

Glenna Holloway's first poem was published in the New York Herald Tribune in the late '60s. Since then she has been published in scores of national magazines including McCALL'S, GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, SATURDAY EVENING POST, MODERN MATURITY and the major literary journals including GEORGIA REVIEW, WESTERN HUMANITIES REVIEW, NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, HOLLINS CRITIC, NOTRE DAME REVIEW, MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW, CHRISTIAN CENTURY, CHRISTIAN LIVING, AMERICA, CONFRONTATION and many others. She was often on "Dial-a-Poem Chicago." She also free-lanced for the Chicago Tribune, the Sun Times and other magazines and newspapers, writing human interest features and travel articles.

But her first love was and is poetry. She has given readings and programs for poetry societies, libraries, Barnes & Noble Bookstores, nursing homes, seniors, large organizations and small groups. She recently read her poetry, and was the keynote speaker at Perdue University at Hammond, Indiana. She was featured at the Chinese Cultural Center in Westmont, Illinois with both poetry and paintings, and she reads annually at St. Xavier, and Triton College's "Celebrate the Arts." She has won many national awards including the 2001 Pushcart Prize. She is also a six-time winner of the Chicago Poets & Patrons "Best of the Best" annual award sponsored by W. Clement Stone. She is a member of the National League of American Pen Women, Chicago Poets Club, and in 1991 was the founding president of the Illinois State Poetry Society, a branch of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies.

Her readings and programs are tailored to the audience. One of her nature poetry programs includes kodachrome slides. She also takes requests.

For fees and available dates, contact:

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## The Little Bitty Poetry Competition

### First Place



#### Indelible Calligraphy

*Last night, three migrating cranes  
brushed slow winged strokes  
across the full moon's empty page.  
You called it a lovely living haiku.*

*Today I saw everything with borrowed eyes  
I want you to let me keep.*

*Tonight, a new verse crossed lunar vellum,  
a single line, a great lone bird  
whose beat we heard before it inked  
the essence of eternity  
not on the moon, but us.*

*by G. R. Holloway*

## SEMANTICS

You're still sleeping, a touch away.  
Winter light seeps under the shades,  
analyzing yesterday's verbs. I inhale  
this a.m. differently, altering chemistry,  
alternating electrical currents, changing  
the magnetic field of the sheets.  
The new day's dynamics meddle  
with my circuitry, with the words  
that overnighted in our pores.  
Words-- mere sounds-- the loudest being  
those not said.

I concave against your back, a compress  
of blood, bone, forgiveness: Sending  
and intercepting red, blue, orange.  
Shop talk in cells, semaphores blossoming,  
nodding like neon begonias, skin through skin.  
Language is a body of inventions, diverse  
around the globe, tensed with misunderstanding.  
This is conversation pure and simple,  
not the same as morning mumblings.

You turn, exclamatory-- ankle, belly,  
mouth underlining the fluent exchange,  
spelling out all of yesterday's missing words.  
Message clear.

## THE SOUND OF GRAY

The familiar voice, rebounding  
from the marvels of a satellite  
and strained through miles  
of copper wire should be bland.  
But it plunges like a blade  
into my deepest privacy,  
vibrating, pausing  
for my own shocked utterance  
to make the same journey.

Once there was a warm mouth  
charging the air, caressing  
the spiral of my ear with yes colors  
so close I could feel each syllable  
and inhale the sweetness.

Now through a cold invention  
the message arrives  
segmented, untinted, brittle.

This is not progress. The flaw  
is not electronic and the tone  
does not originate in smiling.

TRYING TO IGNORE THE METAPHORS  
(While Writing a French Rondeau)

I think of Cliff while watching lightning split  
The tallest pine astride the ridge then hit  
The vine-choked underbrush with rolling fire.  
Dead leaves flare up, rain hisses, makes a spire  
Of smoke, a claim. I hear it snap and spit,  
Prepared to smolder all day in the pit  
Beyond the slough. And once the burn has quit  
At water's edges-- still, as I retire,

I think of Cliff.

Each summer conjures well-aimed storms to slit  
My battered woods. I search for any bit  
Of green returning near charred wounds, and liar-  
Like, hail life as something to desire.  
All winter when my likeness seems to fit,

I think of Cliff.

FELINE FINAGLER

You warmed yourself in someone's old beret  
the night you crept inside the Good Will Shop.  
He found you hiding there, my favorite cop,  
who named you on the spot: Maurice Chevalier.  
He caught you in his burglar-hunting beam  
as he went in to check a sudden noise.  
And ever since, your superficial poise  
has conned him out of chicken, fish and cream.

Your friend, the cop, should surely spot a fraud--  
except you play the naive clown so well,  
you've got him badge and baggage in your spell,  
you heathen hypocrite, big-toothed, big-pawed!  
He thinks you're innocent, a wide-eyed loser,  
but generations back, say two or three,  
an alley master climbed your family tree,  
and you will likely grow to be a bruiser.

