Editorial Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Joe Spann
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Grady Walker
Assistant Editors: George Luiskutty, Geoffrey Wright
Publicity Staff: Heather Wall, Sandra Crandall, Jacob Tuinstra

Editor's Note

I wish to thank the entire staff for their various contributions. At one time or another each of you have given a certain amount of time and effort in order to bring Promethia one step closer to printing. Among the various menial tasks and favors performed you, perhaps the most taxing was listening to my visions, dreams, and complaints about this year's magazine. At each turn you were encouraging and helpful.

Much gratitude belongs to the English Faculty. Your willingness to work with me, your willingness to believe in Promethia, your ability to take a few on the chin to make it happen taught me and encouraged me constantly.

To Dr. Grady Walker, I say a special thank you. Thank you for your wise counsel, your oaken patience, and your stern grace. Though you always let me guide the ship, you pointed the compass, the schedule, and the hidden dangers that laid in our way.

Finally, to all of the writers who submitted anything, you are Promethia, you provided the spark which is now the fire. I am honored to have published some of you, and am honored to have read all of your works. The Editorial Staff, the student body, and I thank you.

Lastly, I thank those who have gone before me. John Affleck who pioneered Promethia's resurrection two years ago, and Geoffrey Wright who secured Promethia's place as ORU's official literary magazine last year. For the first time in my life I actually felt my feet were too small to fill the shoes I wore. Thank you for the chance to serve, to carry the torch. This year we have established Promethia's endurance. Of all the eternal flames associated with ORU, may the flame of this magazine warm more hearts, do more good, and yes burn even longer than the Prayer Tower.
Grass Fires

That day my fascination with fire mingled with fear. Several small fire departments were called and there erupted a great chaos of screaming men, frightened children, sirens, water hoses, and hot terrible flames. I stood still in the middle of it all and felt the most confusing mixture of awe, terror, and guilt I had ever known. I watched the chaos I had created and for the first time became familiar with an awesome paradox. I was ten years old and had started a fire in a tall grass prairie. The July sun and anxious prairie wind had taken my small fire and turned it into a force I could no longer control. Up to now, it had warmed my feet and roasted my marshmallows, now it threatened my life and home.

This sort of paradox runs throughout the human condition. We are limited, finite, and sinful yet we have been irrevocably given an imagination, a fire, with infinite, almost god-like capabilities to create. If we create recklessly the creation is out of control and dangerous to all who get near it. If we regard this fire with awe and trembling, if we carry it carefully and light those places which need lighting we are bringers of hope. We are Promethia.

The poet is an arson. Good verse sets fire to a thought or emotion giving it the fuel to grow and spread itself. A single poetic image is a spark set afloat upon a great dry sea. Its hinted meaning breathes the first rush of prairie wind, which fills the sails of the fire-bark and sends it skimming across the crackling waves.

When I first read this particular set of poems as they are compiled here, I felt as though I were standing in the middle of that prairie, that windswept waving prairie at night. I stood there in the middle of untouched grass, holding my torch. There was an orange glow from over the rise in front of me as if a brilliant sun were burning out just on the other side. The wind brought waves of hot, choking smoke amid the cold night air. As I approached the other side I saw for miles fire after fire, some raging, some just being lit, some burning out quickly in bright explosions. I heard the voices of the fire starters and those being warmed by the light of the fires. Some laughed and talked to travelers, who had stopped by to keep warm; some danced madly about with a sort of concentrated angry justice. Others ran quickly up and lit their torches and disappeared over another hill without a minute to spare. Some just sat by their fire and stared into the heat with quiet tears falling.

It felt the way you do when you are closer to understanding something than ever before, yet further from being able to explain it; a sort of vicious relentless peace, the very peak of faith. I was afraid, expectant, determined, there watching Promethia at work.

I felt on my cheek the warmth of my own torch, burning composed and peaceful, and hot in my hand. Turning back to my dark prairie, I touched the flame to the top of the dry grass and watched the fire begin to grow.

