



Northern Lights '95
University of Wisconsin Center
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Haiku

by Kathi Pollard

For Nathan & Jenny
Oct. 11, 1994

Rocking at dawn wrapped
in quilts of longing and grief,
my soul feeling cold.

Hyacinths still bloom
even though my heart lies
buried in fall's leaves.

* * *

Cautiously she smiles,
careful not to blush as he
whistles approval.

* * *

Sunset painting red
on the cheeks of white jonquils,
they blush with delight.

* * *

Frogs splash in the creek,
Crickets court their young ladies
Symphony of spring.

A Mourning Passage

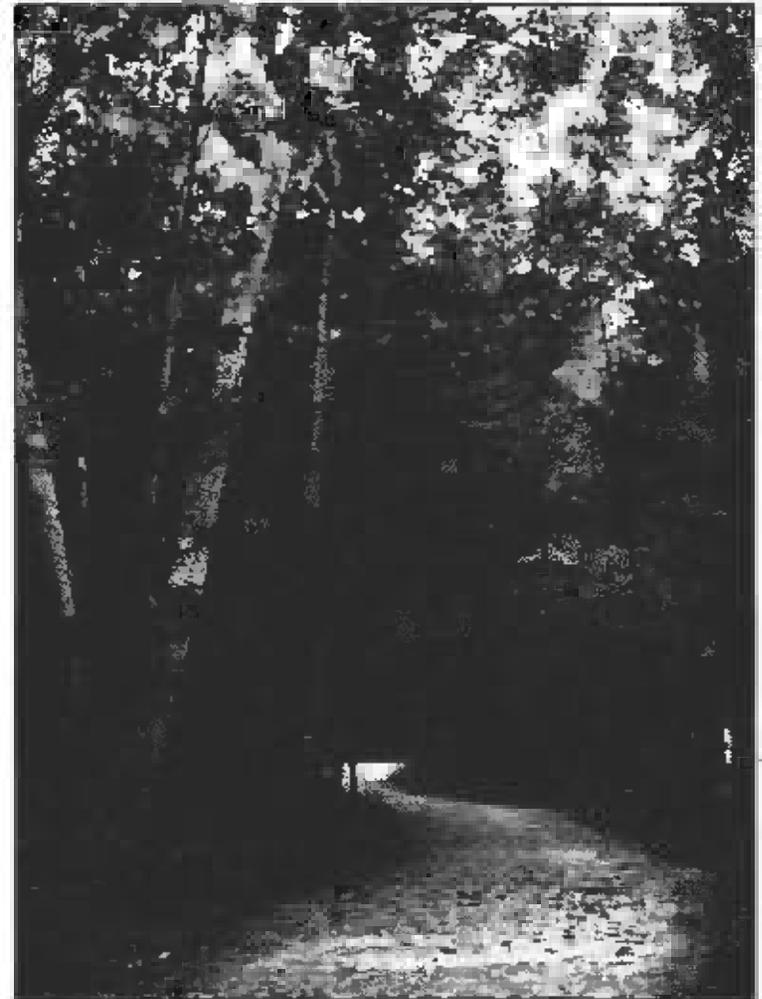
by Kathi Pollard

Familiar comforts fail me
Rest evades my overwearyed body.
There are no answers to divine enigmas.
The torture of the present overshadows
The grace yet to be revealed,
And courage to claim it escapes me.

I long for the meaning and purpose of their absence,
But grief cloaks the inaudible answers
From Heaven's residents.
We were pilgrims together, wending through
Unknown country, destined for Home.
I always assumed it would be I
Who would grace the threshold of
Eternal glory to welcome their arrival.

Present and future joys of motherhood
Have been stolen from me forever.
Where was He who sees all when
Death was pillaging my life?

In the stillness of the night, I lie
Motionless and wonder if perhaps
Even God doesn't occasionally blink.



September by Kathleen A. Harpt

Taken by Surprise

by Sean Mayers

"Is everything okay, Sean?" my mother whispered through the door. "Aren't you coming in? It's after midnight." The continuous rumbling of rescue vehicles had abated, but the events of the previous day were still echoing in my mind.

Every morning for six months, I had jogged five miles out in the countryside to clear my mind and maintain a certain level of health. There was nothing unusual about the morning of February 5th, 1991, besides some rain in the distant valley. One of the state-owned helicopters flew by, letting tourists absorb the beautiful scenery, before heading towards the coastal area in the west. It was flying low that morning, maybe to get a close up view of the vegetation. I really paid little attention because I was so accustomed to seeing it. As the helicopter was making its way from the valley, a loud bang echoed in the distance. I looked only to see the aircraft drop from the sky.

Standing there, I stared at the tree line waiting, hoping that the helicopter would emerge and go on its way. But it didn't. I unwillingly realized something terrible had gone wrong. Without grasping the magnitude of what had happened, I ran in the direction of the crash.

As I approached the smoking signal of destruction, I paused to confirm if I truly wanted to see what had happened. I wondered if I was emotionally strong enough to witness the obviously gruesome sight. Without fully contemplating the consequences, I slowly walked toward the site, an action I have regretted since.

