

THE NAMINGS

Long starless nights when she couldn't sleep
or violent dreams of fiery swords awakened her,
the thought persisted: Why? Sweaty noons when sun
broiled skin, and blistered soles were more painful
than insect-bitten legs and arms scraped on thorns,
she wondered why. Why hadn't the serpent approached Adam?

The fruit proposition, first phrased as a question,
psychologically packaged, was more than a mere exercise
in temptation. The serpent needed knowledge. Each time
he tried to sample the coveted tree's prize for himself,
he was blown to the ground by ferocious winds.
Already well-versed in evil, he needed facts about good.
One can't conquer what one can't comprehend:
a basic principle. He watched the human pair for days,
knew when they ate and slept, knew when she left
his hand to stroll with the canine he named "wolf,"
or fill the flowered air with her lyrical laughter
at the bouncing creature he named "hare."

The serpent was amused when Adam named him "dragon."
He was convinced that Adam, made of common clay,
could be easily mastered. What he didn't know was
how soon the taster would die as God declared. If one bite
killed the man quickly, his mate he called "woman"
would be left. Alive, untainted, Eden hers alone.

She was the one the serpent feared most, the unpredictable,
the more complicated half of a superior life form.
God spent extra time making her, used bone not dust,
added nuances He hadn't used with Adam. If "woman" fell
after one taboo taste, her riddance would be welcome,
and Adam could be overcome at leisure. But if, as suspected,
the punishment were protracted, "woman" would then have time
to offer the fruit to her mate, and both would be doomed.
Yet possibly not before useful information was revealed.

The perfect solution. How interesting to learn how long
God would let them stand. How fascinating to observe
the thing God planned called "death."

Thus the serpent's leading question to "woman"
as she stepped out of a cool blue stream: "So the Lord
said you could not eat from all the garden's trees?"
She replied that they could eat from any except
the centerpiece tree. She repeated God's grave warning
not even to touch it.

The serpent moved closer, softly assuring her: "Oh, no, your life here won't end. That isn't what God meant. That tree will impart knowledge. God just wasn't sure you were ready then to know as much as He does. Now you are. See how perfect, how sweetly inviting is the fruit of this loveliest tree? Made to enjoy!"

Everything visible was beautiful. The tempter was beautiful, his lithe symmetrical body was warm and plump with evil wisdom and evil thirst hidden under gold and silver scales, opal wings, ruby eyes and iridescent patterns on its hide glowing with every color human eyes could see. Unlike the other fauna, he had a dulcet voice. Almost as melodic as God's.

Innocence without suspicion, inexperience without caution, no stores of lore to draw on, no hormones of fear. The woman took what was proffered.

The serpent was still smiling as Adam ran to her side and bit. The humans frowned at each other, disconcerted. They stumbled off to gather leaves to wear.

Afterward, she often pondered God's last visit. The shock, the shame, the expulsion. Now she dropped to the forest floor to rest. Adam picked leeches off their ankles and scratched the rash on his back. He sloshed aside the slime at the edge of a pool, cupped his hands around a drink just as she screamed at a long legless threat crawling toward her on the ground. She struck the hideous gaping head with a stone and Adam beat it dead with a branch. It was like nothing he had named back in the garden. They wondered if there were others. They hurried away.

At last the woman asked her mate, "Why did you taste the fruit? You could have refused, spared yourself."

"No, I could not. God warned us not to eat it. I could not let you suffer the consequences alone. Nor, once having you, my joy, my companion, could I bear to be alone."

(cont.)

Adam began making tools, tilling soil. The woman ground seeds between rocks, hauled water, gutted fish. They had seen an unnamed creature eat a fish, and saw a strange animal kill and consume another animal, startled at the bright crimson inside it. Were they filled with such? Were they meant to eat such? One day, hunger drove them to eat a wounded bird.

Often they wished for other humans to share their toil. They thought God had said something about reproducing them, but His voice was thunder, His eyes lightning, and His words difficult to understand that awful day.

Her lower belly ached again, and once again blood trickled down her thighs. Unlike the gush of red when Adam fell and gashed his shoulder on a jagged stone, she had no discernable wound. She swabbed with moss, hoping her predicament would pass more quickly than the first time, back in that dark vault of rock where they shivered, and were attacked by another unnamed creature-- like a combination "bird" and "rat" that swooped at them. Back where everything trembled and rumbled and part of the cave collapsed.

Within the time of Earth's first journey around the sun, memories of God's face and their first glorious home faded and they could not recall some of the names Adam gave the various life forms.

Then on a new day, Adam named his wife "Eve" for she, in her pain, bore a son, and became the mother of all humans. And the world would forever remember.

QUITTING

Tomorrow is the great awaited Smoke-Out.
Today I'll implant steel rods in my spine,
Rev up the old will power, chase off doubt,
Command my grody craving to resign.
I started on the countdown when I woke;
My leather case contains ten weeds I broke
In half. I'll ease up on the dawn's taboo
Dispassionate and calm, sans ballyhoo.
These things are simple if well-planned; I'm set.
Just keep it cool, that's all I have to do.
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

I won't be like those chronic bores who tout
Their victory over habit's fist. I'll shine
With sheer example, careful not to sprout
White wings and halo. Gracious and benign,
Not spewing sermons, just a quiet stroke
Of genius in the frenzied fumes. An oak
Against temptation. --Maybe if I chew
Some gum this urgency will pass, this corkscrew
In my brain demanding ransom. Gee, I bet
Myself I'd last till breakfast. I've had two!
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette!

Now drop your voice an octave, please don't shout.
Don't jump ahead so far, don't undermine
Resolve before you've started on the bout.
Relax. This system's gonna work just fine.
When I feel weak I'll give my pride a poke
And hole up in my office, maybe stoke
The bod all day with candy bars in lieu
Of lunch, and coffee-up with stronger brew.
Relax. And do whatever seems to whet
Determination. --Is it really true?
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette?

It's times like this I'm glad I have some clout.
I'll work alone today. Those sorry swine
Across the hall will puff cigars and flout
Good breeding, gesture with their full packs, dine
Amid the burning of the leaf, provoke
Me past endurance. Hopefully, they'll choke.
--My ashtray's nearly full of residue
And this makes ten. I'll never make it through!
But hey, hang on, they're halfies, don't forget.
I'll save my next for someone wearing blue.
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

(cont.)

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Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

Our head of advertising is a lout
But all his suits are blue. "Call Mr. Stein,
Miss Pitts. And bring more cake and sauerkraut.
Yes, buzz me when he's off his other line."
Oh, cut the sheep dip, rise above the hoke
And pull the act together. Guzzle Coke.
Get hiccups. Faster! Eat that cold ragout.
My stomach's rolling like I'm getting flu.
Well, that would do the job. I've never yet
Smoked then. With luck, pneumonia will ensue.
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

Now see? It's not so bad, this rendezvous
With grave decision. I've pulled off a coup
To free this realm of nicotine. My sweat
Has made me strong. I'll rule the corporate zoo!
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

--Glenn Holloway

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(Form: chant royal--60 lines, iambic pentameter,
turning on 5 rhymes throughout, ending with an envoy.)

THE HUNGER MOON

Summer is sweet on the tongue,
soft on the shoulders as kachina clouds,
unlasting as the corn god's shades of green.
Yesterday when the sun centered on my roof,
the red-tailed hawk reeled around
the hot glare forcing shut my eyes,
tightening his circle and pouring down
his cries on my doorstep.

He is back with the dawn. Down and down
he hurls his keening like splinters of cold.
The hawk is a prophet of the hunger moon--
a time of no more corn,
a time when the deer go far,
leaving no tracks to a place no man finds.

None of us will starve, not even the hawk.
For me, famine is of the spirit
while the body fuels on dried fare,
and the only sweetness comes in jars. The wings
are first to wither, then the deep singing.

Someday I will follow the hawk. I will climb
past mounds of dead-gold buckbrush.
My foot will rattle shards of ancient lava,
startling a lizard into the dominion
of beak and talon. I will face the she-wind
angering in the cinder cones, prying
at broken shadows of the sacred peaks.

There in the secret heights I will master
the proper maintenance of wings.

--Glenna Holloway

THE REACH OF SONG, 1987; The Diamond Muse Award,
1990; DEAR MAGNOLIA, Grand Prize, 1991; POET, 1992;
RED MOUNTAIN REVIEW, 1995.

1500 A.D., ANOTHER ATLANTIC CROSSING

The dream-- or was it weariness and wine
Inventing scenes of gargoyle fantasy?
Convulsing heart, an ague in the brain,
Cathedral bells and stabs of fiery tongues,
Vignettes of naked natives, cursing Spaniards.
Canary Island trees kowtowing west
Like supplicating crones, trunks forming arches,
Hair flung down foretoking the ground--
That vision loomed so many times before,
Asleep, awake, a simmer in the soul.

Half-thoughts in swirling idiom, a stew
Of Latin, Portuguese, Castilian steeped
In seaman's argot. He wondered where he was--
Back in a yawing cradle, child again,
Or ill across a horse ignobly sprawled?
The Admiral, rising, bumped his head; the dusk
Revealed his place. His hands reflexed, he heard
The linking metal, felt its weight and wept.

The caravel was under way across
A bias-running tide. The bulkheads groaned
Disrhythmically; he languished on his bunk
To drain the tankard pressed between his palms,
His hard-won palm-lined shores lost from his grasp.

The captain of the ship released his bonds
Which he, Colón, the colonizer, true
To God and Sovereigns, loftily relocked.
Let Isabella witness this injustice;
Chains would be his scepter, calumny his crown!

By day, his silence broken only by
His iron expletives against the rails,
He watched the tropic birds dive whitely hungry,
Longed to hold a quadrant to the sun.

The caravel embraced the blue winds-- his.
His route, his reckoning, unknown before
He shaped the course. Now every idle sail
In Christendom would fill with jealous greed
Of westward-bearing amateurs who sought
The East, the scoffers and the scholars who
Believed but had no spine for unmapped risks.

The monarchs would restore his station soon.
 They must! His words would open, clear their eyes.
 He would return; his mission was Cathay
 And still Cathay: This salt of Genoa,
 This commoner who lived by wool and wits
 And charts to touch Cipangu's fringes, claim
 Them for Castile, was Destiny's own son
 Ordained by God. He would not founder now
 So close her gold reflected in each stream.
 Next voyage, her silk and spice, her lace-carved tusks
 And more would ride his holds low in the sea.

By night he made the stars his rosary,
 Lamenting long to heaven's porchlights, pride
 Still preened, comparing all his griefs to Job's:
 And did I govern badly? Providence
 Almighty was my guide. What choice had I
 But execution of insurgents who
 Defied the law? The gall of Bobadilla
 Seizing private papers! And my house!

The captain was uneasy in these waters;
 He sought and took his prisoner's advice:
 "Northeast to catch the stronger westerlies.
 This time of year Madeira is the landfall--"
 The only words Colón spoke on his journey
 Of degradation back to Spanish judgment.

The Admiral of the Ocean Sea could walk
 The quarterdeck between arrested sleep.
 He thought about how knowledge changed a man.
 While proving others wrong, teredo worms
 Of error/doubt could enervate his own
 Accepted stock. But one thing never changed:
 The Evil One beset all chosen men
 Proportionate to greatness. Take the jinns,
 Those cursed spawns of Islam loose on earth
 To foul supplies and water, cause a plague
 Or agitate the settlers' discontent.
 Or pour malevolence in ears at court...

Misfortune falls on triumph like a fever.
 Nor yet is either over, guiding angels...
 I rally at this wrongful bitter dose!

How much is music, key lowered now,
gone minor again, flowing that little groove
where pain runs convex to the surface? How much
is the glint of crystal hung from mirrored arches,
barely moving with audience breath,
striking flints in his pale blue eyes?

He is a prophet. Forecasting ruin, forecasting
rain, predicting your heartbeat, willing it,
playing your spine like a keyboard, electrifying
your long red guitar strings. He compresses
a grain of hot salt in every pore, starts
small internal combustions, all pistons at odds,
then one enormous turbine synched with him,
generating enough current to throb down
the marble columns, revving the riderless carriage
outside the fourth dimension, holding a seance
with Gabriel and Gershwin, Debussy and Berrigan.

His grin is sudden, mocking. He flats his fifths
and goes south on a short bridge, tootles
to the carved unicorn, blows out the chafing dishes
along with the illusions. And for a jigger of time
you can stand it, fill your lungs on the afterbeat,
see that he's nothing but a trumpet man,
not a sorcerer, not a fakir
pulling the cobra out of your basket.

He is a child. Blowing bubbles of light,
expanding the spectrum,
merging with bobbing sixteenth notes. He is
imperial Rome, an announcement of gladiators,
Caesar chariots, a boast of soldiers,
an ancient fury. He is Africa. Black hunter cry,
leopard stalking, impala bleeding, eyes looking
out of water, eyes burning, curling edges of night,
smoke rising, winding winged scales,
sucking back into his bell, recycling.

He slams a fist in your throat, turns you
on a spit and hamstrings you with blades of ice.
He hustles the horn, wrestles it,
mistress and mentor, a panpipe saved by his kiss.

Feel the sound, mama? He's concentrating
on all your edges now, honing sharp sharper,
quivering on a sill to otherwhere, retiring
to a glistening waver pulsing between turquoise
and green, hanging on like dying gills.
A trumpet man, mama, more lives than a cat,
more wind than a Texas twister.

(cont.)

You used bad materials to start with.
 All the wrong components. This soft flimsy stuff
 won't hold up no matter whose brand.
 There should be building inspectors for such things,
 an edict declaring them purely esthetic,
 utterly nonfunctional. ~~fireproof.~~ Not

I never dreamed there was activity
 up in that little back room or that you were
 creating something in the closed dark.
 Once I opened the door by mistake
 and thought it a closet where you kept
 old outgrown loves on their way to the Good Will bin.

We had so much in the other rooms there was no time
~~there was no time or reason to wonder~~
 or reason to wonder what was happening up there.
 The suddenly it was finished,
 glazed with gold and set with jewels. (your most precious
 And you, raging, dragged it out for confrontation,
 warped and crazing, collapsing on its base.

~~Didn't~~
 Don't you know?

no ~~an~~ idol made of used flesh and blood
 can't support the weight of worship
 until after death.

Complete Woman, May 28 - June 2 ✓
 Primavera, June 23 - Sept. 15 ✓

THE IGNIS FATUUS

I

Men marvel at her hair, corona bright,
the color of a waning winter moon,
for she is strange and wild, a child of night
who loves the swamps where twilight lurks at noon.
I followed her until she disappeared
through sedge and slimy pools of brackish black;
she always raced ahead where ravens jeered,
past dying pines and past the diamondback.
She led me faster, luminous and lithe,
through devil's darkness cleft with wisps of fire.
Behind me came another...with a scythe...
but still I stalked her in footprintless mire.
Men say her eyes fluoresce with blue-green flame.
I must embrace her once, must learn her name.

II

Come searcher, learn the real will-o-the-wisp.
Come slog among mutated mud-grown trees
and wait for wind's unwinding snake-tongue lisp
to wrinkle stagnant water near your knees.
Here, latent night seduces natural time
though fronds of sun still penetrate tall ferns,
while strangler figs and chokeweed greenly mime
your myths and struggling gods, your snarled concerns.
Again illusion spreads elusive light,
a solar trick, not what you risked to see.
Stay braced for total dark and call it right:
the ignis fatuus, lure's apogee.
Hold fast to scientific explanation
as lambent flares ignite mind's conflagration.

III

Old Jonas knew the country called "Big Deep"
that muddied up the margins of two states.
He served as guide for forty years to keep
adventurers from snakebite/quicksand fates.
Then Jonas went off fishing. New teams tried
to cross the slough, explore the worst quagmire.
Three members wound up hurt, another died.
When Jonas heard, he vowed not to retire.
He knew the jack-o-lanterns danced out there,
those freakish flames that made men lose their way.
He knew the legends, knew the truth to spare,
enough to be the expert of his day.
Still, men pursued the elf fire, watched night burn...
till legend won. The guide did not return.

form: Shakespearean sonnet trilogy (42 lines)

LIFE IN THE CHOIR LOFT

Mr. Cowper waited for the quotidian mouse run across the pipe organ console's sharps and flats. Maybe staying on the black keys was a rodent game, or maybe the creature sensed vermin were more unwelcome on white. The sooty little offense always scooted between Cowper's practicing and the chime music broadcast, a noon tradition. People likened his winged arpeggios to angels blessing the town.

Cowper was sure the mouse was female, personifying grayish women skittering across his path, too bright-eyed, ^{next line} pointy-nosed, whiskery. Like soprano soloist Letty Long, always wanting to rehearse, leaning her discordant perfume over him, always bringing him sticky cake and something in a bottle for her throat.

