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Come in...and be captivated...



"The Poet" by Denise Morris Curt;

<http://www.meettheartistsandartisans.com/limning.htm>

Denise Morris Curt, The Connecticut Limner

The violin is from Germany circa 1902. The Poet is dressed in red: made of Chinese sealing wax, her hair is Guilford, CT clay soil and copper particles. The book of poems is lapis lazuli and milk curd with tempera pigments. The white is a brilliant mica from Madison, CT which has been cleansed to remove the dark ore materials. The gold band in her hair is gold dust mixed with melted frankincense. The varnish is beeswax which feeds the wood and helps to continue its life with the movement of each season or temperature change, humidity, etc. and melted amber; the two are heated together to give a high sheen and harder lustre.

*\*\*\*Listen to the Medieval French music accompanying her work below for a Renaissance experience!*



*\*Editor's Note: This poem was printed in our one year anniversary issue in the summer of 2009, written for Ms. Curt, the CT Limner. As such it is again featured here in a shorter, excerpted form as a tribute to the artist.*

The Limner

by Denise Bouchard

An afternoon in May  
The tulips are in bloom  
Amidst great works of Art  
She holds sway  
A bright crimson flower  
In the center of a garden room

Enchantment fills the air  
Harps are playing, the music  
seemingly  
Coming from the trees  
I watch as she magically brings  
like-minded souls together  
Such flair, such ease

In her photographs are glimpses of  
doors  
Of ancient places, where I yearn to  
roam

The smell of frankincense fills her  
tent  
She's an alchemist turning dross  
into gold

A question is put to her "What is a  
limner?"  
And she replies, "Someone who  
illuminates from within."

My head spins with symbols of  
mermaids, golden eggs,  
Apothecarist bowls  
Beautiful mermaid's eyes stare

back at me  
Windows of the soul  
And so it begins...

An invitation to her home follows  
all so surreal  
Gray viney arbors entangle with a  
large pergola  
It's corner a home to cooing  
mourning doves

Holds a constellation of lilacs,  
Casting purple shadows in the dusk  
Below as above

Stone goddesses and angels  
Weave their spell all the while

Strangers, but we pour out our  
hearts  
As the wine flows,  
And the angels smile

Her bedroom, a church of stained-glass  
And the evidence of a miracle of  
her own manifestation  
Hangs on the wall

Rumi on the bedside table  
Ancient Persian philosopher  
Still a guide to us all

The old world European kitchen  
Thick crockery sits on open  
shelving  
With a cafe window from floor to  
ceiling

Looks out upon the magical arbor

Where her pink stuccoed studio sits  
Imbuing it all with a fairy tale  
feeling

She bids us enter the studio  
A peak into another dimension

I pass stairways lined with  
mandolins  
And I spy dwarf shoes on my  
ascension

The look and smell of her tools  
intoxicates  
A round table awaits  
Chairs hold a place for many more

One almost expects Snow White  
To enter through the door

The stained-glass windows create a  
soft, rosy glow  
In the setting sun

More mandolins and guitars on the  
wall  
Awaiting their illumination,  
Will their music be sweeter when  
done?

Such visions of another universe,  
A place beyond time  
More ancient doors on the walls  
open to me  
I'm in Europa, walking in fields of  
lavender  
Grapes abundant on the vines

We come back to the arbor

The enchanted center  
And the talk grows deep

Scathing truths are revealed on this  
night  
Enough to make one weep

Of how we were the mermaids once  
With our enchanting green eyes,  
our thick and lustrous hair  
Of the men who loved us, the  
women who hated us  
And how even male strangers still  
treat us with care  
And how both the lack of gifts given  
and those which were received  
Brought us here

In the ensuing days, I feel lifted and  
buoyant,  
As though I was shown a different  
way to be

Why do I feel so light

It's because I was a mermaid once  
And I have met a limner  
Who, by reminding me of this,  
Has illuminated  
Me  
From within

---

### **Bygone Memories**

by Cheryl Sommese

It wasn't enough that he would call all me stupid,  
a name I knew didn't apply  
yet  
paralleled some actions  
in my life:  
particularly ones that seemed to intercross  
his.  
I smiled and went about my way  
as if the buzzing bees and other nature sounds  
overrode the word,  
it certainly was simpler than reenacting  
the staid drama  
that exposed the relationship  
as futile and  
not really worth the bother.  
But it was when he cocked his head gently  
and told  
me with his eyes that all would  
turn out well I had no choice but  
to run.  
How could he stand there

thinking  
we could be okay  
when roadside blossoms  
perfumed the landscape  
and the afternoon breeze whispered  
tales of renewal?