The air was filled with death: smoke carried the nauseating stench of burnt flesh. Trees and shrubs were shredded, leaving a circular area, shaped by the propeller blade as the helicopter had struggled to stay aloft. The craft was totally destroyed, yet its pieces were scattered within a small twenty-foot radius, indicating a sudden drop.

Beneath what appeared to be a door, I noticed a hand. Hurrying, hoping that the person was miraculously alive, I pulled the piece of metal away only to find half of what appeared to be a man. Thoroughly disoriented by my grisly discovery, I noticed two more bodies, one gutted and missing limbs, the other partially decapitated. I froze in horror unable to believe what I was witnessing.

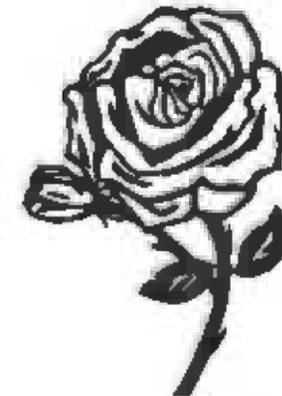
The earth was drenched by the still drizzling rain. I shivered as the moist morning breeze collided with my sweat-soaked body. The trees danced rhythmically as the wind whistled through their leaves. Birds sang solemnly as if they knew what disaster lay before them. I stood

there staring, sobbing, trying to comprehend the tragedy that had disturbed the peaceful morning.

After only fifteen minutes or so the area was crowded with curious onlookers and unneeded rescuers. People poured in from all over the island, dressed in everything from ties and high heels to nightgowns and pajamas, trying to catch a glimpse of the atrocity. When the dead pilot's wife arrived, she collapsed in utter shock. Later, when asked to identify her husband's body, she could do so only by the watch on his hand.

That night I sat on my patio until the wee hours of the morning. I kept thinking of the dead pilot who had left his wife and children at home that morning, not knowing that it would be the last time he would ever see them. I thought of the unfortunate tourists who would not be returning to their homes aboard the luxurious cruise ship. I envisioned my own death and its inevitability.

I did not answer my mother when she called me, but she knew what bothered me. I had never been confronted with death before, and so I didn't know how to handle it. "Coming to grips with death is not easy," she said with a sleepy yet loving voice, "but it is something that everyone has to deal with."



Rose by Kristie Bloch

Wind Praise

by Fran DalSanto

Ah, to read the wind:
To transcribe the whistle
In my ear
Into words of windly
Wisdom.
To know its urgencies
And pauses,
To recognize its nuances,
Its subtle love words
With the world.

What does the hula
Of a lithe young birch MEAN?



Woman by Tonissa Deschane

Wind,
delicious destroyer
of doldrums,
earth-spun offspring
of the gods --

Catch in the sails
Ripple the water
Roar Life!

Today
the wind is a woman
wearing white ruffles
on the water,
a woman who can
use her powers,
but needn't.

And sometimes, Wind,
You are a frigid,
Bothersome blich
Gnawing at my
Nerve endings,
Sending raw screams
Spine shooting.

Guatemala

by Fran DalSanto

Liquid heat saturates
the edge of existence
rain and flies and sweat
seeping into every crevice
every thought every cell.

Borders melt
warping any idea
of the known
the tangible
control.
Time is moot,
the passage from day
into night flowing
with a rhythm
of forever
tomorrow
whenever.

A mist of incandescence
emanates from the waters
the moonlight the mind.
A deluge of dark
drenches the senses,
rapiers of light challenging
the futility of vision;
deadly aromas ooze
into wounds of hunger;
the parameters of self
and safety defined
by touch.

A migration
not of miles
but realities.



Tropical Island Get Away by Stacy Vaughn

Crying for the Sea

by Joseph P. Sekula

After graduating from high school, I entered a sea faring service, the United States Coast Guard. I was eighteen and had never lived near the ocean. My love of the aquariums I had kept as a child was the closest I had ever been to the sea.

After basic training, the Coast Guard sent me to school in New York City. In the morning while walking to my classes, I had ample time to view the beauty of the city's skyline. This was the first time I felt something was wrong as I watched a rusty tugboat towing a large barge. The tug and its tow were heading out to sea trailing a flock of circling sea gulls. The barge contained the city's garbage destined to be dumped offshore. I could not understand why such a large and powerful city as New York discarded its trash in such a manner.

While I was in New York, I saw the movie, *The Warriors* which ends with a beach scene filmed at Coney Island. Since Coney Island was a short subway ride from the school, one of my friends and I decided to go explore the old amusement park by the beach. The park looked just as it had in the movie. Afterwards, we took a walk on the beach. To our disappointment, it was covered with garbage that had washed ashore. The garbage barges had been hard at work. Unfortunately not all of their cargo had sunk to the bottom of the sea; instead it had found its way back home to its former owners.

