

MORE THAN MERE MAGIC

No one, I said, writes music like that anymore,
colors instead of notes
on a wire-drawn breeze for a staff,
recorded on spools of the spectrum.

Then you came to me, a willow wind
brushing the small scar on my cheek,
opening pores in the blue
of my rock-rinded inlands.

You are the only one I ever met
who could discuss Debussy's Afternoon Of A Faun
except it wasn't talk but cloven-hoofed legerdemain,
articulated phosphorescence at once
cerebral and visceral. My guarded shade
flowed cerulean and painted us an island;
your flute hollowed us a hurricane eye in August.

You transposed me to an ocean key,
tuned me a viridian obbligato quick to follow
the discovered imprint of your human sandals,
feeling the flight feathers on mine.

THE LEE WALDROP ROLLER WRITING CONTEST
 sponsored by the National League of American Pen Women
 Black Hills Branch

JUDGES CRITIQUE: (Poetry)

| | Achieves Purpose | Needs Improvement | Comment |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------|---------|
| Subject | | | |
| Aptness of title | | | |
| Imagery | | | |
| Impact | | | |
| Appeal | | | |
| Flow | | | |
| Notable Aspects | <i>It moves me see vividly a scene that I'm not familiar with.</i> | | |
| Major improvement needed | | | |
| Competition rating | | | |

WEATHERSCAPE

The radio says we'll get fringes of an anticyclone about ten o'clock. Miles of sea have already scrubbed this migrant air, all the knuckles of this wind trying to pry open my mouth like an angry nurse good with a dose of salts. Mixed currents tore their tethers from the pole, spiraled down north by east to harass the shutters on my windows, planting sand and salmon scales in wood pores. Mine are stinging pink with Katmai pumice and oily smoke from Athabascan 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, famished grizzlies, falling spruce. Specimen rose-trees on my lawn make no sound 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 desiccated taiga moss, banking off centuries of guano and granite. No one escapes the northland. All the vagrant gales converge in the stoop of a hawk, arrowheaded by an ancient narwhal nailing me to the last wall until it goes down.

1st Honorable mention

First Batch of Honorable Mentions

(158)

A TALE OF TWO POETS

The first one,
fluid and fluent in the posturing of purpose
wound oblique and opaque, a wonder
on the tongue, posed on the gilded page.
Threads wove upon themselves,
needled shallow wounds with small conceits
then paused to wend and couple with abstraction.

The other one
snatched the fallen wand, conducted changing
winds unwinding truth from wild grape vines
wandered past the afterglow.

How long, this second poet wondered,
before critics would be weaned to solid light,
before outraged passions waned
after catching her in the unforgivable stance
of being understood?

multi-rhythm ballad

MUSCALE IMPROMPTU

A tall man with a banjo leaned against the Ozarks,
propped his boot on granite, began to make a song:
He borrowed chords from falling river
down the longest canyon wall,
from the blowing cottonwood
and the bluestem miles of prairie
all tomorrowed with the off-key bawl of calving.

He saved insistent rhythm from an appaloosa hoof,
a pumping well and tin-roof rain,
the ragged rugged meter of the languages that met,
a Hopi shuttling sunset through a rug loom.

A cowboy started strumming his guitar to make a medley,
hummed his loneliness and thumbed some badlands bass.
A Red man added drumming, like the coming of a twister,
like the warning of a rattler and the fear beat of a doe.

Play the ranging polyrhythm changing green to gray or tan,
heathen heat that stills the windmill, spirals deep
inside the core drill, thrums the alto obbligato
for the dreamer and the drum.

Other voices join. The ballad changes key—
minor to major and back:
Dust-scape, wind-scope, miles of mood as black as crude,
magpie notes on rusty wire staff,
salt flat hopes pitched higher-toned and sharp.
Tighten old guitar strings, patch and stitch the tune,
lighten with the lupine, touch a wing.

Listen to the underlilt, the afterbeat of thunder,
whistle up the wonder of thistledown and otter,
modulate the sound of silversmith and potter.
Everything is scaled to harmony's quest—
Sing another chorus of the west.

