"Shade of the Earth"

Joseph Patrick Self
Eastern Washington University, jself3@eagles.ewu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.ewu.edu/srcw_2020_creative_works

Part of the Fiction Commons, Modern Literature Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation
https://dc.ewu.edu/srcw_2020_creative_works/2

This Creative Work is brought to you for free and open access by the 2020 Symposium at EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2020 Symposium Creative Works by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jotto@ewu.edu.
On The Mountaintop

In the Shade of the Earth blocking the Sun
The Nighttime haze fills in and covers the Mountaintop.
Spirits rise with fuming sighs, tortured echos
Rasping throughout a devils mist of starless black
Poison, which swallows and becomes nature’s Tower.
The Sun took a swan dive off a Skyscraper
Not but an hour ago and already the infernal
Army has spread a gashing cloak of Ink.
Penetrating and wracking what once was a Beacon
Of primeval green, ruddy trampled brown, and silver.

The Burning Boy

I stand on the Mountaintop, blooded and bound
By the Fallen Assassin’s of cold wind and scattered hope.
This is the Night that surrounds and the peak
With which I make my Final stand. There is nobody.
Noncompatriots stride like wraiths with vaporous hands
That hold with Iron upon the chains that lock me
To my knees. Rupturing chains which need no lock.
Their binding is of pain and loss. A blade for each,
Like a scorpions tail they pierce into my forearms,
Cutting bone, slicing muscle, necrophiling skin, expulsing blood,
Which slides down my arms, forming pools that
Spread and encircle in occult glyphs, a ritual completing.
But there is blood that does not fall. Instead it is drunk
Up by the chains and flows, streaming tear by drop along the links
To the Nightmares, who by their turn gorge upon heavens liquor,
Filling their feast, becoming drunk as a well.
Wrought with rot, these witches, these Banshee’s consume
Gargling with my life, draining of care and absolving aspiration.
In this void there is revelry and I, like a stuck pig,
Am at its center, kept alive purely for the good that I may give.
I am spinning, tumbling, falling and out of this
Black hole I ascend,— to see that I am not on a Mountain,
But in a pit. The dream transcends and I am in a dungeon, 
Not a tower, joined only by a man of Faith, another of 
My brood, another who could never challenge, rise, or break free. 
He grins with a look that tells me to get comfy and 
Rolls up his sleeves. Hairy, muscular, firm and repulsing are 
His forearms, for halfway in they bare the same wounds 
As me but far older and clearly never healed. They’re 
Covered in pussing green, Mottled tortured brown, and silver shackles, 
All too similar to mine. I stare at him, daggers with no words. 
“How can you stay like this? How can you live down here? Why?” 
He looks at me and with cracked, bitten lips he mouths 
“How can you?” And there is something more to him, 
This outcast, this downcast Man, sleeping in his waste, living in 
Pain. There are red fingernails. Self-painted. A joy. He is me 
And I am him. Baneful fury becomes us both. We rage 
And where wounds were, open and bleeding or old and 
Disease-ridden, fire leaps outward crackling along veins 
That weave around our arms until they are pillars of 
Flame that shroud our souls in light so bright as 
To blind ourselves from the darkness inevitably still there. 
From this fire, which is ferric orange, the yellow of an 
Exploding sun, and the red of a dismantling mind, 
It is our hands that still show, even as the flames 
Extend, flicking like lashing forked tongues across our 
Bodies until we are beacons of this starlight inferno. 
It is our hands that we raise and push down 
And like the rocket kin of angels, we roar upwards. 
We wake from our dreams and with a last parting smile, 
I am once more alone on the mountaintop, the greatest 
Height, the tower of earth. I am once more alone 
And it is the death of Night that surrounds. 

The horned, scorned, and hidden cackling at my weakness 
Once more...
May Live or Die

I am the burning boy. The spectres that surround
Me are the nothingness that threatens every heart.
Back among the Night of dead stars, I must be more
But with the fire in me and out, I cannot be more.
I am returned to the mountaintop. Was it all a dream?
The demon mistresses spin in a hectic dance around me.
Drunk and high with their red hair turned black in the cold.
Then assassins, brutal like the midnight moon of frozen blood
Continue to clench firm, unwavering hands upon the
Chains that pierce and draw and alleviate the self.
My body is dizzy from the blood loss and it is with
A running pulse that should not have been that I am
Able to look down and realize that I have been so
Focused on the claws of darkness that surround me
That I have neglected the watching of my surrender.
I turn my eyes downward, as from wings upon my own
Face. And there are tears pouring down. The face is squinched.
I am crying and screaming. My eyes are closed and there
Is rampant torture in the muscles of my face. And
Still my face which has so much pain in it does not move.
It is me and it is unfeeling or rather unrevealing.
My knees dig into the earth and my arms with their
Palms upward, blood pouring from their center, splay forward
Into a position of bowing but with collapse, without strength.
Once more, I am my heart, where the biggest blade has
Pierced. My eyes open to stare down at crimson mud.
They snap shut in despair.

