

TIME TO LIVE

This can be the dawn of creation's children
 little giants who can lift this earth with their bosoms
 reshaping their elders' remains from windswept chaos
 into the wild and verdant paradisaical wonders heaven meant for us

little giants crushing greedy polluters back into anthills
 who knows how tall they will grow up to be
 we'll all walk with these kids as they see the world
 who will be known as savior or devil for their lives to come

profits and reminders, what is left of a soul to reach
 land ho land ho the flash of the planet has reached out to the stars
 and left hot legacy or by whose tenets did you step
 or stomp with iron treads too often

this smokin shithole is what is left to you
 so clean up what is left or most will die
 generations come and generations go leaving their wealth behind
 comely folk...innocent and wise...unaware the ends of the earth are frayed

is America a cancer upon the world, is this flash of glory grisly suicide
 and whose conscience is going to help love what is left
 oh lord, oh lord, most love you so...glowing icons speaking freely
 of America, don't get me wrong, it is not death-hate...just objections aplenty
 for I am sick as well and older than young saviors

chaos connected until the blood is let but whose bell is rung
 shouldst thou drink thy dragon's belly strange and soft
 lucid and wise hungering not having all for selfish flame
 love tries to live but wings get old needing childish grief
 so God save this world for all to be abounding in harmony and peace

~CHRISTOPHER KRAEMER



DRAWING BY HAYDEN GREELMAN, WHO IS 10 FEBRUARY 18

POETRY

SURVIVORS

War is painful to those who fight as well ones they leave behind
 but the greatest honor survivors can give those who fought
 is to keep going on with their lives

I have real respect for those who fight, those who die
 and those who are left behind because of war.

They are survivors alongside us, among us; we are they.
 Remember those who die as well the ones who survive.

~ANNA MYERS

BATTLEFIELD PSYCHIATRY

"Suicide has become such a pressing issue that the
 Army sent an assessment team to Iraq late last year
 to see if anything more could be done to prevent troops
 from killing themselves."

~MATT KELLY, AP WRITER, 1/14/2004

How well is it working?
 asks another press release,
 to which we in turn must query:
 How well do we think?

Whip people into
 patriotic killing, then
 post them as front-and-center
 "nation-building" targets, follow
 with (consistently!) unclear or nonexistent aims,
 along with indeterminate stretches of duty;
 be sure to make them
 keep the peace as well as murder

innocents. All this
 in direct opposition to
 everything learned
 at home, in church, at school, and even
 from our country's formal proclamations,
 and what do we think might be
 the outcome, for many of them
 out there squinting into the sky
 of another day raid, another night patrol?

Finally, of course,
 it being war, add this:
 "...the accessibility of weapons
 in a war zone can quickly turn a
 passing thought into action." No need for
 long investigations or furrowed brows.
 It is simple, it is elementary.

Suicide
 before or after
 "engagements" over there, or
 disconnection once back here
 needs no study now, if ever it once did —
 Wars have methodically
 pummeled children, women and
 men into the victim's surprised and final
 disbelief,
 and the fatalities of shredded self.

~CAROLYN DUNN

SWEATLODGE

Clean me down in the marrow of my bones.
 Make my body a place the Great Spirit will roam.
 Sweat me until my pores pour blood.
 Purify me till I see,
 till I be perfect love.
 Take away my misconceptions.
 Make me humble, give me grace.
 Baptize me with your fire
 that within me understanding will take place.

~DANIEL ELEY

I'm looking through their words for blame
 their pictures steal me still the same
 I know the dreams we make and call them out
 by name
 heads full of prosperity
 and blind eyes to reality

I'd like to think they made the sell
 I like to think they'd broken in
 that I was pushed down when I fell
 into this labyrinth of sin

(but now I see the picture's right in front of me)

the Sunday skies are turning gray
 the other eyes just looked away
 seems no one wants to hear the ugly truth
 that I found out today
 I let them out and
 I let them in
 to my inner sanctum

~TERESA BARNES



DRAWING BY DONNA JOY DEUFEL, AGE 8

WINTER SHIVERS

that winter I wore three coats from the goodwill
 tired shoes
 fishing tackle for jewelry.

that winter I ate rice with pepper I stole from denny's
 i had crystal balls frozen in my brain
 a friend Mags

who sang songs of russian boatmen.
 there was no tampax for me that winter
 i crouched in the bathroom for a week
 bleeding on newspapers
 i hung the most artistic splatters on the wall.

in bed at night the railroad tracks screamed to me
 "it's cold" they said "we're tight".
 when it was light I visited them
 bringing painted rocks to edge their ties.

that winter I wore three coats from the goodwill
 my hair was a ratted cap and always in my mouth.
 flies drank cool fountains from my eyelids.

that winter I bedded with a screaming man for a lump of coal.

that winter shivers.

~MONICA KOSKEY

FRIENDS AT THE RIVER'S EDGE

For Paul Jackson, Columbia River Bar Pilot
 who died at age 57 on October 19, 2003

I used to have a neighbor, a young woman,
 whose husband was in the Coast Guard
 until he got cancer and passed away
 one summer in his own bed.

She said it was hard to believe he was gone
 since he was gone so often.
 At first, to face the mornings, she told herself
 he was just out to sea and would
 be home soon.
 Then it became a habit she couldn't break.
 She moved because she couldn't look at the river
 for the rest of the days
 and I never knew what became of her.

I think of her sometimes when I am on the riverwalk
 watching your men pilot your ships
 walking where your boots touched until that one day
 when you crossed your last bar.

That poor young wife.
 How sad to have to give up the lovely habit of
 scanning the horizon, waiting
 for a man to return from his voyage.

As friends we are unconcerned with curfews, ticking clocks
 or promises made with altars between.
 We pour out a pint
 choose a topic in your honor.
 Scrabble tiles laid out
 dogs warming our feet
 we are waiting for you to come from the sea.

~DEBBIE BARENDSE REED