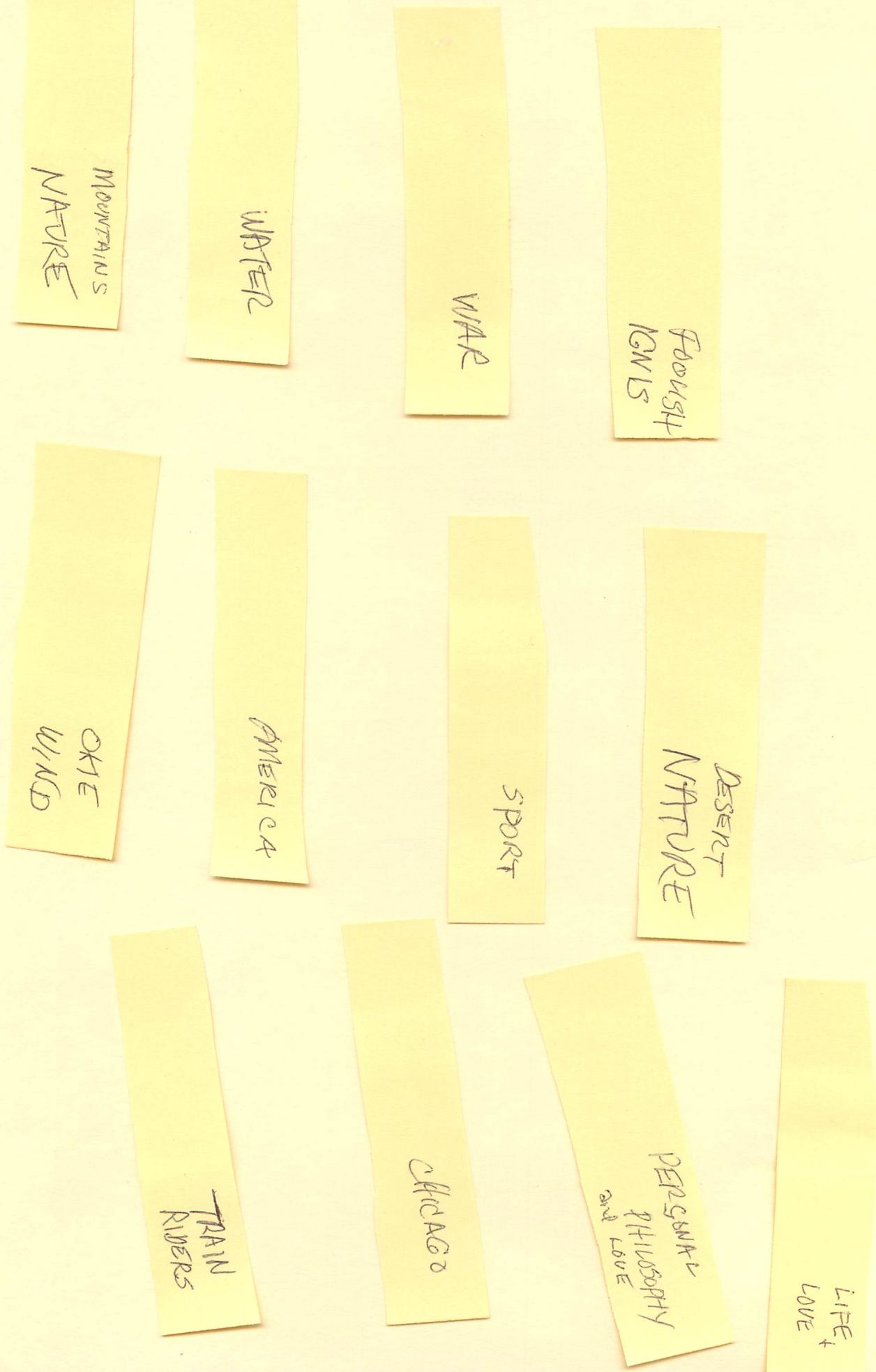


## READINGS

Some good copies  
could be made

Copies of Taxonants  
pg. 1 Grey  
Osteen Edge  
Canada Thistle



CHEETAH, MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
(*Acinonyx jubatus*)

I've released you in full color  
from my camera, from my sketchbook,  
even uncollared you from dark Egyptian tombs.  
Capturing your style (medallions  
of smoldering charcoal on sheet ice)  
takes all the illumination and motion  
camel's hair can muster.