Having transferred to Galveston, Texas, I began working in the field of Marine Environmental Protection. There I fought a never-ending war against industry, to protect the oceans. I had the chance to make a difference in the land of "What Once Was." I heard stories of the times when dolphins swam in the waters of the bay and how fishing boats filled their nets with shrimp while next to the oil refineries.

Money motivated man to take shortcuts in the handling of oil and chemicals. Oil spills occurred frequently in the waters of the bay, and the oils stuck to everything from rocks on the beaches to birds in the water.

I learned to view oil spills differently after I became aware of the greater unseen damage they caused. The chemical properties of the oil caused most of the damage. Crude oil contains chemicals like benzene, xylene, and toluene which poison the waters around an oil spill. Some of



Canoeist by Andrew Trieboïd

these chemicals are known carcinogens. The results of the spills were often tragic. Sometimes dumpsters were used to remove the huge numbers of fish killed by the spills.

When I departed Galveston with orders to Alaska, I left with an empty feeling of sorrow and defeat. My new assignment took me thousands of miles across the North American continent to a place of pristine beauty. With all of its abundant natural resources, Alaska is often called "America's last frontier." This bountiful land stretches for miles in all directions with no sign that man has ever set foot on it. My eyes saw many treasures! Pods of orcas, better known as killer whales, breached off the coast. Humpback whales lazily waved their pectoral fins skyward. While cradled in kelp beds, sea otters floated on their backs breaking open mussels. Dall porpoises aglow with luminants raced alongside our ship at night. The streams overflowed their banks with so many spawning salmon that you could walk across the water on their backs. Sea lions chased schools of herring that looked like large black moving clouds in the water.

In Alaska, I found the oceans under attack on many fronts. Drift net fisheries used near-invisible polypropylene nets that floated on the surface. The nets were often over twenty miles long and indiscriminantly entangled everything from sharks to seals, all of which drowned. On the sea floor, nets from huge foreign factory trawlers raped the bottom, turning coral reefs into rubble. There was no end to the treachery.

When we received word of the huge oil spill from the *Exxon Valdez*, I cried. This single event became the pinnacle of the feelings that had been building for years inside me.

I was stationed on the Coast Guard cutter, *Storis*, which was on patrol in the Bering Sea west of Alaska. We were diverted to Prince William Sound where the *Exxon Valdez* had run aground. The Sound held a special place in my heart since it was the first place in Alaska I had seen.

Upon our arrival several days later, the spill had spread out to cover hundreds of square miles. Over eleven-million gallons of crude oil had poured into the fragile ecosystem. Countless numbers of seabirds covered by the sticky ooze perished. Sea lions and porpoises, having eaten fish contaminated by the spill, died. Sea otters joined the other victims as they became sick and drowned.

As man made a token effort to right his wrong, he used high pres-

sured steam to clean up the beaches. Occasionally, the cleanup crews completely removed the beaches by excavation. The beaches became sterile wastelands, free of both oil and life.

On the water, weather severely hampered the cleanup effort. Only 10 percent of the crude oil spilled could be recovered because of the weather. To date, the damage caused by the spill is reflected in poor seafood harvests.

Only time will tell if man's greed will bring about his own extinction. As we plunder and poison the oceans, we destroy the waters that nourish and give us life. Most certainly, we and our children will die a slow death, just as the oceans are now, unless we change.



Pottery by Amanda Steele

The Kicker
by Crystal Nieling

Darktide
by Fran DalSanto

At three-o'clock
the night is mine.
Mine is the same
claim of ownership
as the stray dogs,
the damp breezes,
and the other insomniacs
betrayed by television stations
off the air.
We understand the
muffled night noises;
we are not frightened
by summer's heat lightning,
or a wandering drunk.
Ours is a kingdom
reigned by dreams
and forsaken hopes,
hopes lost during days
in greasy cafes
and faceless offices.
But the night
is the poetry
we live.

We moved to Brillion during the summer of 1969. My parents bought a 120-acre farm in Wisconsin and announced with great enthusiasm that we would be leaving Illinois. I was fifteen years old and the idea of moving was far from exciting to me; having to leave my friends behind was disheartening. Besides, the word "farm" made my nose wrinkle, my shoulders droop, and my heart sink. My grandparents had owned a farm; one visit to the barn was all I needed to decide I didn't want anything to do with that profession.

At our new home, I had gladly taken the responsibility of watching my younger sisters while my folks milked the cows. But, our comfortable arrangement was altered less than four months later when my mother walked into the kitchen, removed her red bandanna and muttered, "Crystal, I think I have the flu." The deathly color of her face and the weakness of her voice supported her comment. I wasn't prepared, however, for her next statement. It jumped out and slapped me in the face. "You'll have to go out to the barn and help your dad."

As I helped her into bed, fearful thoughts filled my mind. I had been out to the barn only to call Dad for lunch or to tell him he had a phone call; I had never actually helped him with the chores.

After changing into an old flannel shirt and a pair of faded blue jeans as slowly as possible, and then dawdling along the well-worn path to the barn, I stepped inside the milk house. My stomach did a flip-flop as I looked at the cows. I have been afraid of big animals ever since childhood when I saw my sister fall off her horse. I'd also seen my uncle get kicked by a cow he was trying to milk. I decided that large animals and I were not a good mix.