---

**A Powerful Passageway**

by Cheryl Sommese

Along that winding stretch,  
a passageway leading to death  
transforming humanity forever  
I wish to live  
my life.

Honoring the one who walked,  
and stumbled,  
fell,  
and walked again  
with

noble offerings  
works that feed love.  
And sometimes disappointing—  
immersed in acquisitions of  
frivolity and selfish pleasures,  
regrettably eclipsed  
by greed.

But in that pathway  
the one I seek so fondly,  
resurrecting in the dread of my fears  
and quiet of my hopes,  
it is there I realize  
a welcome escort.  
For despite the yoke  
and melancholy that lingers along the way,  
its incline  
are steps to my salvation.

---

**Secret Garden**

by C. Michelle Olson

An enchanted place where beauty awaits  
Flowers reach out like hands that grab a prize  
Bright bursts of color to discover  
One glance will sure to hypnotize  
Smells of delicate aromas leave a lingering scent softly blowing in the air  
Blue birds cheerfully singing  
Dancing their flight of grace  
Flowing water fountains draw them near  
Stopping to drink and play; no interest to escape  
Inner peace fills this sacred, enchanted place  
Serenity lives in my mind's eye

A fixed picture not to be erased  
The secret garden ever awaits

---

### **Black Tree Black Tree**

by C. Michelle Olson

Black Tree, Black Tree  
What's happened to Thee  
A black beauty tree I now do see  
A shy answer, whispered tenderly,  
'A dreadful fire hath swept over me

'Struck was I with a deadly force  
that destroys all who would stand in its way  
And I, Standing tall  
Not a voice to scream  
No legs to move

Just a stationary tree  
A white burn did I receive

My beauty once displayed so intensely, shines stronger than before  
The fire, though an enemy  
Remained a friend, exposing my core

My beauty shines through my skin  
Black beauty is my name  
Embrace my presence  
That now, your attention, doth claim'

---

### **Quay**

by Akinfe Fatou

When enamored mannerisms

And gestures can no

Longer be contained

In the oval of

Conversation...

That is when eyes

Come in close

And a soft

Index finger

Moves over lips  
To quiet the  
Short anxious breaths  
Like the night songs  
Of small innocent insects  
Drowning in the black  
Night beneath park  
Benches and  
Provocative whispers.  
Then no words at all,  
Heat springing  
In and out of pores.

---

**Voices of the Sun**

by Akinfe Fatou

Zephyranthes,  
Saw-tooth sunflowers,  
Godsend spider lilies  
Channeling

Aisles of the inner-child  
Seeding... potted  
In an artful cylinder  
Arranged near the  
Lancet arch of warm  
Kitchen windows  
Bouquets of simplicity  
And genuine hellos  
Arouse, kindle and wow  
The dewy magenta overtones  
That bellow  
Laughter shared in fond  
Casual chitchat  
Nestling the melancholy wilds  
Of a world turned inside out  
Not with coincidence,  
The arduous  
Fragrance that has a hand  
In rearing rare succulents  
  
At that instant

Adoration, maneuvers on me  
Entertain and sway the senses  
To personified exigency,  
Double entendres  
Converse with beauty

---

**The Feast of Booths**

by Vince Corvaia

1

It's said that for a Christian  
there are no coincidences.

The photo of me walking  
in front of Monticello

taken by a woman whose son  
I would meet a year later in boot camp.

The stranger in the bed and breakfast  
who was reading the same page

of the same novel—Middlemarch—  
I was reading that same evening.

Things like that.

So when I called a synagogue

to ask about Sukkot  
for a novel I was researching

and the rabbi told me  
it was Sukkot that very day,

I remembered that even  
atheists are obsessed with God.

2

The fortunes of one American family  
paralleled the history of the phone booth

in the novel I was writing.

I incorporated all kinds of booths—

sentry booths

kissing booths

valet booths

subway token booths

confessional booths—

and the only booth

I didn't know enough about

in those pre-Internet days

was the Jewish Feast of Booths.

“Why are you writing this book?”

the rabbi said over the phone.

“The main character,” I replied,

“is much like me.

He doesn't know if he's Jewish.”