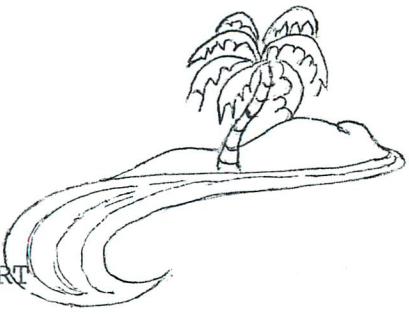
Draining my sienna palette,  
you refuse to keep your canvas context.  
Unhampered by layers of super-polymer,  
you complete your spotted streak  
across the papyrus on my other easel.  
Your dissident design brushes past my strokes,  
tracking shadows in my studio, haunting  
the old passageways, hunting  
the presiding tomcat, a drab native mouser  
who may not submit to your dynasty.  
Shoulders knotted like Osiris's fist,  
your precedent pushes into dimensions not resolved  
in pigments or even the bas-reliefs of Pharaohs.

I warn Tom of your Isis eyes coming, your speed  
matched with light, and hope he hunches himself  
in a small niche you can't enter  
with your leggy serpent length,  
your heathen haunches and expletive head.

Confrontation comes spitting sudden:  
Arranging himself on a vacant pedestal overlooking  
my work, Tom bristles his long lineage,  
his black leopardship. Smoothing the smug cap  
of Ptah, he arcs down sovereignty from ankh eyes.  
Below, your tail tip conveys grudging recognition  
of your high-flown ebony kin.

It is the artist confronted:  
You've both made the point. I put away the paints  
and reach for the sculpting clay.

At midnight my palm slides over your undulating spine.  
At last, cheetah, you're free--but mine!



### A PASSING ACQUAINTANCE WITH DEATH IN THE DESERT

It was here I met you, sidewise  
on earth's curve swept bare and beige  
as a primed canvas waiting for a subject.  
You're nothing like poets and painters pretend.  
No black hood and eye sockets. No scythe.  
Just old tired impartial.  
You inhaled me dry as ghostwood, burned my skin,  
swelled my tongue. I clamped my teeth  
on hard brightness, and refused your soft advances.

The desert needs no bones of mine.  
Built of its own, the hoarded grains  
of millennia's mills, it piles and plunges  
over spines of prickly pear and cholla.  
Flowering agave rides selected vertebrae  
of the planet's undulating chine.

I first caught your scent in trailing fringes  
of breeze sliding the dunes. Deep  
in the perigee, you whispered,  
rattled a snake, fingered my neck hairs.

I still return to watch my footprints  
fill with mauve in granulated layers of always.  
Sometimes I see skinks surrender their hoarded warmth  
to pygmy owls. Wading an ocean of light,  
I set up my easels and palette like traps  
to capture secrets where blossoming cosmos  
withdraw fuchsia rays to meditate on their seed.

I paint ocotillos as they comet color  
above the sidewinder's graven intaglios like shadows  
of a spiral galaxy.  
I'm tethered to ancient rhythms my blood remembers.  
Here is my space quest, cordless and alone.

It was here you learned my name, here  
I learned a sand language never spoken.  
And when we came gaze to gaze, you and I--  
remember-- it was yours that looked away.

WRITER'S WORKSHOP  
For L. S.

Summer in Aspen: the namesaked trees  
investing pale fluff in any opening--  
stairwell, window, unguarded yawn,  
hired hands hauling it away in huge black bags.  
And James Dickey, telling you and me to read  
Dryden and Pope and to empty our heads  
of metaphor. Slipping into elegant French  
rolling down from his heights as easy  
as aspen fuzz, easy on his tongue  
as old Southern whiskey, he presided  
over our premises, our poetic promises.  
He told a classmate his stuff was too Hollywood.  
He read us his own words with subdued vengeance.  
He didn't believe in beautiful.

