born thirsty.
 Mud leaks slower than woven leaves and grass.
 My hands molded wet dirt; sun dried it.
 Unlasting as a meal.

It wasn't an accident: Don't believe
 tales about forgetful old women
 leaving clay cups in newly mastered embers,
 finding precious substance in cold ashes.

Too thick or thin, too wet, too coarse—
 exploded, fractured—ceramics
 miscarried often but had no careless birth.

It was my hands made man a storer,
 preserver, trader, foundations for peace.
 My fingers fashioned beads strung on willow
 to mark a woman mine.

My palms made the first wheel,
made two with center holes for a stick,
a plaything, a lost exclamation point in time
defined by rock.

You later ones
blessed with knowing hands,
never forget the source. Clay must be hunted,
seasoned with digger's sweat, praise words
and promise words placed inside Earth's wound.
Creation breathes in her marrow,
the raw dough of eternity
waiting to be baked like bread.

Entrusted with mounds of her living self
willing to your touch, remember me,
remember all the hands that formed before

each time you make another miracle
and yield it to the fire.

Glenna Holloway
913 Bailey Rd.
Naperville, IL 60540

URBAN TAPESTRY

Glenna Holloway

My oar dollops the water, raveling the reflection:
Bridges above me—giant warps over river,
lanes, tracks, the yarns of my childhood.
Creeks were my flosses, keeping my linings
from fraying, keeping me close
to the ways of catfish and rabbits.
My origins were up there in a garden-patch bungalow
once atop that burrowing segment of superway—
now the new tunnel, breechloaded with cars,
blasts a volley of steel across the bow of my small boat.
An oil barge passes me, rocks me under the new span
then slides down-river like a disease-bearing snail
spinning its slimy wake above the deep muck
where my slow fever thinks the bones of my old home lie.
Their fading cries underweave the weft of the city.



July 12, 1986

Dear Glenna,

Thanks for your note. Yes, indeed, winning the top prize in NFSPS must have been an unbelievable thrill!

Here is a minor one: your poem "The Answering" came in third (second runner-up) for the June CSPA monthly contest. It is excellent, and surely a money winner somewhere soon.

As the enclosed note states, I will no longer be CSPA monthly contest chairman after August 1. I will get out the July entries in August, but Selma Calnan will be doing the August contest.

Thanks for your loyal support of our contests.

Gratefully,

Neil

THE ANSWERING

Runner-up #2

27A

Because no one has ever spoken
Back from here, we have all supposed
This colding seal remains unbroken,
This ancient passage always closed.
If only you who think I died
Could know this is a sweet exchange,
Could hear how boundaries fade inside
The spectrum's unimagined range!

You never would have come to me
Had I remained a normal length
In mortal phase. Can you see
The structured weave, the narrow strength
Of patterns permitting us a place
In that frame's weft? A giddy girl,
A proper gentleman of grace
In middle years allowed to purl

Into the fabric of acceptance?
Not while I lived, but only after,
Could you speak this without the chance
of rebuke or even laughter.
Like you, I never dared express
My secret. Silly child, you might
Have thought. But by this leaf you press
Into my hand, we will unite.

Don't grieve, darling, your words are not
Earthbound. I hear your lover's heart
With mine and don't despair our lot.
New dimensions reweave my part
As they will yours at your last breath.
The cycling portals pivot and spin
On far-off stars that hinge on death—
An old wronged term that means begin.

And by your token I transmit
My pledge through leaf-veined stillness;
We'll meet renewed, a better fit
With time, my touch free of chillness.
It's fitting that my name was Hope—
Oh, never abandon its call
No matter how long transition's scope.
Here time is nothing; love is all.

THE WILDLING

Men called him cougar, mountain lion, puma,
sometimes painter, but he had no need for a name.
"Spirit of the canyons" some tribes proclaimed him,
secret as a Cheyenne shaman, going and coming
from nowhere like a dust devil, just as loose and fierce.
He watched his world through smoky topaz; old arcane fire
embered in the jewels studding quiet gold.