“Please,” the rabbi said. “Come over.”

3

On my first morning of school,  
as she tucked my shirt in my long pants,

my mother said, “You are Jewish,  
but I told your teacher Protestant

so the other boys will leave you alone.”

On Sunday mornings,

an old woman from the neighborhood  
took me to Catholic mass.

My parents celebrated Christmas.  
You can understand my confusion.

What gave my mother away  
were the death camp testimonies

she dusted in her library—

Five Chimneys

Night

The Last of the Just

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

Patton: Ordeal and Triumph—

and a Star of David

she would wear

until she alienated someone,

then put it away

until the next neighbor.

4

“This novel,” the rabbi said

as we crossed the vestibule

to his office,

“is not the issue here.”

He had more books  
than my mother did.

“If your mother’s mother  
was a Jew, then she is a Jew,

and likewise you are a Jew.”

“But I believe in Jesus,” I said.

“Satan believed in Jesus,” he reminded me.

5

I sat in the back of the temple  
taking notes.

No one told me not to  
until after we had risen

and followed the rabbi  
into a hallway festooned

with plastic fruit  
hanging from a ceiling latticework.

The rabbi explained the huts  
Moses and the Israelites lived in

as they wandered the desert  
for forty years.

I started to pull my notepad  
from my coat pocket

when a man younger than I  
brushed his elbow against mine

and gently shook his head,  
grimacing at the floor.

From there we entered  
a dining hall set for dinner.

“What you did in the temple,”  
said the younger man,  
  
“was not proper. But stay. Eat.”  
“Yes,” said a tall woman  
  
old enough to be his mother,  
“you must tell us all about yourself.”  
  
I yielded to their kindness  
as if tasting fruit after years of sand.

6

I abandoned the novel  
three months later  
  
and eight years later  
left my marriage for reasons  
  
I didn't understand.  
To atone, I tossed

the manuscript and all my research  
into a Dumpster.

I went to work late  
the morning the garbage truck arrived.

7

I have the Internet now.  
What would a genealogical search cost?

But I drag my feet, as with most everything.  
I never even called that young man

from the synagogue,  
the one who after dinner said

something I didn't think  
people really said to each other:

"Gabe Shulman. I'm in the book."

**Illusions**

by Bryan Henry

The streets are a carnival,  
And everything's free.  
Hear the bells.  
See the freaks.  
Blow the whistles.  
Meet strangers  
You think that you know.

Hear the ringmaster scream, "We've got everyone's dreams!  
Just a dime  
For the chance Of a lifetime."  
Come all, It's last call for the show.

The calliope sings  
Over gilded carousel rims.  
Grants youth  
To the old  
For a night.  
Bright lights  
Hide the lies of their lives.

Strange mirrors, odd games,  
Miraculous feats  
Call the wanderer.  
He asks, "Is this real?"

And he walks the wire,  
And time talks,  
And he soars.

And he walks lone roads,  
And time talks,  
And he flies.

---

### **Mon Jardin**

by Nicole M. Bouchard

Dans l'océan il y a un jardin d'histoires  
J'écris le visage de mon coeur sur l'eau

Je vous appelle, mon amour, de l'autre côté de la mer  
'Venez à moi sur le vent'  
Casse la chaîne autour de mon esprit

Vous m'emportez en haut d'un escalier en colimaçon  
Au dessus de l'eau où je peux maintenant respirer

Je visite le jardin d'histoires dans l'océan, de temps en temps  
Mais j'écrit le visage de mon cœur sur la surface de vos yeux à la place.

---

*English Translation:*

*My Garden*

*by Nicole M. Bouchard*

*In the ocean there is a garden of stories  
I write the face of my heart upon the water.*

*I call to you, my love, across the sea  
'Come to me on the wind'  
Break the chain around my spirit*

*You take me away up a winding staircase above the water*

*where I can breathe now...*

*I visit the garden of stories in the ocean time to time  
but I write the face of my heart on the surface of your eyes instead.*

---

### **Balance**

by Michelle Kennedy

I watch the sun burn the moon  
It is the season of orange, yellow flame  
If I stay aware, present  
I will see the opportunity  
like a phoenix to rise  
shed the old skin of who I was  
emerge to seek who I want to be

I think of  
Honey and tar  
ribbons and rope  
strength and vulnerability

The warm flannel sheets  
lay testament to  
the contradictions of life  
Less layers, more layers  
I rise, shake the night away  
Open, I rustle like scattered leaves  
Hear my name being called

