

THE POWER TO PRAISE

How could I glorify my God?
He has a choir of angels shod
In fire-tongued sandals, and a ring
Of sun-robed saints; their lyrics prod
The dumbest tone-deaf soul, they sing
Celestial harmonies to bounce
Off planets and magnetic poles
As heaven's choruses announce
His greatness, His majestic roles.

I am, poor poet, bound to words,
Banality in every phrase--
Yet sometimes soaring with the birds,
He lets me make a worthy choice
To honor Him with my small voice.

WITNESS

I try to load my words with meaning,
aim them inside people's need,
try to leave them something
that won't melt in random rain.

I used to want my words to smoke and zap
with the stuff of Isaiah and John.
It's a long time since Pentecost,
maybe a longer one before the end time
when we're given holy answers.
And even as I prayed
for the right things to say
I was like a sophomore reciting
lessons not clearly understood.

I expected too much of my mortal mouth.
I don't know if its sound
ever stopped a fall or helped to make
a Christian. But I've learned something--
trying to say whatever I said
helps keep me one.

And today someone told me
my trying is what he remembers.

--Glenna Holloway

RAYS OF HOPE

Sometimes words free fall and spin
before they find their place, before
they can rest like lamps on poles.
Because you offered them in faith,
they soar again, exclamatory vowels,
lighting your untraveled road until
you recognize them, sing them:
Your own words returning,
homing hymns of victory over darkness.

--Glenna Holloway

BEGINNER'S PRAYER ON 89th STREET

It took a long time to climb, Lord,
away from where the slumlords mock
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 climbed alone.
This time, Lord, You'll have to help.
Now I can see-- up isn't where I thought.

--Glenn Holloway

NOTHING LEFT TO SAY

You said it all
in one lean-as-a-scalpel pronouncement
incisive— divisive—
leaving me unwhole and unhealed
on the cutting edge
of a period.
Your own clipped words
were over quickly.
My sentence
goes on and on.

REPARATION

We came from cliffs where threadbare limbs were patched
With scraps of ice to moss-plushed cypress knees,
The pile laid smooth by shade and shuttling tides.
Thick sun-bleached yarn festooned and thatched
In awnings custom-made for wading trees
Gentles ocean glare; our long gaze glides
The uncommitted folds of foam and rides
Green fringe the lengths our healing daydreams please.
We dare to swim where gold-finned flash appears,
Learned at last the water will not freeze;
We learned to smoke and sell the fish we catch,
To troll new warmth for smoothing rough-edged years.
Far from our welted land of hardened tears
Our mended seams hold fast with hope to match.

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 what we declare 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:

as once again the old words were re-born:
this time of green, the sun had become
no more, then frozen the stars. Mirrored
that night the bright stars brightly, at dawn

dear to conception-- another born of hope.
Of even that we took like him. He, the son,
if you, I mean, that we practice the word
that breathes him. In appearance or in form
and to his name for

NOT OF THIS FOLD

Another Take on John 10:16

"I like the way you look," the angel
said as he took from the flock. "I mean, he's
just a little bit like you, but for a different reason."

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

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(Another Take on John 10:16)

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"Not of This Fold (Another Take on John 10:16)"
(C) Pennsylvania State Poetry Society, Inc., 1981
Richard Gardner Memorial Award
"Messiah" published in entirety, (C) FREEZER BURN, 1997

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