Down from the rimrocks he came, a warm shadow,
moving the same way lava once flowed, remembering
the black obsidian that cut his footpad when he caught
his first vole— barely a chink for the huge hunger-hole
he carried after his mother drove him out of what he knew
as home— a bark-scented cliff-hollow,
creviced with juniper roots, screened
with a twisted fallen trunk and summer acacia shoots.
He and his sister cut teeth and claws on the wood skeleton,
shed their spots in its shade, mastered balance
on its angles and grade. For awhile his life
was a tangle of mother's dark tail-tip and hind legs,
laced with branches and small cones. From a special limb
he could glimpse the up-slant of mountains vignetted
with indigo, purple and olive. Still in sight of his tree

(cont.)

he watched a white sego lily grow tall as his ears
until his compulsion to taste it, found how porcupine grass
tests an inquiring nose, made toys of crickets, learned
the evil noise of a diamondback, saw it strike
his sister. He forgot nothing of his twenty month total,
not even a loggerhead shrike that stored its catch
on lofty pinyon twigs as he stared, all heartbeat and tongue,
mad to be face-level with each winged beak-loaded arrival.
He had quivered with envy and pleasure whenever
his quick mother stole the impaled rodents for him.

Now he was as much fur-sheathed power as she. But new,
unpracticed in the ways of jackrabbits and solitude,
surrounded by drought. His gauntlet was sanded playa,
scorched arroyo, a rancher's buckshot. Shimmering brightness
closed down his eyes, hummed along his nerves, dinned inside
his head like wind. Harried by his belly he passed cholla
and color-comets of ocotillo, hurried by scent-claims
of his kind telling him "Move on, these miles are mine!"

Whatever he touched cracked or broke loudly
in a ring of chaparral; there was no safe bed.
His nostrils began to sting, his tongue
was tainted with an unknown. His topaz burned
from an outside source. Ahead he could hear
scrub oak and manzanita seethe and whistle in flames.
He zigzagged flaring brush and blowing ash; to his left
a stone exploded, pelting his rump with shrapnel.
The dense dark ceiling became a sudden sieve
letting an overhead river fall. He had never seen such rain.

(cont.)

He had never seen fire at all.

A smoke-blinded quail darted toward him;
he borrowed time from fear to eat.

Four more days a migrant, hurting-tired,
prodded by noon-heated odors, moonflash of alien eyes.
He liked the wispy sweetness of sage, the lowered stars,
scurrying skinks patterning the transient surface.
He caught a white-footed rat. It wasn't enough.

He entered piney half-light, became a half-tone crouch
over conifer needles and centipedes, past mariposa yellow
and jabbering jays that couldn't keep a secret. A coyote
tucked behind buckbrush saw the ancient rite of passage,
understood a role was being filled, having early done the same,
knowing too, something would be spilled but never wasted.

All the hungry muscle meshed in ritual rhythm, arched,
elongated, aimed by what his mother traced on his brain
for that moment. The mule deer felt nothing;
shock was swifter than fangs, a rule long perfected.

He was whole at last, auditions over, the part his.
The nameless cat paused to look at his stage—widening
toward metamorphic rock columns and strange shapes.
He climbed outcropped agate streaked with blue,
russet and mauve to match the western sky. He sat
like bronze on a carved plinth watching twilight rise
from the low waiting places, content to know his niche.
High desert felt his triumphant scream; yucca, cloud, beetle,
the tentative stream struggling beyond the straggling trees,
everything that vibrated with his sound was his.

35A

Unnumbered songs and sonnets lie at Nature's feet—
The sentimental drippings from the maudlin tongues of those
Who try to play her essence in a pentametric bleat—
Who do not recognize a whore because she wears a rose!

There was a time I mouthed her psalms, believed her cliché-sweet
In days when April softly feathered hidden wrath's repose—
The resting time before the harlot showed her huge deceit
Concealed in casual breezes and nascent freshet flows.