So, as you read, approach the poet’s fire. Become aware of the nature of each flame; warm yourself; maybe, even light your own torch.

--Joe D. Spann
Editor-in-chief
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Dr. Grady Joe Walker
Professor of English
Oral Roberts University, Arts & Sciences, English Department
by Geoffrey Armstrong Wright

This 1998-99 edition of Promethia is proudly dedicated to the infamous Dr. Grady Joe Walker, who has with humility and dignity offered his service and guidance to generations of students. Dr. Walker’s benevolent spirit has long been and will continue to be a fire to warm the hearts of students, as well as test them, and a light to guide them on their way.

After receiving his B.A. in English from Oklahoma City University in 1957, Dr. Walker, or as he was known then and is known now, Grady, launched his teaching career as a Graduate Assistant in freshman composition at Oklahoma State University, where he received his M.A. in English in 1959. Before coming to Oral Roberts University in 1967, Grady taught English and German at Cameron State University and Southwestern State University. Upon his arrival at ORU, Grady also taught both English and German and founded the respective English and German clubs. Later, in 1971, after completing his doctoral studies on D. H. Lawrence, Grady received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Tulsa. At this time he laid aside his German classes to focus on teaching English, which he has done with excellence and grace ever since and for which he received an Excellence in Teaching Award in 1998.

Grady has developed and taught courses on Medieval, Romantic, and Victorian literature, as well as Creative Writing, but the Survey of English Literature (held every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7:50 in the morning whether students are present and awake or not) is still his pride and joy. One of Grady’s specialty courses is his seminar on D. H. Lawrence, which has occasioned student/faculty trips to Taos, New Mexico, to visit the home of Lawrence. Also does his own share of writing published the poem “Red Soloman” in Westview, a poetry and prose. Also, his Open Letter to the Editor was published in the “Laurentiana” section of the D.H. Lawrence Review. As a member of the Modern Language Association and the South Central Modern Language Association, as well as the Conference on Christianity and Literature, Grady has presented various papers at literary events across the country. In New Orleans, Grady presented “The Character of Hagen in Das Nibelungelied” in the German section of SCMLA, and in the Italian section of SCMLA, he presented “The Sacramental Frame of Silone’s Bread and Wine.” At the Conference on Christianity and Literature held at Northern Arizona State University in Flagstaff, Arizona, Grady presented “D. H. Lawrence, The Nemesis of St. Paul.”

Ultimately, it is Grady’s generous heart that has made Promethia itself a reality. He has served as the magazine’s Faculty Advisor since its conception, and he was an indispensable part of its recent rebirth and reconstruction.

Grady, for these and all the other wonderful things you have done and all that you are, we thank you.
--the Students, Faculty, and Alumni of ORU
The Light of a Life

A gift for Grady Walker in honor of His Seventieth Birthday

Printed in 1998-99 Promethia in honor of his service to this magazine
He is the hoary-headed one,  
the feast-maker,  
cake-baker,  
myth-shaper,  
the vestige of a Victorian age.  
He is the teller of tales,  
spinner of yarns,  
weaver of dreams,  
builder of houses.

Like the fizz on frothy foam  
his words tickle his tongue and  
flow forward, outward to eager ears  
anticipating the wit and wisdom of another generation.  
As the hammer pounds the cold, black metal,  
so wields the wordsmith the anvil of tradition,  
this word-lover, architect of language,  
bastion of proper, precise, punctuated English grammar;  
Like a pillar that does not bend with fierce wind,  
he stands firm, the sagacious professor,  
unflinching, unswerving, holding up an immovable standard.

As Beowulf raised his arm in fierce battle against Grendel,  
monster of darkness, evil-filled creature,  
possessor of the odor of destruction,  
the page-turner lifts his voice against the dark fragrance of modernism;  
he is the new Apollo, oracle of the gods,

The room-window opens,  
yonder-light shining like the flicker of fiery flame,  
black silhouette against the transparent wall,  
the book-maker stoops, standing tall,  
the pagers turn,  
laden-leaves rustle with the restlessness of insomnia,  
forging forth the story of a life untold.

