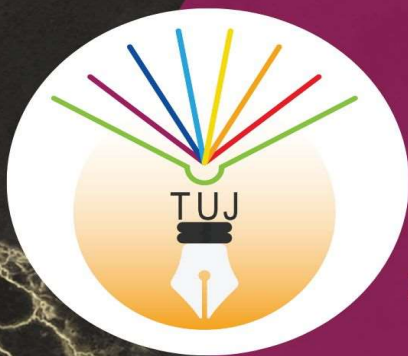


**Volume 01
Issue 05
March 2023**

ISSN: 2582-6352



The UNiVerse Journal

**A Quarterly Refereed
Open-Acess Multidisciplinary
e-journal of Humanities.**

**Editor-in-chief:
C.P.Pathakk**

**Indexed Journal
Peer-reviewed**

An International Quarterly Refereed Open Access
e-Journal

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The old warrior

Sharon Lopez Mooney

He leans against winter shadows
with such great sorrow, longing
to conjure peace as a magician might
with sacred water before a birth,
cupping a cigarette like men in war do
he inhales, feeling his fear has burned
right through him scalding his children
outside an occasional car passes in the rain
sounds of wet whipping on the street.

He flips the remote, shutting the tv down
silence bangs against the heater
he draws the blinds partly closed
longs for his home land to surround him,
heart of his, held captive when
they banished him and forbade return,
his heels still stick out bare
from shoes worn as a desert man does
no socks in winter, backs forced flat
he makes sandals of every shoe he wears
believing maybe he can one day return.

But now the desert warrior is dying,
he is tumbling within shifting sands
changing his entire world, the walls melt,
he is lost in an eternally damnable dark.
He blows smoke over his shoulder as a desert man does
no longer hungry for humus on deli bought bread, he
sits back and cries, a siren grows louder
screams past his warehouse home, fades into the fog,
he cries against being alone as a desert man might,
at three am the concrete city outside is quiet.