Have my trees' whispers to me become more urgent?  
They have something to tell me  
insist that I listen to them, hear them

The balance of light and day  
my hemlocks say  
Remember the balance  
I give pause

When the circle is completed  
and the moon gently washes the day away  
into purple ochre and black velvet  
I look for you, to you, find you  
I am no longer alone in the cold blazing sun  
Tonight you are here  
I feel your hand gently resting  
on the base of my spine  
The heat of your body  
melting completely  
into me, rushing  
through my blood  
filling me  
crushing me  
oh so sweetly  
on this cool autumn night

And I remember  
The balance of light and day  
the heat and the cool  
the burning and the washing

I remember the balance

---

**Fall in Grace**

by Michelle Kennedy

Her coat was bright blue  
Bright blue her coat was  
he repeated again and again  
A five minute interview  
of what he filmed  
after Building One was hit  
Tears flowing down his face  
the camera continued  
to film him, this time  
as he described their  
high speed fall  
holding hands  
They looked  
peaceful  
he said  
Two angels  
falling  
in  
grace  
gracefully  
to the ground  
in a world turned  
upside down  
in a flash  
they chose  
the manner of their death  
when all other choice was taken  
rather than burn, they jumped  
He held her hand  
Bright blue her coat was  
Her coat was bright blue

---

**He Said**

by Michelle Kennedy

He said:  
teach me  
to write on glass  
so that each letter  
slips and slides  
until it's etched in  
permanently  
inspired, humbled  
images tattooed  
words imprinted  
like silk feathers  
against my skin

I want to know  
what it's like  
to love so freely  
to dance on  
the shimmering reflective surface  
while the light absorbs within me  
so I glow, empty/full  
golden slivers  
the flecks of who I was  
melting into who I am

The alchemy of purpose  
of life with meaning  
of giving and getting  
teach me

to be silent  
to breathe in meditation  
to sleep soundly  
where dreams do come true

while words rise to that glass landscape  
stories get told  
and become my gifts  
of poetry, for you

---

### **If I Were**

by Michelle Kennedy

If I were free  
would you lift me up  
take me out over the horizon  
where black asphalt  
meets the blue sky?  
Could I simply sit back, close my eyes  
feel the breeze caress my skin  
thoughts wander freely  
as the miles slip away?

If I were free  
would you lift me up  
let my arms rest softly  
around your waist?  
No words needed  
our bodies bend in unison  
where the road gently curves  
around a wooded corner  
Could you let me  
share this moment with you?

If I were free  
would you lift me up  
off the seat and lead me  
to soft grasses and cool streams

along quieter paths  
not fully explored?  
Could we lift our faces to  
the buttercup sun  
feel it warm us  
to the bone?

If I were free  
would you  
ride until the stars  
peppered the sky  
above us and feel the air  
turn cool and crisp  
Would we not stop  
until we rode as  
long and far as  
we could?

If I were free  
would you?

---

### **Dark Rooms**

by Siddharth Katragadda

On a busy day in the Big Apple, walking through the corridors of a bustling  
flea market, I saw amongst the wares that had been brought here  
from sea to shining sea, and some from overseas, a broken old  
gramophone with a shining head of gold, it's needle still intact.  
'A 1920s model,' the stall owner said, a man who looked as old, 'has a 12''

turntable and a double spring motor.’ It played O.K, had a slight buzzing from the sound box and the graphite grease had gummed up the springs – but could be easily ‘cured’. In any case, the \$300 price tag was a bit over what I had in my wallet, I decided. Besides, it would bring back niggling memories of the old house, back in India.

On my previous visit to my grandfather’s house, one that had fallen from grandeur to pity, was the last time I had been privy to such antiquity. In the study, dark and deserted, the rusted gramophone tip lay stuck to the last track of the record, the drum to the side, like the head of its proud master, when death came to him, one of those clear-blue summer afternoons in Hyderabad. The music still echoed in the air, though it had been years since the voice of Shamshad Begum played in that room, lingering like a ghost that was determined to finish that song. An invisible hand reached to crank the dead machine to life but slipped past. The ghost of my grandfather, trying to pick up his pen, the raven-colored India Ink in which had dried decades ago, tried to finish his unfinished book. How painful it must be to die and leave his characters unredeemed. They were the ones who must have cried the most at his funeral.