Evenings the local jazz was good,  
and our Jewish roommate's impersonations  
served with her cheeseless lasagna at midnight.  
Afterward, at the dark bedroom window,  
the mountain pressed closer,  
pleading for lyrics we all shunned.

That last angry session you said our poems  
had been aborted, dissected to death.  
Dickey said they were never conceived,  
called them false pregnancies.  
I said they'd been artificially inseminated  
in glass outside the warm womb--  
laboratory entities. What did anyone expect  
from altitude so dry and dreamless, swirling  
with the white invective of seeds denied?

After all these years back home on level terrain,  
each night beneath my lids  
the mountain waits.

--Glenna Holloway  
The Thing About Second Choices Anthology, 2000

ANNIVERSARY, DRIVING THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA

Laying aside the laptop you insisted I bring,  
I home back to your face, gaze at your image,  
your hands on the wheel.

The blue of your eyes matches the Pacific;  
the blues behind mine  
are color-coded like flow charts.  
Watching you scan the visuals scrolling  
from the road, I long to know  
what things you save and what you delete.

Mountain graphs interface with sun. Make us  
a copy. Smile me warm, smile us synchrony.  
My data banks have space for more  
than cryptics and fractions.  
Beauty should never be a lonely route.

Be keyed with whole realities, natural  
and animate: waves straining on tiptoe  
to rake the tops of seastacks,  
yearling elk trumpeting in the fir forest,  
aspens learning green.  
Input the deep green of my irises,  
the russet of my hair.

Memory me again with April verbs,  
unstress my shade with lavender,  
the sound and taste of azure. Program us  
for being and to be. Gentle your touch,  
your time. Process all your softest wares  
and words through me.

Wonderful  
Marion

## GOD'S ROCKER

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

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

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

These notes, these moves, these drums & strings  
are my hosannas!

--Glenn Holloway  
First Prize, (C) ENCORE, 1996

Glenna Holloway  
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"A train has a poor memory; it soon puts all behind it. It forgets...the hurts and the joys. It spreads them out behind and they drop back of a horizon." --Ray Bradbury, THE LAKE

#### PULLING OUT OF THE STATION

Relax now. Lean back and talk to yourself. Not aloud, of course, or the other passengers will think you're doped or dopey.

Forgetting is simplified on a train. Maybe it's not easier but it's methodical, time-eating busy-work, sure as the next crosstie.

Maybe it's the here and now clacking past: old barns kneeling, wobbly and winded, spilling hay like falling hair, country stores always with a lone gas pump, blurred rust patterns on the cars backed up at the crossings. All turning to distance seeking its own level, widening out behind your swaying watch.

Locomotives obscure what's ahead, even Chicago-- eliding nearest sidesight, diluting hindsight, limiting your eyes to farther off right or left. Acres of crops and clouds slur by. The river you loved, a shrunken thread dropped aimlessly on unremarkable ground, is gone in four clacks.

Hell, you viewed it too sentimentally all along. Besides, there's been a drought, don't blame the river. Maybe that's how it was with Alex-- but wait--you vowed he wouldn't be the subject.

When you got aboard you were Mrs. Alex DeWitt III, with the little built-in flippancy: "I'm not his third wife, he's the third Alex DeWitt." People never forgot then. How can you?

Listen, it's only a name. Keep looking out. When you pass a patch of dark bushes, you can see yourself in the window. The button-down collar across the aisle keeps looking, too. And why not? This always was your most flattering color. You never looked better.

(cont.)

Maybe you are forgetting who you are.  
Or remembering at last.

Stop chewing your lip. Don't sigh between clacks.  
Your hands have grown strange in your lap,  
the bluely vining veins somehow more definite.  
Why do we say we know something as well  
as the backs of our hands? You never noticed  
that amoeba-shaped spot. You forgot your watch.  
Do trains have clocks? Get yourself a drink.

From the rear of the observation car,  
shifting sun-slants do peculiar things  
to the vanishing point. Rain shafts  
in the west paint the horizon  
with interruptions. It's too soon to go  
to the diner. You rattle the ice  
in your glass, order a refill.  
When you narrow your eyes, the vee of the rails  
pulls upward, out of touch with gravity. Smoke  
from the club car backs through the passage.