Cowper caught the mouse once in a trap that broke its tail. The cheese was gone. The mouse must have flicked a triumphant parting gesture, then snap! Cowper was pleased with the crimp in its impious arrogance. But when he felt its warm squirm, its scrabbling claws, he dropped it like a live coal. He saw it zip under the organ pedals, followed eye-level to poke with his umbrella, causing a bass eruption that jammed city hall's switchboard with queries about the unholy racket emanating from the church cupola. Cowper needed a sedative before his own ganglionic halls rang again with cherubic chords.

Forthwith Cowper pledged himself to rid his space of intruders, doubtless plural by now. Twenty-four years he had played there, the nervy mouse for six weeks, bolder every day, avoiding cunning devices guaranteed to dispatch, frolicking around janitorial efforts and congregational input, even Letty Longnose's homemade poison. He devised a new approach.

He filled a solitary Monday morning with Bach and righteous resolve for dealing with pests. Suddenly a chuckle escaped as Cowper's thoughts covertly included Long Letty and two flat tenors.

The swell diapason rattled the rose windows, the flute tremolo segued a stringy dirge, then silence. Mr. Cowper adjusted his 39-cent dust mask and poised one classically trained hand. The trespasser appeared at 11:57, defying toxic treats, defiling the keys. Miss Mouse. Cowper fired his Mace.

Jon. 1997
edited

MAJOR RHAPSODY IN C-SHARP MINOR

You didn't expect him here
with silk hangings and life-size classic sculpture.
He made no entrance, he suddenly was
onstage, easy as moonlight, fitting with fountains
and topiary as if here was always his place.
But the way he moved and smiled, you knew.
You knew he was a trumpet man.

Son of a thin ragged line inhaling used smoke
mixed with applause to blow from rubber cheeks.
Son of the hard-molded case-followers,
those rolled-up bus riders
down the stretched, streaking nights, closing
their painted eyes, seeing brass hanging over them--

begging to be snatched and hidden
for a night or two of peace, watching it
turn to an armored snake in their jealous hands,
hearing it tongue out tarnished laughter
on three ribs, belling out morning and a hangover
in some town they mispronounced.

You didn't see this loose-angled one pick it up.
The instrument came like quick cell division
from his lip. And the sound began:
uncoiling slow, coming for you, crawling
into your head, changing the texture
of your bare arms. You know that sound, mama?
Nothing as simple as ever-popular heartbreak
or phantom train whistles. Nothing
as explainable as a tenor sobbing Eili, Eili

or wild animals moaning up the moon. His eyes
ignite and lightning arcs from his hair,
striking the conductor zapping it
into your gravity center. The sound, mama,
leaching tones out of the caryatids,
out of your wine glass, rearranging molecules,
making them glow like neon fog, fulminating
red and purple, alive like magnified ocean drops.

(cont.)

DESERT ODYSSEY, FEBRUARY, 1991

This endless sea is dry, its wavy crests
designed of sand, its granulated tides
eternally unscheduled, owned by wind.
Or gravity when overburdened heights
slide down a concave swell. And now disturbed
by men in motion and their weaponry,
A mortar shell will spew a mighty splash.
A hole fills up like leakage in a bilge.

Could be the desert has its own Poseidon.
And if he chose this realm for peaceful rest,
his hideaway for secret meditation,
he's now incensed at savage noisy lights
that rip the dark and craze the blistered sky.
If so, this god must be enraged enough
to pour his bile on mortals setting fires
that char the clouds, and blasts that crater hell.

My own seaworthy ship: a tank with eyes
to leap horizons, pierce the dark and relay
images Athena couldn't conjure up.
My crew is trained but none is battle wise
like those Odysseus commanded once.
I make myself no such comparison,
no hero. No enchanted sojourns, nymphs
or ogres-- ah well, maybe counting colonels--

My Army unit got called up and here
I am, late of a college classroom where
I taught the classics: Homer, Virgil, Dante,
themselves no strangers to the Fates and war.
And like all men who fight on foreign ground,
I wonder when I'll see my wife and home.
Professional professor, weekend soldier
for years-- no incongruity in that--

If one exists, it's in the harpist there
on my right flank, the best damn driver here.
A tank-jock's normally a tougher cut
than he who plays as if retained from childhood
to grace Hellenic halls and royal feasts
with Menelaus praising his sweet hands--
those proven hands that bully steel and heat,
commanding his big thunderbitch with verve.

Deployed in battle line, my bulky fleet
of blunt and roaring vessels sailing sand
is on alert. Our thermal sights blip full.
Identified as enemy, I still
beg instruments for every shred of knowing.
These guns make pale Lord Zeus's lightning bolts,
make trash of other tanks. Our radios
have words. The column is approaching fast.

I give the order to destroy the targets.
Incredible the way our rounds locate
their marks, make tracks and turrets flash and soar.
Grey-eyed Athena gasps, her aegis high
above the rubble, sending us a hawk,
a grey-backed raptor screeching victory.
Her cloud expands more slowly than our eyes.
My crew exults in scores like arcade games.

In thirty minutes, wounded men arrive.
Elation dwindles in a grinding pall;
we watch as one man fumbles on his way
as if to hide a pistol in his sleeve.
On closer look, he holds his severed arm
and dies beside my tank as others groan.
Two more make wine dark seas with their own blood.
Iraqi armored troops, surrendering.

This ocean's wretched wrack clings to our wake
as silica Poseidon watches, waits
astride an Arab horse or camel hump--
avenger riding on the tidal dunes
and hard-caked flats nailed down with light.
Without a trident, does he wield a spade,
this unknown deity whose spleen we rasp?
What sacrifice will he require of us?

Back on patrol at dawn, the goddess glows;
Homeric rosy fingers earn their poems.
The crews are sobered from the bite of combat.
Now, animated sights demand decisions.
The shapes we read are not precise enough
to leave no doubt. But if we wait too long
then we'll be in their range. Commanders all
have grappled this chimera in their craws.

"Sweet Jesus, Cap'n, time we oughta shoot!"
my gunner cries, a blond Telémakhos,
his tongue undone, his trigger in control.
The radio confirms no other tanks
of ours are in this sector. No more choice,
our time runs out, I order the attack.
How many gods and men have we provoked?
Please my dear God, don't let us torch our own!

As images explode we hear the news.
An error. Static, curses: "Hold your fire!"
We hit two U.S. tanks, off course for hours.
No one survived our deadly friendly blasts.
I must not break, must keep my men from breaking.
Penelopes must learn they wait in vain.
And who explains such useless costs to them?
And in this world, who can explain to me?

"Before the end my heart was broken down.
I slumped on trampled sand and cried aloud,
caring no more for life or the light of day,
and rolled there weeping, till my tears were spent."
--The Odyssey, Book IV, translated by Robert Fitzgerald

A REASON IN THE WORLD

Once Mama goes
I'll use up the chicory and sorghum, swap
the Mason jar of Kennedy half dollars
for green rectangles, get in the pickup
and just drive. I'll swap steep gravel roads
for fast interstates. Joe-pye weed
for squared lawns and scalloped bushes.
Coon dogs belling in the gap for traffic pulse
and streamers of light like music I can sing.
I'll drive until I find a reason
to stop or a reason to turn around and come back.

Wet tires sizzle, heatless. My rhythm sometimes
fades like the station the radio loses
on the way. The next state's too-early frost
is a ditto of ours, limp crops leaning
like lines of ragbag refugees from some new war.
Old stores with gritty sharecroppers leaning
over Pepsis and Moon Pies. Me,
separate as the lone gas pump out front,
not wanting to explain my hurry, not knowing
the lyrics to "Where you headed, stranger?"

Away from you, I might shout. Away
from what I know and don't know. Away from
familiar nothing to maybe only different nothing
that just replays in another key.
I'm after live songs, trumpets, guitars enough
to fuel my tank to Chicago. I'll sleep
under sheet music, inhale hot jazz for lunch
and wind me in a gospel-slapping choir robe.

Practice runs I call these Sunday goings
and right backs. Short rolls on the treble staff,
quick upwardly mobile riffs on a limited scale
and down again. Mama's not gone yet.

But I've taken the whole trip
on so many midnight turntables, her words
on my back like a hand-me-down coat
that weighs too much and warms too little.

Today I found a forty-year-old road map
in Mama's Bible, the highways traced and dated
with quarter note rests all the way to New York
in red. And by a different, dimmer route,
all the way back in blue. She never told me that.

It's all the magic horn, mama, that golden fetish,
possessed and possessing, that haloed concubine,
caressed and polished, surrounded with plush.
And you-- chapped, smacked,
earning your master's degree in martyrdom,
sewing clothes out of mill ends,
that eternal alloy suspended between you
even in bed, that icon he hocked once
to buy you an emergency doctor in Dayton.
And you sold your mother's ring to get it back.

And the man, mama, with the hard mouth,
dead weight in the bus seat, little slivers
of life telescoped in battered cases
under collapsible stands. Trumpet man.
Pitched all shades and angles like shadows,
worse for women than drifters. Gone too high
too often, a pile of singed feathers
dripping wax on the downers, always patching
to fly one more set too near the sun.

Was there a man at all?
Or just a flared gold phallus that seduced you
and crammed you in the gears of a music box
on wheels, hurled you across the bad-weather map
into broken-john motels with lint bedspreads
and the boozy corners of never-quite-level halls
full of lurching bodies and bad acoustics?

Tears emptied, he mounts the god syndrome
like mercury, surpassing sound, no longer
protoplasm and metal but some new alchemy
entering the last panging tunnel you sealed
and secured. Driving deeper, blowing down
your barricades like Joshua,
peeling off new notes like bright blisters,
exorcising the orchestra, resolving
each chord with light. Nebulizing fire.

White consumes you, turns you immaculate,
unhurting anymore. The trumpet
fluoresces like his phosphorous eyes,
confetti light orbits his head.
His image blazes beyond seeing.

You open your eyes as the waiter pours champagne,
hear something shut like a latch, focus absently
on an alabaster herald you hadn't noticed before.

ADDIE AT EIGHTY

Glenna Holloway

It's hard, she said,
always being so damn grateful
for snow shoveling
or getting a couch moved or rides downtown.
Afterwards I knew she was scolding herself
for getting crotchety.

Once she told me how
some nights she'd think
about white lightning--
the kind the old sheriff used to make
and stash away for years to mellow.
You knew it never had dead birds or frogs
in it and wasn't colored with tobacco juice.
It was a kind of slow pure white
that takes some of your breath away
but leaves your tongue intact
and contents your throat and gut
like a good honeydew melon only warm.
That's how it oughta be, she said,
to grow old.

DESERT ODYSSEY, THEN and NOW

That endless sea was dry: its wavy crests
Designed of sand, its granulated tides
Eternally unscheduled, owned by wind
Or gravity when overburdened heights
Slid down a concave swell. Or when disturbed
By men in motion and their weaponry.
A mortar shell would spew a mighty splash.
The hole filled up like leakage in a bilge.

Could be the desert has its own Poseidon.
And if he chose that realm for peaceful rest,
His hideaway for secret meditation,
He's still incensed at those first noisy lights
That ripped the dark and crazed the blistered sky.
No doubt the god remained enraged enough
To heap more bile on mortals who set fires
That charred the clouds, and blasts that cratered hell.

My own seaworthy ship: a tank with eyes
To leap horizons, pierce the dark and relay
Images Athena couldn't conjure.
My crew was trained but none was battle-wise
As those who followed brave Odysseus.
I made myself no such comparison,
No hero. No enchanted sojourns, nymphs
Or ogres— ah well, maybe counting colonels—

My Army unit got called up and there
I was, late of a college classroom where
I taught the classics: Homer, Virgil, Dante,
Themselves no strangers to the Fates and war.
And like all men who fight on foreign ground,
I wondered when I'd see my wife and home.
Professional professor, weekend warrior
For years— no incongruity in that.

And always on my right flank was the harpist,
Young and handsome, best damn driver there.
A tank-jock's normally a tougher cut
Than he who played as if retained for life
To grace Hellenic halls and royal feasts
With Menelaus praising his sweet hands—
Those proven hands that bullied steel and heat,
Commanding his big thunderbitch with verve.

Deployed in battle line, my bulky fleet
Of blunt and roaring vessels sailing sand
Was on alert. Our thermal sights blipped full.
Identified as enemy, I still
Begged instruments for every shred of knowing.
Those guns made pale Lord Zeus's lightning bolts,
Made trash of other tanks. Our radios
Had words. The column was²⁹⁹ approaching fast.

Odyssey 2.

I gave the order to destroy the targets.
Incredible the way our rounds homed toward
Their marks, made tracks and turrets flash and soar.
Grey-eyed Athena gasped, her aegis high
Above the rubble, sending us a hawk,
A grey-backed raptor screeching victory.
Her cloud expanded slower than our eyes.
My crew racked up their scores like arcade games.

In thirty minutes, wounded men arrived.
Elation dwindled in a grinding pall;
We watched as one man fumbled on his way
As if to hide a pistol in his sleeve.
On closer look, he held his severed arm
And died beside my tank as others groaned.
Two more made wine-dark seas with their own blood.
Iraqi armored troops, surrendering.

Back on patrol at dawn, the goddess glowed;
Homeric rosy fingers earned their poems.
The crews were sobered, combat had its bite.
Then, animated sights required decisions.
The shapes we read were not exact enough
To leave no doubt. But if we held off long
We'd be precisely in their range. Commanders all
Have grappled that chimera in their craws.

"Sweet Jesus, Cap'n, time we oughta shoot!"
My gunner cried, a blond Telemachus,
His tongue undone, his trigger in control.
The radio confirmed no other tanks
Of ours were in the sector. No more choice,
Our time ran out, I ordered the attack.
How many gods had we provoked? I prayed:
Please my dear God, don't let us torch our own!

As images exploded we heard words:
An error! Static. Curses. "Hold your fire!"
We hit two U.S. tanks, off course for hours.
No one survived our deadly friendly blasts.
I could not break. I kept my men from breaking.
Penelopes were told their wait was done.
And who explained such useless costs to them?
And in this world, who can explain to me?

Last year I had a letter from the harpist.
Like mine, his children dreaded further war.
My students asked unanswered questions daily.
What Muse would guide us through the final course?
We studied Homer's "man of many wiles."
And could he in the end persuade himself
Of what was justified? What learned or gained?

Like why we're here to do it all again?

DESERT ODYSSEY, FEBRUARY, 1991

That endless sea was dry: its wavy crests
 Designed of sand, its granulated tides
 Eternally unscheduled, owned by wind
 Or gravity when overburdened heights
 Slid down a concave swell. Or when disturbed
 By men in motion and their weaponry.
 A mortar shell would spew a mighty splash.
 The hole filled up like leakage in a bilge.

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 And if he chose that realm for peaceful rest,
 His hideaway for secret meditation,
 He's still incensed at savage noisy lights
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 No hero. No enchanted sojourns, nymphs
 Or ogres-- ah well, maybe counting colonels--

My Army unit got called up and there
 I was, late of a college classroom where
 I taught the classics: Homer, Virgil, Dante,
 Themselves no strangers to the Fates and war.
 And like all men who fight on foreign ground,
 I wondered when I'd see my wife and home.
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 For years-- no incongruity in that.

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 Made trash of other tanks. Our radios
 Had words. The column was approaching fast.

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 No one survived our deadly friendly blasts.
 I could not break. I kept my men from breaking.
 Penelopes were told their wait was over.
 And who explains such useless costs to them?
 And in this world, who can explain to me?

Today I had a letter from the harpist--
 Who earned a medal in a later battle.
 His children fear he'll leave them for a war.
 My students ask unanswered questions daily.
 Muse, tell me of the "man of many wiles,"
 And could he in the end persuade himself
 Of what was justified? What learned or gained?
 Must we go back and do it all once more?

DESERT ODYSSEY, FEBRUARY, 1991

This endless sea is dry, its wavy crests
designed of sand, each grain a seed
eternally unplanted, borne by wind.
Or gravity when overburdened heights
slide down a concave swell. Or when disturbed
by men in motion or their weaponry.
A mortar shell will spew a mighty splash.
A hole fills up like leakage in a bilge.

Could be the desert has its own Poseidon.
And if he chose this realm for peaceful rest,
his hideaway for secret meditation,
he's now incensed at savage noisy lights
that rip the dark and craze the blistered sky.
If so, this god must be enraged enough
to pour his bile on mortals setting fires
that char the clouds, and blasts that crater hell.

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to leap horizons, pierce the dark and relay
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My army unit got called up and here
I am, late of a college classroom where
I taught the classics: Homer, Virgil, Dante,
themselves no strangers to the Fates and war.
And like all men who fight on foreign ground,
I wonder when I'll see my wife and home.
Professional professor, weekend soldier
nine years-- no incongruity in that--

If one exists, it'd be the harpist there
on my right flank. A tank-jock's normally
a tougher cut than he who plays as if
retained for kingly halls and wedding feasts.
Old Menelaos heard no sweeter hands--
those proven hands that bully steel and heat
to make a better driver than the rest.
He guides his bitchy thunderdog with class.

