

**Back then he was the butterfly unseen yet beautiful in the sun
burnishing the noonday keeping life alive**

by Michael Kleiza

Back then he was the lifefull meadows, fields of stone, the goldenrod and granite, the burdock and the overburden, the jar that glugged the fertile muck of the pond to catch water bugs.

Back then he was night sky stars, Orion's belt, the Big Dipper, Polaris, galaxies receding, the evening heat, lightening lashing the horizon.

Back then he was the wind, the May air, the sun, the river and the bent reeds. the shoreline curved, the aerodynamics of dragonflies, burping frogs and birds spearing the air, the rust on fishhooks in the weeds, all the cycles that fall in upon themselves and return.

Back then there were the older boys that had found a robin's nest, dropped the chicks one by one into the water pushing them under and he hid with death beneath the prehistoric tree canopies near the burned-out cars and the garbage.

Back then there was the aftermath of a torture that grasped tongues, keeping him silent from saying what he saw, submerging all that had been done in backrooms where the black robes hung.