Within this ancient seer,  
a vision of rhyme arises;  
the muse speaks in mute whispers,  
an echo of the eolian harp.
Words of a lifetime of living,
voices from the past,
breathing in the wind of hope, of mutability,
offering a chance to cling to clarity,
inspiriting changeless truths:
"one truth is clear: whatever IS, is RIGHT"
"beauty is truth, truth beauty, --that is all
   Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Gesticulating, articulating, he proclaims
messages measured by epiphanic moments,
rich revelation of eternal veracities:
He is the way, the truth, and the life;
"More things are wrought by prayer, than this world dreams of."

--Mark Hall
FLOATING • SPARKS • IGNITE
Aspens in Spring: Florescence
No
Hurry
Now
Fourth week in May
Will do
For white fingers
To sprout green
Ten thousand feet
In the air

Aspens in Summer: Confidence
No sacrifice now
Not a crown of thorns
But of bold green
Florets
Competing
With mad blue sky
For attention

Aspens in Autumn: Incandescence
Big Bang
Blaze of glory
Suns themselves
Inhabit the branches
Whisper last requests
Then
Drop
With
First
Snow
Fall

Aspens in Winter: Somnolence
Now
The Earth's surface
Has hairs
Slender cilia
Pale
Uniform
Verticality
Still
But for
A wavering
At the touch
Of the boreal breath
Of God

--Keith Gogan

Autumn

morning hidden in
rainy day silver blue haze
leaves fall to the ground

--Nicole Baxter

The Lake

By the time the trees had turned
nothing was left but rusty boats
drifting on the still lake
and brittle leaves washed up
to the shore then carried
out and drowned

--Chris Dooley
Drip, Sky

Drip, sky, to a mild,
Overcast special.
Dear bud of spring, like a colorful dress
On a green girl, watch your weight and
Don’t slip. You are the covering,
Oasis, of a lush, gaudy land—
A sweet contrast to a man.

Drip, sky, to a mild,
Overcast special.
Dissolve all sidewalks with your water;
Outlaw our geometric wasteland—
Doing calculus to the path
Of a splash.
Remind me not to live so fast.

Drip, sky, for a while
Till no one feels special,
Only jealous when the wealth of us
Dines on the cuisine of solitude.
And looking at this version of a tree,
I wonder how much gravity makes graviti—
God bless the men of Gemini

Just Curious

Old hag, ragged
big-boned bag lady
pushing a cart of
crusty, rusty
junk-things
frizzled, greasy
mop on your head,
could hardly be called
hair, under that
awful hat;
knobbed knuckles
clutch at nothing
I wonder where
you come from,
ragged, wasted
woman?
wrinkled, restless
big-boned bag lady,
refugee,
with your three, hole-patched
winter coats, your
portable junkyard, lugged
around town in a
Wal-Mart shopping cart
with one wheel gone bad.
Where are you going,
you are always going somewhere
where?
Just curious, you know.

--Amanda Hall
Average

He was wrinkled tan pants, a practically transparent red shirt from 1985-- not quite tucked in, socks with blue stripes all the way to his knees, shoes of that plastic leather with two velcro straps sole on one foot

His hair was thin, brown, combed over the top to hide the rounding of his head

He took pictures, smiled, always knew everybody's name, laughed, never seemed to care when he was laughed at

He should have been great
He was maybe

Everyone thought so the night he was killed
Some punk kid trying to be somebody

I wonder what he thought when he opened the door-- probably smiled, remembered his name, saw the gun too late

--Nicole Baxter

Tragedy on the Twelfth Floor

Yellow buzzing between me And silence and safety Cringing, furtive glances Spy droning intruder's irresolute form And movement flows from hand to mind to shoe to wasp to wall Leaving a fatal flaw crushed on white-wash.