The man across from you is handsome, watching  
you return to your seat, the afternoon  
flicking from a new angle now, the clacking  
a deeper tone. In the window your hair is paler.  
Sun-bleached, no doubt, from that ten days  
in Key West. Odd how your hands are lighter.

The man glances again above his book.  
It's been a long time since you were involved  
in this game. You aren't now, of course.  
He's staring. At this rate, he'll be over here  
momentarily with smiles and a clever introduction.  
All right, be gracious, can't you?  
At least, sit up straight. You probably  
drank away your lipstick. Why didn't you fix it?

Your purse is empty! No cosmetics, comb, keys,  
tissues, aspirin-- just a few crumpled dollars.  
How could you have left home so artlessly!

The guy is getting up. Coming nearer. He--  
drops his coat, jacket and Tribune  
all over this reserved space beside me,  
turns and goes back to sprawl in his!  
Who the hell does he think he is?

The window shares no indignation.  
The only reflection as he loosens his collar  
is his, the late sun and his just-lit reading lamp.  
And this nondescript pile with a woman's purse  
poking out. In this empty seat bound for Chicago.

## JOURNEY FROM JAUVE

The travelers watched their home sun fade.  
Engines thrusting blind,  
they sped past stars, through shine and shade,  
their mission a desperate kind.

Their craft turned Earthward as they planned.  
The crewmen knew each risk  
to save their desiccated land  
rode on their aerodisc.

New water sources they must find  
through intercosmic aid.  
With hope, they sought a mastermind.  
They carried gold to trade.

Jauve's metaphoric basilisk  
turned lakes to smoking sand  
and crumbled hills with one tail whisk.  
Would Earthmen lend a hand?

Jauve's early natives once had flown  
to many far off spaces.  
Their ancient books said some were known  
as incubative places

for enterprising anthropoids  
and healthy atmospheres.  
Intelligence was well-employed,  
no signs of war or fears.

This time, would welcome shape their faces?  
Maybe they've now grown  
ill willed, with battle-ready bases  
framing all they own.

The strangers were all volunteers;  
their blistered asteroid  
had bred a race of engineers,  
life's outpost in the void.

They prayed to any god below  
who guided Earthly turns  
to pour his mercy on their woe,  
and help with their concerns.

They slipped through threats of surface burns,  
their ship's odd shape aglow.  
The universe both lives and learns  
where daring travelers go.

ANNIVERSARY, DRIVING THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA

Laying aside the laptop you insisted I bring,  
I home back to your face, gaze at your image,  
your hands on the wheel.  
The blue of your eyes matches the Pacific;  
the blues behind mine  
are color-coded like flow charts.  
Watching you scan the visuals scrolling  
from the road, I long to know  
what things you save and what you delete.

Mountain graphs interface with sun. Make us  
a copy. Smile me warm, smile us synchrony.  
My data banks have space for more  
than cryptics and fractions.  
Beauty should never be a lonely route. - nice line

Be keyed with whole realities, natural  
and animate: waves straining on tiptoe  
to rake the tops of seastacks,  
yearling elk trumpeting in the fir forest,  
aspens learning green.  
Input the deep green of my irises,  
the russet of my hair.

Memory me again with April verbs,  
unstress my shade with lavender,  
the sound and taste of azure. Program us  
for being and to be. Gentle your touch,  
your time. Process all your softest wares  
and words through me.

Wonderful images  
and great language  
throughout.  
-Caroline

## Afternoon Among The Artifacts

I almost missed it among the other displays, almost  
didn't notice the thing that changed the world.

This version's called The Fat Man, a bulbous unarmed twin  
of Nagasaki's nemesis. Obsoletely catching dust,  
cornered in an aircraft museum outside Milwaukee.

Hard to think it a bomb or even a weapon.  
More like a time capsule, maybe filled with oddments  
of our century's first third: a rumble seat,  
a beaded flapper dress, a tub for making gin.  
All things before my time but no more alien  
than this bulging precedent shadowing the floor.  
Forerunner of smaller packages of streamlined rage.  
We went fast from atomic to hydrogen to smart missiles,  
strange interstices filled with equations  
that don't translate the same in every language.

