

Holloway
913 Bailey Rd.
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RUWENZORI!

Glenna Holloway

Some still say "Dark Continent"— unenlightened strangers
who look at old sepias and read one page— strangers
who land then leave and never need to shield their eyes.
You see the dripping corridors of berserk green weaving
always dayless, faces and feet in samples of night,
pits and cages of customs, storm bags like herds
of hump-necked wildebeest hanging on the horizon.
You see black dust driven across the sun by hooped pistons,
places where ignorance is pure and evil is innocent.
And if you looked no more you would call it a dark land.

When savage sudden daybreak on the veldt
exorcises each shade lingering behind your eyes
you begin to know bright Africa.

For the last learning, you must climb. Far above
the thorn trees, through the temple veiling,
they are there— the Mountains of the Moon!

Continental beacons of ice and silica and lakes of opal
catching fire— Ruwenzori— the Mountains of the Moon!
Great glistening Titans headdressed in Ptolemaic pylons,
cold-faceted obelisks that fell from a lunar pedestal.

cont.

Hot-cut crystal domes that heaved up whole
from Hades, ignoring Vulcan's spewing funnels.
Frosted deserts and frozen dunes,
altars of alabaster, secured, sacred, beyond
terraced moats arc-lit with scimitars of sun.
Wet-shiny skin of the guides reflects
the unblinding blow.
No one can remember dark.

D R A G O N _ B O A T R I D E

Unpracticed, oar-clumsy,
I knew better than to board a strange beast
in a strange land. Like an unriden stallion
wanting only to be rid of me, the wading creature
recoiled when unleashed, the red prow reared, bucked,
and spurted forward after the unpronounceable river.
Flaming comb and hackles trailing fragments of sun,
my unbroken mount ignored the faulty extensions of my arms,
aimed its head at the curve of rumpled sheen
and beyond! To a trough of froth and roar where its cries
of freedom from myth mingled with thunder of rocks and water.
It shook with conviction, dipped its fangs
into spume, once tasted, never forgotten, and filled itself
with all the magic it was heir to. Shivering its new song
into my numbness, swaying me with how
it knew the path around the boulders, it claimed me wholly,
no longer a rigid rueful barnacle on a foreign monster.
I, a pale spike on its spiny back, small muscle of its wings,
listed in harmony into the next bend where the river unclenched,
sailed shinily erect onto fast underrunning olive silk.
Content to chase whatever the secret current chased,
waving at the watching world,
waking the surface with our gilded tail.

LONG NIGHT HOMESIDE

I should learn to speak Japanese.
There may be something more to say.

You smoke too much in Kyoto
under the blue tile roof of your father.
Why did I leave? Why did you stay?

Out of cigarets and choices.
Bored and huddled again on the prickly davenport
with my stewardess indigestion,
moon caught in the bared oak at my winter window.

Look. Two tiny stars, more alike than different,
impaled on California twigs
going unerringly to the heart of the matter..
Like haiku. Like shokwa. Needing no embellishment.
Impelled into jet-lag sleep on a wingless plane,
prodding grounded dreams while a jilted sun
hits bottom beyond the eastern arch, jarring
our paper fortunes near the gold pavillion,
jolting my moon free.

And at my periodic waking, the escapee
sheds no light on the fate
of lost pierced stars.

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DRIED ARRANGEMENT

All those long cattails of longing
Sprung up in the soft marsh places
Of my inlands:
You picked them green and strung them upside down
To desiccate in your cellar
Along with laurels and strawflowers.
Now and then you show me the stiff brown bouquet
On your altar.
Hung up on the hard harsh places
Of my island,
I cling to rock ridges
That scar my eyes, and no longer
Weep among the weeds of my desire.

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SONNET TO HIM WHO PROPOSED WITH SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Glenna Holloway

Oh love, were I to know the larger truth,
Would I find feigning in thy patterned prose?
If flatter^{ed}/fogged eyes and sweetened tooth
Could truly gauge the metal of thy pose—
Would it be pure and precious? Would it hold
My imprint dearly, yielding to my touch?
Or would alloyed resistance make thee bold,
Revealing in thy smooth caress a clutch?
Ah love, perhaps it is not wise to test
How malleable and rich thine offerings.
And yet one answer my soul must request
Before we move to merge our profferings:
Art thou in love with all the sums of me—
Or more enamored of fecundity?