NIGHT DUTY, COUNTY HOSPITAL

*Hospital
mentum*

Wilderness witch-man my far-off forebear,
 mystic motions against ancient moons beneath my lids,
 jade-leaf jungle tuned to cabal chants
 while brother devil-doctors dance with fetish fang and feather:
 My pulse takes up the secret rhythm,
 systole—diastole, an alternating tom-tom,
 forgotten incantations, major—minor harmony.

We are not strangers, shaman,
 minus our masks in this breeding dark;
 atavistic heart, disrhythmia unchecked,
 wild harsh cadence, current beyond blood
 quickens with the questions, with unknowns in the shadows,
 alien kindred tom-tom, minor—major keys.

How great the gamut, Aesculapius?
 Sorcerer, healer, leech, how far through the gauntlet am I?
 Sharp stone incision, humble herbs and purifying fire
 begot a sterile lineage
 of wizard steel, bottled nostrums, licensed magic!

Past shade-brooding forest, far down in the covenant breed,
 some conjurer's conscience defied endemic demons,
 some holy heathen swore by aboriginal Apollo,
 sowed it deeply in the seeds of evolution.
 The beat has wandered, broken; the tangled cord remains.
 Skulls and scarabs dissolve on the walls of waking.
 Sure shadowless light supports my hands,
 anointing my sacred scalpel.

Balanced blend of primitive and
modern

Night

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

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NIGHT DUTY, COUNTY HOSPITAL

Sure shadowless light supports my hands,
encircling my sacred scalpel.
Wilderness witch-man my far-off forebear,
mystic motions against ancient moons beneath my lids,
jade-leaf jungle tuned to cabal chants
while brother devil-doctors dance with fetish fang and feather:
My pulse takes up the secret rhythm,
systole—diastole, an alternating tom-tom,
forgotten incantations, major—minor harmonies.

We are not strangers, shaman,
minus our masks in this breeding dark.
Atavistic heart, disrhythmia unchecked,
wild harsh cadence, current beyond blood
quickens with the questions, with unknowns in the shadows,
alien kindred tom-tom, minor—major.

How great is the gamut, Aesculapius?
Sorcerer, healer, leech, how far through the gauntlet am I?
Sharp stone incision, humble herbs and purifying fire
begot a sterile lineage
of wizard steel, bottled nostrums, licensed magic!

Past shade-brooding forest, far down in the covenant breed,
some conjurer's conscience defied endemic demons,
some holy heathen swore by aboriginal Apollo,
sowed it deeply in the seeds of evolution.
The beat has wandered, broken—the tangled cord remains.
Skulls and scarabs dissolve on the walls of waking.

cont.

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

Night Duty, County Hospital.

2.

Sure shadowless light supports my hands,
anointing my sacred scalpel.

Glenna Holloway
913 Bailey Rd.
Naperville, IL 60540

NIGHT BREAK, COUNTY HOSPITAL

Glenna Holloway

Wilderness witch-man, my far-off forebear,
Mystic motions against ancient moons beneath my lids,
Jade-leaf jungle tuned to cabal chants
While brother devil-doctors dance with fetish fang and feather:
My pulse takes up the secret rhythm,
Systole—diastole, an alternating tom-tom,
Forgotten incantations, major—minor.

We are not strangers, shaman,
Minus our masks in this breeding dark;
Atavistic heart, disrhythmia unchecked,
Wild harsh cadence, current beyond blood
Quickens with the questions, the unknowns in the shadows,
Alien kindred tom-tom, minor—major.

How great the gamut, Aesculapius?
Sorcerer, healer, leech, how far through the gauntlet am I?
Sharp stone incision, humble herbs and purifying fire
Begot a sterile lineage
Of wizard steel, bottled nostrums, licensed magic!

Past shade-brooding forest, far down in the covenant breed,
Some conjurer's conscience defied endemic demons,
Some holy heathen swore by aboriginal Apollo,
Sowed it deeply in the seeds of evolution.
The beat has wandered, broken—the twitching cord remains.
Skulls and scarabs dissolve on the walls of waking.
Sure shadowless light supports my hands,
Anointing my sacred scalpel.