Deployed in battle line, my bulky fleet
of blunt and roaring vessels sailing sand
is on alert. Our thermal sights blip full.
Identified as enemy, I still
beg instruments for every shred of knowing.
These guns make pale Lord Zeus's lightning bolts,
make trash of other tanks. Our radios
have words. The column is approaching fast.

I give the order to destroy the targets.
Incredible the way our rounds locate
their marks, make tracks and turrets spin and fly.
Grey-eyed Athena gasps, her aegis high
above the rubble, sending us a hawk,
a grey-backed raptor screeching victory.
Her cloud expands more slowly than our eyes.
My crew exults in scores like arcade games.

In twenty minutes, wounded men arrive.
Elation dwindles in a grinding pall;
we watch as one man fumbles on his way
as if to hide a pistol in his sleeve.
On closer look, he holds his severed arm
and dies beside my tank as others groan.
Two more make winedark seas with their own blood,
Iraqi armored troops, surrendering.

This ocean's wretched wrack clings to our wake
as silica Poseidon watches, waits
astride an Arab horse or camel hump:
Avenger riding on the tidal dunes
and hard-caked flats nailed down with tons of light.
Instead of a trident, does he wield a spade,
this unknown deity whose angst we rasp?
What sacrifice will he require of us?

Back on patrol at dawn, the goddess glows;
Homeric rosy fingers earn their poems.
The crews are sobered from the bite of combat.
Now, animated sights demand decisions.
The shapes we read are not precise enough
to leave no doubt. But if we wait too long
then we'll be in their range. Commanders all
have grappled this chimera in their craws.

"Sweet Jesus, Cap'n, time we oughta shoot!"
the gunner cries, a blonde Telemakhos,
his tongue undone, his trigger in control.
The radio confirms no other tanks
of ours are in this sector. No more choice,
our time runs out, I order the attack.
How many gods and men have we provoked?
Please my dear God, don't let us torch our own!

As images explode we hear the news.
An error. Static, curses, "Hold your fire!"
We hit two U.S. tanks, off course for hours.
No one survived our deadly friendly fire.
I must not break, must keep my men from breaking.
Penelopes must learn they wait in vain.
And who explains such useless costs to them?
And in this world can one explain to me?

I give the order to destroy the targets.
 Incredible the way our rounds locate
 Their marks, make tracks and turrets flash and soar.
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And in this world, who can explain to me?

EPISTEMOLOGY

After you fulfilled all I could wish,
making me think humans were never evicted from Eden,
I suddenly told you: this continued moment,
this ongoing now-- is the essence of epistemology.

Not expecting philosophy in my arms,
you made an uncertain sound, and I replied
against your skin: this is the purest knowledge,
because of how we receive it, where it comes from.

Holding you after hunger is quiet reveals more
than things spoken. Blood cadence at rest says
what no written language can. Words are clumsy,
threadbare. Now I feel your thoughts as they form.

You tell me you sensed we were talking
before I broke the silence. So much hovers between
slow breaths, beyond what voices trivialize, what tongues
have betrayed, what dictionaries can never define.

Your yes presses closer. Love's lore originates here,
a long languid synapse arising from where we live,
this tranquil time and place
where flesh and being distill truth.

Where we know what needs knowing. We know.

--Glenna Holloway

GLENN HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

FRONT OFFICE DRAGON

My job is to keep
you waiting,
telling you sweetly
my boss is in a meeting.

My job is to keep
advising you
he'll call when he can.

My job is to keep
(as we both know very well)
you from getting to him.

My job is to keep
only if I succeed.

HOPI HOMECOMING

Miles fry under our wheels
and slough off. The drought is worse
than I thought. Crops are gatherings
of desiccated crones leaning on each other
rattling death wishes. The racing shadow
in the dry washes and high basalt roadcuts
is my bus from Cleveland. I can
participate in its cubist performance
by holding my magazine up to the window
though no one else would notice the shade
of difference I make in one small square.
Out there the shadow-bus composes
its true image, compressing its length,
recoiling from desert and heat,
rising taller to look back for its lake.

Blue Corn would smile at the analogy--
that smile that begins at the left
of her mouth and leaves a luminous aura
after the rest of her face has forgotten it.
Odds are she'll be at the bus stop
with the want ads and the Appaloosa instead
of the pickup. Hell, a horse'll feel good
between my legs after steel chairs
and seminar stools. The horse and I
will be in sync before we pass First Mesa.

But can I interface with my Badger Clan?
I'm like this bus-- speeding a new highway
still sticky-- a late model vehicle of alloy
containing other lives besides. Which one
am I? Somewhere is there a spirit me
beyond the smoky abstraction the sun reveals?

Blue Corn, my love, you write happy
from your mother's Bear Clan.
You too are no longer programmed
by kachinas. When you dance I know
your eyes are uncloudy beneath the mask.
Most of you belongs to me
but the foot, the drum, are your own.

Can you make any part of me whole?

--G. R. Holloway

GLENNA HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

MILLENNIA

The magma cooled and centuries of seed
Arrived in birds, by tides and tropic gales.
Some sprouted, slowly changed the island's hue.
Rain washed the crater slopes, began to feed
Small pools as trickling run-off turned to swales.
Varieties of natant larvae grew.
The germinated coconuts spread shade
For ferns. Sun warmed the geminating glade.

At last a human population came,
Attracted by the verdure of the shore.
They found no snakes, the native geese were tame.
Despite fire-streams, good fishing, fruits, and more
Insured their stay. They gave the place a name.
--But Pele loved her Eden best before.

--Glenna Holloway

NARRATIVE IN WHITE

Arctic people have hundreds of words for snow--
nuances of texture, depth, duration.

My middle America snow is deep chalk dust,
prairie pages of the she-wind's diary.
She doodles idly, sometimes erases her secrets,
terracing, pot-holing, building dunes.

An old metaphor, the snow as an open scroll
for a poet's musings. But this is not my tale.
A used quill lies on the river bank
where mallards write their journals
in precise graphics.
A raccoon's symmetrical syllables run bias
from pine margin to margin. Varied versions
of blue and gray underline each entry.

I trace fox printing half a mile. The fox
hunts and pecks, rhythmically punctuating
with his nose. The theme, ancient
as the mouse, is polished, proofed,
sentimental quotations deleted.

The next page bears elongated strokes,
emphatic periods of a cottontail.
Over here-- a sudden cursive shift,
then wider spaces between its dashes. I expect
the paragraph to be followed by the fox.

The plot changes. Hawk wings interject
a brief sweeping signature.
In an uneven indentation
the rabbit's sentence ends abruptly.

I retrace my rough scrawl
across February's broad shining sheets,
pondering how many small dramas my eyes missed.
Trying to recall the Inuit word for bloody snow.

GLENN HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

SHOWING CHICAGO TO BAUDELAIRE

You were always attracted to city nights, monsieur.
I own a copy of Les Fleurs du Mal in French,
ripe with urban musk, erotic alliteration, the patina
of impacted space. This should have been a good venue
for your verse. Too bad so few people came
to the reading. This venture leaves me broke, Mr. B.
Leash your strophes, hang your demons backstage;
you can walk the Loop with me and Jack Daniels.

Lake breezes flutter the curtain of Diesel fumes,
not a smell you would know. The phallic towers
of the powerful probe the high haze, challenging
low-flying angels. You can see the aura of millions
of lives for miles offshore-- part light, part heat
and motion. The old termagant's broadened
since dragging her ragged petticoats through black mud,
Indian twilight and the evil stink of skunk cabbage.

Michigan Avenue fires millions of rounds
of electric white ammo from oblique angles.
You can't escape the shrapnel of light, incendiary
shards of it, imparting no illumination,
no warmth you can hold, sucking out what you hoarded.
Infecting you with a virus that keeps you
coming back for another pelting, another piercing.
--Do you wear a wry smile, Mr. B?

Now we're in the outback, still in sight
of magnificence--magnanimity--maggots.
The lower level is pocked with puddled reflections,
shimmering shades of lust and logic, business
as usual, obligatory beauty. The trumpet
in that storefront retreat is tonguing out blues--
a color, a condition. Some of the mop-and-dust people
rehydrate inside, jockeying their barstools, betting
on hot-lipped riffs to move them higher.

Giant tools are at rest, teeth slightly bared.
The metal traffic never stops; the motorized moving
from somewhere to elsewhere scores the dark,
never out of reach of hands that open, caress,
point, make a fist. Simmering grease sounds like rain,
glass clinks; small machines gritch, whine,
and mostly close hard on your cash. Neon viscera
surround the collage-- geometrics of red beef,
opaline fish, potato pyramids, miles of newsprint,
wood, fabric, fabrication, fable. The man dozing
in the cardboard box waits to eat from upscale garbage.
The city honors and trashes, adores and ignores.

You nod at parallels to 19th century Paris. You
were the brilliant rebel, doomed genius, the damned.
Does the city make the artist or defile him?
Maybe both. You were like that building on the corner—
meticulous brick and polished balustrades— fronting
a brothel. Your poems seethed behind formal facades.
Your lines wept under carriage wheels, chimney soot.
Mine are free— wrinkled with racket and smear.

Chuffing semis gather now to disgorge at sun-up.
Nothing is blossoming wicked and wild in rusty cans
on cracked stoops, only forgotten cold-burnt geraniums.
The city's sleepers roll over, restless before rising
relentless to track across her not-yet made-up face.

Look there— a night-blooming cereus opens ghostly rare
in a florist's window. To the west, the top floor
of that steel and glass lance is open to new arrivals,
all hours. Steaming or frozen, the city is a womb.
The city incubates death. It has character
but outgrows its soul. The city coughs, spits, curses.
This city is a phoenix.

Like your poetry.
Maybe it'll fly in spring. Come back.

Glenna Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville IL 60565-1652
day or nite

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Your lines wept under carriage wheels, chimney soot.
Mine are free-- wrinkled with racket and smear.

Chuffing semis gather now to disgorge at sun-up.
Nothing is blossoming wicked and wild in rusty cans
on cracked stoops, only forgotten cold-burnt geraniums.
Sleepers roll over, restless before rising relentless
to track across Chicago's not-yet made-up face.

Look there-- a night-blooming cereus opens ghostly rare
in a florist's window. To the west, the top floor
of that steel/glass lance awaits new arrivals,
all hours. Steaming or frozen, the city is a womb.
The city incubates death, despair, discovery, desire,
greatness. She has character but outgrows her soul.
The city coughs, spits, curses. Still, Chicago
is a phoenix-- amassed ashes not her blight
but fuel for her strength.

Like your poetry, Mr. B. Maybe it'll fly in spring.
Maybe I'll find an old fashioned angel. Come back.

You nod at parallels to 19th century Paris. You
were the brilliant rebel, doomed genius, the damned.
Does the city make the artist or defile him?
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but outgrows its soul. The city coughs, spits, curses.
This city is a phoenix.

Like your poetry, Mr. B.
Maybe it'll fly in spring. Come back.

--Glenna Holloway

SOUTHWEST DRY SPELL

Scorched. Singed. Nothing tongues can say
is brittle enough. The right word would craze
like old pottery, fall apart and turn to dust
before it hit the ground.

Cattle lying down may never get up.
Already they smoke with black flies,
ears and tails too limp to flick off the biters,
more after moisture than blood.

This gray-brown heatscape has stopped breathing.
It's been over a year since a creek ran through
the landscathe. Fine grit fills creases
in our faces, upturned, searching the glare

threatening to combust. The only shade is
between cows' ribs, outlining their misery
like prison bars they tried to pry open
to escape the jailer sun. Stilled windmills

are brands against its fiery setting, burnt
into submission, blades welded to silence.
But now, wind would be another enemy, sweeping
all worth from the surface maybe forever.

Lungs hurry to expel each breath. Forced
to draw another, they swell again on 107 degrees
until rolling thoughts of unresisted drowning
displace wisps of green breeze memories.

Our brains are full of blips,
short-circuited logic. Each synapse sputters,
sparking another non sequitur. We don't look
at each other. We buy imported water.

We add supplements to the last desiccated hay,
not for weight gain, just to give the cows strength
to beat their hearts. Knowing no one will buy them
or the land. Not even at the price of bone.

--First Place, 1998, POET'S ATTIC QUARTERLY

THE SPECIALIST

Confident in step and hand,
cachet of well-trained youth,
a coat of nineties gloss--

But his eyes are ancient.
He listens with them,
connecting deep behind
the asking eyes he faces.
His patients--the ones beyond
sophistication's pose,
will tell you
he has hearing of the heart.

Yesterday I needed
more than bottled nostrums
and prescribed smoothespeak,
more than surgical steel wizardry.

Consulting this practitioner
of modern internal medicine,
I recalled that blue comes from
the cool part of the spectrum.

But his warm irises incised
confusion and fear
and applied non-synthetic caring.
My hidden sore was lanced,
more balm applied
than words alone can deliver
and I slept in the healing ward.

--Glenna Holloway

SPOON RIVER AFTERTHOUGHTS

Here stands the finest marble carving,
words befitting my worldly position,
a place of perpetual caring
for Braxton Sturgis, IV.

Yet it's plain from the carelessness
of your feet you've read my life elsewhere.
The crass biography my only daughter wrote
bulged with best-selling details bound
in commercially viable vindictiveness.
Besides making crude sport of my initials,
she proclaimed me
this planet's most prolific liar.

Not so. I sometimes skewed data
and dates, mixed a metaphor or two,
indulged certain whims.
But not without assistance.
My sins were never worse than yours.
Trust me now, old cohorts and consorts,
below the heroic urns and noble lines
the bottom line here is:
This is the last place
Braxton Sturgis would lie.

--Glenna Holloway

STAR SALESMAN

You're native to this territory, skilled
in local idiom and dialect,
politically correct, at ease on stage
with pagers, flow charts, wine lists, limousines.

You sprawl across the king-size hotel bed,
designer alter ego hanging pressed,
awaiting morning's cue, your Gucci shoes
ashine for well-rehearsed auditions for
the role of sweet success tomorrow— or
you'll even settle for a part next week.

A dozen times each month you play this lead.
And nothing but heroically blank verse
suffices to recount the episodes
you tell yourself in mocking dialogue
in rhythm as you buff your manicure
and duly note the comic undertones
that permeate this neo-classic farce.

Provider of expected locomotion,
the style and polish to complete the plot,
to make the entrance and escort the client
to lunch, silk lining iridescent wit,
lapels well-tailored with sincerity,
pants creased with confidence. Your faded shorts
don't show as lively anecdotes emerge
from pockets filled with practiced protocol
and uptown jokes, a little charge card magic.
Instead of hotdogs, you have haute cuisine.

Despite the talent and the presentation,
the bottom line is (how you hate that line!)
the customers aren't clapping for the number.
However bourbon-coated and benign
they make it sound, their script says NO, a word
of lead and ice that lodges in soft spots
beneath your belt, attacking gourmet spoils.
And when the scene plays out, the wound-up mime
propels the props to yesterday's airport
where soon the custom-made attire, almost
adept enough to give its own performance,
goes inanimate back on the plane.

Your seat-mate gripes about approaching winter.
You wonder how you'll pay for warmer clothes
before the ice man cometh, credit gone.

At last, unfolded in home's terminal,
you wait in line in Ma Bell's crowded alley,
and dredge your slept-in depths for change enough
to call, report the bust to your exec,
director of these high-camp, one-act flops—

who'll maybe say you don't still head the cast.

STOPPING IN THE DESERT ALONE

Did I drive 1200 miles just to sit here staring
at my sweaty hands on the wheel? To memorize
the livid veins like ruckled roads crossing
hot desolation heading deeper into the interior?
The interior is what I'm running from--

nothing inside worth keeping-- mucked up
with misbegotten cells and superchemicals
that don't know good from bad. Sitting here,
slashed and burned, poisoned for dessert, myself
a damaged ecosystem-- more of a desert than this.

I'm no longer afraid, just dried up. Mumbling
to whoever still lives inside, pretending
to still be a woman, not just an animated logogram
for ignorance posing as medical prowess. When I die
the docs will finger their beards and say:

"A shame it didn't work this time. Maybe
we'll hit the right combo next time."
And next time is already sitting
in their waiting rooms filling out the forms,
preludes to filling coffers and coffins equally.

Cut the commentary, girl, you're not the type.
Some patients get lucky; maybe you will.
Listen, if you've got a few months,
why spend 'em driving? You can still dance, dammit.
You could adagio with that dust devil out there,

what's left of your hair standing straight up--
grit to grind your teeth on for a soft-shoe number--
grit to sting you pink and alive, to sand
your scars smooth and touchable as rosewood.
Enough grit to get you back on point like a stylus.

Look at that wild thing dervish around the cactus:
secret rhythms-- slow spins-- winding down now--
naively graceful. You could choreograph that. Could it
lift you like a ballet partner? Is it strong enough?
If you cover your eyes and nose could it hurt you?