This huge clumsy egg is abstract art. It should seethe  
with metaphor, vibrate with the voice of Isaiah  
above the wails of hell. I'm curiously detached.  
I'm missing something.

Maybe that first blast damaged our inner ears  
and eyes, jarred spaces in our cortex  
so we can't relate one thing to another.  
Caused a cerebral non sequitur.

I wander among the airplanes, mostly wings of war,  
over fifty years of progress in flight. I pause  
beneath an ultralight, stare at a lunar lander,  
reflect on The Fat Man's progeny  
stashed somewhere like family insanities.

I take another look at the forebear. A kid scrawls  
an obscenity in yellow crayon on its pocked surface.  
It won't rub off; it only smears. Maybe Eliot  
was too elegant. Maybe the world,  
inured to bangs and whimpers,  
ends with a blurred scatological curse.

ON THIS EDGE

This day, this shaper of air  
to fit a skin of salt marsh scent  
This sound falling through a treble staff  
to merge with dark bass my soles can feel

This deep width I can't see around  
or across and could wander weeks  
and still be on the edge  
This text, my tongue tasting of pewter font  
below antique welkins

No more magnetic north, no roads  
Miles turned inside out  
leaving no tracks where they went

These grains, part sea salt, part drift  
of forgotten continents, no line between  
solid and light from this lunar ghost  
never walked on, this chilled eclipse

This spiral galaxy colonized by spartina grass  
This hand of mine reaching down to neap tide  
to sift out my grandfathers' footprints  
running before the always wind

PURSUING DYLAN  
While Limited to Four Beats a Line

I envy the pentametric thrusts  
Expressing your rubs with life and love.  
Tetrameter tends to cramp my style,  
Accents preferred to measured sameness  
Even when they're strongly stressful.

Determination's primal punch  
Is trouble, fueling grasp and drive,  
Sanding the fulcrum of human existence.  
Sounding alarms with whispers and yells.

If I attain those winged heels,  
Those soaring free flights of a soul  
Caressed, a hundred beats a line  
Could not contain my ecstasy.  
I would not fear the devil's foot.

Heir to Adam's appledom,  
You lived just half as long as I,  
Yet knew as much, and maybe more.  
Still, you often lost your grip.

The worm gnaws closer to the quick,  
And there's the mortal's famous rub.  
The corporeal itch, the carnal scratch.  
Attrition versus polished pride.  
No earthly hand can satisfy  
Myriad nameless untamed needs.

Chafe, tickle, pinch, those feelings  
Don't endure. The rhythm runs  
Its course no matter what the form.