"LIKE A PANTHER IN THE GLOVE" ...Emily Dickinson
(For Another Emily)

"She was so thoughtful"— "So caring"—
her friends recited in psaltar tones.
"So sweet." "So sad." The ritual room
of shaking heads, furred sibilance of whispers
and carnation overkill thick enough to replace her bier.

My two-pronged anger crackles and strikes:
Is this worth living as she did?
This maudlin mumbling mass?
Their sentiment a sentence!

At least such pious pap will never drip
from mobile mouths once mine is cosmetically closed!
They can never muster enough charity
to honey their tongues with me.
What right have they to my name on their warm lips!

Maybe she wasn't always wonderful. Or maybe
she ran on low amperage—never knowing how it is
to operate on your own hot crossed-circuitry,
splicing with scorched fingers
your own frayed smoking wires. Or maybe
she did it all and knew it well
under insulation of infinite grace.

In silence
I will make myself her monument.

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VIEWPOINT VIETNAM

by Glenn Holloway

Below us—thick jungle night, hard
Rocking cradle earth and ready arms
To claim the offspring of a winged workhorse.
Dropping without lights,
Waiting in the dark to be born,
Wishing our travailing monster
Could bite on air and be silent.
Feet-first delivery on a hump cleared of cover,
And we the expected
Run to share the indifferent blanket of rain forest
With murderous midwives.

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RIDING THUNDER ROAD

Glenna Holloway

There she was again,
The tiny girl, seven or eight years old,
Ancient-faced like temple ivory— half a child
Above the rice muck. No mud pies for her;
Children seldom play here. She worked
The crop. Or did she play after all—
At war?
Was it she who touched the batteries together?
She stared curious and motionless at the truck
That boomed and blew apart—
The maskless face of a kid watching a mechanical toy
Not understood.
She wouldn't know why growling convoys clawed north
Like endless disjointed dragons. Nor would she know
Of mines or the minds who rigged them.
But she would know the hurting of hunger;
She could believe we would eat her rice.
She might
Find solace in the blast of a truck each time

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RESCUE IN VIET NAM

Glenn Holloway

The enemy is down there—Victor Charlie
we call him— black jungle clad,
black pajama clad, waiting for me to hover
like a bulbous bug with windmill wings,
waiting for me to descend
for the fresh bleeding bait on a tray.
An unseen web radiates from the central fact
in the new clearing, hemmed in questions.
But native mountain men who summoned me
try to make it secure
enough for me to snatch the young prize.
And if I can get away with the offering
from under the hidden guns, from under
their bushy waiting—
our man on the litter will live
and so will I— to guide my chuffing monster
into another leaf-and-lead-rimmed net
tomorrow.

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DEFOLIATION: DOWN FROM MUGIA PASS

Glenn Holloway

Bomb crews mostly idle now
While we continue stripping miles
Of pointed shields shaded and shaped in green,
Heraldry of couchant serpents and punji stakes—
The Cong Clan's bar-sinister in spades.
Lush blazonry drops and bares their skeleton
Supply route. But how many skinny designs
Sprout from each browned leaf like veins,
Escutcheons abandoned for new coats for arms,
For legs and wheels for arms? As many as all
The aliases of the house of Ho Chi Minh?
He forged so many he forgets. And his trail
Is like a skein of damaged lizards—
Growing new tails, winding through
Rampant elephant grass and rubber tree bearings.
While our eagles mostly idle in the south.

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VIETNAM VILLANELLE

Glenn Holloway

There is my enemy's face;

He looks young, days hungry and scared.

Still, another will take his place.

Tall grass masks him without trace

Till his tunnels are blasted, bared.

There! Is my enemy's face!

Caught, he may curse his disgrace;

More often he begs to be spared.

Still-- another will take his place.

Slow searching, vise jungle, mud pace,

Stalking unknowns, self unprepared--

There is my enemy's face.

Will our kinds ever embrace?

When his last dare has been dared,

Still another will take his place.

Now arms hold death in the mind-race,

The time-race our rifles declared.

There is my enemy's face:

Still. Another will take his place.