Our lawman strokes you lying in the sun.  
He doesn't see your lurk-and-lunge-at-prey  
design in shoulder, neck and jaw at play.  
I'll buy your act, book you for one long run,  
although you're often naughty and uncouth.  
But Frenchy, I've got offbeat genes myself,  
no sign of pedigree and none of pelf.  
Together let's just rise above the truth.

WINTER INHERENT

Splitting September's dark without a moon  
the high two-octave cry of a single loon  
    a blue peak on my spinal graph  
summer's final epitaph  
    Night wraps me colder  
        Suddenly I'm older

Resounding shivers in the night  
the lone loon's warble now in flight  
    receives no answer from his mate  
        Unlike him I know my fate

## ARTEMIS IN THE SKY ON DIAMOND POINT

She knows him from ancient astral trips,  
gauze gathered at her ballerina waist,  
ankles wrapped in strips of moonlight.  
He lifts her like a bit of cumulus,  
master of the dance that follows  
when day's end slips below  
the obsidian stage. His hunter's horn  
calls only her, her galaxy of gleam  
and spin. He leads her in the pas de deaux  
with the wisdom of his role. He grips  
his star-strung belt, strewing sparks;  
he dips and turns, the cosmic choreography  
older than his silver arrow tips.

This millenium, with rounder hips,  
she's less the huntress, called Diana again,  
and still amused at the old tales  
that she slew him to eclipse  
his fame. Generations witness there's been  
no tropic midnight he failed to track.

Sometimes he spells his name O'Ryan now,  
changes rhythm, shines oblique to misguide ships  
and amuse his lady. You'll miss his tricks,  
his astrodust and comet tail pips  
unless your eyes of glass are trained just so.

Sometimes he drops his flashing sword, skips  
equatorial regality, and flips  
a gilded coin to choose his mood.  
But she still knows the blips and tracings  
of his path across her southern dark,  
and hurries to her name warmed with his lips.

## BLACK OPAL

Let the novice beware, the old gemologist said.  
When you behold great beauty, when it holds you  
    unblinking suspended open-mouthed  
you cross that corridor where strange persuasions  
    lie in wait on opposite sides of the brain.

Lean on your learning, he said, always, always  
in the presence of black opal. Measure hardness,  
    specific gravity weigh x-ray magnify  
        to find a perfect specimen to own.

Even then, another piece with foreign inclusions,  
flaunting impurities, can work its conjury, strike  
your eye with bright snares, seducing your senses  
    but reducing the value of the stone.

Smiling, he laid down his loupe and confessed  
    it happened to him when he was young.

It happened to me today. I race  
to the cutting lab with my prize: no longer  
a coal-like lump of ancient Andamooka silica,  
amorphous, noncrystalline secondary mineral  
with a dark background. It has done its magic.

I put the soft stone soon to grace my hand  
    into the lapidary's hand, and I tell him  
to look with care below the wicks of arcane atoms  
    flickering in midnight catacombs,  
        fueling on light and legend.

I tell him to dismiss old wives' tales  
of the bad luck gem. As you cut the cabochon,  
Lapidary, keep your mind at some high cool level  
    safe from sorcery not user-friendly  
        to those not October born.

Long past decaying Australian sands eons old,  
amorphous, noncrystalline secondary mineral,  
    gone beyond the rationality  
of layered defraction grids and trapped moisture,  
what you hold, Lapidary, is the spectrum's source.  
    But take care with that sensitive core,  
        watch the heat from your grinding wheel,  
            the grade of your diamond grit.

Under the blue and gold schiller you expose,  
    down where the sun bends in red stress--  
adjust your eyepiece, Lapidary, can you see it?  
    Something lives there in the deep premises--  
        something has made its home there  
            where it revels in its experience with fire.

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### WHITE BIRDS AND OTHER TOURISTS

They gather loudly, winter refugees.  
Some travel weeks to claim a Southern home  
Away from frowning skies and hostile seas.

Some probe the estuary's monochrome  
Or dive where flashy bite-size smelt appear  
In schools below the jetty's wreath of foam.

Five herring gulls wheel overhead and veer  
To eye the bluefish caught on trolling hooks,  
Then hang around to snatch bait off the weir.

A tern alights between indignant looks  
And swatting hats; it rises with a prize  
Of flapping silver in its beak. It crooks

Its neck, repeats triumphant treble cries.  
A gannet darts to steal the stolen catch.  
The tern emits frustration as it flies.

Out on the beach a black-back swoops to match  
Its speed and wits with three old fishermen.  
It scoops up plastic spinners in a batch,

Then drops the lures, dives down and raids again  
Another migrant's open tackle box.  
This time it plucks a shiny ball point pen.

The pirate takes its booty to the docks,  
Exchanges it for someone's set of keys,  
And quickly merges with the squabbling flocks.

--Glenna Holloway

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WINGS

They were always my metaphor for life:  
Airfoils curving wind over leading edges,  
reveling in the lift from below,  
the sudden release from heaviness. Mine,  
the century when humans escaped gravity.

Fairy terns soaring in columns of light  
reveal their design, their shadow bones  
through fire-shimmered feathers.  
Wings move the planet, fan the trade winds  
on their way, cool the savage sun enough  
to grant us a long reprieve.  
Wings let us bargain with moonlight  
on the bias of darkness.