--Christiane Hofmann
Monet

Monet sings colors.

Choral canvas harmonies
from
dissonant
pastel
notes.
Rubbing,
Bleeding
Formless lines.
Tense.
Intense
Clashing
Pulling pushing crowding
SHOUTING MOVEMENT
Always joining, flowing, forming, forever breathing, bathing bodies.
Living, loving, life; telling stories.

Beauty broken into parts.
Measures played with separate breath,
Songs heard with eyes and hearts,
Floating pieces brought to rest

Replaced chaotic formless, none
With many, married, moving, one.

Thoughts on a Metallic Urn

Timeless portrait, forever caught
Your profile, etched in stone
Bound to brass--What souls have you
Left the same? Bound to your image,
Etched with pain. Chalky lips
Beckon my own, but I must not
Heed the siren's wail.
Hands fastened your lovely profile
To harsh metal, a cruel joke
On the urn, itself once a lovely thing.
Now rendered dark and oppressive as an
Opaque prison for your Alabaster beauty
How many stares of strangers have you endured?
How many lovers looked, and then walked away?
You, laughing at my mortality,
And crying for an escape from your
Eternal, ageless home.
Leave me stranded in life, as I turn away
And leave you stranded on your pot.

--Ryan Dean Moore
The Road to Oklahoma

the sun
has long since
dipped down
beyond the horizon
beyond sight
though daylight
lingers
in hazy blue
laziness of summer

beginnings of night
make shadows
coolness
a six-legged
winged world comes
to life in buzzes
and whirred flight
that splat the
windshield
like yellow paint

our legs creak
old bones
stepping
out of the car
stretching
our nostrils
breathe in
the freshness
of outside
welcoming
anything
after the staleness
of warm, cramped
car
we walk in
small steps
prolonging freedom

a few disheveled
tavelers
wander out
of the brown
and red brick
building
heading back
to laden-down
station wagons

picnic tables
and dented green
trashcans
litter the lawn
beyond
is a row of
hedges
separating the
forest from
highway civilization

we smile
delight
our one
moment in
fairyland

fireflies
light up the
bushes
fallen stars
flashes of
neon gold
surround us
as we walk
on cracked cement paths
under the
drooping fingers
of ancient
weeping
trees

the hum of the
highway is
distant
the smell of
exhaust
dirt
pavement
is lost

--Nicole Baxter
The First of the Year

My dreams tonight are runways
salted and pulsing crimson and violet
through the dark heart of evening.

My dreams tonight are of a spider web of city lights below,
incandescent laces like the tendrils of a jellyfish
needling through a black and viscous sea.

My dreams tonight are of the asphalt rhythm of highways
bearing my family homeward through snowfall
and drifting memories of recent days passed in happiness.

I am fitted to leave it all behind--
to take it with me wherever I go.

I am returning from home.

---Geoffrey Wright

Boston #2

On the North End
white lights hung
    limp
across the street
marking tunnels which
    run beneath the
pavement
from one shadowed
building to another

White lights like a map of veins and arteries
hiding from the moon

---Christopher Dooley
INCENSE • BURNING
Another Sunday Sermon

Candy-coated, goes down smooth
the critics laugh, we warm the pews, muse,
Joking Jesus
lights dim, a congregation thick with
yawning herds out like
sheep before a slaughter,
wet lips, ruby drips, dress shirts stained
with too many sunday sacraments,
distended stomachs bloat with
bread-tokens tasted, wafers of
Our blessed saviors body broken
(yeahyeahyeah) belched out in
solemn ministerial tones,
and file our into blinding sunlight, to our Buicks,
ready for that sabbath turkey football dinner.