I am done.
I am afraid.

What now, what next? There is nothing. Nothing I can see.
No radiant path forward, just the blight, just the darkness.
Just my heart, which when searching is empty. It is not
The Night. It is not these witches. It is not life that
Is nothing, cold and dark and unfeeling and heartless. It’s
Me.

The last of my blood drains from my spirit
And the hags which lap like a pack of wolves close in
As I collapse in final fate. They race forward pouncing
And slipping, loosed to hate to dig out and claim my
Heart. They tear apart my chest, splaying ribs
And pulling off flesh and as they raise my
Heart above them laughing in manic joy, it is found
That there is not a coven of stoneturning witches,
But one single controlling wave of shattered emotions
In this one woman with hair turned pale in the Night.

Must Burn to Feel

I am what it means, that we may live or die.
Not a heart that is blown up, but one that chooses
To explode and in its final moments, standing at
Heavens gate, between clouds and the sun, there is fire
That swirls and takes your death like fuel to claim
You from the ashes.

The Midnight Mother in robes of Ice is still in her
Rejoicing to finally have a heart of her own. She dances
In ruby red rain, jumping and splashing with bare feet
In puddles of the same ichor. But I am dead. Aren’t I.
I finally did it. I gave up. I was to weak. The sadness
Of not feeling sad took over. The worthless pain worth
Too much to sell. It took my heart, my last refuge.
The only thing I still had to cling to hope. Gone.
But I let go of my attachments. This is serenity. Is not this peace. Isn’t it?
So I’m not sure I miss it. But where there
Was weakness, there is strength. Where there was
Death, there is life. Where I had reached my
Destination, reached my end, I find that I am
Still on a journey and in the Blankness
Where my heart used to be where there was
Blankness even when it was there, A phoenix now
Kindles whatever part of me still remains even when the
Rest has given up or given in. There is fire of rebirth
In the cavity of my chest and with passion the Flames roil and fill the network of my veins. They Replace the blood that was lost with not hope or Brilliant kindness or anything good, but withe Anger And spite and hate at myself for what was lost Because I couldn’t keep it. The fire surrounds me And like I was in the pit, as I always am I turn into a beacon of searing heat, My arms Pillars of light and fury, my hands the only uncloaked. My body rises from it’s crumpled, discarded fetality And with Ra and Apollo and frey standing in a line Behind me, my arm stretches out making a grip In the air and the heart in Night’s hand bursts Into Flame washing over her. My heart, the apple, Courses towards me and returns to my grasp. Our Touch causes an eruption and as I shove it Back into the gaping hole of loss, I am able to feel Everything that I thought I never would again and At the top of it all, the rage that brought it back. Nights robes now drip and she covers her face From the light. “Give time it’s due. We’ll be here once more.” “The nothing is in you not me. The frost natural, not the Flame.” “Yes. but this heart is mine. I may be cold, but I’ll Fight not to freeze. Because I despise you more than I could ever hate myself”

Shade of the Earth

I must burn to feel for I am the burning boy. Night stands before me and she is all the pain The future holds. She is a depression nap because Being awake is too hard. She is a mouth Clamped shut out of fear. She is every Unrealized desire. She is surrender. Silver manacles On rough hands somewhere unknowably deep within The earth. She is the weakness I hate in Myself. So I take this hate and I mold it into whatever can be used to combat the
Chains that try to take hold. I sculpt anger
From a block of pain and an arsenal from loss
So that the next time I find I have
Climbed to the top of the mountain and
Once more am surrounded by Night and
Her sisters, I can search in my heart and
Discover more than nothing, So that when
Night hurls her scorpion chains I can deflect
Them with a sword of fire and burn them
To molten ash with the light of the sunbird in my
Heart. I am the shade of the earth and I am the burning boy