

~~Some also published but not signed~~
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GLENN HOLLOWAY
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SAGANESQUE SONNETS
Creation According to Carl

I

Our blazing fallout 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? Have we 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.

DEJA VU
II

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

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WEATHERSCAPE

The northland starts on its old score
with pressure in my head. Outside
stops doing its job of pushing back.
The radio says we'll get fringes
of an anticyclone about ten o'clock.

Miles of sea have scrubbed this migrant air.
Wind tries to pry open my mouth
like an angry nurse with a dose of salts.
Currents of cold tore their tethers
from the pole, spiraled down to harass
my window shutters and plant sand
and salmon scales in wood pores.
Mine sting pink with Katmai pumice
and oily smoke of Athabaskan cookfires.
My teeth grit glacial silt; my lungs fatten
on the breath of rutting moose. Seal hair
tangles with my gray as this prelude cry
rolls from throats of Tlingit fishermen,
aging grizzlies, falling spruce.

Hybrid rose trees on my lawn can't resist
bowing. I can't hear their breaking.
But the time is near and I know
what this wind wants
after raking the backs of guillemots,
scraping up swatches of taiga moss,
banking off centuries of guano and granite.

All the vagrant gales converge in the stoop
of a raptor, arrowheaded by an ancient narwhal
nailing me to my garden gate, the last barrier,
until I feel it going down

and my hand lets go the roses.

CPU REVIEW, 1995, 1st place

WEATHER MESSAGE

The northland's old score starts with pressure
in the head. Outside stops doing its job
of pushing back. The radio says we'll get fringes
of an anticyclone about ten o'clock.

Miles of sea have scrubbed
this migrant air. Now the wind tries
to pry open my mouth like an angry nurse
with a dose of salts. Mixed currents tore
their tethers from the pole, spiraled down
to harass the shutters on my windows, planting sand
and salmon scales in wood pores. Mine sting pink
with Katmai pumice and oily smoke
of Athapascan cookfires. My teeth grit
glacial silt; my lungs fatten on the breath
of rutting moose. Seal hair whips and tangles
with my gray. This prelude cry rolls from throats
of Tlingit fishermen, old grizzlies, falling spruce.

Rose-trees on my lawn can't resist kneeling
nor can I hear their breaking. The time is near.
I know what this wind wants after raking the backs
of guillemots, scraping up swatches of taiga moss,
banking off centuries of guano and granite.

All the vagrant gales converge in the stoop
of a hawk, arrowheaded by an ancient narwhal
nailing me against the last wall between us
until I feel it going down

and my hand lets go the roses.

WEATHER MESSAGE

The north wind's old score starts with pressure
in the head. Outside stops doing its job
of pushing back. The radio says we'll get ridges
of an anticyclone about ten o'clock.

Miles of sea have scrubbed
this night's sky. Now the wind tries
to pry open my mouth like an angry horse
with a nose of salt. Mixed currents force
their fathers from the pole, spilling down
to harass the shutters on my window, planting sand
and salmon scales in wood pores. Mine sting pink
with Kermati pus and oily smoke
of Alaskan cookfires. My teeth grit
against salt; my lungs fatten on the breath
of rusting moss. Seal hair whips and tangles
with my gray. This prelude cry rolls from throats
of flapping fishermen, old driftlines, falling spruce.

Rose-trees on my lawn can't resist kneeling
not can I hear their breaking. The time is near.
I know what this wind wants after taking the backs
of gullfingers, scraping up swatches of talus moss,
banking off centrifuges of guano and granite.

All the vapors of pale converge in the spoon
of a hawk, arrowheaded by an ancient natural
nailing me against the last wall between us
until I feel it going down

and my hand lets go the roses.

OLD HOME, ABANDONED

Glenna Holloway

Still upright but terminally gray,
only bindweed, burdock and teasels claim it.
Vagrant winds cross the porch to worry
the flea market rocker no one's bothered to steal.
The fence has a falling sickness
and my bedroom shutter protests against pocked boards
like Jay's fist on the bathroom door. I wish
I hadn't come. It was easy enough to leave here
back when movies and magazines made us grump
about our cold linoleum, squawking stairs and hot water
enough for only one bath a night. I wouldn't wait
for my turn every fifth night, instead lugged buckets
and dishpans of stove-heated water and poured in
hoarded drops of Christmas scent and softener. I'd soak
and sniff my upright knees and run my hand over my skin
thinking of silk dresses and three-inch heels
until someone, usually my brother Jay,
pounded to get in. And I'd yell out, "You grew up
with nothin' but a two holer! The snakes are gone.
Won't hurt you to re-live the good ol' days.
It'll keep you humble, sport!"
But he'd keep thumping just like the shutter clinging
to its only hinge. Dead leaves scudding across the porch
make me turn to look for Mama's shadow in the hall
tiptoeing on her way to feel my forehead when I was sick.
Almost I can hear cows in the barn and Papa calling.
The swing makes a noise like Sara just before
her asthma attacks. I turn to go, break into a run
for my car. The shutter knocks urgently.
Oh, Jay, you can't come in!