--Amanda Hall

Confession

Over lunch
My friend tells me
Some mornings
She gets up and
Has to chip away
At the block of ice
That encases God
And I smile
Half nod
Seeming sympathetic
Until
I remember
Some mornings
My hands too
Feel
The hardness
Of steel
The chill
Of solid water

--Keith Gogan
On the Eve of Good Friday

Choir children born
In fountains of water and wine
Echo their mourning against
Cathedral walls clear-cut
Like broad incisions
In the asphalt fabric of city streets
and frosted with starlight
distilled in forlorn
remembrance of children
murdered in cobblestone streets
and mothers who flung themselves
on the killing swords
and a child hanging atop a hill
while his mother watches
behind shadows parted low like curtains
and weeps into a chalice for her tears
to spatter over her doorposts
as a ward against memories of an angel
who once feathered by
and posed a question
which she answered
yes

--Geoffrey Wright

Madonna with Child

Blue robe, black eyes--all I remember
Your being, incarnate
In eyes, lips, and clothes
And gentle hands holding the world's weight
As if a feather lay upon your palms
Always a smile for me, gentle as rain
And for all who, weary, weeping, creep to you
Beholding in your face the peace from pain
That mirrors still the form within your arms:
The sleeping babe birthed from your wounded womb.

--Christiane Hofmann
Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi, carrion fruit for flies,
Cross hung corpse, the criminal sigh,
Where is the kingdom now? Parables turn cries.
The dove marked man left meat for crows to dine.

Twelve fled. One split his body on the stones.
They fed this taste of death with silver, cowardice, despair,
And fled the cursed unbroken bones
That strained a bloody spill served by a spear.

One centurion tongued confession of the Son
Known dumbly by the world in numbing darkness.
Temple curtain rent, what light has flown?
Shades walking in Jerusalem, do they curse or bless?

Mary receives her Son God's tree bears;
Fruit for a harvest feast, this planting--death prepares.

--William Epperson

Sonnet 1

With trembling hand she reaches through the rain
That falls from stark trees stripped of their clothes,
And cold wind beats tears back; unhardened pain
Reveals itself, all secrets now disclosed.
Chastity chased and body all but dead
Unvirgined by the mongers who'd held her
From Harlem, spirit's brothel she had fled
To these woods forever seeking shelter.

He meets her in the woods that final one
And she falls down into the bed of leaves;
With years of unloved wounds she falls undone.
Compassion mov'd, he lifts her to her knees.
His holy hand touches her spirit's flesh
And she her head lays on her Savior's breast

--Joe D. Spann
The Sad Clown

I cried last night
    When I saw the circus clown,
    When I beheld the artificial face saddened, reflecting a painted and bruised heart,
Trying to make the audience laugh and feel good through his pain,
Hearing the whisper of hurt,
Seeing lovelessness wrapped like a snake around his waist
In black, blue, and red colors.

His shoes, a size 20, someone said, were too big,
I could not walk in them--
Me, a child of eight, at the circus for the first time,
Listening to the rhyming of the ringmaster,
The trumpeting of trained elephants,
The roaring of rebellious lions,
But my eyes were transfixed on the man-too-big-for-the-red-fire-engine,
The misfit whom everyone derided
Because that's what you do to castoffs.

My hands reached out to him, trembling fingers desiring to touch the painted-on frown,
But he did not see me, did not touch me, did not hear me.
Hoping and questioning, yearning to love,
Seeking to soothe his pain with the hug of a child,
I failed; I forsook him.

I cried last night
    When I saw the crucified clown,
When I beheld the spittle-covered face saddened, mirroring a broken and bleeding heart,
The rusty, re-riven, red nail-spikes--
    Wound-makers,
    Spirit-smashers,
    Heart-breakers,
Driven into the hands of God.

Longingly, lovingly, I tried to touch the stained face--
The red, blue, and black colors,
But I was not tall enough to reach him
And I could not fit into his shoes--
My eight-year-old feet were too small.
Me--forsaker-child,
Could not give him water for his thirst,
A rag to wipe his wound,
A hug to help his heart.

