

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



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Volume 41
number 4

Waterways

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VOLUME 41 NUMBER 4

in his language,
people live
more graciously too
much would be lost
in the translation

.

Enid Dame
excerpt from
Translation

WATERWAYS

Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 41 Number 4

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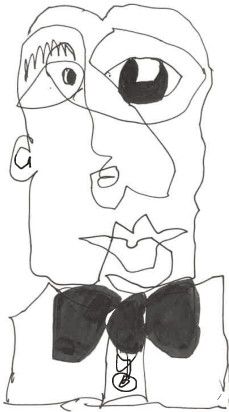
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THE POET AND HIS POEM.



Wayne Hogue

James Penha

Virtual Unlearning

The first classrooms in which I taught came configured by ancient principles and principals of City public schools—teacher at an imposing desk on a podium beneath the clock, before the chalkboard facing the children under control. But the sixties suggested to some of us that the shape of schools should change with the times. “Why not meet outside,” we asked . . . or just broke out of buildings into sports fields and gardens and parks, and indoors on floors, in tight circles of chairs or bean bags, in groups, to puzzle out a theorem or discover a poem or argue a philosophy. The lines were redrawn. Not forever it seems. Our gracious revolution will not translate to zoom.

Marilyn Braendeholm

Tell Me About Little Oak Elementary

When Dad got his new mail route,
we moved house. I went to a school
that taught kids with hearing loss.
Anacusis. That was such a big word.

Little Oak was walking distance from
home, and as we walked everywhere,
Mum enrolled me straight away.

I was one of four odd-ones-out,
though I never felt that way, me
not being deaf like everyone else.

I learned to sign, and finger spell,
body language, facial punctuation,
speaking without ever saying a word.

Like all kids, we studied reading,
writing and arithmetic, but mostly
we explored our senses. Learned
life-lessons: eye contact, attention,
touching, sharing, and friendship.

We sniffed out scents and recorded
memories. Scented comfort in waxed
wooden floors, oak bannisters, and
muddy rain boots and earthy beaver-

wet woolen coats in the cloakroom.
Dry chalk smelling dusty as blankets.
Forest scented No 2 yellow pencils.
Books scented woody with vanilla.

Did I mention lunch . . . I should.
A milk bottle, achingly cold, and
a red jam sandwich in the other hand.

I'll tell you about Little Oak, but
it's not what I saw or did; it's
all those scents that still fill
my head with deafening joy.

Edward J. Rielly

The Holophrastic Stage

Each word carries a sentence
of meaning, a world of feeling,
a question transcending her young age,
a statement profound in its simplicity.

The parent listens, interprets,
senses in the moment a lifetime
of articulated meaning yet to come.
But that can wait. In the word,
in the young child, one word is all
that matters now to her, to you.

Monique Laforce

*D'avance nous sommes démunis
comme les dessins des neiges
Jean Royer*

J'avais pendant si longtemps oublié
les mots qui dessinent le bonheur
je te donnerai
ma planète la plus cernée
mon visage le plus fragile
et le plus vulnérable
celui du sommeil

tu caresses un oiseau
dans le creux de la vague
et j'entends un bruissement d'ailes
qui survole toute la mer

Monique Laforce

*In advance we are destitute
like snow drawings
Jean Royer*

I had forgotten for so long
the words that draw happiness
I will give you
my most surrounded planet
my most fragile face
and the most vulnerable
that of sleep

you stroke a bird
in the bottom of the wave
and I hear the rustle of wings
which fly over the whole sea

Ellaraine Lockie

An Act of Kindness

She is one of the women
who travels daily from her township
Singing in the back of a pick-up truck
with a chorus of others
Come to clean the rooms
in my B & B bordering Kruger Park

She sees me walking a path
parallel to the Crocodile River
I see her running toward me
Watch her fall to her knees before me
Close the lowest five button holes
that fashion the front of my
ankle-length straight skirt

She says something in Swati
Looks up at me as a lilac-blue blossom
drops from a jacaranda tree
And under the kindness of shade
she pats my calves

I can't interpret the words
but I can read her body language
There my dear
I've closed the open invitation
The accident that wrote itself
across your womanhood
I know this because here no woman
would walk aware of bare thighs winking
between the weave of khaki

I help her up
Hold her hardened hands
Thank her by returning
the sunshine of her smile
And waddle like a knob-billed duck
back to my room where I segregate
the unbecoming skirt to a suitcase