Actually-- could anything?

A TALE OF TWO POETS

The first one spiraled her words, preened
her posturing, posed her poem spindled,
oblique and opaque on the twilight page.
Roots choked on themselves as she spiked
shallow insights with small conceits,
infected the wound, paused in vagaries
to couple with disjointed abstraction.

The second poet, fluid and fluent,
picked up the fallen wand, confronted changing
winds unwinding truth from tangled vines,
and spread it on bleached vellum at noon.

Modernists wandered by with shielded eyes.
How long, the second poet wondered,
before they would be weaned to solid light,
before their outrage waned
after catching a writer
in the unforgivable stance
of being understood?

--Glenna Holloway

THE TETRARCH AFTER MIDNIGHT

Anything remotely round--
Moss-crested stones upon the ground,
Curved shadows in his garden
Could make him suck his breath
With a muffled rasping sound.

A change-- perhaps a trip to Rome,
He thought. Some place away from home
To leave the episode behind
Along with that beguiling child
Who briefly stole his mind.

The name Herod means heroic,
He announced aloud. I'll not
Allow some unwashed Stoic
To stalk my sleep and plot
Against my very sanity.

That man burned oil behind his eyes;
His tongue resounded, smoked
Like incense, wild disguise
Not hiding power in his thighs
And arms he never called upon.

Crucifixion-- much too public--
Yes, I should have hung him.
Instead-- decapitation! Whim?
Or female devil's vengeance-- rubric
For some future rite? Synonym

For usurpation? What a pair--
Most women shrink from blood. Beware!
I still can see the princess, hair
A-flying, prancing to her mother
With that ghoulish salver.

I should have harkened to John's word
About Herodias. She's mad!
She set the tray beside my bed
Unknown to me. And then I heard
Her humming, turned and saw the head!

(cont.)

She ordered it to watch
 While we made love. My crotch
 Went icy, sweat rolled off my face.
 She raged: "I should have kept the rest
 And put it in your place!"

She pushed John's eyelids open
 While she danced and mocked all men.
 I swear his fire still burned
 As if some ancient god returned
 To validate his advocate.

And now this Christ is doing things
 No mortal can. It's John, I know!
 Back to punish me, to show
 The world my weakness, prove that kings
 Stand helpless under heaven.

Oh, pull yourself together!
 With Jews there's always more afoot.
 I must be careful whom I put
 In prison. Why and whether
 They brew disruptive weather.

Curse you woman, curse the troth
 I pledged before your daughter
 Like a drooling fool. Curse you both,
 And best you heed my latest oath--
 You two will serve me as you ought!

--Glenn Holloway

THREE GENERATIONS AFTER

In the morning distance
crows rise
like oily smoke
claiming the air space

Behind curtains
she watches them
obey their leaders
dirtying the new day
more coming
beyond counting

The first wave scrabbles
on her roof, a commotion
like combat boots
on winter clay roads

The ceiling amplifies
claws
 beaks
 coarse calls
Their ranking member
screeches a command

She reflexes to the dark
of the kitchen to hide
two great grandsons
in cupboards
under leftover night

She wonders if
they have genetic memory
Her own chromosomes cock
like a .45

She waits
 suspended
as new cells remember

She waits
for the generic fist
on her door

--Glenna Holloway

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if their brains
are blipping codes

Her own chromosomes cock
like a .45

She waits
 suspended
as new cells divide
and remember

She waits
for the generic fist
on her door

--Glenna Holloway

ALMOST FORGOTTEN JOURNEY

Eons before we ventured through the womb
and entered into death's arena, this,
the short apprenticeship we serve between
revolving epochs-- there was staging room
where I remember bending toward the kiss
of light, becoming crystal tourmaline,
then part of tide-wash flooding a ravine.
Next I became a seed, the genesis
of being. Probably we met at times,
you in a storm or molten rock's abyss.
Can you recall the others, those with whom
we shared galactic fires and helix climbs?
Or did we leave them in the early rimes
of cooling clay to plan a nobler tomb?

--Glenna Holloway

COMING TO TERMS WITH HIGH VOLTAGE

July lightning cracks.
A red wire falls in a field,
blackens one bean row.

Linemen make repairs.
One hands tools to another
higher on the pole.
He nods—gloves, sleeve seams live-traced
in creeping glow like fox fire.

The field browns with fall.
Tall green weeds hide the charred stripe
long after harvest.

The farmer, electricians, passers-by never noticed
two haiku and a tanka happened here.

--Glenna Holloway

DEEP SWAMP

Sun falls suddenly.
Human steps hurry away.
A night heron shrieks.

Wind wrinkles water
around jutting cypress knees
and cottonmouth coils.

Mist and moon mingle,
crisscrossed with silent owl wings.
There are young to feed.

A fawn drinks quickly.
Sawgrass parts, a bobcat springs,
staining the green moss.

Now is the hunter's.
Only hunger rules the dark.
Law is ancient here.

GLENNA HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

12 lines

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TO AN ORB WEAVER
(Argiope aurantia)

Wildness is not a lack of rules. Our roles
are merely different, yours ordained
by Athena, framed in geometric shimmer.

Your realm continues beyond my premises.
Your black and gold cloisonne sways
faint promises in music of an alien school.

Your net of notes only the sun knows how to play
stretches between minor keys, filling chords
not resolved by my harmonic scale.

High noon predator, I applaud your skill,
your patience, your choice of prey. My potions
will spare you to rid my garden of vegetarians.

But beware. The red-wing blackbird,
another player, another wild difference,
admires you without deference to beauty.

--Glenna Holloway

TO HIM WHO PROPOSED WITH SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Oh love, were I to know the larger truth,
Would I find feigning in thy patterned prose?
If flatter-foggéd 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 fond caress a clutch?
Ah love, perhaps it is not wise to test
How malleable or 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?

--Glenna Holloway

TO KILL A CROW

Like an oily wind-borne rag, it flapped
out of a broken window in a rapid transit car
parked on the siding. Track workers, lunches
in laps, hunched inward as it screeched overhead,
landing its black insolence too close
to Holt's coffee. Holt's fast pitch zapped the crow
with an apple. Dust flew, the bird squeaked
like a cankered file, then hustled to the car roof
as Pete, the apple owner, squawked louder.

"Aw, it was just a reflex," said Holt. "Here,
take my candy bar." But Pete wouldn't have it,
curses converged in shoves and the crow feasted
on bread and ham between shuffling boots.

After I broke it up, we clumped like toadstools,
glaring at the soot-winged offense, everywhere
at once, scarfing up apple pieces and crumbs.
"Where th' hell's my candy bar?" Holt pawed his sack.
Wind waved the wrapper stuck on the car roof.
We pointed and whooped.

There's no telling about a bunch of rail benders--
at least one has a record, one an engineering degree,
and one named Pike keeps his distance--
maybe our idea instead of his, smelling like he does
of Ben-Gay and yesterday's sweat. Holt muttered,
"Them birds're jinxes. My old man used to say
you can't even kill 'em
unless you're in league with the devil."
I saw Pike's hand fiddling with the heavy rubber band
around his broken lunch box but I didn't see the rock.

The crow took a header from the car, landing at my feet,
splayed wings, bulging belly, beak open to the sky
as guffaws and mimic caws moved past me. I bent down
to pitch its finality in the trash truck. Jackhammers
started, vibrating the carcass, imitating life.

One claw closed; wings folded in slow dignity.
The crow rolled over, limped a step as I blurted HEY,
and exploded in the air like Satan's best expletive.
Crowing all the way.

--Glenna Holloway

GLENN HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

TO AN ORB WEAVER
(Argiope aurantia)

Wildness is not a lack of rules,
our roles are merely different,
yours framed in precision symmetry,
ordained in metrical links.

High noon predator, your realm continues
beyond my premises. Your design sways
faint promises in music of an alien school.
Your net of elided notes
only the sun knows how to play, stretches
between minor keys, filling chords
not resolved by my harmonic scale.

You ply the wisdom Athena gave you,
flaunting the gold and black cloisonné
she reserved for special spiders.
I, beguiled, applaud your charm,
your patience-- also your choice of prey.
My potions will spare your artistry
while you rid my garden of vegetarians.

But beware. The red-wing blackbird,
another player, another wild difference,
admires you without deference to beauty.

--Glenna Holloway

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GLENN HOLLOWAY
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Naperville, IL 60565

TO THOSE DOCTORS AND OTHERS IT MAY CONCERN

These last notes from my research lab may be
unfinished when found. My jar of reprieves is empty.
I have entered the complex process called death.
And my dear sworn-by-Apollo colleagues
(who labeled me loner, prima donna, bastard),
despite all the times we've seen death, heard it,
caused it on occasion,
we don't know much about it, do we?

Based on my forte for human horology, my time
will stop near midnight. Till then, I write
my thoughts as a poem:
No more late hours to haul my heaviness
up the ladder to inhale library dust,
mine the only fingerprints claiming those heights
since my old professor's. No more mornings to stare
through the lighted shaft probing mindless obscenities
feeding on healthy tissue. Nor afternoons to breed
and stalk the seething child-killers in glass cages.
Having defeated one once, I'm driven to destroy others.
But my demon, destructive as any virus, has come again
with the fuel bill. Unpaid, he's shutting my shop.

No time left to isolate the mutant entity I suspect
lay each day beneath my eye imitating innocence.
My life's goal--to expose it to world attack, unlock
doors, to stand and throw Messianic lightning down
the corridors of science. I would deal with the devil
to do it. But the dream must be delivered by others.

I move away from magnification and atomic rhythms
to culture my notebook in starlight. What do I know
of poetry? Yet the minutes allow for nothing else.
Now is distilled sediment, vitro-essence of failure
sealing my cloudy siphons with unanswers.
My sulphuric tongue is already silent. And no life
will be better for an eleventh hour poem.

So much waste. Great strides to standstills. Unless--
that one! My wire-drawn student who yesterday
challenged the godsmith. And turning to dispute me
in the flush of discovery, incised and laid open
a moment by my point, gave me a glimpse
of the bright burning edge of a demon I know.

To that damned and holy host-- that lonely pupil--
I leave all I have. The harsh shine of my keys--
and my only poem.

--Glenn Holloway

GLENNA HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565
630/983-5499

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THE TRIHEDRONESS

You've seen her, a cunning child
looking from under
lashes long enough to blow
in the wind. You've seen her eyes,
wild and craving as a falcon's,
cool and hot as a cougar's.
Waiting, always weighing.
When the lids lower and raise
she's gone.

You've seen her,
eyes benign as a fawn's,
you've met them transmitting praise
and hope, blue-green tunnels
of velvet understanding.
Reflex lenses anointing you.
She may stay long in the past;
she may come back tomorrow.

A blink. That fast.
Disconnection is silent.
Looking returns to a vagrant sea.

You know I share the eyes
with her and her.
One member of the trio
needs confining below the surface,
forever out of sight.
One should wear
a wide-brimmed white lace hat
and hold hands with the sun.

Both are prisoners of me.

Upstart in a Stetson

I'm surrounded by sunburnt flats, homogenized smell
of sagebrush and manure and the hot forge. Letting
loose my accumulated nosiness and trying to wear
my hat so it doesn't look bought yesterday.
I'm a writer soaking up the West in a week.

This guy's name is a surprise: Basil. Nothing
you'd expect for a horseshoer south of Albuquerque.
Hell, I'd have bet he's pure Navajo. I wanted
to learn some of his words--like maybe a few phrases
the Japanese couldn't crack in WWII.

His next words are newsroom familiar
as he straddles a horse's hind leg and it flinches
to remind ole Basil he's vulnerable.
I want to ask him if that happens often as he
betters his position to finish filing the hoof.

The animal is pied, not as big as my fine roan
back home. Wiry and jut-angled like the sculptures
made of coat hangers at Taos art fairs. You'd swear
this creature eats cactus. I venture to ask
what it is. Cayuse, he says. He implies more
with a tobacco juice exclamation point,
the commentary as likely for me as the horse.
If Basil already thinks I'm citified hopeless,
I might as well clinch it. Yeah, well,
what exactly is a cayuse? I say it out loud.

Indian pony originally. Mustang. Bronco.
Wild stock. This one's fast. For some reason
he's developed a crossfire. Basil looks up, knowing
I need to ask. This hind leg collides
with the opposite front leg. I'm correcting it
by raising the heel of the rear shoe. He gestures
with a hammer. I make noises like I know that.

I've got a platter foot back in Baltimore, I say.
Had an infected frog. I put him to stud. Daisycutter
but good blood. I square up with Basil's glance.

Another exclamation point hits the sawdust.
Good hot shoer can fix all that, he says. By now
Basil has another horse in that dangerous slot.
By now he's reading me like the Times. This shoe
is called an eggbar, he informs me. It's therapeutic.

(cont.)

(stanza break)

Guess you've been shoeing a long time, I say, wanting
him to say his father taught him. Wanting him to say
he's at least part Indian. Then I see the sign
burnt in wood: Dr. Basil Cauldron. Veterinarian.
Four years, he's saying. One more year at this
and I'm off to New York.

He reads me as I frown at the sign then the iron oval
he's nailing. The vet's my grandfather, he says.
We make a good team. But I want to see the East.
My mother was from New York. The old man's betting
I won't stay long. He may be right. He usually is.
Basil straightens, committing his eyes to a grin.
Granddad's a full-blooded Navajo.

The picture is perfect again with the far mountains
and free-ranging horses in the foreground. You speak
his language? Was he in the war? The big one?

Yeah. But I can't speak Navajo worth a road rose.
I speak my mother's tongue well enough though.

You sure do. You sound like an Oxford graduate.

USC, he says. I didn't mean English. Mama was a Mohawk.

--Glenna Holloway

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
3811 Carole Dr.
Doraville, Ga. 30040

TO MEASURE TOMORROW

by Glenn Holloway

Woven brilliant birds on draperies
Feather-draping my dull windows—pretending to
Seclude my wanting world, but
Hiding nothing. I see and go.
Watching.
Wafting wild wings release you,
Raise you like Nike past
Where leaded minds still stumble.
Beyond
The silence of silver galaxies
Into the singing suns of infinity.
Beyond
The fourth dimension. Who said the fourth
Was all? Who knows? There may be fifty!
You and I know five...

A LETTER FROM A MAN OF MANY LETTERS

Everything and anything
Has been said all ways anyway.
No thing is a new thing.
So why should I kowtow to modern dictum
And avoid roses and June and love,
Or whatever things I love?
Then subjects of peasants
Please other peasants.
(Take it any way.)
Besides, what is more hackneyed than man
Himself, or worse,
What is more trite than
Yet another pedant poet?
At least my hair is short.

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
1028 Apple Lane
Lombard, Ill. 60148

A LETTER FROM A MAN OF MANY LETTERS

by Glenn Holloway

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Has been said all ways anyway.
No thing is a new thing.
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And avoid roses and summer
And God and love
Or whatever things I love?
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Please other peasants.
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Himself, or worse,
What is more trite than
Yet another pedant poet?
At least my hair is short.

WHO NEEDS EDEN?

We breathe the fog that crawls the beaver-run
And climbs until impaled by spears of pine;
It fled the sea and soon will flee the sun
To secret places where blue herons dine.
We watch the valley/s for the twilight's rise,
And walk the blood-red hills against the wind
To meet the moon and wait there while it vies
With nimbus rings like cotton newly ginned.
The morning brings the rain that ^{bleeds the clay;} ~~dimples/sand/~~
It dabbles in the narsh and dimples sand.
A few miles down the highway's puddled gray
It rinses whitewash off the old fruit stand.
Our land is moody, restless like a child;
Kaleidoscopic wood designs grow wild.

POSTSCRIPT

You think those who fake it, ignore it, or drown it
At least have the freedom from stress we all crave?
La Dolce Vita's a way that should crown it
With laughs, and a liver the medics can't save.

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
3811 Carole Dr.
Doraville, Ga. 30040

ON OMAR, THE BELIEVER

(A Ballad)

by Glenn Holloway

If nothing and naught were our father and mother,
If only more dust is the goal of the grave,
Then let us stop fighting a clay-begot brother;
We've no time or talent to waste being brave!

Old Khayyam the tentmaker tried to be savage;
He claimed the sole truth was the juice of the grape.
He said that man lives like the head of a cabbage—
To flower, to fade, without hope of escape.

He dared One Whose power was more alchemistic
To show man His gold and His blessings to pour,
But even while trying to be atheistic,
He cried out for Heaven's forgiveness, and more—

He cursed all the pitfalls He laid out before us,
He constantly blasphemed the Holy Concept...
In spite of denial, in one tortured chorus,
He begged the Creator our pardon accept!

If nothing and naught were our father and mother,
If only more dust is the goal of the grave,
Then let us stop fighting a clay-begot brother;
We've no time or talent to waste being brave!