He whispered--
I could not hear,
But my face felt the fury of the wind,
And I knew
The one who further-fled was forgiven.

--Mark Hall
Rainbow: Covenant-Ribbon

Bark-battered, rock-shattered, boat world,
Teeming ark-life, ani-man smells, breath;
Brain-flickers, like a Pentecost-consciousness.
Life-flickers; worlds on worlds, each after its kind.
Stamping straw, straining reins, moving for expanded space;
Tense nerve strains in man and beast,
Exit-anticipation heightened.
Doves diving downwards, scattering olive branches,
Piquing the panthers, tormenting the tigers, raging, encaged

Rumble-thud, boom-bounce, shuddering beams strain
Tarred strappings, trying the skill of the ark-man.
Boat-base, bouncing the boulders and peaks of Ararat;
Shifting cargo, mingling masses, maddened reptiles and monarch butterflies.
Raven, dark-winged deserter, camping on corpses,
The first to escape the confines of ark-safety,
Dove messengers going and coming
   For seven days
   and
   seven days
Final freedom from that raucous bird-cage
Silent message reaching the ark-people
And self-confined God in the depths of the wave-house.

Cramped, cradling His treasures, Noah and Sons, Inc.,
Speaking His mind and His will to Noah:
"Go forth of the ark....wife and sons and wives
And cattle and creeping things, after their kinds."
A thousand eyes on the holy man Noah
As he advances on unsteady sea-legs
Moving toward the massive portal,
Last swung on hinges by God's hand.
Massive movement behind him, swarms
And spirals of winged creatures
And ponderous paws of long-lethargic beasts of prey
Padding now into magic order for the exit,
From the haven now turned prison.
Sons of Noah chink at the hardened pitch
Clanging tools of iron biting into wood and tar
Chiseling holes for the eager and blinding sun to penetrate and explore
Suddenly, as if moved by explodic breath from impatient God,
Bulky beams buckle and crumble, exit becomes entrance,
Into a new world, purged of poison, the
Bursting of life, to replenish and multiply, one more change to please and amuse the almighty.
Mazy movement into frenzied rush to escape into the blue air.
Spreading over the land, each after its kind,
Not minding bones and slime from the receded flood,
Grazing new grass and leaves, recycled life-chin.
But Noah, higher order, conversing with God
Knowing His mind, finding and fitting stones,
Building a sacred structure, altar to his God.
Sacrificing clean animals and clean birds
Covenant-table, stony slab, evoking the Sacred Presence.
Suddenly, spanning the space, forming itself out of
Mist and sun, mixing colors never seen before,
Words of Holy God forming themselves into color strands
As He thunders out His promise, covenant code:
"I do set my bow in the cloud....a token of covenant."
Splendor-sliters, delicate-vivid, reassuring man of His infinite fidelity.
The bow of a promise, one foot planted solidly in lost Eden,
Spanning the world and all time, revealing the other foot in apocalyptic splendor!

Rainbow, covenant/promise symbol, His ribbon and
Bow, Noah now to infinity--
    Gift-wrapped promise package,
    Mine!

--Grady Walker
EMBERS • RED • AND • WARM
All-American Thanksgiving

A feast of feathers
(God be thanked),
Of fruits of others' labors in vain to overcome
The bills and rainless summer dust,
Celebrate tradition unbroken
Since great-great-grandma's sweat
Brought forth groaning table abundance.
Please pass the cranberry sauce,
The congealed blood of a nation
That feeds the lawyer in his dusty cell
Beside the single-working-almost-mother
Of Dreams--

The fat, belly-filling bird stares stupidly
Headless among the stuffing
That's come out of lives since the tax crunch
And the welfare farewell
Hidden in the sweet potato casserole;
The minimum wage of pies
Has risen,
Fattening thighs without nutrition,
Thin cotton padding for designer winter coats.

