

BLUE COLLAR REVIEW

Journal of Progressive Working Class Literature

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Review by Prema Bangera

The landscape of a magnificently robust fist resurrecting above an ensemble of forlorn bodies with picket signs rising together awakens you and pulls you into the Summer 2011 issue of the Blue Collar Review. One of the picket signs on this front cover reads: You Say "Cut Back." We Say Fight Back. You are in the presence of the working class as this journal celebrates their songs of every day.

This collection brings together poets from all around the regions of the United States and even from around the world. Gregg Shotwell from Grand Rapids, MI writes about the morphosis of an individual into a monotonous environment in "I Am The Rouge." One can feel the mistreatment which has transformed a human into a warehouse:

I have become the assembly line
crawling like a centipede
through the concentration
of time clock rhythms
and pneumatic sighs...

I bow to the Madonna of Machinery
whose nipples are like grease fittings,
whose crankcase is a womb.
I am the fire in the foundry.
I am the pit.
I twist nuts, shoot screws,
and spit rivets like slang...

My blood is thicker than oil.
My saliva more toxic
than cutting fluid...

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I am the Rouge.
I was here, Mr. Ford,
before you were born.
I will be here, Mr. Ford,
when you
are long time gone.

Here, we witness the paradox of a person broken and fallen on his knees while rising and voicing this injustice.

The effect on the individual always spreads into the greater mass. Philip Porter from Willoughby, Australia writes of the quite crackling of all laborers diffusing like disease in "Rubber Workers." We see the slow progression of the inevitable exhaustion:

At 8 our street died every night.
rows of hibernating houses,
windows flickering the TV screens' spul-like,
eerie-blue, monitoring the pulses...

At 11, our street shrugged
as bundled men like chrysalises
in overcoats slipped from their
council owned cocoons.

Tributaries of workers swelled
to flood. Some moved faster
as they woke, others
slowed to better hear a mate's

remark. A shifting shoal of black-
winged moths drawn to the glow
of factory lights the clang, crash
bang of their industrial Jerusalem...

The journal ends with Al Markowitz from Norfolk, VA speaking of the cycle of life, its application to the hopeful change of this community in "Anticipating the Fall." The tenderness of its movement flows throughout us:

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Something is dying here
among the shuttered strip malls
and vacant houses lawns
reclaimed by wildflowers and ragweed
The smell of the earth burning not so far away...

Something is being born here
overdue but stirring
in the dense disillusionment
and desperation of the unemployed
and soon to be –

A rumbling in the distance
becoming louder
a storm gathering –
the yet fragile promise of
a new season.

Markowitz, the editor, brilliantly places this poem at the end to perhaps create anticipation for the next issue, which will surely be another good read. This poem acknowledges the current destruction of our society, but holds a sense of hope to fight for a better tomorrow.

Similar to these pieces, many of these poems invade your mind, break your heart and leave you wondering how strength carries us on—how this strength is seldom appreciated.

This journal is an assemblage of voices breaking concrete with talented poets such as J.E. Bennett, Kent Newkirk, Nick Norwood, Barbara Gregorich, David Sermersheim, Troy Bigelow, Thomas Lange, Michael Conner, Kate Dwiggin, Andrena Zawinski, Robert Petras, Chad Haskins, Kent Newkirk, DB Cox, Dominic Cuzzo, Debbie McIntyre, Charles S. Carr, Mary Franke, Cleo Fellers Kocol, P.B. Bremer, Ken Poyner, zdoiores Guglielmo, R. Yurman, Sarah M. Lewis, Ed Weerstein, Margaret Sherman, Dillion Mullenix, and Jon Andersen. Each poem seeped into my skin and touched my soul for they speak the truth of our suffering.

On the back, Werner Herzog is quoted: “The poet must not avert his eyes. You must look directly at what is around you, even the ugly and... the decadent.” In the Blue Collar Review, we see the open eyes of artists painting the ugly and the decadent. Each poem unfolds to reveal how this ugliness becomes beautiful as we enter their hearts, their minds, cradling in the soot of their every day.