I also hated the various smells in the barn. Some were tolerable: hay, straw, silage, oats, and warm milk. But others were disgusting: ammonia and manure. To add insult to injury, I really couldn't stand Dad's choice of a country-western music radio station.

Plodding down the aisle to where Dad was working at the south end, I forced a weak smile in his direction. He had been a factory worker and now loved every part of being a farmer. And he especially enjoyed someone to keep him company. He was grinning.

"I'm so glad you came out to help." This job takes three times as long for a person to do alone." He seemed pleased to see me in his favorite place.

"I'll show you what to do."

Dad's enthusiasm wasn't influencing me one bit as I watched him step between two cows to prepare one of them for milking. I watched carefully, but Dad sensed my lack of zeal. He repeated the washing procedure on a cow across the aisle.

"Wash that one next," he said as he pointed across the aisle again. I picked up the water-bucket and gingerly eased my way into the stall next to the cow. I slowly kneeled, so I was face to udder. The quick, firm beat of my heart was a constant reminder of my fear. I carefully cleaned the areas needing attention, removing any visible dirt, and did the same gentle massage to the udder I had seen my father do only minutes prior. That cow held so still a two-year-old could've washed her.

Dad was removing the machine from one of the cows.

"Which one next?" I asked. He pointed directly across from me. Talking quietly to the cow, I edged my way in beside her. Once again, I repeated the procedure successfully. My confidence swelled.

I checked around for Dad, looking for further instructions. I could see he was removing another machine. I thought about the pattern that he had established by zig-zagging across the aisle, always washing the next cow in succession. I raised my voice a little.

"That the next one?"

"Sure!" he replied. He seemed to be enjoying my self-reliance.

I headed in the direction I had pointed. As I tried to squeeze in between the animals, one cow promptly side-stepped into "my area" and stayed there. I thought for a moment. Maybe she was used to being washed on the other side. I moved in that direction, and she quickly whipped her hind-end into the spot she had moved from; she strained her neck as she looked me in the eye. I glared back at her. My new-found assurance made me more determined to wash this cow so I could get this smelly job behind me.

I moved closer, planning to shove her over and make a space for myself. An intense kicking motion brought her hoof too close to my leg for comfort. This cow was serious. I stood there, trying to decide if I should give up.

Muffled laughter filled the air. The snickering was coming from Dad's direction. I jerked my head around. Dad was leaning up against a support post, one hand covering his mouth. His face was beet red and his shoulders were vibrating.

"What's so funny?" I asked. He was laughing so hard it made me start to giggle.

"You don't have to wash that one!"

"Why not?"

"That's the bull!"

I looked back to check the biological make-up of the animal. Sure enough – this animal didn't have an udder. I felt my face burning from the neck up; I was so embarrassed at how awkward my attempts must have looked to him. Then I thought about the near miss with the bull's jabbing hoof, and my embarrassment turned to anger.

Bang! I dropped the metal bucket I was holding onto the aisle and the water sloshed over the sides.

"How could you let me get so close to that bull?"

Dad was still enjoying my naivete.

"I knew he wouldn't let you get close enough to do you any harm."

"What do you mean? He almost kicked me!" My voice was trembling as tears flowed down my face. I'd had it with that barn and everything associated with it, my dad included.

When he saw me crying, he stopped laughing and his strong arms pulled me close. I rested my head on his chest.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. I could tell he really meant it. "I should have stopped you before it went that far, but I thought you'd figure it out on your own."

The milking machines needed to be removed. He released his embrace of me and returned to tending the cows.

"I hate this barn! I hate this place and I wish we'd never moved!"

"I don't want you to hate it. Is there anything I can do to make it better out here?"

"Yeah, change that radio station."

Dad immediately put the milking machine down and switched the radio to my favorite rock-n-roll station. I dried my tears and, avoiding the bull, resumed my job. The emotional pain I'd felt subsided as we worked our way to the north end of the barn. I noticed my nose had adapted to the odors.

When the chores were completed, Dad and I headed into the house. He rested his hand on my shoulder as we walked. We didn't talk, but I think he knew I was happy to return to my favorite place – he could keep his.



Scene by Kristie Bloch

Witless to Wonder

by David Lawrence Olson

Black water stretched on for hours. His eyes slowly became full of the night. His pale white flesh engraved itself upon the black. His bone cut frame floated against the outline of the lake.

"Dude, gimme a smoke."

The blackened outlines of his eyes distracted me. I forgot to answer back.

"Gimme a burn, fuck."

"Sorry. Here."

I pulled a cigarette from my pack. His long bony fingers pierced the cold night air as he reached for it. His other hand was reaching for the lighter in his uppermost coat pocket. Flame rose out of the lighter. The red glow illuminating his face reminded me of my father.

I remembered the color of my father's face as he hit me. His eyes were wide and his face glowed as if he were Santa Claus. His hand was held high. His hand would slam down against me. He looked like a preacher on a pulpit banging the podium with his fists. Sometimes I remember things I don't like.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Let me use your lighter."