I crashed in a glider once.  
Seeing with osprey eyes those moments  
before earth claimed me, seeing  
the great curved sweep of heaven seamlessly  
welding all we are to all we aren't,  
I flew again, tamed my fear,  
put it to work like fuel to stay aloft.

And I know  
this cold-white gull at my feet,  
this found art, broken in last night's gale,  
knew jubilance at its height.  
And never regretted its wings.

--Glenna Holloway,  
ARIEL, 1999

## FLYING THE JUNEAU ICE CAP

Down there  
has the look of silence.  
But I know that arctic leftover  
cracks like rifle shots,  
creaks under wind's rake,  
a mother lode of loneliness.

One hundred miles  
of no roads, no animals, no living--  
just life support for glaciers,  
keeping them hale enough to bully mountains  
and slough off bergs the size of barns.

Even the Nunataka groan under their scars,  
those great granite chessmen  
castling the empty board  
where pawns and knights were lost.

My small shadow-wings  
slide the arena  
as kings, queens and pompous bishops  
stand gray-blue watch.

And far beneath their reign  
each ancient restlessness  
tests its own antithesis.

### ENCOUNTER WITH CANIS LUPUS

Fir-lined Montana morning. Backcountry  
brown and viridian lacing every angle,  
seasoning each breath. I heard wolves

last night after moonrise.  
Blue ice peaks on my spinal graph.  
No chance of seeing them. Yet I wish.

My gaze veers. A sudden presence. Startled  
into perfect stillness, neck hairs alert,  
communion pulsates, predator to predator.

He's no loner. The stance,  
the stare confirm him. Pack leader.  
Freshening a claim when I appeared.

He feels no need to summon the others.  
My rabbit gun stays shouldered,  
my walkie-talkie stays on my belt.

So much is coiled in his laser eyes:  
long lines of wolf wisdom,  
lessons in alpha honesty

fill the dark doors of his pupils.  
Pale ochre eyes admit everything:  
sovereignty his jaws decided,

warm secrets of the dominant female,  
the taste of hot blood, deer marrow.  
Lunar-lit rituals of hierarchy,

choirmaster, arbiter, pliers poised  
on a throat, brief challenges ending  
with long muzzles dubbing his shoulders.

Our eyes are locked. His do not blink.  
On a curve of light I enter for a moment  
the pure heat of their certainty

and forgive all their knowing.

## COUNTERPOINT: THE LOST CORDS

The therapists all gave her up: "No hope,  
why waste your time? She'll never speak a word,  
she's closed her mind. The case will break your heart."  
Like high-pitched bees trapped in an envelope,  
an idea whined inside my head. I heard  
concertos in my sleep; they could impart  
a healing strength, if not to her, to me  
if this approach should fail. My reasoning  
was simple: Savagery had caused her state--  
let human heights expressed harmonically--  
the smoothing, prodding shades and seasoning  
of music throb down walls and activate  
her frozen cords and self-imprisoned tongue.  
Re-tune her soul to beauty, played and sung.

The reels unrolled their offerings in her room.  
Soft-spun sonatas, choirs and symphonies  
recorded on her brain as sure as wax.  
Rachmaninoff-- her eyes began to bloom--  
Dvorak, Brahms, Tschaikowsky's melodies  
seeped in and out the conscious parallax  
of time and tone, entwined inseparables.  
Romanced, wing-shod, string-plucked-- who could resist?  
One day I stopped the sound-feast. She must ask  
for more. She must end the silence. Miracles  
began. She'd felt some chord resolved with Liszt--  
Les Preludes-- wanted it again. Her task  
was plain. She had to name or hum the thing.  
And music won. She found the notes to sing.

STAR SALESMAN

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

He sprawls across the king-size hotel bed,  
Armani alter ego hanging pressed,  
awaiting morning's cue, his Gucci shoes  
ashine for well-rehearsed auditions for  
the complex role of sweet success tomorrow.

Repeatedly he's played this vital lead.  
And nothing but heroically blank verse  
suffices to recount the episodes,  
he tells himself in mocking dialogue  
in rhythm as he buffs his manicure.  
He duly notes 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. His mended shorts  
don't show as shiny anecdotes emerge  
from pockets filled with practiced protocol  
and uptown jokes, a little charge card magic.  
Instead of hotdogs, he eats haute cuisine.

Despite the talent and the presentation,  
the bottom line is (how he hates 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 his 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 fill the role alone,  
goes slack, inanimate back on the plane.

His seatmate gripes about approaching winter.  
He wonders how he'll pay for warmer clothes  
before the iceman cometh, credit gone.

At last, unfolded in home's terminal,  
he counts out cash enough to catch a cab,  
report to his exec, director of  
these high-camp, one-act flops-- and maybe learn  
that henceforth he no longer heads the cast.  
Or worse-- that he has played his final part.

## COMING HOME TO MORNING

I saddled the Appaloosa first thing.  
Three years since I sat a horse, three years  
of alien winds, bias, staccato winds  
bullying my unsure steps.

