

Poetry centerfold

Various Authors

1991

Cloak of Skin

mick vranich

detroit 1989

surrounded and left alone
more marks that don't connect
movies with the faces as big
as worlds of flesh in bright
light on the thin screen
i don't have anything to say
about it really you should
talk to someone else like
the wind working up into a
frenzy in the trees bending
and breaking branches thrown
to the ground like a blanket
made of sticks the ceremonial
fire is raging but no one
is watching maybe a few are
seeing it in the corner of their
eyes the axis is crooked
today the hole is getting bigger
i am nothing really
just the dream of becoming
in this cloak of skin do you
hear what i am saying the
cloak of skin has a mouth
to talk with but there
are shadows here that won't
go away until they see what
happens to it all what happens
to it all not just a part
because no parts are separate
but i am nothing in this

cloak of skin dragged
through the streets
at the end of a rotting rope
and unnoticed because
the big screen is showing how
the faces should look with
the smiles riveted in place
put behind the glass
examined carefully thrown
in the heap like the rest of the
bulldozed bodies still quivering
still warm
i am nothing really just
this cloak of skin with a
mouth saying don't kill
everything so soon while you
load your rifles while you
slit a throat while you
fill the lung with poison gas
ravage the earth to the bone
no not to the bone
incinerate the bones to run the conveyor belt
pile up the goods for the ones
who traded in their souls for a shoe shine
equal rights to have everything
they've got to sell you
get it so you think you are someone
but it won't last you think
it will you want it to be this
way you want to have a lot
of things but the things will
shake off your shelf
the shadows will come in
your house at night when
you are sleeping dreaming
about what you can get
next and they'll see your
dreams and they'll see how
clean your hands are and
they'll see how empty your
heart is and they'll sit
by your bed all night and
when you wake they'll watch
you get even cleaner
they'll get in your car with you
they won't do anything to you
because it already happened
they're just watching they know
you have no soul left so
it doesn't matter even if

the TV says it is how it
should be.
don't talk to me about
what you do because i am
nothing your words don't
mean anything to me
because you think you are
someone because you have
something a gold watch
a gold car a gold house
a gold chain around your neck
a gold shackle around your leg
a big smile your words
have no meaning to me
I'm nothing but a cloak
of skin with a
mouth saying don't
kill everything so soon.

No End

M. Rashid

No end to this—
dark with a bright light crossing.

.
The day breaks with countless parts
of broken bodies pushing up,
pointing through the rubble
to a gray sky, false cloud, a piece
of someone else's sun.

.
Far away in the land of the free
many rejoice in the slaughter,
the vast misfortune of those they
cannot, will not touch or see.
And others watch and watching
acquiesce.

.
This is the way the world continues on and on
with bang and boom,
with screaming and whimpers
and then of course the silence.

.
This is the way, with the powerful ones
from the land of the free
unflinchingly, mindfully
pushing all the new and shiny buttons.

.
This is the way, with strong smiling faces

feigning regret for calculated spots
in the cold camera's eye.
This is the way, with willing and watching
dark screens with a bright light crossing.

Campfire Talk

Antler

Birds don't need opinions because they have pinions.
What is the opinion of the pinyon pine on whether Christianity is for or against homosexuality?
A flower doesn't need a savior to be able to bloom.
A waterfall doesn't need a guru in order to gush.
A caterpillar doesn't need a Bible to become a butterfly.
A lake doesn't need a Ph.D. to become a cloud.
A rainbow doesn't need a fresh coat of paint every year.
Worms don't need to study existentialism to exist.
Mountaintops don't need to kneel and ask forgiveness for their sins.
Capitalism and Communism mean nothing to every tree that alchemizes light.
No whale will ever know who Christ is.
No chipmunk will ever follow Buddha.
No eagle gives a shit about Muhammed.
No grizzly will ever consult a priest.
No seagull will ever become a Mormon.
No dolphin has to learn computers if it wants to get along in the modern world.
No sparrow needs insurance.
No gorilla needs a God.

On Patience

Lone Wolf Circles

Becca wrote:
"Draw the patience of the stones and rocks
into yourself,
that you might share their patience
in having your dreams fulfilled."

.
I ache for my visions, so vivid,
shining with sweat,
filling me with their sweet smells
and bursting desire.

.
Like a wolf caged,
I leap against the bars
of alleged reality,
until they give way
to freedom and fantasy.

.
I ache for my visions,

the way they throw me on my back,
roughly undress me,
plant feathers in my skin,
and toss me off the cliffs.

.
I taste fear like metal on my tongue,
until my body drains out through my nuts
and I become wind...

.
I ache for my visions, so vivid...

A Commentary on Modern Existence as Noted by a Chicken on the Freeway Near Columbia, South Carolina

Christina Pacosz

I did not cross this road
to get to the other side,
turning chicken-hearted midway
and stopping, a stunned white blur
of feathers crouching on the broken
white line. I tumbled from a truck,
the victim of a broken latch
and freedom is a joke,
my life a cruel hoax
passing before my eyes.
Life on the chicken lager

.
crowded up against a sea
of squawking feathers,
sawed-off beaks to keep us
from pecking at each other
and the profits, thousands
of chicken eyes staring up
at the sky, while rain pours down
and we drown, or the sun bakes us
right where we stand.
Stupid chickens, the verdict,
whatever the weather.

.
The position of the human
in the pecking order,
the rank and serial number
of our respective fates,
raises objections to the term lager
and all its terrible history.
Exaggeration! the counterpoint
to this lament. No matter.
Smack in the middle

of technology's awful woosh and whizz
no one can hear the question:

.
How long does it take
a chicken to die?
Rescue is a luxury
and the safety
of a quiet coop on a backwater farm
a distant dream.
Helpless as the startled motorists
who speed by,
my only satisfaction:
this death will not
feed them.

A Song of Blissful Ignorants

Steve Izma

Port Vila, 1989

How can we know the rattle and roar
Of the tanks as they conquer the streets?
How can we know the panic and woe,
And the running, the racing heartbeats?
And how can we know the sense of betrayal
By hustlers, politicians and cheats?
For here in the heart of the world's great wealth
We never fear violent defeats.

.
We're the ones who have conquered all people and land;
We're the ones who keep privilege and jobs close at hand.
We're the ones who collect, who hoard and amass;
We're the ones for whom life goes on all too fast.
We're the ones who believe that we earned what we stole;
We're the ones who are striving for total control.
We're the ones who for pleasure will spare no expense;
We're the ones whose possessions have deadened our senses.

.
How can we see the scarred, torn land
Stripped bare in the path of a mine?
How can we see a valley's last tree
Where once was a forest of pine?
And how can we see the pests and the plagues
That follow a cash crop's decline?
For here in the heart of the world's great wealth
The vision of gold makes us blind.

.
How can we hear the moans of the hungry
Where once there was food all around?
How can we hear the sharp cry of fear

From victims the death squads have found?
And how can we hear the dispossessed shouting,
Defending their last patch of ground?
When here in the heart of the world's great wealth
Our ears ring with money's cold sound.

.
How can we feel the lush, moist heat
That makes the last rainforests grow?
How can we feel the joy of a meal
That's gathered from a land made whole?
And how can we feel a lover's caress
In a passion deep-reaching and full?
When here in the heart of the world's great wealth
We've lost touch with the earth and our soul.

War Poem No. 101

(When Heaven Parted)

William Boyer

Slashing above
The panicking guards
The cascading lies
Knifed through the fog
Igniting the sky
And our troubled faces
Lies so advanced
They were undetected by radar
And could only be seen
Through naked eyes
So untrained
They were compelled to cry

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