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Notable Aspects Several good similes and metaphors.

Catches the essence of the mountain. (I taught in Japan one year)
Major improvement needed

Competition rating

1st Prize

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

Fujiyama:

good Haunting as haiku, mine to see
only in misty colors on silk scrolls.

Three weeks I waited for audience with its majesty,
fastening paper fortunes to cedars,
hiking the Hakone hills to knock on the doors of clouds
Hibone (in World B&B Encyclopedia)
while red ferries stroked the lake below. good

Once, struggling up Fuji's flanks, I touched it
like truth, held it hugely—
unidentifiable.

A Shinto wind urged me to Kamakura,
beyond the ignorance of intimacy. But still
the mountain sat coveting privacy like a fat shogun
censors
enshrined in smoke from a billion censors,
unmoved by my petitions,
contemplating old crucibles beneath his throne,
considering a show of power, screening his conclusions
from earthly eyes.

My home flight began with empty layers
in my lacquer memory box. Then off the starboard wing—
a Bodhisattva!

Pedestaled on ermine and lapis, Helios-haloed, good
caped in white lotus. Bodhisattva Fujiyama!

Electing to stay this side of heaven, giving a glimpse
inside the meaning of light, Forcing shut earthly eyes.
But my gilded box will never close! !

I thought
those were
prayer papers

good image

[St]

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

U

Fujiyama:

Haunting as haiku, mine to see
only in misty colors on silk scrolls.

Three weeks I waited for audience with its majesty,
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Electing to stay this side of heaven, giving a glimpse
inside the meaning of light. Forcing shut earthly eyes.
But my gilded box will never close.

THERE WAS A WOMAN WHO USED TO GIVE ME FLOWERS

When I was ten I heard her called a whore,
the sentence fletched with barbs that stung my spine.
I'd followed her through years of phlox before
that word bored itching in my brain. Define
the user of a hoe! But that could not
account for rancid tones of voice that fell
like spattered ale-foam on my father's hot
hearthstones. Unfitting with her bouquet smell.
I later learned the meaning of the slur,
through tears watched twitching suns contort with lies.
Then wicked moons mimed coins, men's grins and her
white rage enlarged to learn what to despise.
My childhood, white phlox petals, all my prayers—
quicksilver dropped on knife-edged granite stairs.

Long days uncoiled the ancient codes within,
preparing me as resident temptation.
I saw the pausing eyes my next of kin
returned to me, their sullen fascination
with hip and thigh, my budding breasts. Were they
symptoms of sin? Oh, for an older friend!
The one I'd known once quickly moved away
after father "had a word with her"— "Tend
your lessons, girl, forget that piece of trash,"
he growled when I inquired. I missed her more
that season. Her garden was a backlash
of weeds where beauty used to rise and pour
against our wall. At summer's end, I knew:
What my father called her wasn't true.

But why did he degrade her? Why such hate
a child could feel its pulse? The evening fire
hissed and cracked like a rabbit gun, a spate
of sparks gnawed on the rug. He cursed the spire
of smoke like one gnarled ghost finger prodding
prospective hosts. He drained another glass.
He started teasing, yellow-smiling, nodding.
I never learned effective words to pass
him off. A choking feeling, hot and brittle,
abashed excuses trailed me to my room
attended by his grinding "Surly little—"
My door closed on the rest. My gentle groom
would smooth my mind, familiar fantasy.
I woke, my father reeking over me.

ROLE REVERSAL

She laid out my days with hand-knit sweaters
and fresh-squeezed orange juice,
unfolded my nights from a brass-bound chest.

(The scent of cedar still brings back
almost to touching and hearing
taffeta quilts puffed with down
^{eider}
and bedtime stories of her own making.)

She ironed my manners between Sunday ruffles,
unrolled plans from pink rag curlers.

For years we giggled in duet—
I was the alto part—
hers was the same three notes as our door chime.
She filled my head and my hot chocolate cup,
shaped me in her hugs.