OLD HOME ABANDONED

It's still upright, but terminally gray,
claimed only by cobwebs and bindweed.
The back fence has a falling sickness.
My bedroom window shutter protests
against pocked boards like Jay's fist
on the bathroom door. I wish I hadn't come.

It was easy to leave here
when movies and magazines showed us other ways,
made us grump about frigid linoleum,
squawking stairs and hot water enough
for only one bath a night. I never waited
for my turn every fifth night, instead lugged
buckets and dishpans of stove-heated water
softened with hoarded drops of Christmas scent.
I'd soak and sniff my upright knees
and slide my hands over my shiny shoulders,
thinking about silk dresses and diamond eardrops.
Until someone, usually brother Jay, pounded
his impatience, made this bald dent in the paint
on the door. And I'd yell, "You grew up
with nothin' but the two-holer, sport. Go re-live
the good ole days now the snakes're gone.
It'll keep you humble." But he'd thump away
just like that shutter clinging to its only hinge.

Dead leaves scudding across the porch
make me turn to look for Mama's shadow in the hall,
tiptoeing, coming to feel my flu-achy forehead.
I almost hear cows impatient for milking, and Papa
calling pigs. The old swing, quarreling with wind,
makes noises like Sara's asthma attacks. I break
into a run for my car, leave a tuft of mink on briars.
The shutter's rhythm changes, grows urgent.
Oh Jay, you can't come in!

GLENN HOLLOWAY
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Naperville, IL 60565

OLD WIVES THE TALES COME FROM

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

Daily they fatten to fill their final boxes,
paying out advice no one needs, paying
out the slow twine, enlarging the old designs,
straining fifty-odd years of wifery
for a mite to impress the young ones
tightening against their webs and cardboard,
closing in with the last lid.

They wait-- frayed sheaths-- used awhile
by knife-voiced kin who own everything in focus
outside the net of squares and wheels.
On humid suburban evenings, on some deserted
concrete patio, they group like toadstools,
picking at the threads of the days' patterns,
unraveling their mouths,
honing their only weapons.

PRIZE POEMS, National Federation of State Poetry Societies

INSIDE PASSAGE, GLACIER BAY
In Memory of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton

I leave the midnight sound of the ship's orchestra,
tightly closed couples, funereal scent of carnations.

Down here the engine massages my soles, strums
my belly, a discordant guitar. The screw munches
loose ice, spitting fragments against the hull
like pieces of my life, a hollow random tattoo.

Old images line my crevices, prime my movements.
The other guests are primed with promises
of scenic splendor with gourmet breakfast.
The corridor is full of trailing sentences,
serial goodnights. I wait for the last door to close.

The empty elevator delivers me to the top deck,
the penultimate chill. The sea
is Irish whiskey smooth on the rocks. The air
cleans my lungs like silk pulled through a gun barrel.

Across the bowscape, the moon trails a ramp wide enough
to climb if I wanted to be higher. At land's end,
an old worn glacier kneels to lap reflections.
The tall young one catches every dangling shine, volleys
the bright bias from peak to pylon to walls of murals
and friezes of poems in blue calligraphy. Its hoard
of blue is scalded with silver; its face can no longer
resist duress of captive fire. The facade crazes and falls.
The ocean roars in shock. Slow geysers muffle the crash.

No mattering difference comes of it all.
Liquid silver heals over the wreckage wallowing
to the surface, blue-fluxed, light-brazed.
The glacier's forehead exposes another vein of blue,
another poem. The ship sways, dips, moves on
in afterquiet as unseen instruments guide
sleeping passengers through the fiord. Far below me
bakers are making bread. I'm being kneaded
on their boards and set aside in a bowl to rise.

I ease back, older by a decade, careful not to slip.
Glad with breath, I pick up my coat, hunker in its warmth.
A great bald eagle crosses the moon-flood, sounding
like wet sheets on a windy clothesline, circling
to look again at what is passing under his jurisdiction.

Like him, I rise, silvered and possible.