As I lit up a cigarette of my own, I could hear a splash in the water.

"Fish jumping."

His comments partially fell on deaf ears. I was too busy thinking thoughts I didn't like.

The moon wasn't out that night; in fact, the entire sky was vacant of starlight. The blackened outlines of the trees slowly disappeared into the night sky. The red glow of his cigarette was the only break in the charcoal black of the night.

"Hand me the 151."

I dug the bottle out of my back pack. Again his bony fingers reached out to me. Again memories flooded me.

The unscrewing of the bottle's cap rushed me back. It reminded me of my grandfather. He was always able to pop the cap off the bottle by slapping the palm of his hand into it. The cap would whirl upward and become lost in the kitchen lights. I also remembered him pouring his glass. The whiskey would melt the ice cubes almost on contact. His face glowed that red glow, just as my father's did.

"Watch, dude!"

He spit some 151 into the flame of his lighter. A great ball of fire

floated upward into the blackness. The illumination was like a great lighthouse guiding ships in from sea.

"Humm."

I wasn't really impressed. It's not like I wasn't the one who showed him how to do that.

His dark eyes cut through the night begging for acceptance.

"Cool."

This prompted a smile from him. He tilted the bottle back and started sucking. Tears rolled down his cheeks. His eyes widened and he set the bottle down. His face was cringing with pain.

"Dude, take a suck on your bum."

I never really thought much of him, but I would have been alone without him. Alone is a lot worse than putting up with someone you don't like. Funny, I remember putting up with a lot of people that I didn't like.

He handed me the bottle. The bottle was bent back, and popped into my mouth. The rum burned as if I was drinking rubbing alcohol. I used to drink rubbing alcohol when I was twelve. It's hard to convince someone to buy for a twelve-year-old.

There was a stiff breeze off the lake at that instant. The breeze was cold and thoughtless. It probed through the trees with its single-minded goal. It never slowed, or looked at what it had done. The breeze made me think of my father again. I recalled a poem that fit him well:

*Yawn, great selfish bastard
Great belly of requila filled swash
Oh selfish bastard, you're unwept.
I souly despise you.*

*You held me not
You loved me not.*

The poem fit that night well.

"Hey, what's up, dude? You've been trippin' all night."

"Nothing, leave me alone or I'll kill you." His concerns were very annoying to me.

"What's the matter with you?"

"I said shut up and leave me the fuck alone."

"Tell me—"

Before he could finish I began hitting him. I used my fists first. Then I started kicking him as he lay on the ground. I must have kicked him

over twenty times. I stopped when he started coughing blood. His entire face had been reduced to a nesting place for blood. The cigarette I had given him lay on the ground. The cigarette, still burning, looked inviting. I leaned over and picked it up. I took a drag and put it out on his cheek.

He started to scream. I figured it was for help. I started kicking around in the woods. I was looking for a rock. The rock needed to be large enough to do a lot of damage quickly. I located and pulled the rock from the grasp of the forest floor. I decided to go home at that point.

"No need to go to prison," I said out loud to myself.

The five-mile drive home that night went by in a hurry. I hadn't felt that good about myself in some time. I could feel myself glowing.



Dragon by Tonissa Deschane

Nothing But Blue Skies

by Judith M. Johnson

On a bright but cold day in March, we took the family dog, Yukon, to the vet. He had grown thin and frail. The veterinarian x-rayed him, palpitated his prominent bones, and frowned. The clock ticked. Yukon went for another x-ray, and the clock ticked away.

Yukon came back. Up on the table...and down went his head. The vet talked. I listened. The clock ticked and laboriously moved its minute hand.

The vet's recommendation was to keep him there. He explained muscle tissue, now gone, bones fused, and the strain on his systems. We peered at his bones on a little backlit window on the wall. Yukon lay on the table, the clock ticked, and my hands stroked affection on his face.

His face was beautiful, but the eyes were covered by clouds that diminished his sight. With each little thrust of the minute hand, my fingers found a new place on his ears, his muzzle, his neck.

In went the sky blue serum - just like the sky - and slowly away Yukon flew - drifting like his shed fur in the parking lot. And this time, the clock stopped.

We took him home. We buried him beneath a pine. He cradled the earth like a heavy snoozer who could sleep through anything - even sadness.

A ball of Yukon's shed hair lightly bounced across my foot. I believe in symbols - and it was Yukon's way of saying goodbye.

Broke Ideology by David Lawrence Olson

Groove smooth
with a poppin click.
Dance hard
with aggressive kick.
Swallow rough
with a vodka kill.
Choke and suck
with a style all new.
Flavors of salt, flavors of sweet, flavors that are new every damn night.
We all think we're hot, we all think we're cool.
We're nothing but luke warm, soapy, ring around the bathtub, filthy
water.
Dancin and drinkin aggressive and right.
We live with a cause for today and at night.
Jealous of love
we substitute sex.
Wearing disease as a badge
does perplex.
Alcoholism is my badge
I think.
With my eyes closed I drink away, I run away, I hide away. For tomor-
row runs away with what I need and for that matter it runs away with
what I have been and forever will it run away with
what I am going to be.

