EXPLORATIONS
IN POETRY

by

Philip N. Henry
to sister a-go-go

as you move
your naked body
gracefully
across the lighted stage
how strange
it has preserved
the grandeur
of an ancient ritual
which stirred hearts
long ago.

strange how
as you dance
and prance
your rhythm
recites a story
familiar to another shore
your shadow
paints images
of gods and spirits
unknown.

wiggle
sweat
sway/bend
like a palm branch
captivated by the wind
but there is no glory
in your enchanting story
only compulsion
to survive
in a merciless world
creating
bewildered glances
and sex phantasies
in an audience
which shows appreciation
by tossing pennies
about your sacred feet.
The Masks

What color are people
behind the masks,
could they be colorless,
or are they mask on through?
Masks come in many colors—
red, black, white, yellow, and blended,
I wonder if people do too.
Could the human spirit
wear the color of a mask,
or is it colorless
like the wind,
for the wind is free?
Many people use masks
to hide their nakedness
while breeding false identities
and deceitful divisions in mankind.
What shame.
Without masks people could be the same,
for those enslaved by masks
have become colors
rather than human beings.
to the unconcerned

the bitter cold
sinks its teeth
into dry naked skin
shattered nerves scream
a message from within
a deserted stomach
finds strength to utter
an ignored squeal
gone is the fill
of yesterday's meal
ideas for money surface
from an ocean of dreams
stolen from comic books
and television scenes
a baby cries
a disgusted wife moans
a knock at the door
carries a bill collectors tone
out the back door
like a runaway slave
to the sanctity of a pool hall
for a while he is saved

a robot
fashioned for destruction
remote control
society's limitless seduction
of innocent black souls
for no other reason

you look at me
and for no other reason
than the color of my skin
you say
i hate you

i look at you
and say
you don't hate me
you hate yourself
for not understanding me

you look at me
and because
the civilization of my people
was destroyed
by the uncivilized nature of yours
and say
nigger

and i look
at your stupidity
and say
nigger is not
in the color of the skin
or ancestral string
it is a disease
that plagues
the white ignorant brain.