

**While Standing in Front of
Henri Rousseau's
Woman Walking in an Exotic Forest
by Mary C. O'Malley**

I feel the heat of his jungle as
fungal smells dissipate
into the present time of the
museum. Orange suns
hang from primeval fronds,
while someone like me
(a lady in white frills) stands
stilled as a wild blue cockatoo
awaiting a spider to eat.

Termite and bird layered
sounds slither from
cracks between the canvas
and bronzed frame.
Giant blue flowers push against
a gravity of reason.
This conjured heaven or
past Eden's life invades
swallows whole my humid
dreams. And it permeates my
primitive blood
relights archaic
genes while we swirl
on a tilted planet in
a galaxy so far from peace.