For Jeannie, Still Unrecovered by Kathi Pollard

She was a gifted woman whose soul extended
well beyond the boundaries of gender and class,
But whose body rigidly conformed to all that a
demanding society held as graceful and feminine.

Her mind was an exciting wilderness left unexplored
because her heart was fettered to
charted territory belonging to the iron tamer.

She bartered her spirit grappling for parts of the whole,
desperate to hold intact her fragmenting anatomy.
But her feet slipped from the precipice of untold human sorrow,
and she plunged headlong into a velvet prison of oblivion.

Incarcerated by muteness, glassy, absent stares spoke volumes,
but he was unable to hear the truth her silence dictated,
so deafened had he become by the roar of the crowd.

The Light on the Hill

by Gemma Valerie



The Light by Natalie Flynn

Youth service ended at approximately nine-thirty p.m. that Wednesday night. The moon shone brilliantly from the sky and its beams cascaded across the trees, allowing shadows to fall all over the ground. The wind was soft and gentle, and the leaves swayed in hushed silence. I could feel the cool air caress my face as I skipped out of church in the moonlight.

By the time I was ready to go home, it was approaching midnight. I graciously declined the offers of the young men to walk me home and excused myself from the group. As I strolled home in the magnificent moonlight, I gazed up at the stars and the moon and studied their reflections in the vast body of the Layou River. I felt so fortunate to be alive and marvelled at the workings of a mighty God. I felt so overwhelmed with praise and adoration that I could feel a warm tickling from my back all the way to my toes. The bushes around me echoed with pleasurable sounds of the night creatures. I could hear the fluttering of bats and the distant croaking of the Malfin. All around me were the croaking and hissing of night creatures. The night was a perfect night, and I savored the breath of the wind and thought to myself, what a beautiful night.

I was just about to turn the last corner to my house when I noticed a dim flickering light on the hill. The light came on again for a few minutes and then it was dark again. I looked at my watch. It was fifteen minutes after midnight. This hill was used by many farmers to go to their gardens. What would someone be doing up on the hill at this time of night? It was really strange and the thought bothered me throughout the night.

Early the next morning on my way to breakfast, I overheard my parents in conversation with Mr. Tom, our next door neighbor. From pieces of their conversation, I could gather that the light was seen by other villagers and was causing quite a stir in the village. My dad thought something sinister was going on and felt that the police should be notified.

I went to school that day, but had every intention of finding out exactly what was going on. That night after everyone had gone to bed, I got out of bed and silently sneaked out from my bedroom, tiptoed past my parents' room and out the back door. It was about one a.m. I went over to Matt's house. The night was dark and I felt fear creep up my back. A leaf on a low branch lightly touched my lips and I tasted the bitter substance of cedar. Matt's room was around the back so I pelted stones at his window in an attempt to wake him up. About five minutes

later, the window opened and a light shone into my face. "Who is it?" Matt called out. "It's me," I shouted. "Put on some warm clothes and let us go up the hill."

"What for?" whispered Matt.

"Come on," I hissed. "Don't be a sissy."

"I am coming," he said and in a few minutes Matt was running through the door of his house. Matt was quite furious, and screamed at me telling me that this was no time for a young lady to be playing detective.

Matt was a tall lanky boy who enjoyed sports. He was very adventurous and I knew he would not let an opportunity like this pass him by. The path was slippery because of the early morning and I could feel the icy wind blow over my face. As we drew closer to the mountain top, the light seemed to grow brighter. Almost to the top of the hill, we could hear the faint voices of three men engaged in a heated argument. We drew closer and about eight to nine feet away, three men were sitting and warming themselves around a brightly lit fire, and I could smell the burning of dry gum leaves. Two of the men were arguing about something. The one with his voice raised stood up and started walking around the fire. He had a bald head and there was a gait to his walk. I noticed that one of the men looked rather frightened and his eyes darted from one man to the other. I could not get a proper look at the other man as he had his back towards us. We strained our ears to hear what the argument was about. They were speaking of ways to get rid of the body.

Matt and I looked wide-eyed at each other, each asking the same question, "What body?" and then we saw it, not one but three still bodies lying on the ground. I let out a gasp and we ran pell mell down the mountain, not giving heed to whether we slipped and fell.

We rushed to the police station and reported what we had seen, but the following day, after a thorough search of the area, the police had come up empty handed. It was several weeks before the bodies were found by a farmer who accidentally stumbled upon a grave on his way home from hunting. The bodies were identified as those of three young women who had been missing from a neighboring village.

In all my life in Koko village, I had never dreamt of such activities taking place, and now I have to wonder if it is really safe walking home alone on Wednesday nights after youth service. There was never a perfect night after that, and now I am accepting the offers of the young men to walk me home.