Southwest winds are indigo and green, curved  
and fringed like the Appaloosa's neck.  
Across plains, hills, valleys  
they roll, humming a major key opus.

A riding wind is an opal and oboe wind,  
long legato passages streaming my face,  
cooling patches of freckles popping out  
on my arms like grace notes.

Gold glare shuts down my eyes, the horse  
glorious under me, her dull thunder hypnotic,  
her mane billowing, brushing my knuckles  
like raveled raw silk. We plunge into tunnels,

branch-lapped, a future of lemon light. We emerge  
dusty with pollen scent, bits of treble clinging  
to our eyelashes. The spotted mare, pure rhythm  
and music, resolves almost-forgotten chords.

Full gallop, we circle a clearing of clover,  
once for every year I've missed.  
I'll hurt on hell's pitchforks tomorrow  
but arpeggios of laughter take me around again,  
  
windsong whispering the pain will be sweet.

HE ASKED: WHY WASTE YOUR TIME CREATING POEMS?

I write them, I said, to delve, to wonder,  
to make the loud world be still awhile.  
But create them? More likely they infect me,  
colonize in me, take over. I can feel  
their cells dividing to claim space  
like squatters. It may take weeks to coax  
them to surface, work them out of my system.  
Still, I'm a volunteer host if the season  
is right for certain strains to flourish.

Some poems taunt me; tentative and wary, they  
scuttle off like scorpions, stingers raised.  
I go after them with a torch and a bare hand,  
no creator, not even a capturer,  
just a wanter of them, a willingness to suffer  
their strikes for the power they transmit:  
Spring loaded with chemistry, cornered  
in earthy niches. Potent instruments  
of thrust, animate with ways to disturb  
old apathies. Not meant to finalize  
breath or beat--but maybe to make each tremble--  
if only for a moment.

## BALLADEERS BY NIGHT

It's still you I sing to every night.  
It's so natural I almost forget the audience,  
the orchestra, the truth. After closing,  
I come here, jeansed, bandanaed, beaded silk dress  
locked up two blocks north. A few fast steps  
from there down to declasse, but here the vodka  
and maybe the habitues are more honest.

The old man drumming spoons on the bar  
is my friend. You'd like him. The obscenity  
on his T-shirt offends me but I forgive his need  
to lash out, his selfhood fading with each wash.  
The accumulated obscenities of his age  
offend me more-- in the heart or the belly  
or wherever unwanted non sequiturs lodge.  
He must have been handsome when he was young.  
Maybe as handsome as you. I rattle up  
fierce joy with the ice in my glass:  
At least the years will never savage you.

My friend tells me cigarettes are bad for my voice.  
"So's singing 4 hours," I say, and he laughs.  
I watch how it's done. My mind makes him faceless  
as the bar top, cool against my bare arms,  
smooth as Doc Severinsen's canned trumpet  
haunting the smoke with one of your favorites.

Doc hovers over the practiced booth sitters,  
haloing the twosomes and the sorry solos,  
sucking them into the bell of his horn,  
levitating them on a single luminous note  
the way I sometimes do my audience  
if I'm sure I can do it without breaking.

I sip the trumpet's lush legato lines, the sound  
you reveled in, the sound you rivaled Doc with,  
almost tasting the high blue-green vibrato  
ending the passage. Easy to pretend  
it's your warm elbow near mine. Soon my friend  
will see me to a cab. I'll go home, maybe sleep.

But the next riff comes on like a siren  
damped in heavy smog out on the tollway.  
Like what you may have heard that night.  
If you heard it...

## FEVER 103 and RISING

This elusive little beast isn't fooling me  
with its cold/hot breath,  
its shivery silverness caressing  
me pale and tender, rippling over my ribs  
like a fur boa teasing me  
in front of some perverse audience  
my rheumy eyes can't see. Mouth filled  
with surgical tools for slipping beneath skin  
and sinew, its lancets pause here and there  
using my bones for a strop.

I suspected the dreaded basilisk  
when that flicking stickiness tongued over me  
at daybreak. Until I noticed  
its undulating form was less than ugly,  
slenderly sensual, softly mean. Warm blood  
shapes its intentions; this is not  
the reptilian basilisk once thought unkillable,  
but the basilisk's own slayer, the weasel.

Whiskers and tail tickle me sicker,  
needle claws accent its dance-and-dart ballet  
up my vertebrae. My own hidebound act  
vacillates between stupor and tightrope walking  
while juggling my heart, liver and spleen.

Still, I know what's taking place:  
The weasel, live coal eyes level with mine now,  
sniffs toward my brain, listening  
for certain major chords to reverberate  
through dividing cells as it waits for a chance  
to light the ultimate fire.

### SPOILSPORT

November's early warning in my knees  
Requires me to unpack the heavy clothes  
That hamper my golf game. The frosty breeze  
Abuses my composure with a sneeze  
As icy needles penetrate my nose.