--Christiane Hofmann

Mr. Wilkee's Winter

Leaves falling, brown, yellow, red,
Bushy-tailed rodents bolstering caches,
Stinging air sweeping, comforting,
Corpuscles attempting to compensate,
Reddening faces of wee ones.

Inside, fire burning, mommies calling,
"Come on in kids!"
Children leave off attending their companion,
...and daddy's fire.
Three-fingered man, black teeth smiling;
He knows they'll be back, maybe give him a hat.

But I turn, leaving white world, icy home,
Facing red brick, central heating, empty halls.
Shutting the door, glancing once more into past,
I turn the television on.

--Iain Little
Great Grandma's Grapes

Purple...
pressed from the pulp
of my mother's womb.
Umbilical cord around my neck.
Not enough air.

I came to believe
in never enough.

Great Grandma Mabel rolled
concord grapes
from the palm of her hand
into her mouth.
Eating them seeds and all.
"Waste not, want not."

I imagined those seeds
taking root.
Her body plump and ripe.
Clusters of grapes spill
from her mouth,
until I cry
Enough!

I...eat only the skins,
preferring sour to sweet,
preferring pulp to meat.
It is enough.

--Scott Aycock
October 1996

Green leaves are turning now to brighter death;
The wanderer clasps his cloak against the cold,
And winter threatens daily with his breath
The countryside in silence to enfold
But for the scrape of branches now stripped bare
And the leaves that rattle dry upon the ground
None can escape the wind that’s everywhere.
Though he may shut his ears against the sound.
But with the leaves my heart is turning too;
It soars with them against the deep blue sky.
Though all around decay may meet my view,
My soul with outward seeming won’t comply,
But rises like a bird upon the wing--
Though winter comes, inside my heart it’s spring.

--Christiane Hofmann

The Apprentice Woodsman

I made a path into the woods
Where green ferns grow in spring
And wilt tobacco brown in fall.
Under landmarks oak and elm,
Branches to my solitudes
In shades of summer suns,
Shining idylls of yesteryears,
Where I no longer live.
I knew where my path ended
And left me a wanderer
In my own wood,
Searching for familiar places
Not so far from the home
To which I always returned

Now new apprentice woodsmen
Walk my path
Discover my wood
Use my path to forge their own
And then to find their way back
Home.

--John Affleck

27
Front-Porch Chess War
Wooden armies, eager for carnage,
Face off, swollen with pride-rage,
Brain-torture-pleasure, like witches' pots,
Seethe and boil, point of explosion,
Held in check by age-old iron rule.
Stone-faced, helmeted front-line
Pawns, first-line defense,
Dispensable indispensables,
Stare with cold-hot hate
Across the empty, bloodless field
Soon to be soaked and fertilized with
Rich fertilizer, red and rich,
Life going to life, drain-stain.
Hooves, iron-clad feet and
Spear-butts pounding dirt.
Heart-drums thunder as
White pawn darts; first
Move, studied and deliberate,
By power beyond pawn,
Bubba's battle plan,
Chess-book genius, altering
Goddish defense power in
Opposing force above the
Royal Couple, bishops, knights
Castles, dark in their mystery
Still subject to bubba-
Power on opposite sides of the
Board battlefield, Spiritual-mental
Conflict, forcing lightning-and-
Long-pondered moves of
Subordinate royalty and
Spiritual hierarchs and beyond them,
Gods of war, present always when
Clashes develop, taking sides,
Forcing thunder-bolt moves;
Tauting wwar chants after
Victory rips and tears
Float mockingly over gashed corpses:
"Whatcha gonna do,
Bad Boy, Bad Boy?
Whatcha gonna do when
They come for you,
Bad Boy, Bad Boy?"
Dark-Bubba tenses as
White-Bubba exults and gloats,
Mars and Jupiter mock and
Rock terrestrial citadels, over and
Across the Bubba-kings as the
Conflict plays out on the
Board-field on all its levels:
Illimitable-gods, heroic men, and

--Grady Walker

On the Boardwalk at Dawn
Cool, wet fog hovers on liquid salt,
resisting the sun.
Soles of sandy shoes grate
on drenched, black wood.