Hopelust

by Fran DalSanto

Stubbly old man
eyeing the young flesh—
misplaced lust
lingering near the dust
of his cuffs,
mingling with midnight
and assorted smoke,
all vaguely out of reach.

Sunwalk

by Fran DalSanto

I flaunt my tresses
transformed by the sun
into magic amber strands
flaming fantasies
for old men
in passing cars.

The Barn

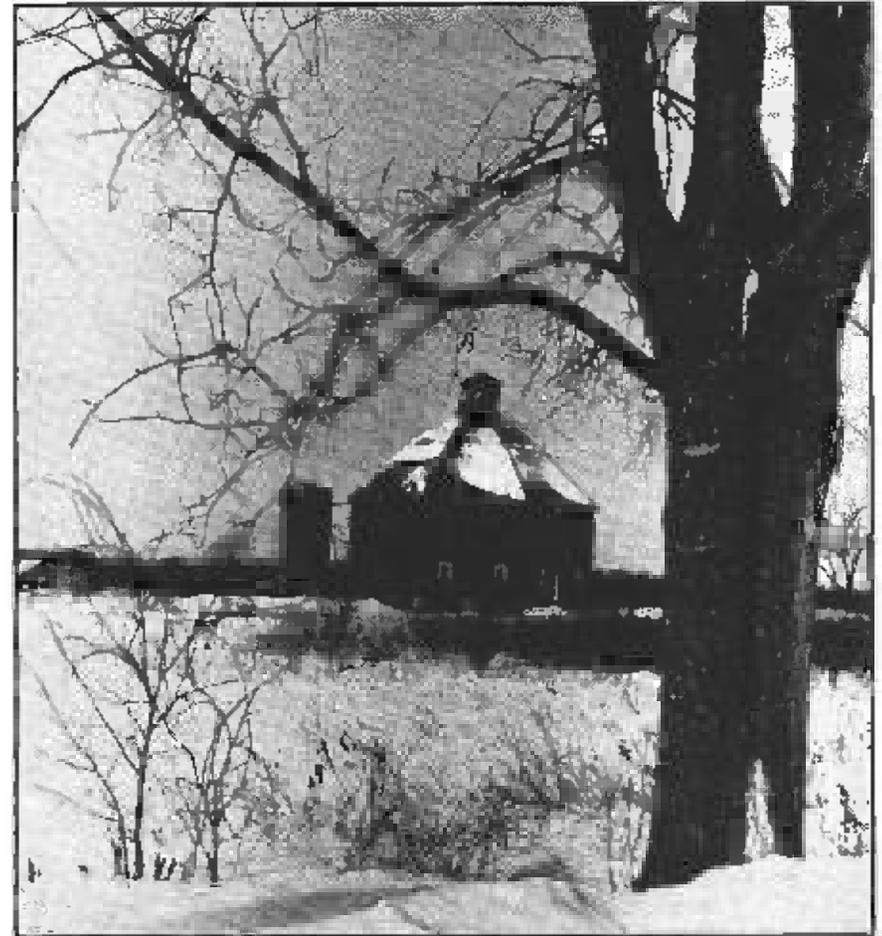
by Camilla Bedrosian

Unique in shape, practical in design,
proudly standing for over a century,

THE BARN evoked curiosity about its past,
became a subject for painters, photographers.

For twenty-two years it was part of my landscape.
And now it is gone. Demolished.

And I must be content with a few boards
from this sentinel of the past.



Sentinel of the Past by Camilla Bedrosian

To Him Who Loved Me Best

by Kathi Pollard

What is it, that I cannot seem to forget you,
Yet the remembering is equally as difficult?

I have discarded the dried weeds
in the Mason jar on the window sill,
picked on one of our walks together.

And the pressed blossom of a first rose
I've placed in the back of a book which
I have no intention of ever reading.

How is it, that in the mere holding of my hand
You were able to stir the depth of my soul?

In lying shoulder to shoulder on the beach
my heart was scorched with unspoken passion
more than my nakedness by the blazing sun above.

It is a mystery to me that your tenderness
could cause me to abandon all that I had become
in order to offer you someone I was not.

I will not confess my love for you, for in doing so
I would give meaning to that which should never have been.

It is enough to admit that you were the first
and that beneath my breast lies a barrenness
untouched by those who have followed.

One Daughter's Reconciliation

by Kathi Pollard

The chasm between us continued to grow
wider and deeper with every flutter of my heart,
a heart which led me closer to something new,
and further away from you.

You, who always insisted I wear
dresses with frilly slips and anklets,
never once told me you thought I was pretty,
because I wasn't, I supposed.

You, who always admitted to everyone but me
how very bright and precocious I was,
never encouraged me to continue my education,
to become someone special.

I have spent years feasting my insecurities
upon flawless forms and glossy images which
bombarded me daily, from pediatricians' offices
to grimy muffler shops.

I have read every self-help book written
looking for clues, and listened to talk shows
of successful women who were plain but smart,
looking for hope.

And every step I took toward new
led me further away from you.

Now that I've finally discovered new,
I realize it's not new at all,
just recycled - a more refined and defined
version of the old.