But her years turned toxic,
and the woman she was
moved away in medicated stages.

Now for longer than I childed her
I have mothered her.

The brass-bound chest is the same,
but our mouths shed no laughter
between unrehearsed folds of strangerness.

SKY THOUGHTS IN JAPANESE TANKA

Watching moon-wake through
Night eyes of glass is reading
Cosmic poetry
While it is being written
By ancients on scrubbed blackboards.

Atoms out in space
Incubate the seeds and spores
Of impatient stars.
Comet tails are seines to sift
The air-borne genes of heaven.

Why is man so proud?
Galaxies are God's gardens;
Planet earth is one
Bud on an eternal tree.
Could man's role be that of bee?

I REMEMBER TANNY

"Aw, Mizz Moss, I can't write no essay on patriotism; I don't even know what it means."

Vignettes of the sixties classes are stinging vivid still:
 His name was Vernon Tanager, a sometime boy
 who seemed to have more limbs than anyone else
 angling from his too-small desk. I could never stay angry
 with Tanny, big bony fingers fidgeting with mischief,
 Oklahoma brogans tracking in barn aroma, double negatives.
 He was gritting his teeth to graduate, and to that end
 I kept him many afternoons till sun biased my chair rungs.
 At our last confrontation over the paper subject,
 his voice stumbled cutting the gutter words
 from his outburst: "I can't shovel all that stuff
 about love of country, glories of the flag,
 and wishing I had more lives to donate!" The Indian part
 of his eyes was agate, daring me to mention
 things like justice, equality, even freedom.
 "But Tanny, don't you feel anything for America?"
 "Sure. I got a big urge to see Grand Canyon
 before I split for Canada." A moment later
 the agate lost its edge. "Don't give up on me," he grinned.

Before shipping out for Viet Nam he sent me a letter:
 "You know I'm not much at English or spelling
 but I can't leave you thinking I let myself
 get herded off like a dumb sheep with no stake in anything
 and no attachments. I didn't get no smarter
 but my head's more together thanks to your brand of glue.
 Guess I am part of this land. Going a long way back.
 I'm like a needle on a lodgepole pine. I know the limbs
 are blighted and the trunk's got borers
 but it's still the tallest straightest tree in the forest.
 And it's my tree. So I can't help wanting to hold on to it.
 I don't see nothing better anywhere I look,
 don't see the other kinds propping up falling trees
 without taking the lame tree's land in the process.
 The lodgepole pine don't operate that way.
 Maybe if enough needles hang on and do
 what we're supposed to do even if we don't like it,
 our tree will get well and put out new branches.
 Better ones. I guess that's hope.
 So that's what I aim to do. Maybe that's loyalty.
 And if I die doing it, somebody ought to know
 I'm not leaving bitter, and I'm glad to be part
 of the tree. I guess that's pride.
 And maybe all of it put together is that word
 you told us to write about only I couldn't. Remember?"

I remember, Tanny. I remember as I read your name
 between reflections on the shiny new monument,
 remember the medals you won before you finally fell
 all the way to the forest floor,
 one more needle to nurture the roots
 of the lodgepole pine.

Glenна Holloway
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8 lines

VIGNETTE IN A PLAID JACKET

Glenна Holloway

No endearing cliches like freckles,
a missing tooth or a broken toy
appended to a well-dressed slump.
No enlarged irises in silent pools.
Just a small average face,
a scrubbed shine the eyes don't share,
and a mouth that barely twitches
telling me good-bye.

July

(26)

NOTHING LEFT TO SAY

You said it all
in one lean as a scalpel sentence—
incisive, divisive,
leaving me unwhole and unhealed
on the cutting edge
of a period.

Your own clipped words
were over quickly;
my sentence
keeps going on

November

NOTHING LEFT TO SAY

You said it all
in one lean-as-a-scalpel sentence,
incisive— divisive—
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on the cutting edge
of a period.

Your own clipped words
were over quickly.