PARADOX OF OMAR, THE BELIEVER

(A Ballad)

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Doraville, Ga. 30040

THE VARIABLE CONSTANT

by Glenn Holloway

Stone, wind, flesh—

Greatness, weakness, conceit—

Brutality, gentle faith, despair—

There are some made of each.

And sometimes they are all one.

^{plattered}
A curse can be a desperate prayer;

Love can devour the loved.

"The meek shall inherit the earth," said a small shadow.

"And they can have it," shrilled another, hulking, angular,

"They deserve it," It's all semi-pseudo, ersatz, quasi."

"...Many search but never see, hold but never have,"

Offered a deeper distant voice.

"Because there are a thousand shades of black and

White, mostly grays; nothing is cut and dried neatly,"

Recited the blustery one.

"You're only saying everything is relative. I've heard

All that," came the quiet reply. "Isn't it merely the

Need for sighting in from other observation sites? A

Matter of changing shoes?"

Day, night—fire, water—man, woman.

Sometimes all are the same. Always

(cont.)

There is the captive sacred Cyclopean Eye that
Never shuts—even when painted with pitch.
And always the fastidious id, the naked I.

CHELSEANNA, LITTLE GIRL

Her mother taught her to be like a queen:
To think above the ranks of common birth,
To keep her soul aloof and pressed between
Lush layers of prefabricated worth.
Her mother fed her daily with this fare,
Explaining how the merest flick of fate
Had thieved them of their titled name, their share
Of tangibles to crown their high estate.

No matter though, for lofty blood would tell.
Nobility of mind would outweigh wealth.
And as the daughter thrived, digesting well
The heady helpings of her mother's health,
She planned the daughter she would someday bear:
The world-transcending kin, the angel-heir!

Poor Chelseanna never had a chance
Her neighbors said while she was still a child.
Such airs, such high-flown heraldry self-styled
Made everybody look at her askance....

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Nobility of mind would outweigh wealth.
And as the daughter thrived, digesting well
The heady helpings of her mother's health—
She planned the person she would someday bear:
The world-transcending kin, the angel heir!

(cont.)

She spoke sigh-softly, thinking none could hear.
Her pomp and pretense now betrayed by fear
That some dark force had tarnished her birthright,
She pled her case with Psyche in the night....

CHELSEANNA, MOTHER-BLIND

I raised a rose for Eden in my yard;
Each day enhanced the promise of a bloom.
Each pointed
Ballooning buds that made my soul a bard
Enslaved me, made me proud perfection's groom.
No spot or blight could mar that precious plant,
No careless foot or lower life invade
That destined ground where I prepared to grant
New Eden's need for white of purest shade.

Then came the day my prize unfurled its news...
Not like the vision I would still impose—
Of white, the equal presence of all hues!
What bee or hybridizer's blunder grows
And flowers, streaked with pink, chartreuse and wine?
How could this thing have happened, Child of Mine?

(cont.)

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
1028 Apple Lane
Lombard, Ill. 60148

TWO SONNETS TO SARAH

by Glenna Holloway

BEHIND THE CURTAINS

Each day she measures fabrics in her chair,
The padded chair with heavy rubber wheels.
Her clients talk of going here and there—
They never seem to wonder how she feels.
She sews their curtains, swags, and tats their lace;
Her artful fingers applique and pleat.
She smiles as they discuss some famous place;
She minds her craft and never leaves her seat.
Her work is sought, exquisite, highly praised.
She would not wish for pity from her friends
Who, if they thought at all, would be amazed
That nature in its wisdom makes amends:
The scenes that she has seen they could not travel
On average feet, nor average eyes.unravel.

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
~~3811 GayoxyDxx~~
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1028pple Lane
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THE VARIABLE CONSTANT

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"I've heard all that," came the quiet reply. "Isn't it

Merely a matter of changing shoes?"

Day, night—fire, water—man, woman

Sometimes all are the same. Always there is

The captive sacred Cyclopean Eye that never

Shuts—even when painted with pitch.

And always the fastidious id, the naked I.

SAGANESQUE SONNETS

Empyreal contrails must have awed us when
the red giant burst and spewed us through the void.
The swift sidewise flashbacks of our beginning
illuminate dark mental niches-- then
they vanish like a burned-out comet. Freud
said we forget what we can't face-- Did spinning
through velvet silence, constant press of twinning
cells erase that imprint? We've employed
soft-padded rationale on which to lean
our origins. It may be we enjoyed
the centrifuge, imploded time. All men
were processed thus. The vast exchange machine
we know as death will one day intervene--
returning us to stardom once again.

Eons before we ventured through the womb
and entered into death's arena, this,
the short apprenticeship we serve between
revolving epochs-- there was a staging room
where I remember bending toward the kiss
of light, becoming crystal tourmaline,
then part of tide-wash flooding a ravine.
Next I became a seed, the genesis
of being. Probably we met at times,
you in a storm or molten rock's abyss.
Can you recall the others, those with whom
we shared galactic fires and helix climbs?
Or did we leave them in the early rimes
of cooling clay to plan a nobler tomb?

SAGANESQUE SONNET

I'd read of other life forms, full of doubts.
And yet one scientist has made me quell
My skeptical response, no easy sell.
His studied speculation now re-routes
My reasoning; it drowns pragmatic shouts,
Then stirs up images of nonpareil
Exotic beings on some parallel
Who might inhabit other whereabouts.
I studied all of Dr. Sagan's theses
Then on the cusp of this millennium,
His bold position on unproven species
Persuaded me to recognize the sum
Of his beliefs. His logic rose like cream
To lift his words beyond the earthly dream.

IMMORTAL MARINER
(At the Art Institute of Chicago)

His heart went out to sea when he was ten,
a boy whose toys were pencils, brushes, paints
he borrowed from his artist mother when
his talent overwhelmed all her complaints.
She realized he had a special gift
that ranged beyond the limits of her palette.
She understood he must be set adrift
in years ahead. It hit her like a mallet.
And drift he did, on times and tides of ocean,
painting waves and windstorms, fishing boats,
all drawn from depths of mood and shaded motion,
capturing each moment as it floats
on nuances of sun and shadow scoped
on spectrums gleaned from all he ever hoped.

With living colors cloned from old salts' eyes,
the sea and solar secrets of refraction,
his canvas blends a mix of gasps and sighs
in peaceful themes and stabbing peaks of action.
With loving strokes of light he poetized
each scene with potent truth and inner soul.
Now gazers linger, awed and magnetized
by artist, subject, swallowing them whole.
His audience, as always, loath to leave,
collects before his "Gulf Stream" and "Life Line."
They speak of artistry that can achieve
such urgent feeling, make you taste the brine.
Another Winslow Homer hasn't come
to share such mastery of medium.

SEEKERS ON THE EDGE
(Saganesque Sonnets)

I'd read of UFOs with scornful doubts.
Now certain scientists persuade me well.
The logic of their speculation routs
my negative response. I'm in their spell.
My thoughts were often occupied by those
who might inhabit other unique places.
Unchecked imagination soared to pose
exotic beings in fantastic spaces
and situations facing unknown species.
Then on the cusp of this millennium
I read some more of Dr. Sagan's theses.
My mind was activated with the sum
of his beliefs. A sonnet rose like cream.
Of course, the things I wrote were just a dream:

The strangers watched familiar home stars fade
as engines thrust them free from pull behind.
They spun through vast dimensions, shine and shade,
three volunteers, their mission a desperate kind.
The dauntless emissaries prayed their risk
would somehow save their desiccating land.
The daring new design of their aerodisc
propelled them Earthward as their leaders planned.
They must have water; they would pay in gold
for hydro-sciences, a rescue course.
Brilliant specialists equipped their hold
to locate help, an intercosmic source.
In time to save their blistered asteroid--
life's last galactic outpost in the void.

They came to us, pathetic in their need.
They hoped Earthmen's compassion would surmount
first fear, then curiosity and greed.
They gambled everything on one account
interpreted by elders from old lore
about a "golden rule" this planet had.
Their legends said they'd been here once before
to seek advice when ancient kings went mad.
Our folklore hints of visitors from space
but modern scholars scoffed it off the pages
of our affairs. We meet now in a race
with time, our water squandered through the ages.
And as we watch-- our wealth, our science fails.
We learn together-- only God prevails.

RETURN OF THE REAPERS

The travelers disembarked and checked their chart.
Where were the trees and crops they left to grow?
They stared at rot, a silo torn apart,
Debris of death abandoned long ago.
The strangers spread out, searched the fossil land
For fertile fields and streams described in books.
Still hoping, they dug deep in fetid sand
For roots and corms, for signs of inglenooks.
One found an odd rock underneath his sole
Then saw scratched words the nodule held in wait:
"Within this case beneath corruption's toll
A primal spore survives to germinate.
We failed, we cultivated our worst weed.
To live, we cannot propagate our greed."

"For this fear of death is indeed the pretense of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good."
--Apology, by Plato

TO PLATO WITH THANKS

That you, so long before Christ came to Earth,
Perceived that death might be man's greatest boon
Is marvelous to me. Your mentor was
A wise man, yet no wiser than you were
Who recognized dualities in things
Man clings to (sometimes right and often wrong,)
Who recognized that striving for the good
Should be man's first concern, not mortal life.

Who recognized philosophies were void
Without the caring for each other's souls,
Researching truth, supporting what withstood
The test of dedicated minds to God.
A God not made of myth, but felt without
The stone designs, the sun, the temple fires.
A sense of love surpassing Eros, far
From self, past filial, best called agape.

Surrounded by possessions, gazing blind
At columns posing as eternity,
Its caryatids wrought exquisitely
In marble lies, I marvel at the minds
That reached beyond acceptable assumptions.
Forsaking comfort zones of thought, you plumbed
New answers, keener scruples, higher knowledge.
Applying logic, you defeated fear

Of death, its old genetic grip on man,
Its hollow eyes and baleful leer, a false
Reflection of the body's armature.
These centuries removed, you could not know
A modern Cardinal who called death "friend."
Of course, he knew of you, plus centuries
Of wisdom and the holy Word passed down.
This Bernadin would seek you out, I think.

I hope the two of you have met by now.
You have so much to talk about. You learned
The greater part of truth when you passed through
The gate you knew was there. Two Old World sons,
Two intellectuals with well-known names,
Believers of two different faiths, but kin.
What conversations you will have together!

My wish would be to listen, but you gave,
Before my birth, the words I cherish now:
The perfect ideology for life.

VIEWING MAGRITTE'S "THE LOVERS"

I recognize that man on the canvas,
the one with the swaddled head, all features
covered. The arrangement of his drapery
is a bit too debonaire for a Halloween mummy.
Not a bed sheet, more like an Arab pate piece
gone hyperbolic. For all the elegance
of his wrapping, his collar is a disaster.

His kissing partner is carelessly swathed
in her anonymity. Almost an afterthought
she tossed on. Or did he?

Is it starlit assignation?
Thinking if they're spotted,
who would be so gauche as to pull off
their masks? Some suspicious spouses might.
Or it might be convenient in other ways.
Either could slip in a surrogate
and be elsewhere kissing
without muzzy curtains between their lips.

More likely they share strangeness
tearing intimacy in strips
to bind stings unhealed enough to be seen.

--Glenna Holloway

VILLANELLE IN VIRIDESCENT GRAY

The line between neap tide and sky
Has disappeared like rubbed pastels,
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

They draw their graphic pattern high
Across mixed hues; it parallels
The line between neap tide and sky.

Light's changing moods intensify
The foreground textures, sheen and shells,
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

The pier shades truth while colors lie;
Imagination's stroke compels
The line between neap tide and sky.

Winged calls begin to prophesy
The storm this palette's blend foretells,
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

They pose on pilings, preening dry
Before their stippled rising swells
The line between neap tide and sky
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

--Glenna Holloway,
THE FORMALIST, 1992
ORBIS (England), 1993

GLENNA HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

VOICES

In darkness
or aloneness with telephone or radio,
voices can touch, something can connect
through human sound that doesn't happen
between flesh. Maybe nearness
gets in the way. The notions our faces foster.

I never liked Aunt Clara, the why unsure,
defenseless. If you forced an explanation,
I'd shrug and mention her vapid smile,
the way she held her teacup.
I used to want to put eyebrow pencil on her,
creating some trace of expression.

In the still vastness of unannounced daybreak,
voices hold a different tone,
changing with distance, not the same
when you can't see the lips. Sometimes
you think a voice on the wire or across
the hall is not the person claiming it.
And even if it's saying the expected,
a whole new set of sensors takes the message.

I'll always regret not being far enough away
to hear Aunt Clara's call for help.

WALKING TO WAKING
(after Richard Wilbur's "Walking to Sleep.")

We're seasoned to believe the garden fence,
coffee pot, chairs, everything we last saw
with open eyes will stay the night outside
our languid lidfalls just as we left them,
as we trusted them to be: Unmoved by time
or tricks of dark we think impossible
in our fragmented understanding.
Against the hostile forces of morning,
feet flung from sheets, fingers spread,
we see nothing is the same.

We try to grasp cold vacancy snagged
on splintered air as sharp as what impales
our soles with every step, letting us fall
in increments. We're unsure if this will pass
with repossession of a full range of faculties,
blown like the Big Bang with nothing to stop
their outward bounding until gravitational drag
kicks in. At which time their trajectory droops
into the pull of some peculiar planet,
some place not meant for mammals.

Our only option is the bed, the one absolute,
the one universal lodestone we must return to,
and persuade sleep to renew the contract
using sturdier stuff. And add a clause
providing quick precise termination of tenure
plus a ready steady gait.

It's six a.m. Does anyone know where we are?

--Glenna Holloway

GLENN HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
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WATERCOLOR WEEKENDS

My brother found this secret place
he calls his spirit home
where recumbent clouds rest.
High in the covert hills,
this glacial gouge is full
of clearest quartz pressed to liquid,
leftover tints and tones swimming--
sometimes rainbows jumping rainbows.

Staring at pooled sky, I can believe
the monster ice once passing through
so tall and jagged, reached up to snag
a patch of azure, a swatch of fluff
for a tail, and pulled it for miles
like a kite--then spread it under glass
to keep, the blue so intense it seeped
and stained the grass the first warm May.

By night, the captive cloud's kin
come calling on this mezzanine of land
and lake till time to board the right wind
aloft or morning's rapid transit sunshafts.

But sometimes, like my brother's guest,
they loll against cedar and pine,
settle down in tent and lean-to,
even firepit--and hang around for days.

--Glenna Holloway

GLENNA HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
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WHAT IT WILL TAKE

Simple sleep is not enough.
Tonight I need no less than
swift temporary designer death.
Drugless ubiquitous suspension
of time and place, of me,
computers, closets, colors,
my own alterstate/counterstate,
beginning and ending at will.

Holloway

THE WILD LOVER

No garden prize for me. I say
Let seasons' cycles have their way.
I don't subscribe to formal rows;
No leaf or stem on my place grows
According to a pinioned plan,
And nothing's planted other than
What came by wind or bird or bee.
My land's a haven for the free.

The galax slopes and piney floor
Grow bloodroot, squill and many more
That you might label common weeds.
I smile as cranesbill sprays its seeds
Beneath the hardwoods' regal stand
Which knows no pruning reprimand.
No chemicals or rasping blade
Defiles this purple-scented shade.

Unlandscaped ground, rain-scarred and gulched
Is gently nature-nursed and mulched,
For here she rules with perfect scales
Between bobcats and baby quails.
Machine-made sounds don't interfere
With daily rounds of sloe-eyed deer.
I've known arbutus buds in ice
And frosted webs and spruces' spice.

Through summer scorch and winter freeze
My patient wonders wait to please.
I welcome all who wish to pause
To look for beauty--not for flaws.

2nd

WINTER OVERTURES

Gardenia scent is gone, November's breeze
Brings icy needles jabbing at my nose.
It sends its early warning through my knees,
Distressed and stiff, confined to heavy clothes.
I'm not exactly getting out of sorts,
Or not preserving well with passing years.
I still can hold my own in tennis shorts,
Returning summer's serves, or changing gears
With speed to spare right through October days.
But when raw wind impales me on its points
And pewter sky infects me with malaise
I hover by the hearth to rub my joints.

Invading like a parasite, the cold
Claims bones that otherwise don't know they're old.

--Glenna Holloway,
(C) THE LYRIC

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--Glenna Holloway

COOKING UNDERCURRENT

Time-savers, gadgets, wired shortcuts,
The plug-in help I've got
Will never change a kitchen klutz--
A cordon bleu I'm not.

Electric knives to slice and peel,
Hot prongs to poach tomatoes,
A probe to pinch and punch and feel,
A mace to smash potatoes.

Machines to string out noodle dough,
Twin mauls for crushing beans.
The oven beeps to let me know
It's lethal while it cleans.

An automatic coffee urn
Extracts exotic brew.
The range can sense impending burn,
Won't overcook the stew.

Robotic tongs both grasp and lift,
The Smart-Pots skim and baste.
Computers measure, mix and sift;
I'll bet they even taste.

