

Poetry

centerfold feature

Mick Vranich
Willie Williams
Kim Derrick Hunter
Marie Stephens
Christina Pacosz
Ron Allen

1988

Chains Across The Trees

by Mick Vranich
America's totem is the hamburger
don't look at me look at tv
chains across the trees
generations bread on cheap meat
glass cars with flashy decals
x this z that magnum force
for minute sight
name a town where the demons
don't lurk lead heads zapped on crack
it's just disease we get to see
in young bodies
armed and ready to blow your face off
don't look at me look at tv
chains across the trees
smell the burning hair
the leather straps that hold the ancient
horn stretch under the weight
of the desperate breath
of the few who still breathe
and walk with careful steps
away from the machine with steel teeth
don't look at me look at tv
generations bread on cheap meat

and paper hats and stars that never
show up in the night sky
or leave the mirror
stars that live in magazines
stars that haul piles of rags
around on their backs
to show you how to look
when you get there when you
get where the stars live
in the magazines and the sky
is shaking from the light
beyond here don't look at me
look at tv chains across
the trees startled wings
just before the fire and
spinning blades reach the nest
America's totem is the hamburger
wrapped in skins of beasts
that run from their homes
in the thick jungle
out into the open plains
to be picked off poached
packaged up and replaced
by the quiet cow grazing
until the water runs out
the soil wears away
and there's no place to go
don't look at me look at tv
chains across the trees

If Darwin Was Alive What Would He Say?

by Willie Williams
God
goddess and goddetts
regale in regal laughter
as pheasants and raccoons
return to reclaim
the wilds of this city
flames cleanse
the lands before
forced resettlements leaves
space for
nature's natural squatters
darkened ruins
are razed
as echoes of the living
cry out to space
traveling at the speed

of tears and
green colors now
memories and once cityscapes
things keep changing
like Faruk
losing his dreadlocks
and Kofi doing
the fourstep Jabba Jig
in aging York.

.
(Beware of open
doorways they could
be someone's home
at night)

for frantz fanon the guevara and patrice lumumba

by Kim Derrick Hunter
Concerning violence
What
Are the terms of warfare in the event of darkness
The practical application of shadows
The technical aspects of dreams

.
The role of death
In approaching cease fire
And the liquid embryo sleep

.
Perhaps it is something
Broken once and betrayed
Some ugly justice
Made to lay out our places
At the table of the world

.
Perhaps
Some one
Wrestling with death
To avoid torture
Beheading bureaucracy and privilege
And in the process
Killing the bureaucrat and the privileged

.
The hot slant of a small metal missile
Rips the son the daughter
Both began in the womb
And moved into the world
And were in the process
Of being moved by the world
When the world took note

The homeless unemployed worker campesina native took note
The gay black junkie hillbilly hustler took note
The pornographied field house wife body bag chauffeur invisible spine of the world took note

.
How will the bullet repay
Our masters for their kindness
How will the flow of blood
That begins with the bloodless refusals
Of even the "good" jobs
Undo the knot of lies that binds us
To early slow death

.
Who will own the burning necklace
The silencer
When the world is owned by no one

.
We need a new form
Of cost benefit analysis
To determine the price of the bullet
That will repay our masters' kindness

For the Stone-Throwers

by Marie Stephens
How to carve an image in the
Stones left scattered here
Scuffle in the streets
Students hoarse with yelling
Tear gas blood and fear
Branded with the tell-tale ink
Running from the tracers
Harder in the smoke
Of burning cities to
Define
The proper line
Easier to gather
Under borrowed banners
Hope, protection, safety
And an order
In the quickly gathered
Counter structure
Better (thought) to
Place their limitless
Good will and trust in
Parties, leaders
Lifting scarecrows from their midst
To battle harpies in the fields
Children torn asunder
In the grappling of nations,

Their stolen bodies now become
Rebellion
Throwing stones and running
The lowest common factor
In the formula of change
Only, once again
No change, no revolution
Only insurrection and oblivion
Or just another nation
An excuse for more atrocities
In vengeance
And the blood of the stone-throwers
Will have been sold cheap
Their deaths, their pain
People will whisper to one another
Trying to remember times
Until invasion, punishment and slavery
Leaves them numb and without memory
Except perhaps
with this brutal truth to live by:
Every nation built on barbed wire
Every boundary
A murder
Every flag
A thief.

A Gentle Rebuke to American Schoolchildren In the Form of a Poem

by Christina Pacosz
Turn off that television,
that sickly electronic light,
for T.V. is a thief
robbing you of your life.
.
A dangerous drug
making you fearful
of your own imagination
that buoyant, flamboyant eye,
your birthright,
and then you will be lost
when you most need
the bright image,
the dark vision.
.
Now, in the silence
pay attention, child.
At first you will be bored
and think there is nothing
to do. Remember then

what I tell you now.
Learn to love patience and desire,
for I have heard the children
of the Haitian poor, studying
on the streets of a dark
island in the southern sea
because there was no light
at home to read by.

.
If you are lucky enough to
to have a full belly
fill your heart
with the blessed names
of the myriad trees.
Study light and how shadows
fall to earth. Learn
to call the bright birds
one by one. Fly
in your dreams,
sing

.
the song of your own
free name.
Claim it.

I Want My Body Back

by Ron Allen
I want my body back
I want my body back
Where is my body
Did anyone see it dressed
Incognito in some spy movie
Is it being killed over and over
Again in some war
To prove someone's winning
It was never photographed
And placed on milk cartons
Did anybody see my body
On to selling underwear
Did anybody see somebody
That might be my body
Don't want anybody
But (my body) back

.
Is my body in somebodies
Body shop
Sold to replace body parts
.

Is my body now a centerfold
For the Detroit News
The Detroit Free Press
Or The Metro Times

.

Is my body now lying
In some funeral parlor
Pumped full of the
Embalming fluid of Reaganomics

.

Is my body now being
A human error
In thermonuclear holocaust

.

Is my body now working
In some South African jail
Pushin' apartheid for both Botha's
Body and my body
For the body politic
Of white supremacy

.

Is my body now a paper boy
Carrying the bourgeois rhetoric
Of the news and the free press

.

Is my body now a rapist
Of women (humanity)
Raping again and again
The body of my mother

.

Is my body now a multi-national
Stamping the emblem of corporations
On the backs of third world bodies

.

Is my body now a cigar-smoking
Fat cat pushing dioxin through
His words through
The smoke rings of my body

.

Is my body now a cartoon caricature
On some Saturday morning propaganda
Sayin' it's only entertainment

.

Is my body now a Contra
Stuffing Iranian money in
The holes of its body
To implement insurrection
To internally intern the innocent
Is my body now a neo-colonial
Missionary blessing the Ethiopian dead

.
Is my body now a policeman
Turning his back to crack
To crack someone else's
Mind and body

.
I want my body so I can walk
The 22 hills lyrics with
My body tappin' the bass pedal
Sendin' out multi-dimensional
Flesh songs

.
Anybody sighted my body
In the jungles of mass media

.
Somebody put an APB
On my body

.
I want my body so I can
Dig my fingers into somebody

.
I want my body so I can
Dig my toes into the natural earth
And walk like a natural man

.
I want my body so I can
Breathe again

.
I want my body
So I can fly again

.
I want my body
I want my body
I want my body

.
Back.

fifth Estate

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