Pat Anthony

Early Tuesday Morning

She mops the open air
foyer at La Universidad
Veracruzana where doorways
open onto a crowded streets
inimitable green VWs for the hailing
racing past in jostling cadres
their intrepid drivers, their tinny honks

I pause to chat with la señora
before another day splits us
into our roles of maid and student
but for this exchange she is mentor
our liquid Spanish spilling over
damp tiles as I ask about her trip
in on the buses, her family today

she rewards me with tips for
navigating among los vendedores:
las fotos, el papelería, la farmacia,
which coffeemaker my housemother
would like the best, which sweet
buns to buy from the panadería
on my long walk home

as the first bell rings we hug hard
her wide smile lingering behind
my eyes as I enter the narrow classroom
and begin copying crowded sentences chalked
on the worn blackboard thinking
how our brief exchanges teach me
so much more than what's written here
the lessons I'll really take away.

Wayne Hogan

The Ukranian Peasant Woman's Struggle To Prepare The Evening Meal She Fears May Not Be For Everyone

You learn your strengths and weaknesses doing this, learn your place in the scheme of things, learn the difference between Saturn and the RAS, she said to herself, thinking of the many P-valves and JITs that lay ahead. She knew the homeostatic nature of most of all the processes, in some respect. Knew her numbers for the most part, in some respect. In some respect, she knew the proper vs. improper forums from which she labored, had rotely memorized the exact routes taken by one component in getting to another component, etc., in some respect.

You learn the difference between “look” and “see” in this business, when to say “dough” and when to say “go,” she said to herself, for the most part.

Charles Rammelkamp

Brain Damage

On the earwax removal kit package
I saw on the pharmacy shelf next to Q-Tips,
I misread “bonus drainage basin”
as “brain damage.”

I thought of autocorrect.
Writing to a friend
about recent novels I’d read
featuring female protagonists,
the software decided
I meant “felafel protagonists.”

I remembered a phrase I’d seen
in some online news item that flashed by:
“the long-term impact
of smartphone use
on mental health.”

Why did I start calling Andy “Larry”?
Did he remind me of my former brother-in-law?
Why couldn’t I remember names?
Words elusive as dust motes.

I thought of Freudian slips. *Parapraxis*.
Some unconscious devil taking the train
of thought down a different track.
I thought of cigars just being cigars.

William Corner Clarke

Intimation

Yesterday
On a window screen
Facing west
I noticed a small moth
At rest
Silhouetted
Against the late
Afternoon sun
Wings a filigree
Of black lace
Perfect balance
Exquisite grace
And then
I remembered
The year before
Seeing another one
In the same place
Identical
Wings as beautiful
The same detail
And for a moment
I could not help
But wonder
If it ever sensed
In some unfathomed
Insect way
That it had lived
Another life
In the springtime
Sunshine
Of another day

Desperate

The party is collectively desperate to find a perfect candidate to oust the bull currently breaking all the good china in the official residence.

No one's gaining traction so far and they've called in consultants to help them define their Dream Candidate along key personal characteristics.

The profile now calls for a grey, someone not too white and not too black, preferably quietly bisexual but a good fit with they for a personal pronoun.

Military service is mandatory, preferably with a Purple Heart history and rank of ex-Captain on the college debating team would be a plus for the Incumbent Contender Debates.

The window for Applicant Submissions is still open until the thirty-first, so if you know anyone who fits the profile, encourage them to file early and often.

Sheryl L. Nelms

The City Secretary

one Saturday night
in June

in Baird, Texas
on Main Street
usually a dead
ghost town

a micro brewery
was celebrating
its grand
opening

in a renovated
building

with taste testing
and free shots

of their twelve flavors

Della and her husband
had been helping themselves
to round after round

until she noticed
the inviting copper pole
behind the counter

and climbed on
and began to twirl

she didn't see
the city councilman
who recorded the video
of all her undulations

but she did catch it
Monday morning
when the mayor
said, "You're fired!"

Roberta Gould

Chatter

The story was aborted
in the middle of the river
The fish swam on
The flies persisted

A train overhead
gave a warning sound
The background towers
hummed alive

Time passed and the words
subsided. No need to say
more than the water itself
whatever the tale

another story
The rain came
filled the river again
one more time

Our Geography of Poets

California

Ellaraine Lockie

Kansas

Pat Anthony

Maine

Edward J. Rielly

Maryland

Charles Rammelkamp

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Roberta Gould

Quebec

Monique Laforce

Tangerang-Banten

James Penha

Tennessee

Wayne Hogan

Texas

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Virginia

William Corner Clarke

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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