I'm not exactly slipping out of sorts,  
Or not preserving well with passing years.  
I never lack for partners or escorts,  
And still can hold my own in tennis shorts,  
Returning summer's serves, and getting cheers.

I move with ease right through October days.  
But when raw wind impales me on its cold  
And pewter sky infects me with malaise,  
My body starts reminding me it's old!

### KNOWING OF LOVE

Ciardi and Nemerov: at their best as lovers.  
Not just lovers but hearers and doers  
of the word. Unlike Hemingway, who said  
he left his best books in bed, they brought  
the best of it to the page, understood  
the source like the apiarist knows his bees,  
like him listening in his dark for the hum,  
the sometimes venom in his blood, knowing  
it's salvation. And knowing  
when and where to let the hive swarm  
to gather sweetness. Knowing too,  
the secret essence of building: how  
the perennial arch, its center stones  
long wedded, edges planed to match,  
falls together to lift its singular wonder.

--Glenna Holloway

Disrhythmically; he languished on his bunk  
To drain the tankard pressed between his palms,  
His hard-won palm-lined shores lost from his grasp.

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

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.

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UNWILLING TO PRACTICE

That icy stuff keeps coming down;  
The clouds all wear a frozen frown.  
The thought of going out's appalling;  
Unlike snow, I don't like falling.

--Glenna Holloway

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

CRISTOBAL COLON REPLACED AS GOVERNOR OF  
IRONS  
—Headline

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 foretelling 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.  
In a sullen yawning 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

## CHICAGO WATERCOLOR SHOW

Chicago's river spreads a wash of gray  
While spackling city margins winter-dull.  
Spring's palette adds chartreuses flocked with creams  
And sudsy whites. Late lightning rips the seams  
In blue reserves, conspiring to annul  
The pastels with more vivid interplay.

As jonquils pay off most of March's debt,  
New artists work in shades of lullabies  
And stippled lakeside sheen. Braque's textured brush  
Repaints the parks, surreal in summer's blush.  
The nights are flashed with cubist fireflies,  
Each moonrise flecked with birds in silhouette.

As backgrounds hold impressions of Monet,  
The next stroke primes Picasso's stormy spray.

--Glenna Holloway

#### AFTERTHOUGHTS

Boarding the flight to Singapore  
she was wearing that bossy black dress,  
the twins trailing her, a double dose,  
and if he hadn't met her years ago  
north of Kuala Lumpur and if the sun weren't  
prying around, flaring pinpoints of color  
in her hair, he might not be so close behind.  
But his morning glances had already caught  
the flickering mangrove greens in her eyes.  
What was she now, 40-odd? Not much changed  
by Africa or England. He could persuade her  
into a sarong kabaya, take the hairpins  
out of that damn bun like he did last night  
and 20 years vanished. Words sounded hollow  
as rebanna drums and said less. There had to be  
a way to tell the woman how he felt, beginning  
long before that dual edition of jungle genes  
bringing up the rear ever said "Daddy."

--Glenn Holloway

GLENNA HOLLOWAY  
913 E. Bailey Road  
Naperville, IL 60565

CAMERAMAN

High speed shutter at f/11: this field  
the depth of equatorial heat,  
this filter peeling layers of indifference  
off colors, clarifying sun's deviant slant,  
incising the tidal wave of wildebeest  
separating the Serengeti into vertical levels,  
levitating, mixing sound with motion.  
Numbing all sense of numbers, hoofs pound by  
for days-- as bison once rumbled  
over American grama grass; as caribou  
still cross pale negatives of Alaska.

Telephoto lenses leap the river, not losing  
the albino calf or the lame mother swimming  
back to look for her offspring. Overhead,  
chaos freezes into still life-- windless  
thorn trees blooming with hunched vultures.  
Below, stilled lives pile on a sand bar  
slicing the downstream current.  
A wide-angle, last frame view of Africa.

Across the world, Bangkok to Bangor, mangrove  
to man, breathing things press their images  
in closed boxes: Part of the great bellows  
of transmigration from dust to dust.  
Revelations of time and place,  
multiple versions of light and dark.

--Glenn Holloway

## HERALDRY

For a century, the old clansmen 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 wheat crop failed. Daily,  
more elders went limp like soiled draperies  
piled in corners. No fabric was noble or whole,  
no color. Only hunger and anger were strong  
enough to pose rampant.

Across escutcheons of hunters  
the wind pried in bar sinister crevices  
of castle and hovel. It spiraled  
around the borders of dark forests,  
carving its bearings with dirks of ice  
and sometimes on its own bias  
offering a stag on morning's white field.

Yes, daughter, the crest you cross-stitched  
is elegant on silk, a spread of gold antlers  
and poised hoofs, regality balanced  
with a lean and bare-fanged entity--  
panther, perhaps. Embroidered with more truth  
than you were designed to inherit.

41 lines!

### THE POTTERS OF THE RED HILLS

Our hands are ancient:  
Older than the painter's-- that stick-man  
who left his best dimension in a cave.  
Older than the lightning god's gift,  
older than the hands of the wood carver  
and the stone chipper who made man a hunter.