My kitchen's armed, a battle zone
And I'm the casualty.
I long to own a super clone
With no more need for me!

--Glenna Holloway

THE CLUMSY CONSUMER REPORT

My finger's cut as I open a can,
A plastic bag claims a tooth.
The crimped-closed edge of a frozen pan
Finds I can be uncouth.

The canopy that covers the ham
Might yield to a bayonet.
Designers closely studied the clam
But they aren't happy yet.

To greater, rarer heights they aspire--
Impregnable wraps for cheese,
And seals for nuts and cakes that require
Three engineering degrees.

My bread reposes behind chain mail;
I spring the flap with a thud.
My sandwich contains my fingernail--
And look-- is that ketchup or blood?

Inventors should get deserved acclaim.
Would all of these masters stand
To bow to the clapping due their fame?
And then--would they give me a hand?

GLENN HOLLOWAY
913 E. Bailey Road
Naperville, IL 60565

THE CLUMSY CONSUMER REPORT
Glenna Holloway

I'm a gentle soul, relaxed and mild;
I love my fellow man.
But there's this stuff that drives me wild
And shortens my life span.

I go to build some midnight snackage--
That's when my trials begin--
Getting the goodies outa the package
Thoroughly does me in.

My finger's cut on a zippered can,
A plastic bag claims a tooth.
The crimped-closed edge of a frozen pan
Finds I can be uncouth.

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1st place, P.S of Penn.

THERAPY

I will go to my cabinet to find
Something for the light-headedness,
The fever and the flush, the flutter in the center.
And the ache.
Ah, a purge should do it.
If not, there is a natural remedy,
A certain staple street, busy with things so basic.

Why do you smile, imp in the steamed-up glass?
I have overcome such a syndrome before. I am
No child with damp ears.
In a few days I won't even remember; I will not
Carry a kaleidoscope
Of jasmined jewels and satin sparks in my brain.

A drink, of course, a drink!
For I must sleep. Without dreams.
Arabian nights wide awake is distraction enough
Submerged in sequined cerise notes of this insane
Concerto. One can die of beauty.

(cont.)

Worthless nostrums! Height of sophistry!

You win, my love, you win. You

Are the only cure. You

Are the panacea for peace. But now

You can never leave, nor can I—

For peace is only temporary.

IF THE SHOE FITS...
or PASS ANOTHER BUCK

After cutting and haggling, Congress cobbled a shoe.
It was so much too tight no one knew what to do.
The joints couldn't wiggle, the sole couldn't bend.
"That foot is so bound, it won't run off and spend,"
said a Senator, pointing to stockpiles of leather,
"and look what we've saved back for inclement weather."
"The pattern they gave us was so much too big
no Tory could wear it, nor even a Whig."
"It would flop and would slip, and would fill up with rain;
you'd see all that padding go right down the drain."
"But now," said another, "the foot cannot grow;
it might lose the race from a cramp in the toe."
"Nonsense," said the statesman, "why, everyone knows
that a cramp in the toe is the fault of the hose."

From ORIENT/WEST

BEAUTY IS

(Japanese Tanka)

Until you notice
Iridescent filigree
On a lowly fly,
Truth to see eludes your eye
In loveliness of lotus.

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
1028 Apple Lane
Lombard, Ill. 60148

MEASURING STICK

by Glenn Holloway

They told her—kindly, of course—
To try something else, ~~because~~
She had no talent for poetry.
~~She was sitting on the ground,~~
I found her ~~sitting~~ on the ground,
Silent and slumped like the toadstools around her.
~~She wasn't crying,~~ But from the pages
~~passed~~ She gave me, I knew
She knew how to cry.
~~Her meter was as seldom as a total eclipse.~~
~~No, not free verse— an iambic beat tried to be there.~~
They told her the rhyme pattern was all wrong.
~~And it was. Like wearing mismatched shoes.~~
~~No newly minted phrases. No provocative bursts.~~
They said she was ~~not~~ not a poet. But
~~From her lines I knew~~ ^{Her lines said} this about her—
She looked at a dandelion and saw resurrection;
She reached into black holes and felt the fingers of God.

Heaven alone may understand,
If even Heaven does—
This strange estate, this Satan's seal,
This clutch that claims my soul.

These strangled callings, can you hear?
They clamor for control—
Erato's whisper: "Poet art thou",
Some playwright's ghost ~~in~~ outshouts!

I never prepared my voice to sing;
Why did it turn to gold?
I never have toasted Terpsichore,
Yet still she came and bred...

The shades of sculptors haunt my hands,
And fight my mother's gift—
The only birthright gift I own—
The rest are bastard freaks.

Her truth of touch, her rare technique,
Her keyboard mastery
Precede this horde that made me host,
Infesting heart and mind.

How long will my destruction take
Upon this devil's altar?
They wind me, tease me, feed me wine
To keep me running longer.

Oh, never let me hear again
The sound of wild applause.
Serve no more sticky spoons of praise;
It doesn't soothe the burn.

You proud, proud parents, bring me not
Another gifted child.
You fools, you dreamers, it's a curse!
No worse can Hell devise!

I often read that parable—
The man with just one talent...
I envy him above all men;
Most people envy me!

Would I be wrong to bury some?
Will mine continue doubling?
Oh, God, I'll gladly share with ten
My fair and fatal demons!

ANCIENT WINDOWS

First
there was
only blurred
dullness and doubt.
I might have squinted
all my life but for friends
who wiped the panes with belief
and taught me how to pray to Him,
clearing away all my own smeared prints--
for now I see through the glass less darkly.

THE ANSWERED

Two beds to make,
Two rugs to shake,
Which means I'm not alone.

Fresh corn and squash,
A grill to wash,
Which means that I'm not hungry.

Some clothes to scrub,
Hot water tub,
Which means I'm warm and clean.

I've been without,
Lived through a drought
That lasted seven years.

Then came the fire.
Just ash and wire
Were all it left my name.

I've been without;
I know about
The awful pangs of need.

I'm now without
The slightest doubt
That someone does take heed.

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

21 lines

THE ANSWERED
Glenna Holloway

Two beds to make,
Two rugs to shake,
Which means I'm not alone.

Fresh corn and squash,
A grill to wash,
Which means I don't go hungry.

Some clothes to scrub,
Hot water tub,
Which means I'm warm and clean.

I've been without,
Lived through a drought
That lasted seven years.

Then came the fire.
~~Just~~ ash and wire
Were all it left my name.

I've been without;
I know about
The awful pangs of need.

I'm now without
The slightest doubt
That someone does take heed.

THE ANSWERING
A Sequel to Browning's "Evelyn Hope"

Because no one has ever spoken
Back from here, we've all supposed
This coldest seal remains unbroken,
This ancient passage always closed.
If only you who think I died
Could know this is a sweet exchange,
Could know 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. I'm sure you see
The structured weave, its narrow strength
Would never grant to 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 love without the chance
Of shock, 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, my dear, your words are not
Earthbound. I hear your lover's heart
With mine and don't despair our lot.
Now new dimensions frame my part
As they will yours at your last breath.
The cycling portals pivot, 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 veins of green leaf stillness:
We'll meet renewed, a better fit
With place, my hand then free of chillness.
It's fitting that my name was Hope.
Please don't deny its muffled call
Or waver in transition's scope.
Here, time is nothing; love is all.

—Glenna Holloway

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ANTHROPOLOGY PROFESSOR SAYS DARWIN GOT IT WRONG
—caption, Chicago Tribune

"Most likely there," he said. "Rich ground, warm sun."
He pointed to an Old World map, a plain
Where rivers met. "The Edens, more than one,
Nearby and round the world, all bore the stain
Of that first Eve and Adam's sin, all equals.
The genesis, our time on earth, began
Incumbent on the pairs, the human sequels.
More pairs were made; incest was not the plan.
No quarrel with evolution or the Word:
Sub-beings did descend from those in trees
To walk upright then fade away unheard.
Experiment is one of nature's keys.
Some forms were left to mutate line from line.
But ours was drawn apart-- the Grand Design."

--Glenna Holloway

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AUTHOR'S IMPRINT

I know her. Her words
come from keen hearing
of the heart.

Her artistry defines her:
sometimes a blue ache,
a peony, a sudden peak
on my spinal graph.

And after such intimacy,
holding my fragile premises
in her hands,
how can either of us say
we've never met?

--Glenna Holloway

AUTHOR'S IMPRINT

I know her. Her poems
come from hearing centuries,
listening to hours, to now.
A hearing of the heart.

I know her by touch,
her words making contact
in surface ways,
a one-finger caress. Her lines
plunge deep in veinous ways--
corkscrews and neon probes.

I know her in right brain ways
where no progress ventured
for years. I feel her push,
a force not prepared for,
rooted yet pliant.

Her artistry defines her:
sometimes a blue ache, a peony,
an ice peak on my spinal graph.

And after such intimacy, holding
my fragile premises in her hands,
how can either of us say
we've never met?

--Glenna Holloway

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AWAKENING

Now that it's no longer true,
I can bear to say it: For years
my most memorable moments were spent
outside
a jewelry store window in Chicago
looking
at a piece of Australian black opal,
green, red and blue simmering
softly in its dark core.
From a certain angle, lightning struck
and the colors collided and crazed.
Overwhelmed,
orange and pink shivered, flared
inside where something reveled
in its experience with fire.

One day you taught me to love--
the agape kind for others, and slowly,
another kind for you.
You pulled sounds out of guitar strings
just like the opal looked. And I felt
rocketing lights when you touched me.

Now the place for keeping my memorables
expands
with a vaulted ceiling. I blink
at the jewels in my trust,
knowing
the secret wealth is mine to share
with you-- a solar celebration
where once was only black.

—Glenna Holloway

BEGINNER'S PRAYER ON 89th STREET

It took a long time to climb, Lord,
away from the oozing landfills,
away from where the slumlords mock
the masses yearning to breathe free
of fumes and radon and asbestos.

I was like a roach, Lord, crawling up
a slimy pipe while you watched.
When I got to the top I was blown away.
In that terrible hollow of my falling,
I heard laughter. But not yours, Lord.

You're the one who caught me, jarred me
awake inside. The first time, I made
my way up alone. This time I know
I need your help. This time, Lord,
I can see-- up isn't where I thought.

12 liner

BEGINNER'S PRAYER ON 89th STREET

It took a long time to climb, Lord,
away from where the slumlords moon
the masses yearning to breathe free
of Diesel fumes and radon and asbestos.

I was like a roach, Lord, crawling up
a slimy pipe until I was blown away.
In that terrible hollow of my falling,
I heard laughter. But not yours, Lord.

It was You who caught me, jarred me awake
inside. The first time, I made my way
alone. This time, Lord, I need Your help.
Now I can see-- up isn't where I thought.

BUTTERFLY GIRL

I overheard them laughing in the hall,
Four voices ripe with confidential tones.
My best friend said, "Where does she get the gall
To pour at tea and flash those tawdry stones?
And use mauve blusher with her dyed red hair?
Another said, "She must think she's a star.
Someone should tell her what she shouldn't wear.
Next thing you know she'll buy a purple car."
I waited till they left before I cried.
They never met the cowed and damaged soul
Beneath bravura hues and painted hide,
Or knew the fears I sometimes can't control.
How fragile is the monarch's jeweled wing;
How thin the gaudy shield is to a sting.

--Glenna Holloway

CHALLENGE

In a time men call the beginning
there was unbridled light,
too pure, too intense for any but God's eyes.
A time of mass and matter,
awkward elements warring and waiting--
His playthings--
molded and willed and flung from dawn to forever.
Let science break creation's code,
tell us what life is and how it happened.
And when those wise ones stumble, let them discover
the Why. Let them locate the lost language
of holiness, the origins of praise. Find us new words
wrested from granite, born burning, tempered
on glaciers, cut and polished with diamonds.
To be spoken by men in whispers.

CHALLENGE

In a time men call the beginning
there was unbridled light
too pure, too intense for any but God's eyes.
A time of mass and matter,
awkward elements warring and waiting,
His playthings—
molded and willed and flung from dawn to forever.

Beginnings continue; all things hold the message.
You leaders of science, equip us to receive
the signals of truth; train us to transmit the whole.
Break creation's code; tell us what life is
and how it happened, then let us learn together
the WHY.

Locate the lost language of holiness;
discover synonyms for praise. Give us new words
wrested from galaxies, born burning, tempered
on glaciers, cut and polished with diamond.
To be spoken by men in whispers.

CHALLENGE FOR A SCIENTIST

In a time men called the beginning
there was unbridled light,
black light, white light,
too pure, too intense for any but God's eyes.
A time of mass and matter,
awkward elements warring and waiting—
His playthings—
molded and willed and flung from dawn to forever.

Beginnings continue. All things have a voice.
Equip us to receive molten truth,
tongues to transmit.
Break creation's code; tell us what life is
and how it happened, but teach us the way
to respond to WHY.
Locate the lost language of holiness;
discover synonyms for praise. Give us new words
wrested from granite, born burning, tempered
on glaciers, cut and polished with diamond.
To be spoken by men in whispers.

CHALLENGE FOR A SCIENTIST

In a time men called the beginning
there was unbridled light,
black light, white light,
too pure, too intense for any but God's eyes.
A time of mass and matter,
awkward elements warring and waiting—
His playthings—
molded and willed and flung from dawn to forever.

Beginnings continue. All things have a voice.
Equip us to receive molten truth,
~~prime our tongues to~~ transmit it.
Break creation's code; tell us what life is
and how it happened, but teach us the way
to respond to WHY.
Locate the lost language of holiness;
discover synonyms for praise. Give us new words
wrested from granite, born burning, tempered
on glaciers, cut and polished with diamond.
To be spoken by men in whispers.

CONTEMPLATING PLATO AND THE CARDINAL

Forsaking comfort zones of thought, you plumbed
New answers, keener scruples, higher knowledge.
Applying logic, you defeated fear
Of death, its old genetic grip on man.

For you, so long before Christ came to Earth,
Perceived that death might be man's greatest boon.
You recognized that striving for the good
Should be the first concern, not mortal life.

Millenia removed, you could not know
A modern Cardinal who called death "friend."
Of course, he knew of you, plus centuries
Of wisdom and the holy Word passed down.

This Bernadin would seek you out, I think.
I hope the two of you have met by now.
You have comparisons to make. You learned
The greater part of truth when you passed through

The gate you knew was there. Two Old World sons,
Two intellectuals with well-known names,
Believers of two different faiths, but kin.
What conversations you will share together!

CUCKOLD AND KING

Uriah swore his valiant sword to Israel:
A Hittite, he strove to prove allegiance
To Zion's holy cause. And many heathens fell
Before his might who seldom lived to tell
The prowess of Uriah.

As Joab's hand-picked battle-wisest veteran,
Uriah thought himself a lucky man.
Born poor, his soldiering provided much
Of comfort's touch—soft linen, wine and meat, a house
Well shaded by the king's for his new spouse,
That strange shy girl he wed.

His mind was peaceful knowing his wife was sheltered
By more than tent flaps protecting her bed.
But the campaign for Rabbah was going less well
Than spoiling Ammonites had gone. The king
Was needed at the front to lead his troops, to sing
And play his songs of inspiration to them.
Yet David idled in Jerusalem.

Israel was stymied outside Rabbah's wall.
The king sent forth a summons for Uriah
Who hastened to his lord, devoted to his call.
After his report, David gave him leave,
Aimed him toward pleasure, primed him well with meat.
But the guilty plot was wasted on the Hittite
Who joined the kitchen servants for the night
Beside the king's back door.

When David heard, he tried again to replant
The vineyard with the owner's proper seed. Once more
Uriah failed to cover up the deed. "I can't
Indulge my flesh while my comrades suffer
In the fields," he cried, suppressing all his longings
For Bathsheba. But the wintry will of kings
Is seldom denied. David called for seal and quill.
Exquisite feel for punishment and irony
Went in the message to Joab.

Musician's hands with newly learned regality
Put planned execution in the executed's hands.
David watched him go: Uriah had his chance.
He could have kept it all, but no, he chose
A principle. So be it. Every soldier knows
The battle's risks. The army must advance;
Every obstacle to Israel must fall.
Every soldier makes the most of all his weapons.
David sighed. Lately he wearied of war.
Soon...a wedding to prepare for.

The form is early Italian narrative, random internal/external rhyme, 6 stanzas starting with 5 lines, adding 1 ea. stanza until 10. Meter variable, short last line ea. stanza. — OLD WORLD POETRY PATTERNS REVIVED

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DARING

I dare to ask blessings from a God
I sometimes forget, a God I don't
always obey, don't praise enough.
Yet I dare to believe He hears me
in my insignificance, my wrongness.
And because He is the one and only
God beyond all human understanding,
I dare to believe He will help me.

--Glenn Holloway

DARING

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I sometimes forget, a God I don't
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I dare to believe He hears me
in my insignificance, my wrongness.
And because He is the one and only
God beyond all human understanding,
I dare to believe He will help me.