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TO JOHN SINGER SARGENT'S MADAM X ON TOUR
Glenna Holloway

Ah, your lavender ladyship, the supernova
in Sargent's galaxy of canvassed beauties--
you alone almost ruined your painter.
Not by word or deed, but that you sat for him
in secret. Looking like that.

After hearing so much, reading your press,
I see nothing scandalous about you.
We look a lot alike.

Your nose is praised, pronounced magnificent;
mine, identical, is appraised as too generous
and pointy, especially by me. We share
much else-- even the decollete dress,
the little black imperative of all generations.

The opening night gallery of followers,
assorted artists and adoring pilgrims,
lingers before your wall,
fondling chosen words, hushing down
lavender murmurs with wine sips. Gazing.

My skin is flawless without mauve powder.
(Is that all that makes you daring, dazzling?)
My hair is prettier. But no one toasts me
with French champagne. No one stands agape
gathering dream fodder or speaks huskily
of midnight assignations. (Not that I'd accept
but I'd relish saying no to the presumptuous.)

I shrug back my coat, offering the same profile,
ripely incarnate, unhampered by a rigid frame.
A man comes up and says,
"Don't I know you from somewhere?" His fingers
snap and point. "Oh yeah, CPR class at the Y."

It's like being jealous of purple.

Besides the pastel dusting,
I notice you have one more trick, madam
(yours or Sargent's?)
--Maybe if I rouge my ear--?

FORGETTING SYLVIA PLATH, 1932--1963

She's not de rigueur now. Almost trite
to star her in another poem. Anne Sexton
is the current comet towed back in orbit.

But I saw Plath once, wife pretty,
verses clinging to her eyelashes
along with specks of things
she couldn't blink away.

Now when prevailing winds go slack
she tinges the periphery of thought
like cedar smoke, irritating my eyes.

Her glittering mind,
swarming like her mail-order bee box
(its premises examined inch by inch),
supported vast confusions and illuminations
of the same sweet pollen while she hefted
the winged weight of the hive.

Whirling with the constancy of stings,
she unwound a wake of sparks
from horse's hoofs or maybe unicorn's,
trimming her wick always Charon-close
to fuel's drench, knowing
those brief free-as-fire leaps upward.

FIRE enough to fry the pit demon, the sheet-
COVERED trees, the scalpel-carved moon. Almost
FIRE enough to harden living into a life:
GIVING up only enough blood to write it all on
A WELL and wisely worn scroll of flesh.

ELF, 1995 (Eclectic Literary Forum)

BEFORE A POET KNOWS WHAT SHE IS

Eyes as wild with light as a puma's,
blossoming breasts up-tilted to summer,
topaz and nectarine heraldry of Erato in jeans.

The marriage pleas began in high school,
mouths and arms she liked, bottled forest scent,
denim and leather always close.
New sums to sift at the deep waking.

The suitors spoke hoarsely of apartments
and TVs, beds, money, children.
And two promised a car of her own.
She ran alone to wrap night around her.

Without secret pages,
too unsure to say how warlock winds
hurried her blood, how river tongues rhymed
with hers and promised more. Too new

to tell how strings and reeds in minor keys
leaned her on shoulders of granite,
closed her eyes with pine breath
while wilderness sinew held her closer.

And her unnamed babies
already lay in an outgrown box
pressing blue gentians from ditches.

National Federation of State Poetry Societies,
1981 anthology: WINNERS

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HERALDRY

For a century, stealthy bowmen beseeched
couchant northerlies to rise and face them,
willing a frontal assault from the wolf-wind
to keep their hungry scent from the king's deer.

They had to be fast. There was a death penalty
for venison eaters, a slower one for those
past aiming true at browsing briskets
when the crops failed. Daily, more elders
went limp like soiled draperies piled
in corners, no fabric noble or whole,
no color proud. And only anger had the strength
to remain rampant.

Across escutcheons of hunters,
winter pried in bar sinister crevices of castle
and hovel, spiraling the borders of dark forest,
carving its bearings with dirks of ice.
And sometimes on its own bias,
offering a stag on morning's white field.

Yes, daughter, your knight's armor shines
and your banners are well-made,
cross-stitched crests elegant on mauve silk:
Splendid spread of golden antlers and poised hoofs,
regality balanced blackly with a bare-fanged entity--
panther, perhaps. Embroidered with more truth
than you were designed to inherit.

NATIONAL FORUM, 1994

GLENN HOLLOWAY
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DON JUAN AS GOURMAND

John pored over the art book filled
with plates of old masters, coveted each serving
illuminated by incandescent bulb or morningrise,
sometimes by flashlight when he woke up hungry.
A city friend lent him the volume, then died;
John decided the ripe nudes, elegant elk and boar,
the riverine forests and cornucopias were his.