Man was born a gatherer. He was born thirsty.  
Mud leaks slower than woven leaves and grass.  
Our hands molded wet dirt. Sun dried it.  
Unlasting as a meal. We found a better way,  
a special kind of earth.

It wasn't an accident. Don't believe tales  
about forgetful old women trying to heat  
water in clay cups in newly-mastered embers  
and finding precious substance in cold ashes.

Too thick or thin, too wet, too coarse,  
exploded, fractured-- our work miscarried often  
but had no careless birth. And we taught others  
how to mold and hold the future.

Our hands made man a storer, trader, preserver--  
foundations of peace. My fingers fashioned  
beads strung on willow to mark a woman mine.  
My palms made the first wheel,  
then a pair with center holes for a stick.  
A rolling plaything, a lost exclamation point  
in time defined by stone.

You now blessed with supplies and knowing hands,  
oh, don't forget the source: The searched-for clay  
seasoned with digger's sweat, sometimes a dance,  
praise-words and promise-words exchanged  
for earth's gift and placed inside her wound.  
Today's sterile blocks, measured, packaged,  
paid for with common currency  
are not the same. Creation breathes  
within the raw dough of eternity  
waiting to be baked like bread.

You now entrusted with the modern treasure,  
willing to your touch, remember the beginnings.  
Remember all the hands that formed before.  
Each time you design another miracle  
and yield it to the fire.

## GIFT HORSE

It's not as if you roll melty brown eyes  
at me and nuzzle my arm, not as if I've had  
years of pleasure from you. You even bit me.

On a family visit I happened to comment  
on your regal bearing. And Uncle Jess said,  
"Take him, he's yours, saddle and all."  
Uncle Jess, the family autocrat, insisted.  
Good breeding (mine) dictated that I not  
look you in the mouth. Caught flatfooted  
in the adage, all I could do was say thanks,  
and wonder how I got so lucky.

Once you were here, each day revealed  
worse things than wayward teeth.  
You're an equine misanthrope  
with the disposition of a gum boil. The once  
I tried to ride, you waited until we reached  
the Pendletons' pasture in full view  
of their porch party. You scraped my thigh  
on a fence then pitched me  
in the county's only patch of poison sumac.

You've been a daily blight on my calendar  
since April. Now here I am, watching  
the vet frown as he cleans his thermometer.

Sun plays the sheen of your flank. You look  
like a fallen bronze monument. The doctor  
says your future is unsure.  
There's not a single reason I should care.

I kneel to rub your blaze, expecting even now  
a recalcitrant snort. As the long needle pierces  
your rump, I feel no equalizing of scores.

Your eye on mine, you cozy my hand. Suddenly  
I hear myself saying,  
"Doc, is there anything else you can do?"

--Glenna Holloway

A TALE OF TWO POETS  
(To Jane Hirshfield)

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 random 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.

The 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?

## ARENA

It's THEM versus US; US versus THEM. Easy.  
An uncomplicated formula for direct action.

THEM: the ones who grow the stuff,  
poppies and hemp and coca leaves  
in secluded fields, hillsides, yards, boxes.  
Simple pleasant plants, less work  
than corn or wheat and far better returns.

THEM: the ones who refine it  
to paste and powder in dirty secret labs,  
dirty containers, dirtier hands.

THEM: the ones who move it from the South,  
the East, on donkey backs, on bicycles,  
in laundry, old tires, toys, body hollows,  
in late model cars, planes, attache cases  
across our wild edges, our gracious hems.

THEM: the unbiased ones who peddle to all,  
unmindful of race or religion, tolerant  
of poor man, pregnant woman, or child,  
their ranks firmly rooted in regardless.

US: the ones who cultivate small patches  
of comfort protected by modicums of insulation  
surrounded with refinement of floral borders,  
morning papers scanned with obligatory sighs,  
and annual trips to get away from the clamor.

US: unranked and disarrayed, daily depleted  
with losses, some to their side to become THEM.  
US: less well-defined, less surely slotted,  
most of US relegated to cramped cubicles  
of uncommitted grays.

US: telling our children "users are losers,"  
telling each other we're winning.  
The great majority US, still dodging the draft,  
looking for our weapons, wounding ourselves  
in the foot as we clean off rust, ,  
still not sure where the front is  
or what the enemy looks like.

DEAR PASTOR BOB,

I liked you the very first day, your voice, your smile.  
I wasn't sure if you could take dear Arthur's place  
but that comparison, I knew again, would not be fair.

Beloved predecessors' shoes cannot be filled.  
Each preacher must design and wear  
his own, and none will be the same.  
Approach and style are individual. What matters  
is the fabric's strength of content and belief. You,  
Pastor Bob, display them both sincerely and with flair.

A sermon should reveal the speaker's source beyond the Book.  
With evidence that he has often been there.

You know our Father God in person, not just through  
the ancient words and scripts. You know the Son and Heir  
from constant contact, daily prayer.