Her ritual rhymes of season seem to charm the fool esthete;
I see a certain sameness to her sins I would expose.
She trysts with Satan at the poles or on some wild arete,
Then takes back everything she gives, each favor she bestows.

Her languid sighing promise makes her treachery complete:
While all her panders purify her soul with Sunday prose,
She kills a hundred humans spreading out her molten sheet
To lie and birth a bastard peak where no man ever goes.

Benign black clay and turf belie her ancient heat
While many miles below, a devil's cauldron seethes and glows.
Unfathomed plates and fissures and a gaping gulch compete
In stealthy silent movement of opposing jagged rows

Until one day some distant unsuspecting street
Is swallowed writhing, spewing brick and glass and bloody snows.
Then next the sea is seized in manic fists to beat
The fallen shores and hopeless hearths, defenseless to her blows.

Don't trust the warming sunsets she hangs out in retreat,
Or feel at peace because a wanton woman changes clothes.
I've watched her fiery ensign burn the prairie wheat;
I've seen the crops I planted hosting hordes of worms and crows.

She saw my need for rain; she came to my defeat
With flood! The land and I cry out, but still the water grows.
Her slimy signature is the tragic trail's receipt
For homes and roads in muddy shades of sorrow that she sows.

She drives the revolution when rival pressures meet
To funnel down for bridge and barn as though they were her foes.
She makes a pyre of pines to light her masses of conceit,
Then sprinkles forest bone and ash with every blight she knows.

I've smelled her perfumed breath and heard the birds repeat
The legends of her liliated fields, her famous fabled pose.
Oh yes, I've marveled at rebirth, her flaunted favorite feat,
And drunk her moontime magic full of myth and false agos.

She bears my sadness well with her tears of slashing sleet.
Yet I, long bitter, tremble still in autumn's philter throes.
Despite her timeless treason, I once again entreat
Her mercy, all the while recalling cattle that she froze.

She, the brute, the beautiful, capriciously will greet
Each future generation with her wonders and great woes
Until we storm her secret doors and steal the keys to cheat
This reigning house's charnel clutch, this queen we must depose!

*Transposed from Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

This form is called glose, kin
to the rondeau redoublé, beginning
with a quatrain texte, often a quotation
developed in the pattern below. Or. in
Spanish or Portugese ac. to C. Wood p.82

11. Any Traditional Form Except Sonnet

11-A2

1st Place

WILDERNESS

A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, *
The perfect compliments, for now
We share the secret scented pine—
The woods, a book of verse—and thou!

What more could an older lover ask?
Today has waited in my heart,
Mellowed like claret in the cask,
To flow clear-bright from a silver flask.
Is "heart" a passé word apart
From clinic terms? Not in mine.
It's still the source of love and art,
Not cipherable as brain-waved chart.
No brain would think this fare divine—
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine.

The bread is cold, the wine too warm;
Cultured taste should be offended.
My trained eye tells me it may storm;
My inner eye, another form
Of knowing, sees the rain has ended.
Beyond the mind, the fact-framed brow,
My wider center comprehended
Things in yours that touched and blended
With depths of mine and shaped, somehow,
The perfect compliments for now.

Let sophists say all is mental,
Let them call "heart" mawkish and trite;
It's birthplace for all that's gentle,
The fuel-well for transcendental
Wings our heads would keep from flight.
Wilderness is there, and woodbine
Of immortality, in spite
Of death's old weeds and ancient blight.
Far above cerebral timberline
We share the secret-scented pine.

I brought you here beneath this tree
Because your green trail-blazing eyes
Made paths through browning time's debris,
Homed into the place we agree
Is my heart. No need to be wise
Where verdure circles every bough;
Just listen with your branches, rise
On shafts of sun and synthesize
The light. Beauty attends my vow—
The woods, a book of verse, and thou.

Glenna Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville, IL 60565

12 lines

HERITAGE

Glenna Holloway

I know how lovely flowers are,
They're one of our spring crops.
But I prefer this plant by far,
These stalks with fountain tops
and graceful heights of curving greens,
Their sturdy dignity.
I guess it must be in the genes
My mother gave to me.
Wind plays these leaves a lilting way
I've heard since I was born;
With her I learned to hum and sway
In early fields of corn.