--Glenna Holloway

DAY LILIES

Fiery
exclamations
against the garden wall
willingly shouted all at once,
expending all they have
under one sun
in joy.

--Glenna Holloway

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DAY LILIES

Glorius
exclamations
against the garden wall
willingly shouted all at once,
expending all they have
under one sun
in joy.

--Glenna Holloway

DEATH: A STARRING ROLE IN THE CELESTIAL SCENARIO

I

But death is just a word we mortals use,
Other entities don't regard the same.
Time curves away, form alters to diffuse
Its atoms, rebuilds, takes another name.
No part is new— man, beast nor any noun.
All deeds are old before the doer thinks them.
We still have frontiers (ours are up and down)
But scripts may fail before the printer inks them.
Matter returns to elemental wheels;
We must do the same for nothing's wasted.
Our energies rewind on cosmic reels
As basic thread for stars to be basted.
Beginnings terminate some other phase;
Ends are stages where cyclic portieres raise.

II

Death never was the enemy supposed
Nor is it sinister or strange. Our acts
Could not go on without it. Runs are closed
By saturation, change, the emptied facts,
Not death. In silent worldly partnership
The ancient contract makes the drama work,
Whets our dialogue, underscores the grip
To play a lead instead of ticket clerk.
But rote plot and static ad libitum,
The daily now, foreverness of here,
Compose an overture to tedium.
The wise Director lets no sonneteer
Remain so long he mouths a shibboleth
Instead of song. The scene is saved by death.

III

Transition is a better term. Our scenes
Will turn with different combinations, keys,
Where new dimensions number more than genes
And other sensors tell us more than these.
Forget acquired reflex to veinous chill
And stumbling lungs. Time spirals into space
Where death and birth are one within life's mill.
Eternity is humans' choicest place.
Dying deserves better press; vent the hate
On sickness, affliction, the pained and poxed
Ignoble ways we sidle to the gate,
Disfigured, unclaimed, quickly packed and boxed,
By evil scheme, old age or careless youth.
But don't fear death— perfection transcends truth.

DEATH: A STARRING ROLE IN THE CELESTIAL SCENARIO

It never was the enemy supposed
nor is it sinister or strange. The act
could not go on without it. Plays are closed
by saturation, change, the emptied fact,
not death. This is an honest partnership,
this ancient inviolate contract that
makes the drama work, that gives us grip
and drive. Imagine how wearying flat
our plots, our rote lines ad infinitum,
dailiness of now, foreverness of here,
a strung out status quo of tedium.
The wise Director gives no sonneteer
a part so long he mouths a shibboleth
instead of song. The scene is saved by death!

But death is just a word we mortals use,
other entities don't regard the same.
Time curves away, form alters to diffuse
its atoms, rebuilds, takes another name.
No part is new— man, beast, nor any noun.
All deeds are old before the doer thinks them.
Frontiers still beckon (ours are up and down)
but scripts may fail before the printer inks them.
Matter returns to the elemental wheel;
we must do the same for nothing's wasted.
Energy rewinds on the cosmic reel
as basic thread for stars being basted.
Beginnings must terminate some other phase;
endings are stages where cyclic portieres raise.

Death never was the enemy we thought,
 Nor is it sinister or strange. Our acts
 Could not go on without it, this pivot tip
 That makes the drama work. Our closing is brought
 About by saturation, emptied facts,
 Not death. It gives us earthly drive and grip,
 This old inviolate contract to equip
 Us with an exit that repels but attracts,
 Spares us rote lines, dull plots, our staling breath;
 Foreverness of now and here impacts.
 The wise Director leaves no player caught
 On stage so long he mouths a shibboleth
 Instead of song. The scene is saved by death,
 Resumed by understudies we have taught.

But death is just a word we mortals use,
 All entities don't regard the same.
 No design is new— man, beast or other thing.
 Time curves away, form alters to diffuse
 Its atoms, rebuilds, takes another name.
 Matter returns to an elemental spring;
 We must do the same, completing the ring.
 Energy recycles, fuels cosmic flame
 As basic thread for stars being basted.
 Each role we learn supports the total frame;
 Evolving stages offer different views.
 Nothing we master is lost or wasted;
 We're part of vast collages being pasted.
 Endings are openings where each one renews.

Transition is a better term. Our scenes
 Will change dimensions, turn with different keys
 And combinations, be perceived by other
 Sensors. Those dimensions number more than genes!
 The ones we know will be passé, and of these
 Who understands the fourth? Time is mother
 Of birth, death is the sire, space the brother.
 Death deserves far better press; veinous freeze
 And stumbling lungs are not reacts of truth.
 The revulsion we feel is for disease
 And wounds and all ignoble painful means
 By which we meet, unready and uncouth,
 In evil scheme, old age or careless youth.
 Fear no death itself— perfection supervenes.

DEATH: A STARRING ROLE IN THE CELESTIAL SCENARIO

Eons before we encountered the womb
And ventured into death's arena, this
Short apprenticeship we serve between
Revolving epochs, there was a staging room
Where I remember bending toward the kiss
Of light, becoming crystal tourmaline,
And once, part of a pool flooding a ravine,
And next, a mustard seed, the genesis
Of being. And you and I met at times,
You in a hail-storm, then a blue clematis.
But can you recall the others with whom
We shared galactic fires, and spiral climbs,
Or did we leave them in the early rimes
Of cooling clay to plan a nobler tomb?

Our blazing fall must have been awesome when
The red giant burst and spewed us through the void.
Swift sidewise flashbacks of the beginning
Ignite the under-edges of our minds then
Vanish like a burned-out comet tail. Freud
Said we forget what we can't face— Did spinning
Through velvet silence, pressure of twinning
Cells blank that memory? Or have we employed
Soft padded rationale on which to lean
Our origins? Perhaps we even enjoyed
The centrifuge, imploded time. All men
Were processed thus. The creation machine
We know as death will one day intervene
And gather us back to stardom again.

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Death never was the enemy we thought,
Nor is it sinister or strange. Our acts
Could not go on without it, this pivot tip
That makes the drama work. Our closing is brought
About by saturation, emptied facts,
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Foreverness of now and here impacts:
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But death is just a word we mortals use,
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Evolving stages offer different views.
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Endings are openings where each part renews.

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DECODING 101

It's late. Elongated shadows crosshatch
my back yard, extending beyond definitions:
Black on black cryptograms I can't read.

My neighbor's silhouette hunches over her desk
lurches abruptly, holding my eye to her window.
She rises unsteadily. Her hand goes
to her face, lingers. A single legible line
among the hieroglyphics of a shaded frame.

I never liked her by day.
In this moment I recognize a lamed
and lonely sister.
One deciphered blip on night's graph.

Tomorrow she will have a new neighbor.
Tomorrow I will introduce myself.

--Glenna Holloway

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DECODING 101

It's late. Elongated shadows crosshatch
my back yard. Black on black
cryptograms I can't read.

My neighbor's window draws my eye,
her silhouette hunches over her desk,
lurches abruptly. She rises unsteadily.
Her hand flies to her face, lingers:
A single bent and legible line
among the hieroglyphics of a shaded frame.

I never liked her by day,
origins, isms, idioms posing large,
differences sharply lit. In this moment
I recognize a lamed and lonely sister.
One deciphered blip on night's graph.

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Origins, isms, idioms posing large,
differences sharply lit. In this moment
I recognize a lamed and lonely sister.
One deciphered blip on night's graph.

Tomorrow she will have a new neighbor.
Tomorrow I will introduce the self
just met
to her I've never known.

--Glenna Holloway

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"...Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu..."
--John Keats, Ode on Melancholy

DEFYING THE BREAKERS

The truth, two-sided wave of grief
and joy, I intimately know.
One half conceals a stealthy thief.

The other bears elation's sheaf
of blessings which I store to show
the truth, two-sided wave of grief.

I focus on the greening leaf
instead of raked-up piles of woe
whose depths conceal a stealthy thief.

Survival of a coral reef
attests to standing in the flow
of truth, two-sided wave of grief.

I hold to this, however brief,
the gladness-- always turned to go.
The other is a stealthy thief.

With buoyed cheer, my small craft's chief,
I sail across the undertow
of truth, two-sided wave of grief
and joy, one half a stealthy thief.

And soon I shelter in my soul's belief.

--Glenna Holloway

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ERINIA

You could always count on Erinia's eyes.
She listened to you with them, heard it all,
what you didn't say with words. Her eyes
were country cures, not old wives' tales
like Aunt Vi's--squinty, darting, doubtful.

Erinia was wise-warm in the eyes,
although blue is a cool color.
She made you think of summer irises
on apple crunch mornings. North winds
forgot to snap and bite when she smiled.

You'll never find a better definition
of beauty than Erinia, but she wasn't pretty.
Her thicket of sable eyelashes defied
the years stored beneath, age that comes
from hearing of the heart. If you looked,
you could see those indigo shadows were old
as change or sorrow. She knew where
she was, held steady to where she was going.

Her verbs were seeds, her prayers oak trunks.
Even Aunt Vi admitted
it was just like her to leave us nothing
but good things when she was gone.

--Glenna Holloway

GARDEN KINDERGARTEN

Blue heliotropes
opened wide young eyes, their lives
celebrating light

Their cells splurged color
tracked the sun all day then dropped
from sight together

The sun rose again
without flowers to follow
its westward progress

Cold rain rolled off leaves
Tears from children's leaf-shaped eyes
fell on dead petals

Leftover stalks bowed
making shadows on blank walls
Unseen roots waited

In April-- buntings
repeated the exact shade
Blue is never lost

--Glenna Holloway

THE GARDEN WE CAN'T FORGET
Anthropology Professor Says Darwin Got It Wrong
--caption, Chicago Tribune

"Most likely there," he said. "Rich ground, warm sun."
He pointed to an Old World map, a plain
Where rivers met. "The Edens, more than one,
Nearby and round the world, all bore the stain
Of those first Eves' and Adams' sin, all equals.
The genesis, our time on earth, began
Incumbent on the pairs, the human sequels.
More pairs were made; incest was not the plan.
No quarrel with evolution or the Word:
Sub-beings did descend from those in trees
To walk upright then fade away unheard.
Experiment is one of nature's keys.
Some forms were left to mutate line from line.
But ours was drawn apart-- the Grand Design."

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THE GATHERINGS

Watch them awhile and you know.
Some heads bow, some turn upward.
You can almost see their prayers
rise like smoke above the wall,
skimming the rock's dark shine,
bearing the imprint of the names
they stroke with their fingers.
And some now come to a new wall
for an older war. Always the same.

Mostly they do not know with whom
they share the wall's reflections.
But their whys are shared, silent
wonderings heard by the same God.
And if at first they do not come
in His name, He is still there
for all who call out, believing.

--Glenna Holloway

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THE GO-BETWEEN

Dear Lord, my closest friend
is stumbling. My words, designed
to keep her on her feet,
have only angered her.

Dear Lord, her hand slipped out
of yours; I know she doesn't mean
to disobey. Her busy thoughts
are occupied with thingfulness,

and thankfulness is clouded.
She doesn't realize she's lost
her shoe and dropped her map,
direction sense awry.

She says her luck is bad,
but she'll find her own answers.
She needs unfailing guidance now.
Please be her compass, Lord, I pray.

--Glenna Holloway

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32 lines

GOD'S ROCKER

I'm no Handel composing hallelujahs
for ringing around the world, bouncing
off satellites, spires and pious statues.
I write and sing and move to a different song;
I thump and pick and twang, loud and electric,
sometimes slack-string. I swivel low-down,
up-tempo or whiney blue. I may flat my fifths
but I don't drink 'em. I made Christ my rock.

You say my music, my hot-step rhythm is not
fitting, maybe sacrilegious. Sure, I know,
some gospel bangers you can't always tell
if they're singin' about their lovers
or the Lord. And secular rock is revved
with sex, drugs, violence and cult stuff.
But listen up-- my words come from The Word.
Maybe they're not your style
but my lyrics've got no double meaning
and my beat is honest. Out of ghetto
and jail, despair and deliverance it came.

A Bach chorale won't reach that stud
on the corner, that mama at the bar.
No Latin chant or Anglican anthem,
not even Onward Christian Soldiers will move
that dude on the Harley. When Jesus was here
he mixed with the riffraff, pimps and hookers
and roughnecks. Me, I sing for 'em, tell 'em
the story the only way they'll hear. If I did it
stately and prettified, it'd be Pharisee sound
comin' from me. It would make my witness a lie.
When people hear my music and give their lives
to God it means He's using me for His glory.

These feet-- these drums-- are my hosannas!

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19 lines

LILY OF THE FIELD

Perfection takes practice.
How long did it take to become a lily?

Beauty begets more beauty. Yet,
once being a lily
lovely enough for Christ to mention,
what can you aspire to after death?
Not Solomon's silks, nor a white cloud
after tasting gold in your soft throat.

When your one day is over
you close on yourself so as not to see
your ruin. All you know is beauty,
your own, your nearby kind. What then?
All I know of mine is a promise
of things to come when all is changed.

But wait--isn't that faith? And faith,
whatever the form,
is its own beauty--not in transience
but in holding at the root.

Lily, I know your secret.

--Glenna Holloway

THE LONG LONG FALL

One night as the handsome harpist played,
the music tingled the king's blood,
and the blood rose in his seasoned arm
and his fingers gripped his spear shaft.
His brain plotted the path and hurried
his javelin's point toward the rippling chords,
toward the west wall and the heart
he hated enough to nail its last beat there.

But the musician was young and quick
as a dancer, ready as a warrior
and newly anointed of God. His name
was louder now than Saul's in Israel.

The serpent in Saul coiled and hissed day and night.
Sleeping, the king moaned and beat his bolster;
waking, he gnashed blood from his mouth
Once more he sent his loyal enemy to war.
But when the battle messengers came to report,
the feared subject was never among the killed.

Saul cursed and called his daughter, his spies,
priests, sycophants, and any he could buy
to recover control of the pounding course.
His heirs, his servants, his people
loved his rival. He saw his kingdom leaking
like a torn wineskin, all its sweetness
flowing down to David's lips.

Saul tracked him like a lion on the scent of lambing,
a lean old lion outside his pride, with broken fang
and worm-infested gut, a rogue that tasted man-flesh
and lusted ever after for salt. He pursued him
over rocks only wild beasts owned, threaded through
wilderness where many men were lost, hauled his camps
to mountains without names. And wherever he pushed,
Jesse's marked son slipped past his fist like smoke,

Then Saul, the king of Israel, grew weary
and rested in a cave away from the rattle and stink
of his troops. He slept a Jehovah sleep while
the hunted and his band sheltered deeper
in the same cavern. And the former shepherd
softly bared his sword, bent slowly over the hunter.

Saul roused from shredded dreams and stumbled
toward the light. He heard a voice behind him
shouting, turned toward David bowing, calling
honors to his king. Then David stood and raised
a swatch of color from Saul's robe. The ruler
clutched his garment, remembering Philistine
foreskins those practiced hands had gathered.

THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN

His hardened hands were wise in ways of wood.
His gleaming treasures warm the finest rooms.
White oak and maple grains were understood
So well his furnishings became heirlooms.

He felt a gangling board and knew its heart,
The gain to come from steady sawing's bite.
He worked the native quirks into his art
Or used steel clamps to make an angle right.

When his sure pressure bent and was released,
No part of any chosen trees returned
To former ways. His hands, so deeply creased,
Retiring now, have passed on what they learned

To nimbler heirs-- a dozen boys, now men--
Who once had heard the state's cold cell doors close.
He turned them on a lathe of love and then
Aligned them with a spirit level, chose

A greater will to join with each, dovetailed.
So most are expert cabinetmakers now--
And some are preachers, teachers-- none has failed.
He knew they'd win. The Master showed them how.

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THE MASTER SILVERSMITH

Poured from the crucible, silver
looks disappointing, smeary,
not the worthy brilliance of mercury,
less bright than tin. Cooled solid,
turning proud, it awaits my knowing hands.

This is an exquisite trade, beguiling
the craftsman. Oh, these figures I cast
are not idols, no molten household deities
smoke in my workshop, desirous of worship.
I have no use for lesser gods.

What emerges from the molds is beauty
sterlingly personified, ready to serve
its maker, eager to gather praise
for the hunger that designed it.
Acclaim is an addictive pattern. I need

to look often into the soldering flame to see
the source of artistry is not myself.
The bestower of talents is not genetic dice,
it is the only, unalloyed God
who has told us he tolerates no rivals.

So may the Lord master the smith, burn out
vanity like wax, leaving the fire-clean cavity
to fill-- not with my creation, but his.

--Glenna Holloway

But what is a shape? Only a cup for the blazing soul that
God provides us all. --The Fire Balloons, Ray Bradbury

MESSIAH

"It has to happen. Yes, I've thought it out.
Already happened more than once, no doubt,"
Grey voiced his thesis. As he rose to leave
the unconvinced one's hand was on his sleeve.