All ministers advise their hearers to prepare  
for Heaven. Yet some do not convey  
the way to rhyme the daily grind with care  
for others, or remember Christ is everywhere  
at any time or circumstance. They keep Him in the Sanctuary,  
hold Him fast to Sundays, special services and hymns.  
And there some people leave Him for the week or more  
as they return to lives far distant from His way.  
And they forget the messages when meeting with despair.

You keep us all connected, in spite of time or place.  
You've offered us reliance and resilience and repair.

So thank you, Pastor Bob. Just want to say I care.

Sincerely,  
Glenna Holloway

10  
Copy

## ARENA

It's THEM versus US; US versus THEM. Easy, we suppose, to tell apart at first glance.

THEM: the ones who grow the stuff, poppies and hemp and coca leaves in secluded fields, hillsides, pots, boxes. Simple pleasant plants, less work than corn or wheat and way better returns.

THEM: the ones who refine it to paste and powder in dirty secret labs, dirty containers, dirtier hands.

THEM: the ones who move it from the South, the East, on donkey backs, on bicycles, in laundry, toys, old tires, body hollows, in late model cars, planes, attache cases across our wild edges, our gracious hems.

THEM: the unbiased ones who peddle to all, unmindful of race or religion, tolerant of poor man, pregnant woman, or child, their ranks firmly rooted in regardless.

US: the ones who cultivate small patches of comfort protected by modicums of insulation surrounded with refinement of floral borders, morning papers scanned with obligatory sighs, and annual trips to get away from the clamor.

US: unranked and disarrayed, daily depleted with losses, some to their side to become THEM.

US: less well-defined, less surely slotted, most of US relegated to conflicting conflicts on cramped battlefields of uncommitted grays.

US: telling our children "users are losers," telling each other we're winning.

The great majority US, still dodging the draft or looking for our weapons, cleaning off rust, wounding ourselves in the foot, still not sure where the front is or what the enemy looks like.

## STAR SALESMAN

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

He sprawls across the king-size hotel bed,  
Armani alter ego hanging pressed,  
awaiting morning's cue, his Gucci shoes  
ashine for well-rehearsed auditions for  
the complex role of sweet success tomorrow.

Repeatedly he's played this vital lead.  
And nothing but heroically blank verse  
suffices to recount the episodes,  
he tells himself in mocking dialogue  
in rhythm as he buffs his manicure.  
He duly notes 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. His mended shorts  
don't show as shiny anecdotes emerge  
from pockets filled with practiced protocol  
and uptown jokes, a little charge card magic.  
Instead of hotdogs, he eats haute cuisine.

Despite the talent and the presentation,  
the bottom line is (how he hates 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 his 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 slack, inanimate back on the plane.

His seatmate gripes about approaching winter.  
He wonders how he'll pay for warmer clothes  
before the iceman cometh, credit gone.

At last, unfolded in home's terminal,  
he counts out cash enough to catch a cab,  
report to his exec, director of  
these high-camp, one-act flops-- and maybe learn  
that henceforth he no longer heads the cast.  
Or worse-- that he has played his final part.

OVERTURE IN BEE FLAT

sonakit

(Sir Sam's Solo)

Just like an armored knight I sally out  
to brave my gauntlet, gloved and cloaked with care.  
I handle booty with a twinge of doubt  
that I'll escape the field without a pair  
or more of pulsing spears injecting me  
with fire, which leaves each gilded guardian less  
her lance, a fierce and willing casualty  
of ownership and lordship's due process.

Since they are programmed just to serve their queen,  
they never see their jewels in my jars  
serve sweet-toothed lady, waiting in between  
her buttered biscuits and her almond bars.  
It's worth each risk this daring quester takes  
to taste warm gems my other honey makes.

## DRIVING THE MIDNIGHT LOOP

The late Sunday city is almost as vacant as I am.  
Blisters of light sting bare streets and sidewalks.  
Michigan Avenue voltage shivers through me.

My wires cross and short out. The Chevy's worn tires  
make a heatless sizzle. The engine tenors its monotone  
to the sibilance of sudden lakefront rain. I turn off  
radio arias of alienation and hum my usual obbligato--  
no flattened fifths, just aniline-dyed sharps. Same tune  
as last year when you left me in the dark.

Night is a long leech. I feel it fattening on me.  
Millions of rounds of electric ammo fire at it,  
bounce off. Brilliant white shrapnel pelts me.

I try to stuff some in my jacket but it goes black.  
Soon I'm riddled with shallow concavities  
bleeding faint shades of light I've been hoarding.

Way back I passed something I need, maybe  
on the verge of the Magnificent Mile or in the gorge  
between highrises. Nothing I ever bought was it,

pricey or cheap. In reflections, sometimes I think  
you're still out there on an angle of shine,  
on the bright bias of the possible.

Light drifts away. Warmth escapes me. Maybe  
I'll recharge in the a.m. like a lizard on a log.  
Somewhere are people I forgot, people I promised,

people I owe. They roll up in winter potholes  
and old shadows with broken names. The moon comes out,  
sheds a pale legend all over the roof-scraped sky;

it rides the leech's back, irisless eyeball sporting  
a cold wet halo. The road ahead's closed for repairs.  
No right turn. I shake my head at two leftover tourists

who hope my roaming headlights are a cab's. I scoop up  
each shard of loose illumination, rub it in my wounds.  
And the leech is still hungry.