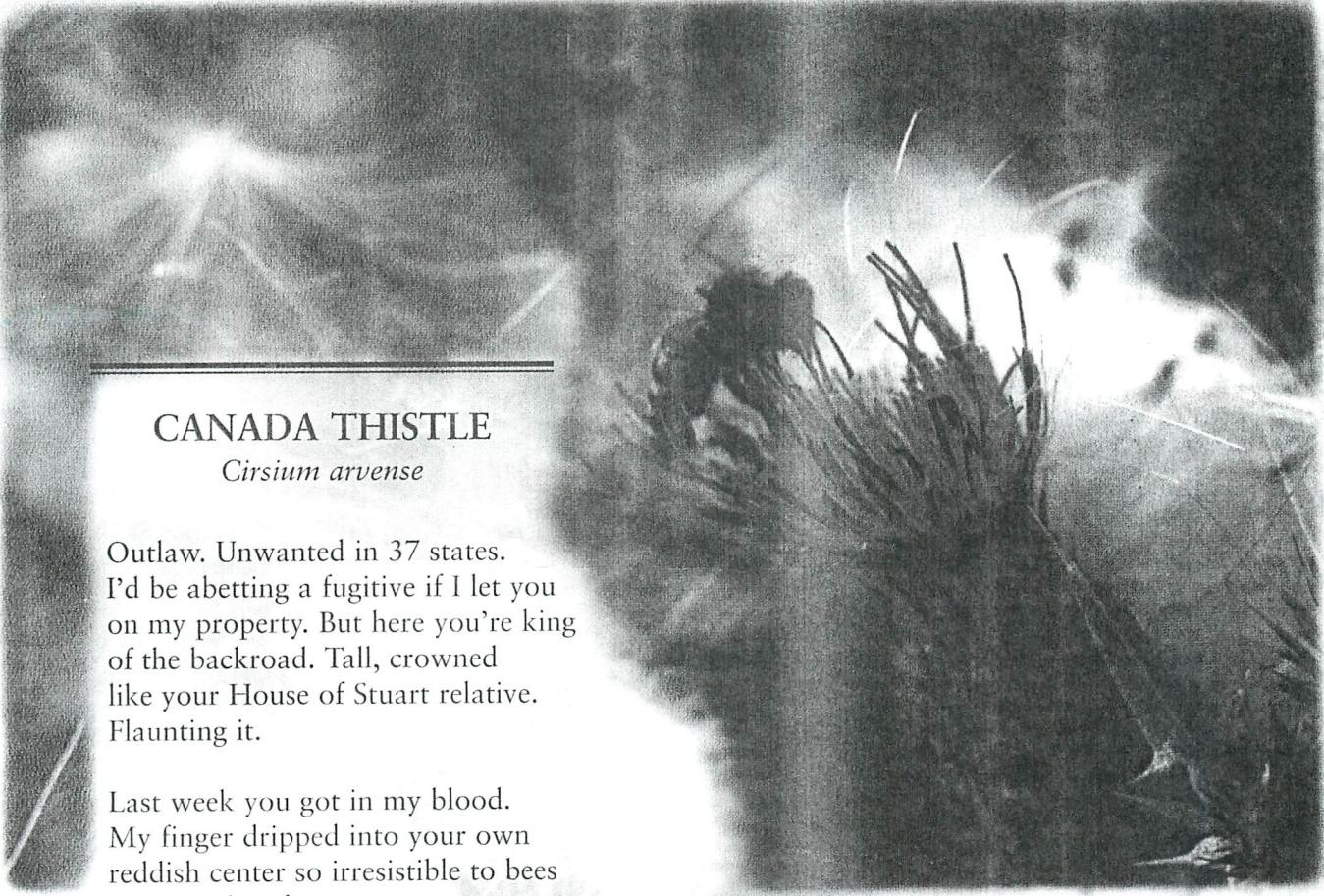
One day all gifts are rubbed away,  
All future pages blanked and burned.  
I do not fear the denouement  
For this I know: the final touch  
Is not finality but love.  
The last stroke lasts eternally.

### A STARRING ROLE

Retiring from the earthly stage at last,  
We change and put on makeup so unique  
No actor could have worn it in his past,  
Nor bowed and raised so radiant a cheek.  
Each player's voice resolves a major chord  
Which swells into dimensions never heard.  
Each tongue transmits the music of the Lord,  
Each ringing passage amplifies His Word.

I will not mourn our exit toward the wings  
Or sadden over lines left unexpressed.  
Soon we will have a part in greater things,  
Assume our true identities twice blessed:  
A new beginning ends life's old disguise.  
Endings are pauses while new curtains rise.

--Glenna Holloway,  
ST. ANTHONY MESSENGER, August, 1994,  
POET, Fall, 1995,  
ANTHOLOGY of MAGAZINE VERSE & YEARBOOK  
OF AMERICAN POETRY, 1996



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## CANADA THISTLE

*Cirsium arvense*

Outlaw. Unwanted in 37 states.  
I'd be abetting a fugitive if I let you  
on my property. But here you're king  
of the backroad. Tall, crowned  
like your House of Stuart relative.  
Flaunting it.

Last week you got in my blood.  
My finger dripped into your own  
reddish center so irresistible to bees  
and wingless feasters  
who must have climbed half an hour  
to get there. None of your customers  
seemed put off by my seasoning.

Today you are softer, more expansive.  
A grounded nova, a slow-motion explosion  
of stars. White dwarfs adrift, gleaming  
rays bearing their motives aloft  
for inches or miles. Orbiting  
with their old designs on the dark heavens  
of warm earth.