Wisdom borne from the journey
has taught me not to worry
About the chasm of differences
that lies between us;

finally, I see
the bridge of similarities
that links us
together.

Teach Me
by David Lawrence Olson

Medgar
Malcolm
Martin
mistreated
murdered
mistold
merciful
makar
meaningful
massive
miles above
majestic
masculine
magnanimous
magnetic
martial
masterful
magnificent
mavin
moving
Teach me always.
Not just during Black History Month.

The Old Peach Tree
by Gabriella Sheldon

Good-by, my dear.
Soon I must go.
Hold me close as you did
When I was a child.
Will you hum the song
That you sang back then?
Do not weep, my mother.
I must go to America.
There I will find a job
And send you money.
I will remember you, my mother.

Do not weep, little sister.
I want to keep your smile
Painted in my heart.
Take care of mother
And your little brothers.
I will send you pretty clothes
And seeds for your garden.
So you can remember me
When you see them grow.

My father, my father.
Now I must go.
I hope to stand tall
And make you proud
That I'm your son.

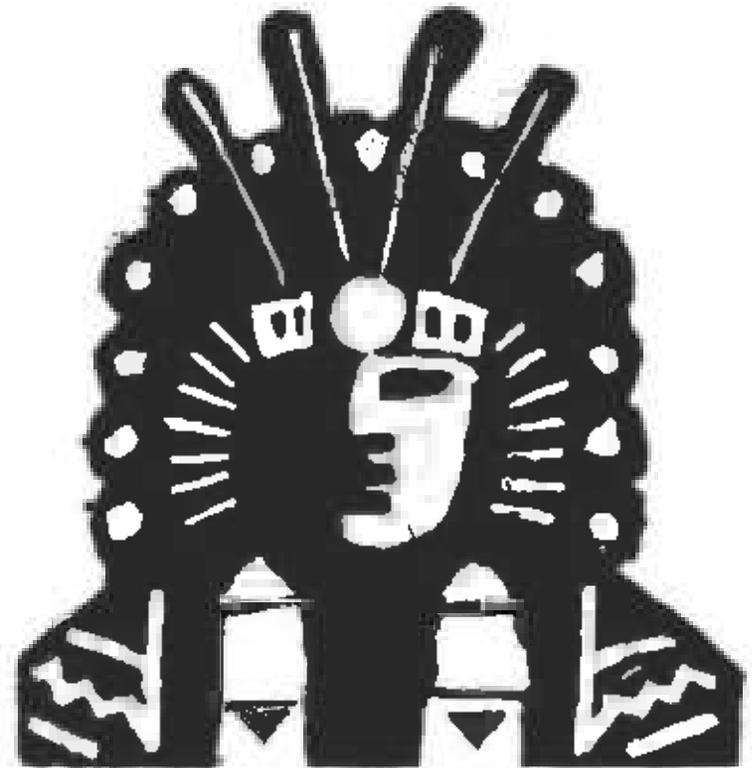
I kissed my brothers and hugged them close.
Then I left them there, waving good-by.
I shouldered my pack and headed west.
Ever west till I reached the shore
And found a job aboard a freighter
Because I was strong and tall.
I couldn't understand a word that was said
Not even the name that the boss gave me.
But I headed west till I saw this shore
And a hand outstretched with a flaming torch.

In the harbor, the ship was docked
And I stepped onto America.
Ellis Island gave me my name.
It gave me hope as tired I left.
That night I slept in a huddled mass
In a darkened room filled with weary souls.
Hungry, wretched, scared to hope.
But having no choice but to forge ahead
When the morning came.

So many years have come and gone.
My back is stooped from my years in the mine.
And then the struggles of my little farm.
I found a wife who spoke my tongue.
We planted our seeds in the fertile ground.
Some years were lean and some were rich,
But we kept our hearts bound as one.
Now she's gone and I live alone.
The kids are close and we visit some,
But I find my mind going back to home.
To the days of my youth across the sea.
I keep seeing the gnarled old peach tree
And the rose that bloomed by the old shed door.
I recall the haze by the river wide
On sunny hot mornings as the sun arose.
I can see my mother's faded dress,
Her apron, the creases on her face.

We wrote letters and kept in touch.
But money was short, so I never returned.
I sent them money here and there.
And wept in anguish when each died.

Life goes on in the seed that grows
Here in America, land of the free.
But no matter where I go in this land
I will never find
A peach as sweet as the one that grew
On the gnarled old tree
By the old shed door.



Indian by Sheri Seefeldt

Life Cycles
(Haiku Poetry)
by Kathi Pollard

Autumn leaves falling
Two tender spirits ascend
Death transfigures life.

Granite marker set
Above three heads joined in rest.
Peacefully they lie.

Snowstorm's ragged edge
Embraces fragile spring blooms,
Virgin blush destroyed.

Clamoring children,
Important revelations
Take flight in the dñ.

Seasons whirling by
Deep-etched grief-filled furrows are
Measure of life's toll.

Enigma revealed
For those of us left behind.
Tears nourish our souls.