#### BEAR AND BEE HIVE BY NIGHT

My honey mills wind down in aftercool  
of autumn-staging sunlight's rapid plunge.  
All day, productive order was the rule,  
now workers rest before their first waves lunge  
at morning sweetness waiting in the clover.  
Moon-time awakens hulking stealth with claws--  
just like a Choctaw spirit passing over  
sleep-dark weeds and logs on brazen paws.  
Old Bruin knows the dynamo is dormant;  
he knows he needn't fear sting-barbs or shot.  
He raids as if he's cued by an informant,  
then wanders off to some deep woodland spot,  
my precious topaz beaded on his chin:  
His tongue will find it, tell him where he's been.

So he'll be back. He needs no workers' dance  
to point him toward his coveted reward.  
Once found, his black brain memorized each chance  
he took and won. He's proved himself the lord  
of night, of fields and salmon streams, wild bees  
besides. Now mine, compared, make easy prey.  
Each raid, he's also seen my apple trees;  
he'll soon gorge twice at my expense. By day  
I don't believe old tribal kin return  
as bears. By sun I count compounded loss  
and load my double-barreled vengeance, burn  
with educated scorn for tales that cross  
the years. Through hunter's sights his powers pose  
against the moon, my aim. He's safe. He knows.

#### CALLER WITH CORNFLOWERS

Folks call them "ragged jaybirds" in the South,  
Their hues combining indigo with sky.  
I haven't seen such bouquets since the drouth  
That left our nursery acres brittle dry.  
Allotted water had to go for corn,  
Potatoes, beans, essential crops across  
The state. Before I left, I walked forlorn  
Among our gray-brown rows of floral loss.  
One blip of blue assuaged my silent grief:  
One seed delayed, survived to proclaim life  
And make an affirmation of belief.  
Today your bunch of short-fringed blossoms, rife  
With color like your eyes, regales my heart.  
What vibrancy you bring to friendship's start!

### THE MAKING Of ANNIVERSARY WINE

We four, close sisters, watched each year's  
first crush.  
The dusky muscats always seemed to tint  
The air we breathed, and charged it with a hint  
Of parties, velvet dresses, darkly lush.  
I still remember Papa saying "Hush!"  
Before each tasting, eyeing every glint  
Of color, then the labels we'd all print:  
"Good grapes and love are things you  
shouldn't rush."

I'll always feel that it was his design,  
Not happenstance, for when each daughter wed,  
That year produced a very special wine.  
The last we opened was a clear deep red  
That bore the date and legend that was mine--  
A fitting toast: "Worth waiting for," it said.

## DROUGHT

So out of sync with weather satellites  
and high-tech mastery it seems absurd.  
A searing sun bears down each day and spites  
the rows of rattling corn, red powder-blurred.  
Order, reasons, rhymes are all askew.  
Synapses snap, relief long overdue.  
Back roads slough off and churn with choking rust  
exposing even deeper-layered clay  
that crumbles in its turn and swirls away  
on smoking orange wind and burning gust.  
We stare at every teasing passing cloud,  
our gritty tongues too parched to pray aloud,  
our faces, stained incarnadine with dust.  
Oh God, please rain on desiccating trust.

## GULL WATCHING

Some fly from cliffs where leafless limbs are patched  
With ice and snow-- to sueded cypress knees  
Where shade-striped quietude is laced and thatched  
With sun-bleached moss festooned from wading trees.  
For weeks gulls ply deep sea, its folding foam  
Uncertain as the earthbound ways of men.  
But once the birds have claimed a Southern home,  
They troll tidepools and settle down again.  
Some plumb the estuaries' tepid sheen  
Or dive where sequin-flashing smelt appear  
In silver schools against the depths of green.  
Some hang around men fishing off the weir.  
White wings pursue all boats. And gulls in flocks  
Of dark-eyed patience spend their days on docks.

## ON ENTERING A STATISTICAL BIAS

Despised by some, the music doesn't stop  
despite the numbered days. Fast rhythms move  
the blood the same as forty years ago.  
My time of life is not a view I'd swap  
for Zeitgeist attitudes that only prove  
insouciance is wasted on the slow  
to learn, the inexperienced, the young.  
The pack mentality has no appeal  
for me-- prevailing mores, styles, the scene.  
I'd rather sing what no one else has sung,  
and make a garden home for what I feel.  
It takes decades of practice to stay green.  
Like all the secret hues in white, I'll bend,  
and blend each subtle shade until the end.

Three small giggling girls  
make fancy mud pies, squishing  
summer between their toes

Two leaping dolphins  
parenthesize our rowboat  
splashing summer sun

Two leaping dolphins  
parenthesize our rowboat  
splashing summer sun

WHEN NOTHING ELSE WILL DO

Only artists can express certain essences, images,  
nuances. Along with wielders of sharps and flats,  
masters of color and canvas, Erato's followers  
hat sculpt shapes and shadows,