My sentence
keeps going on

Glenna Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville, IL 60565
(C) 1981

THE LIBERATED SONNET

Dear Shakespeare, you're THE chauvinist of men,
no doubt of that. Your crass facility
played foul with doomed and done-wrong maidens when
they cried. "O, get thee to a nunnery,"
your churlish answer to their puckered throes.
You also aimed dull blows at female truth
and worthiness; you reveled in their woes!
Your ghost be plagued and plagiarized, forsooth!
You bowdlerized, victimized ladies with verve,
devout losers, stuffed simpletons, all.
Even those you permitted a bit of nerve
found themselves spondeed on masculine gall.

(I refuse to confirm the final bane
of your namesake form; I will not contain
my righteous rant in gilded gelded couplet;
I may even alter your metric quintuplet!)

My wrath will know no bounds, my spleen is full
of sand, and fury, steeped in years of pull
and push and hurry, trocheed by a male.

Julie splitting in Act Four makes a better tale!
No more sexist machinations and chicane,
no more will I endure a macho Moor or Dane.
So stow such biased foolscap in your jerkin;
Behold my thumb, and a fie on your firkin!

THE LIBERATED SONNET # II

Dear Shakespeare, you chauvinistic turkey,
You played most foul with done-wrong maids and wives.
The wretched roles your crass facility
Created shows your low regard for female lives.
Your churlish answers to their puckered throes
Were barbed with sneers at woman's truth
And worthiness; you reveled in their woes!
Your ghost be plagued and plagiarized forsooth!
You bowdlerized, victimized ladies with verve,
Made 'em losers, stuffed simpletons, all.
Even those you permitted a bit of nerve
Found themselves spondeed on masculine gall.

(I refuse to confirm the final bane
of your namesake form; I will not contain
my righteous rant in gilded gelded couplet;
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Go stow such biased foolscap in your jerkin;
behold my thumb, and a fie on your firkin!

UNBIASING THE BARD

Look here, Shakey, you Lizzie-beatin' wimp:
For years you plied your bleak and bloated words,
piled your heroines with ictus, slipped a crimp
in their arsis. Your plots are for the birds,
your Willy-silly females had no chance
to rise above your crass facility,
you strangled their strophes in arrogance—
remember "Get thee to a nunnery"?

You bowdlerized, victimized women with verve,
made 'em losers, trite simpletons, all.
Even those you permitted a bit of nerve
found themselves spondeed on masculine gall.
You scanned their sanity, lengthened their throes,
sonnetized their sins, reveled in their woes.

But narrow couplets can't conclude the tale.
Heed the modern iambs: Our spleens are full
of sand, and fury, steeped in lives of pull
and push and hurry, trocheed by the male.

Our righteous rant outgrew restricted feet:
Your namesake chauvinistic fourteen lines,
your eccentric machinations and metrical conceit
be hereby plagued and plagiarized for sexist designs.

So no more inversions or half-rhymed aspersions;
we'll never endure another macho Dane or Moor.
Poetic justice always comes; observe our liberated thumbs.

4. Humor Award

Glenna Holloway, Naperville, IL
H.M.

THE LIBERATED SONNET

Old Shakespeare was a chauvinistic wimp
Who played most foul with done-wrong maids and wives.
With wretched roles he crassly slipped a crimp
In all his biased views of female lives.
His churlish answer to their puckered throes
(Get thee to a nunnery!) mocked their truth
And worthiness; he reveled in their woes!
His ghost be plagued and plagiarized forsooth.
He bowdlerized, victimized girls with verve;
He made 'em losers, gofers, goofers, all.
The few he permitted a bit of nerve
Found themselves spondeed on masculine gall.

I refuse to confirm the final bane
Of his namesake form; I will not contain
My righteous rant in gilded gelded couplet.
I'm out to reform his metric quintuplet.

My wrath will not be bound, my spleen is full
Of sand, and fury, steeped in years of pull
And push and hurry, trocheed by a male.

Julie splits before Act IV in a modern tale.

No more sexist machinations and chicane,
No more will I endure a macho Moor or Dane,
No more inversions or half-rhymed aspersions.

Poetic justice had to come— observe my liberated thumb!