GLENNA HOLLOWAY

---

Glenna Holloway's poetry has appeared in *The Pushcart Prize, 2001*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Trail & Timberline*, *Western Humanities Review*, and many other magazines and anthologies. Between silversmithing and photography, she is working on her first book.

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Photographs by Glenna Holloway.

Glenna Holloway  
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DON JUAN AS GOURMAND

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

He grew fond of the rusticating gentlemen wearing 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 and brogans plodded between ordinary Monday meanness and Saturday amusement, no more suspect of excess than his neighbors.

The deal was made quickly, grinningly, not devilish. His secret garden of delights no longer featured 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 and bursting 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. Tablescape 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 widening 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 creeping digital numbness from tightening gold bands on his fingers, 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 near his stove, igniting the walls of his house.

## SEARCHING FOR ROAD SIGNS

So where are my feet going, Lord?  
And what are my steps heading toward?

It's not enough to just believe:  
I know I somehow have to weave  
You in the pattern of my life,  
This winding journey always rife  
With breakdowns, burdens, sidetracks, more,  
And vendors hawking at my door.  
There's good and bad and yes and no  
So deftly mixed the lines don't show.  
It's not so hard to find Your way  
Through white or black-- but oh, the gray!

Uncertainties mark east and west;  
My wrong turn missed the right fork blessed  
With footprints that have gone ahead  
To mark the trail through swamping dread.

So guide me, Lord, my sense is blurred,  
Distracted by each doubt incurred.  
Please lend me grace and let me see  
Your dusty sandals leading me.

--Glenna Holloway

## LILY OF THE FIELD

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

Beauty begets more beauty, yours grander  
than Solomon's silks.  
Yet, once being a lily,  
lovely enough for Christ to mention,  
what can you aspire to after death?  
Not even a white cloud  
after tasting gold in your soft throat.

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

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

Lily, I know your secret.

MAJOR FANTASY IN F-SHARP MINOR

You didn't expect him here with classical murals,  
linen tablecloths and life-size marble sculpture.  
He made no entrance, the curtains rose and he was  
onstage, easy as moonlight, fitting with fountains  
and topiary as if here was always his place.  
But when he stepped forward with a thin smile, you knew.  
You knew he was a trumpet man. Impromptu improv,  
long legato passages, lancet tones in his trick bag.

Son of an uneven lineage, descended from a ragged line  
inhaling used smoke mixed with applause to blow  
from rubber cheeks. Forever paired with the hard-molded  
case-followers, those rolled-up bus riders  
down the stretched-out streaking nights, seeing brass  
hanging over them when they closed their painted eyes,  
aching between sips of rum and Coke for a chance to snatch  
and hide it for a night or two of peace, watching it  
turn to an armored snake in their jealous hands,  
hearing it tongue out tarnished laughter  
on three ribs, belling out morning and a hangover  
in some town they mispronounced.

Now this loose-angled one center stage raised his chin,  
the instrument appeared like quick cell division from his lip.  
And the sound began-- uncoiling slow, coming for you,  
crawling into your head, changing the texture  
of your bare arms. You know that sound, mama?  
Nothing as simple as ever-popular heartbreak  
or phantom train whistles. Nothing as definitive  
as a tenor sobbing Eili, Eili,

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

(cont.)

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

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

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

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

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

Feel the sound, mama? He's concentrating  
on all your edges now, honing sharp sharper,  
quivering on a sill to somewhere, retiring  
to a glistening waver pulsing between turquoise  
and green, hanging on like dying gills.

~~A~~ trumpet man, mama, more lives than a cat,  
more wind than a Texas twister.

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

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

Was there a man at all?  
Or just a flared gold phallus that seduced you  
and crammed you in the gears of a music box  
on wheels, hurled you across the bad-weather map  
into broken-~~JAWN~~ motels with lint bedspreads ~~blankets~~  
and the boozy corners of never-quite-level halls  
full of lurching bodies and bad acoustics?  
Trumpet man. Composite of flesh and reed, *or just an instrument*  
brass-cold spite to your touch,  
hot pipe to all we know of paradise to his.

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

*candescence*

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

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

7 mins.

CHIMERA CONNECTIONS, 1985