They were the ones who must have pleaded for his resurrection, pledges that must have trapped him between worlds.

My grandfather was a great man. His second book won him an award, THE LIFESTORY OF AN INCOMPETANT MAN, it was called.

Evil irony that all his six children would turn out to be incompetent.

After all is said and done, you stand and look at the walls, the limestone-painted rooms, the beds with their large teak headboards, the empty closets that a herd of lizards has made its home, where spiders tumble on thin strings of silver saliva, where roaches scurry out at the sounds of the doors opening, you try to tell yourself, like a confident shrink, there has to be a reason. If there has to be a cause for everything in this world then this is it, these dark rooms are to blame.

A place on the wall where the blue plaster had started to peel, revealing the fading white primer coat, and where still remained, a silent reminder, a shallow dent in the shape of a forehead.

This was probably where my grandfather hit the shivering head of his youngest son for failing in math. Red marks were forbidden.

In the middle room, full of clothe hangers without any clothes, like skeletons without bodies, this was where my mother must have run to

get away from the wrath of her father when his face became a marble effigy of contempt, and his expression bordered on mockery, his mouth straightened into a hard line. Often, when she got less than full marks in Telugu class, her father's voice would echo over that of the mullah's wail from the nearby Mosque.

Then, in the kitchen, where must have sat my grandmother, her wicker rice sieve going "Shush! Shush!" as she prepared dinner, the smell of cardamom and cloves in the air, fanning my grandfather, while he voraciously swallowed his meals of oily, ghee-filled pomfret curry, feeding his brain than his stomach, where his hungry characters could start playing out their parts; curry that was one day bound towards his heart like a pirate ship sailing to port.

From the kitchen opened the courtyard, where my grandfather must have stood and listened to the descent of his landlord's voice, words heaped in abuse, intermittent between sprinkles of saliva showering down like mango-showers in mid-April, about how much excess water had been used and how many months' rent had not been paid, the words entering his veins, reaching his heart.

Fear, neglect and insult written in every corner, on every wall - and pride,  
the worst of them, full of half promises, written everywhere.

On the front wall was a picture of grandfather,  
faded brown with age, tawny, sepia, standing proudly by his silver-gray  
Morris Minor, one hand on the shiny hood, the chrome glinting through  
his fingers, his broad-carved face twisted in a proud smile,  
and, had it not been a photo, one could have seen a muscle flicking  
pompously in his jaw. His firm mouth curled, as if always on the edge of  
laughter, his crooked nose giving him a kind of rugged geniality, his hair, a  
cobweb of silver against his sun-whacked skin, his expression darkened  
with

an unreadable emotion, like a hunter who'd just skinned a man-eater alive.

Dressed in a whey silk shirt and khaki pantaloons, he looked every bit a  
sahib. He had done his bar-at-law at Oxford. Was the pride on his face  
bound to trickle into the minds of his young children?  
Children, who, after he died, worshipped that picture  
as they did the many god pictures in the puja room.

Did it make them believe that pride alone would run their lives.  
like the Morris Minor that ran on just gasoline for many a year.  
chugging along, the wind in its domed windshield,  
kicking dust up in a swirl as it rattled past dusty village roads on the way to  
Gandipet Lake that lay smoother than snakeskin in the sun, the fiery disc

bisecting the horizon, dew-drenched grass glittering.  
Past fields silver and green with ripening rice, six chattering kids in the  
back, fighting over who sat by the windows, and who in the middle  
so he or she could croon over their mother's head  
in the front and play with her sari gold-laced pallu.

Each piece needed to be examined, like the innards of a mind. Weighed for  
guilt. Each room needed to be turned inside out,  
Just as Lord Narasimha, the half-lion, half-man, did by  
splitting a demon in half with his bare hands, spilling his entrails.  
I stood at the doorstep, neither indoors nor outdoors,  
It was dusk, neither day nor night. I tried to invert this house, with all its  
dark rooms. The failure of a life, or lives or a family  
or an entire generation lay in the environment that gave rise to It.  
These dark rooms.

*Notes:*

*puja: prayer*

*pallu: end of sari*

*pomfret: type of fish*

*Lord Narasimha: A man-lion avatar of Lord Vishnu who comes to*

*earth to kill a powerful demon who could be killed neither indoors  
nor outdoors, neither during the day nor at night and neither by  
human nor an animal.*

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