POLEMIC

I'm a gentle soul, relaxed and mild,
I love my fellow man.
But there's this thing 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 from the package
Completely 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
Learns 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 one of these masters stand
And take all the credits due his name?
I just wanna break his hand!

On Omar, the Believer

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 the cabbage—
To flower, to fade, without hope of escape.

He dared One Whose power is more alchemistic
To show man His gold and His blessings to pour,
And 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!

f. Sonnet

Glenna Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville

RECLAMATION

To think such common clumsy things as words
Can flow into a sonnet's silken woof
And leave no ragged edge, no scattered sherds
To mock the lyricist with sharp reproof!
These things we stroke or hammer into forms,
Pass up and down the streets and through thin air,
These pieces of foundations, parts of storms,
Odd patches of old cultures past repair—
The tarnished heaps we've spat out, killed with, wasted,
Can often be re-used to build and mend
In spite of all the bitter tongues they tasted,
Can be exclaimed again, a better blend.
Applying human alchemy to curses
Recycles slag, gift-wraps new songs and verses.

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Can flow into a sonnet's silken woof
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In spite of all the bitter tongues they tasted,
Can be exclaimed again, a better blend.
Applying human alchemy to curses
Recycles slag, begins new songs and verses.

COUNTERPOINT FOR THE LOST VOICE

The therapists all gave her up: "No hope,
why waste your time? She'll never speak a word.
She's turned to stone; the case will break your heart."
Like high-pitched bees trapped in an envelope,
an idea whined inside my head. I heard
music in my sleep, knew it could impart
a healing strength, if not to her, to me
if failure held the lead. My reasoning
was simple: Human baseness caused her state;
human heights portrayed harmonically—
the smoothing, prodding color and seasoning
of sound might 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 mind as sure as wax—
Grieg, Chopin— her eyes began to bloom.
Debussy, Brahms, Tchaikowsky's melodies
seeped in and out on shaded parallax
of time and tone, entwined inseparables.
Perfumed, wing-shod, string-plucked—who could resist?
One day I stopped the concert. She must ask
for more. She must end the silence. Miracles
began. She'd had 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!

random rhyme,
multi-rhythm dithyramb

MUSICALE IMPROMPTU

A tall man with a banjo leaned against the Ozarks,
proped his boot on granite, began to make a song:
He borrowed chords from falling rivers
down the longest canyon wall,
from the blowing cottonwoods
and the bluestem miles of prairie
all tomorrowed with the off-key bawl of calving.

He saved insistent rhythm from an appaloosa hoof,
a pumping well and tin-roof rain,
the ragged rugged meter of the languages that met,
a Hopi shuttling sunset through a rug loom.

A cowboy started strumming his guitar to make a medley,
hummed his loneliness and thumbed some badlands bass.
A Red man added drumming, like the coming of a twister,
like the warning of a rattler and the fear-beat of a doe.

Play the ranging polyrhythm changing green to gray or tan,
heathen heat that stills the windmill, spirals deep
inside the core drill, thrums the alto obbligato
for the dreamer and the drum.

Other voices join. The ballad changes key—
minor to major and back:
Dust-scape, wind-scope, miles of mood as black as crude,
magpie notes on rusty wire staff,
salt-flat hopes pitched higher-toned and sharp.
Tighten old guitar strings, patch and stitch the tune,
lighten with the lupine, touch a wing.

Listen to the underlift, the afterbeat of thunder,
whistle up the wonder of thistledown and otter,
modulate the sound of silversmith and potter.
Everything is scaled to harmony's quest—
Sing another chorus of the west.

BASIC RELATIVITY: THE FELINE FACTOR

The fourth dimension
is better understood now
living with a life form
that claims the realm of clocks
and calendars as its own.

The lesson wanders home
circuitous orbits of shadow and shine
skyward tail aquiver with equations
ending in a distinctive warp
its wearer owes to lunar time
advanced in arcane ritual.

Between his multi-lives out there
my lap is a warm space station
sometimes not fully approved.
I learn minute increments
of days and nights slowly
while waiting for the sidewise approach
of distance
to rub my shins with forgiveness.

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