He grew fond of the rustivating gentlemen indulging
in medals and ruby rings. Vermeer and Breughel
and Bosch painted for him even if dirt still limned
his latter day Flemish face and hardscrabble palms
after he washed. His big overalls plodded
between ordinary Monday meanness and Saturday humor,
no more suspect of excess than his neighbors.

His secret garden of delights no longer included
flesh of women, pink clover-tipped and scented,
fresh from Rubens or Titian. Now his most favored
palette was blended from meats and fruits
sweating gem-colored juices, and urns overflowing
berries purpling blue to cerise, all multiplied
in an opulent allegory of reds: Pome-cheeked cherubs
basted roseate ribs flavored with grated tropics,
aromatic roots, seeds. Venison roasted in lemon
and honey surrounded by plump capons turning
to earth-tone treasures over lambent coals, dripping
amber, sometimes faintly whistling. Tablescapes
of lamb and pork in Tintoretto sauces
posed for the eager tear of tooth and jeweled hand.

During each protracted feast, he saw his fingers grow
heavy with sapphires, opals, topazes,
but never hesitant to plunge into saffron rice
or almond and morel-filled breast cavities
and sunset-hued melons. His tongue reveled
in the sweet burn of peppers, hot rum, steamed crabs,
his buttered icons melted in his mouth. Unnoticed
was the midden, worms writhing under bone piles,
shell stench, the battling flies breeding on rinds,
the miasma of mold and rot. Nor did he notice,
for awhile, the digital numbness from tightening
gold bands, or the gray grease building up
under carved prongs and smeared on the facets
of his precious stones. Or the book's pages
charring and curling beside his stove
suddenly igniting the walls of his house.

ROUNDS OF ENCHANTMENT

Remember how we fantasized the fairy rings?
Those greener circles sometimes made a summer field
Look polka-dotted from the peak of hilltop swings.
The giddy heights from rope-hung inner tubes appealed
To magic's possibilities beneath our gaze.
One day we thought an elf had startled our broodmare.
She broke into a gallop trailing high-pitched neighs
Then eyed the verdant spot and sidled back to where
The wheel-shape glowed and shimmered viridescently.
So we two dreamers visualized a pot of gold
Beneath the surface waiting there for you and me
But when we dug we found spadefuls of thready mold.

Too bad our learning interferes with legend's hold.
Somehow life thrives around a little mystery;
New knowledge seems to pave the way for growing old.
I miss the colored overviews from our own tree
When blues were skies and eyes and ribbons at the fair,
And reds were Pop's tomatoes, barns and autumn's blaze.
We hadn't heard pollution's threat; we weren't aware
Of certain chemicals or acid rain and haze.
We learned to drive the tractors once we learned to wield
A hoe-- plus all the skills between-- so many things--
And none of them can cope with man-made ills or shield
Us now. Still, I've found my smile. Look-- two fairy rings!

--G. R. Holloway

GLENN HOLLOWAY
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AFRICAN SYNOPSIS: THE BAOBAB TREE

Morning:

An inkblot on the sun
erupts a hundred fowl like a geyser
against crazed sky.
Zigzag in slow motion
a black quill
returns to tangled branches of calligraphy.
Wayward roots that grew bark
and aspired to heaven,
lurch upward to await the twilight embrace
of winged exclamation points who won it.

Afternoon:

Twisted lines on sheets of glare,
an ancient narrative
of heathen heat blanching the horizon.
Elephants delete details.
Warped shade fills lion prints
accented with fallen twigs.

Evening:

Reunited on the moon's page
birds and boughs compose
cryptic verses of silence
rising above
the voices of the veldt howling hunger.

--Glenna Holloway

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?

(cont.)

TO JOHN SINGER SARGENT'S MADAM X
Glenna Holloway

Ah, your lavender ladyship, Sargent's star
in his collection of canvassed beauties--
you alone almost ruined your painter.
Not by deed but that you sat for him thus.

I see nothing scandalous about you.
We look a lot alike.

Your nose is praised, pronounced magnificent,
mine, identical, is appraised as too generous
and pointy, especially by me. We share
much else-- even the decollete dress,
the little black imperative of every generation.

The gallery of followers, assorted artists
and adoring pilgrims lingers before your wall,
fondling their chosen words, hushing down
their lavender murmurs like wine sips. Gazing.

My skin is flawless without mauve powder.
(Is that all that makes you daring, dazzling?)
My hair is prettier. But no one toasts me
with French champagne. No one stands agape
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