Buddha at Mogaung

Early every morning
the silent Burmese worshipper
picks five or six
brightly-colored blossoms,
places them in a rusting can
and brings his offering
before the cross-legged statue.

U San Win prays,
then looks, as he has done
a thousand times before,
at the statue, to the left
of the center of the chest,
where a heart would be,
but where, now, gapes
a ragged, shadowed hole.

His brother from Bhamo, his cousin in Kutkai,
his uncle, the merchant, in Myitkyana,
all told the same story:
enemy soldiers,
hoping to find hidden treasures,
smashed each holy figure,
then burned the tin and bamboo huts.
Empty-handed, the invaders moved on,
never finding, always searching.

Siddartha Gautama, the Buddha,
taught, "Hatred does not cease by hatred
at any time; hatred ceases by love."
U San Win thinks of the Teacher's words
and of the darkened hole
and of the emptiness
of war.

Harry Spigle

Stonehenge

Across the Salisbury Plain
driving west from London,
peering over tangled grasses
whipping past our bus, peering over
racing posts enmeshed in August weeds,
we glimpse, at last, the sloping mounds
where sleep the Beaker kings.
Around us, traffic slows.
Stonehenge. Stonehenge ahead.

The ancient stones rise random,
ragged, purple-grey against
a sweep of green. Above the
massive bluestones, hauled from
distant Wales, stretch
lintel bridges piled like children's
blocks. Beyond, and all around,
the rolling, surging Constable
sky leans down.

Our guide points out the avenue
of carved and tapered rock
that may have tracked the summer sun,
the prehistoric moon's eclipse.
Two thousand years before our
calendars were drawn, the towering
trilithons were raised by Bronze Age
hands, to form a great ellipse
inside the sandstone circle.

We know the plunderers arrived, and when.
The pillaged bluestones cracked,
the barrows sank. We know the
heel stone shifted, the shattered
lintels fell in fragments upon the
Salisbury plain. We know the outer circle
broke apart, to leave us only this:
the silent stones,
the changing sky.

Naomi Spigle