ROSES IN THE WOODS

35B

Top 20

It was where my map ended, a hunter's speculation:
The place was half swamp, full of deadness, never owned.
Kudzu vine borrowed skeletons of balsam and berry bush,
snapped off canes for its stalking
of the swatches of good ground fleeing ahead.

An out-of-season quail broke cover, crazing silence;
fallen branches split underfoot. Sudden pointed pain
entered my ankle. Green-brown claws surrounded me.
Beyond, telltale magenta spurted up
like open arteries between birch bones.

It was no man's land, anti-personnel entanglements,
tightrope-walking boughs over redoubts of wood spikes,
caltrops on hidden runners conspiring
with limbs to make trip-nooses. Finally
I curved my fingers around battle-dyed satin,
hunched open-mouthed amid exploding life like a parasite.
All blooming centered in a six foot sweep;
upright tufts of petals hid their stamens
till they dropped. Untame, but never wild.

I prodded languorous green mimics
for a rusty plow, chimney bricks, foundation parts—
things that outlast dooryard ramblers.
But leaf-locked shapes were only broken stumps
and tangled layers of forgotten summers.
No house ever stood.

I returned to the flowers like a dream walker.
My probing stick struck an almost buried boulder.
Vines quivered, veins darkened. The rose defended
like a Medusa until, cursing,
I hacked it with my hunting knife.

Thorn-crude carving on the stone read: Jonas Johnson,
Orphan & Bachelor, 1790—1812. His only wishes were
a grave where he fell & justice for this land he loved.

I don't know why my seasoned eyes were wet and flaming
or why each rose flamed out and fell—
red-blown shrapnel for an instant,
then soft panoply for the breached woven shield.

I go back now and then, but not for quail—
To plant roses
there where the mapmakers quit.

glenn Hallaway

NEW ASSIGNMENT

You still have that Rubaiyat smile
earthy, classic, full of riddles.
Mine was lost somewhere between
Chicago and Beirut and the armpits of India.
Got so it wouldn't stretch back and forth
after I loaned it to an unwashed Picasso-faced kid,
and an old man with a burn I could smell who helped me
the night I blundered into the wrong sector,
and the big Assam mama cursing the bullet holes
in her sari hem between words as my interpreter.
Maybe there's a Xerox of my happy-face
in the bottom of my locker at O'Hare.

You still have those great virescent eyes
homing right to the heart of the matter.
My mouth needs your teaching.

But I'm living at traffic lights
and fast food counters while my editor augers
channels to send me to the right spot in South America.
How I'd love to have dinner with you--
it would be a feast
but I'm afraid
of crystal goblets, music
and flowers that smell sweet.

*Pd. \$2 per ea.
entry fee in
Dec. They
kept them
till May 28
then returned
with my name
written on!*

CSPS MONTHLY CONTESTS - MAY, 1986

Winner: Rose Ann Spaith, Ohio
for "Violet"

1st R-U: Glenna Holloway, Illinois
2nd R-U: Denise Duhamel, New York

135 poems, 46 poets
Prize: \$48.00

*Once upon an Offbeat
made Lap 201*

October Winner: Gail Ghai, PA for "Rocky Mountains, 1957"

Runner-up #1: Suzanne Harvey, CA. #2: Maureen Cannon, N.J.

217 poems from 59 poets. Prize: \$78

JANUARY WINNERS LIST CSPA

NARRATIVE

First Place: Margaret Stavely for "A Dream in Gibeon"

Runner up #1 Glenna Holloway, IL #2 Lois Henley, CA

89 poems from 29 poets Prize \$32.50

CSPA MONTHLY CONTEST
October, 1985

1st prize:

Ruth Stewart Schenley PA
for "Epicenter"

Runner-up #1

Glenna Holloway IL

Runner-up #2

Randall Cadman FL

\$39.00 prize

213 poems, 62 poets