Hands clasped in ignorance,
not knowing what lies head,
or what is now behind,
they walk together.

Waves smash on age-old planks,
supports that may not hold.
Bravely, they walk together.

Well-worn guards line either side,
limits established by others.
Assured, they walk together.

Invisible gulls, white on white, soar,
calling down with scorn.
Undaunted, they walk together.

Pressing close,
wispy wind whipping wet hair,
engulfed in longed-for misty shroud,
they kiss.

They walked together.

--Iain Little
The Woods Behind My Grandmother's House

Robin redbreasts jingled spring tunes
like a wind chime among callused
fingers of winter branches
arthritic and brittle and
scrabbling in the air,
raking it for rain,
for gleaning dew and
weaving from Black Widow's gossamer
and wisps of Maga's silver curls
a veil of memories
shaken out into days and decades
and billowed over the coffin
of her firstborn son
bedded down in folds of dead
oak and maple leaves
pillowed at the gray feet of stones
squatting by the oxbow of Willard Creek
where he and his younger brothers
dug for salamanders but found a toy
gun and a pack of cigarettes.

--Geoffrey Wright

Were I to Die

Were I to die
Tonight
A rush of tying
Up loose ends
Would come tomorrow.
Meetings cancelled,
Substitutes brought
In to handle classes.
Papers signed,
Prayers said,
A body dutifully
Shed, along with
Tears, and some
Insurance.
Missing in action for
Awhile I'd be--then
only missed--
And for long times
Forgot.
It would be hard,
But I think, old
World you'd make it.

--William Epperson
Webs

She preserves
yellow photographs,
curled on the edges.
Fragile as ashen leaves.
She touches the picture of a cradled infant,
remembers the smell of her breast milk.

Veins betray the thinness of skin.
With her finger she traces
tiny purple webs
spidering up her leg.

When she was a little girl
her father told her,
"Find your name in a spiders web, you won't grow old."
She laughed then.
Her eyes, now, weary with webs.

On her birthday she dreamed a web,
"My name was in it.
Taking hold of a silky thread I began to dance,
spinning,
spinning,
into ever tightening circles."

She awoke to find her body blanketed
in butterflies, multi-colored.
She wondered why they did not fly.

--Scott Aycock
Ode to the Dusk

People, like fire, burn at both ends
Until all that has been borrowed on this earth
Turns to ash.

Smoke and Spirit mix in the twilight of our lives
And the warrior sings one more ode to the dusk
Lifting voice with the nighthawk and coyote,
Crying out to the amber light and turquoise sky.

He paints himself the color of sunset.
It is enough!

--Scott Aycock

I am a Knife

I am a knife
To cleanly cut
Each moment.
A sharp edge
Shears in two
A present task
And into past,
Like halves of
Orange, casts
Off. No dulling
Of this edge in time.
I cannot turn to flat
To touch with greater
Breadth, or tenderness
Or pressure, this
Now. I move too fast--
To cut and cast
Away.

I want to be a stone
A boy tosses in an edge
Of stream--
To sink and slowly
Feel the flow
And hold the wet
Against the cut and
Drought of time.

--William Epperson
Time and Rythm

heartbeat
flower
winter spring
summerfalls
and children sing.
then comes
seasons and the
weather
changing things and
drifting feather
floating on unknowing wind
broken things that cannot mend.
the sun comes up
the moon goes down
and all the while the world
goes round.
people live and
people die
tears roll down
and we ask why.
The waves roll on
the sandy shore
sometimes in peace
sometimes at war
the mountains sing
the water speaks
the answer is found by
one who seeks;
who seeks to know and
understand
and holds on tightly
to the nail-scarred hand

sometimes life is hard
to fathom
but we're all a part of
time and rhythm.

-- Julie Elizabeth Pape