"But, Reverend Grey, how can you be so sure?
Such outer space theology's impure!
The Bible doesn't mention other planets;
there's work enough to do on our own granites."

"Yes, Father Black, with that I do agree.
More reason He must go Himself, you see.
But as for mention-- 'Other sheep have I,
not of this fold...' We've chosen to apply
it to the Gentiles. Yet it could refer
to beings men have never dreamed. And were
they given souls, would they not need Him, too?
It's not incredible to feel it's true."

"And do they look like us?" asked Father Black,
"or like the signs of some weird zodiac?
Or maybe they resemble cartoon creatures
with alien parts and wild unheard-of features.
And will there be another virgin birth,
another resurrection as on Earth?"

"They'll have what's needed for their own redemption.
Their sins must be paid for without exemption.
But as for how they look," mused Reverend Grey,
"like us, they're also made from sacred clay,
and in His image too. 'His image' means
what pleases Him. In substance or in form.
It doesn't mean we represent the norm.
Or even that we look like Him. We're God's
design conception-- whether peas or pods."

That night the priest slept fitfully. At dawn
he woke, then closed his eyes. Withdrawn
this side of dreams, he saw new scenes unfold
as once again the old words were re-told:

NOT OF THIS FOLD
Another Take on John 10:16

As herders watched their flocks and wished for light
from their twin moons to shine with rays of green
to put the hungry predators to flight--
a practiced angel came and blessed the scene.

His message quickly calmed familiar fear:
"I bring you wondrous news from Paradise!
Transmit the holy words for all to hear.
Your Savior's born in Chalgor's cave of ice
beyond the fiery gonfalons of Glarque.
You'll know Him thus-- a baby in blue fur
asleep in borrowed nests of frostbirds. Hark!
Celestial choruses draw near to stir
your souls with love on this young asteroid."

The angel vanished like echoing chimes
to travel through the next galactic void
to where more whirling worlds await their times.

--Glenna Holloway

First Prize, Richard Gardner Memorial Award
(C) Pennsylvania State Poetry Society, Inc. 1981
--FREEZER BURN, 1989
--SILVER WEB, 1991

OVERTURE

All night I probed the gamut between harmony and discord;
Somewhere beyond my reaching was a song I longed to capture.
Cacophony. Frustration. As first light came I called the Lord
Who once had let me hear divine duet: despair and rapture,
The holy scale, the melody of man, the sound of time.

Was it proud imagination, orchestration of a dream,
Presuming much, assuming I was somehow meant to prime
My piano to receive and reproduce a sacred theme?
The Lord was silent, my numb fingers bowed upon the keys.
It seemed the death of music, the acoustics of the grave.

Then down the dawn came winged notes to linger in the trees,
to wake my weary sense and sensitivity to save
Each scrap of tune they improvised, and once again remind me
Where all concertos must begin, where tone and rhythm starts.
The minor chords are born in wind, the major in the sea.

The bass explodes in thunder from the swift-colliding parts
Of cymbal clouds; vibrating treble comes from counterpoint
Of stars, the cosmic obbligato with hollow logs and rain.
The mighty middle range is rivers pouring to anoint
The sounding board of land, and amplify the whole refrain.

The final movement is composed of all humanity.
No, never mine to play or write, confined to flats and sharps,
My poor preludes are variations on my vanity.
One hears this symphony from source-- someday on heaven's harps.

PAULINA'S PLACE

She's collected these things for years,
exquisite delicate things.
You can see the decorator touch
beyond her warped door: here a swag of mist,
there a shimmer of draped sea foam.
Silk frost swatches patch the peeling corners.

Paulina's words aren't always plain
but when she makes pictures, when delight
invents her smile, her meaning shines.
She lifts her wilted right arm with the left
and holds her hand on her heart to convey
contentment. She laughs like a door chime.

She gathers her clingy cloudlike stuff
in cardboard cut-out frames, sprays on colors
through her stencils, and calls
the finished paintings seines for catching
scenes of summer afternoons.
When friends don't understand, she prints

it out-- how some hold the spectrum's stripes,
and those outside are beaded purses in the rain,
and on the porch they're fairy awnings.
After she won state fair prizes for her work,
people traded words like "weird" and "nut case"
for "unique," "creative," and "artiste."

Kids don't call her Spider Woman anymore,
or her treasures nasty cobwebs. They walk
the woods with Paulina, help her find
her lace mantillas of moonlight,
conversation pieces filled with shed petals
and pastel hope-- the shoring for her dreams.

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THE POWER TO PRAISE

How could I glorify almighty God?
He has a psalmist He anointed king,
Has chroniclers and choirs of angels shod
In fire-tongued sandals, has a star-strung ring
Of sun-robed saints; their worthy lyrics bounce
Off planets, carom off magnetic poles
As all of heaven's harmonies announce
His majesty, His omnipresent roles.

I am, poor poet, bound by wooden words;
No Herbert, Hopkins, Donne, I'm hostage to
The commonplace in everything I do.
And yet sometimes I'm borne as if by birds:
He leads me, lends me unexpected grace--
A Word that makes a difference in this place.

--Glenna Holloway

THE POWER TO PRAISE

How could I glorify almighty God?
He has a psalmist He anointed king,
Has chroniclers and choirs of angels shod
In fire-heeled sandals, has a star-strung ring
Of sun-robed saints whose holy lyrics bounce
Off planets, carom off magnetic poles
As all of heaven's harmonies announce
His majesty, His omnipresent roles.

I am, poor poet, bound by common words.
No Hopkins, Herbert, Donne, I'm hostage to
Banality in everything I do.
And yet sometimes I'm borne as if by birds;
He lets me soar to make a worthy choice
Of verse-- to honor Him with my small voice.

While struggling with the weight of wooden phrases,
Sometimes insight, beyond my own, amazes,
As when He lends me strong ongoing grace--
The Word that makes a difference in this place.

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PRAYER LIST

I'm back again, Lord. On my own list.
Asking more questions. Is length a factor
when I talk to you? Do you like repetition?

I need more help with my life, Lord,
and for the people in my life. I need
to learn more about love. You tried

to show us, but how do I make myself
love someone unlovable? You do it
every day. But you're God.

Time is nothing to you, my life a blink.
But such a long haul for me.
I'm discouraged, Lord. Do you even hear me?

Before the amen is over, I know you do.
I know you care. I know you're the Lord.
I know enough.

--Glenna Holloway

RENASCENCE

Day blackened at noon. Clocks disintegrated.
Astronomical implosions deposed all order,
place and time.
All that was known collapsed in unlit silence.

When our eyes opened, we were young again;
the all, the else was hoary ruin. History fell
as rain and sleet: Shards of war, ravelings
of shore and sky, polyglot thunder, iron, oil,
torrential music, China, Rome, the New World,
the currency of kingdoms, wheat and plague.
Needles and drops of everything gone before.

An ocean licked our feet as lightning struck
each ravaged tree into an upright cross. A tide
of blood washed over us. It clotted, paled,
and vineyards grew along with saguaro, sedge,
and phlox. But Mars and Woden awoke anew
to twist the crosses in a mutant sign to hurl
against the globe, defiling each quadrant.

Unnumbered human spirits rose like desert dust
to dervish in numinous winds. Some souls we knew
as we witnessed the world from above and below.
Our hands held laws and comets. We could vault
magnetic poles, walk ocean floors, perceive
the perfect helices in chaos. We began to age
once more on pinnacles of knowledge, and learned

we must abandon the heights, descend to the nadir,
the carpentry of Calvary where all must meet
before the final phase. Before the promised time,
the King's millennium, before
we reach the sacred apogee beyond the sphere
where all centuries join anachronisms,
match codes and coordinates to realign
their sights by a holy horologe

and complete the collision course with eternity.

RENASCENCE

Day blackened at noon. Clocks disintegrated.
Astronomical implosions deposed all order,
place and time.
All that was known collapsed in unlit silence.

When our eyes opened, we were young again;
the all, the else was hoary ruin. History fell
as rain and sleet: Shards of war, ravelings
of shore and sky, polyglot thunder, iron, oil,
torrential music, China, Rome, the New World,
the currency of kingdoms, wheat and plague.
Needles and drops of everything gone before.

An ocean licked our feet as lightning struck
each ravaged tree into an upright cross. A tide
of blood washed over us. It clotted, paled,
and vineyards grew along with saguaro, sedge,
and phlox. But Mars and Woden awoke anew
to twist the crosses in a mutant sign to hurl
against the globe, defiling each quadrant.

They subsided like lava, always waiting in pits
of vitriol and violence to erupt again, defacing
every trembling serenity, every greening tendril.
Unnumbered human spirits rose like desert dust
to dervish in numinous winds. Some souls we knew
as we witnessed the world from above and below.

Our hands held laws and comets. We could vault
magnetic poles, walk ocean floors, perceive
the perfect helices in chaos. We began to age
once more on pinnacles of knowledge, and learned
we must abandon the heights, descend to the nadir,
the carpentry of Calvary where all must meet

before the final phase, the promised time,
the King's millennium, before we reach
the sacred apogee beyond the common sphere
where centuries must join anachronisms,
match codes and coordinates to realign
their sights by a holy horologe

and complete the collision course with eternity.

RENASCENCE

The day blackened at noon.
Astronomical implosions deposed all order.
All that was known collapsed in unlit silence.

When my eyes opened,
the place and time I knew were gone. I was
young again; the all, the else
was hoary ruin. History fell as rain: Shards
of war, ravelings of shore and sky,
polyglot thunder, steel and corn,
torrential music, China, Rome, the New World,
the currency of nations, ice and plague.

An ocean licked my heel as lightning struck
each ravaged tree into an upright cross. A tide
of blood washed over me. It clotted, paled,
and vineyards grew along with lodgepole pine
and phlox. But Thor and Woden woke anew
to twist the crosses in a mutant sign to hurl
against the globe, defiling every quadrant.

Unnumbered souls rose like desert dust
to dervish in the wind. I knew them;
my eyes were borrowed from eagles
to witness the world from above and below.
My hands held laws and comets. I could vault
magnetic poles, walk ocean floors, perceive
the perfect helices in chaos. I began to age
once more on pinnacles of knowledge, and learned
I must descend, back to the nadir,
the carpentry of Calvary where all must meet
before the planet's final phase, before
the promised time, the King's millennium.

Before we reach the apogee beyond the sacred sphere,
where all centuries join anachronisms,
match codes and coordinates to realign
their sights, to steer by holy horologe.
And complete the collision course with eternity.

SERPENT SEED

Glenna Holloway

Now.
Right now.
It's the only
moment you can
kill it: Envy
isn't green the
way you were
told except
as that very
first tender
tendrils freshly
clawed from fertile
dirt, uncurling and
catching red. You have
to move faster than a
snake can strike or
it's too late for
anything to stop
the process. The
shoot leaps into
flames; a ravaging
tentacle throttles
itself impotently,
thickens, grayly
toughens in the
final fire. Dull dross
remains, cold rolled into
a coil. Another stage begins
below the deepest layers of the
ashes: Planted like Medusa hairs,
they thrive and writhe and wait
for any hint of happiness, any
crumb of joy to devour and when none
can be found, they
start to feed
fiercely
upon the
nearest
eye.

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DON
CORNWALL

A STARRING ROLE

Retiring from the earthly stage at last,
We change and put on makeup so unique
No actor could have worn it in the past,
Nor bowed and raised so radiant a cheek.
Each player's voice resolves a major chord
Which swells into dimensions never heard.
Each tongue transmits the music of the Lord,
Each ringing passage amplifies His Word.
I will not mourn my exit toward the wings
Or sadden over lines left unexpressed.
Soon I will have a part in greater things,
Assume my true identity more blessed:
Beginnings duly end life's old disguise;
Endings are pauses while new curtains rise.

--Glenna Holloway

ST. ANTHONY MESSENGER, 1994

SUBJECT TO SUBLIMATION

A man's an enigma, Lord:
You filled him with many strengths.
You also gave him gentleness,
and You filled him with many fears.

He sees male animals fight
for food, for females, for territory.
He sees the fittest win and breed
their strength into their progeny.
And he says, "This is nature's way."

He looks at his own strong arm.
It can curve inward to hold,
comfort and protect
a wife, a child, a neighbor.
And he knows its latent force
can lash out,
spring-loaded like a lethal machine.

He looks in his dynamic brain and sees
the circuitry for producing marvels,
surpassing his bone and sinew skills.

He looks at all he is and doesn't know
the sum. Questions overwhelm him.
Is he shield or threat?
Sometimes the shield must fight
to be a shield. But whether turning
the cheek or raising the whip as Christ
once did, a man can't hide.
Or even turn his back
while he struggles to master himself.

The one pure truth is:
only faith can save him.

The form is Japanese Sedoka,
pairs of 5-7-7 stanzas

A TIME SO FAIR

Man has climbed so far,
bloomed so full in his short days...
Has he done it all before?

Is this an old route?
Were there other gardens where
natives dared to walk upright?

We crossed lower sills;
other foes became fewer
when we mastered tools and fire.

The birth of our souls
implanted skills and music;
our skulls enlarged with power.

Star memory lost,
we groped light for things we knew
when infinity loosed us.

In each rooting calm,
after the lust of rutting,
the scent of growth prodded us.

Once we knew that E
equals MC square, we saw
mutant clouds re-define fear.

Branched from slime to fur
to slightly under angels,
endemic flaws recycle.

Still the pulse of change
flays the core of each atom.
A tomb may reform fury.

Maybe we will learn
to tame this wayward species,
rise to build a time so fair.

Or must we backslide
to our beast-forms with a growl,
whimper as our cells revert,

prime the next big bang,
begin again, sort, attach,
till we touch the holy grail?

Glenna Holloway
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VIEWPOINT IN HAIKU

Glenna Holloway

June bug bouncing on
Lily stamen—springboard of
Sticky gold beach balls.

Mrs. R. W. Holloway
1028 Apple Lane
Lombard, Ill. 60148

HAIKU FOR HUMANS

by Glenna Holloway

A great optimist
Is one who starts a crossword
Puzzle with a pen.

A great pessimist
Is one who thinks of all the
Germs on all his cash.

A great mind is one
With no prominent tunnel
Below ears and eyes.

A great physician
Is one who himself has had
The operation.

Author's note: These are offered as a complete poem or individually.

3. Poetry

f. American Haiku

27/161

THE FORGIVEN

The seedling pine I
Tried to kill in my herb bed
Now shades my old age.

GLENN HOLLOWAY
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November Synopsis

The last loon crazes
horizontal twilight sounds,
his cry a blue ice peak
on my spinal graph. Winter
comes suddenly as night.

--Glenna Holloway

十一月記要

最後的冰鳥碎裂
地平線上的暮音，
他的叫聲是我背脊上
一座藍色的冰峯。冬天
驟然來臨如夜。

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Face down in snow
the fallen tombstone
buries the family name

臉朝下在雪裡
倒落的墓碑
| 埋沒家姓

GLENN HOLLOWAY
Naperville, Illinois

HOPI HOMECOMING

Miles fry under our wheels
and slough off. The drought is worse
than I thought. Crops are gatherings
of desiccated crones leaning on each other
rattling last wishes. The racing shadow
in the dry washes and high basalt roadcuts
is my bus from Cleveland.
I can participate in its cubist image
by holding magazines up to the window
though no one else would notice the shade
of difference I make in one small square.
Out there the shadow-bus is being
its true self, compressing its length,
recoiling from desert and heat,
rising taller to look back for its lake.

Blue Corn would smile at the analogy--
that smile that begins at the left
of her mouth and leaves a luminous aura
after the rest of her face has forgotten it.
Odds are she'll be at the bus stop
with the want ads and the appaloosa instead
of the pickup. Hell, a horse'll feel good
between my legs after steel chairs
and seminar stools. The horse and I
will be in synch before we pass First Mesa.

But soon I must interface with my Badger Clan.
I'm like this bus-- speeding a new highway
still sticky-- a late model vehicle of alloy
containing other lives besides. Which one
am I? Is there a spirit of me beyond
the smoky abstraction the sun reveals?

Blue Corn, my love, you write happy
from your mother's Bear Clan.
You too are no longer programmed
by Kachinas. When you dance I know
your eyes are uncloudy beneath the mask.
Most of you belongs to me
but the foot, the drum, are your own.

Can you make any part of me whole?

ORIGAMI

Oriental know
how the ineluctable
folds within the quixotic.
These small exotic
gifts transform banality:
peonies from scrap paper.

Three ponies caper
from two-fingered pleats, a crease:
emerging without inked lines.
Patient folk designs
waiting in old magazines:
Recycled phoenixes rise.

Third dimensions please:
forms as old as printed words
cut from discarded pages.
Poems for the eyes:
never written, never read,
shaped to hang in laughter's breeze.

--Glenna Holloway