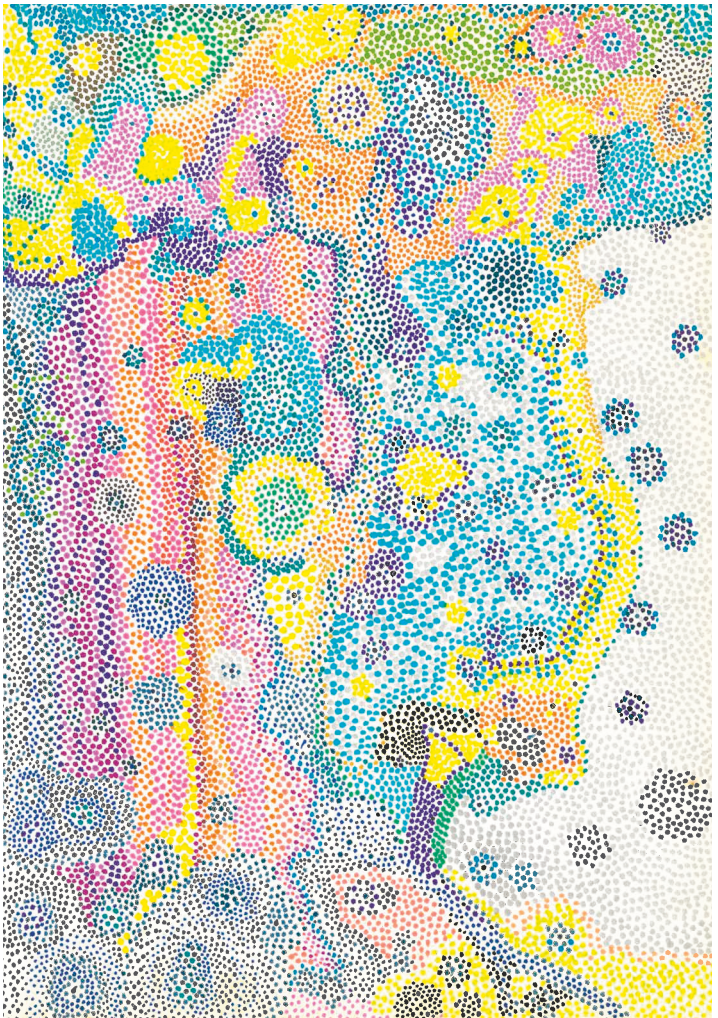


Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



November, 2022 Volume 43 No. 5

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Volume 43

Number 5

But 2020's lockdown auction
was online only

excerpt from "Enfold" by James Penha

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contents

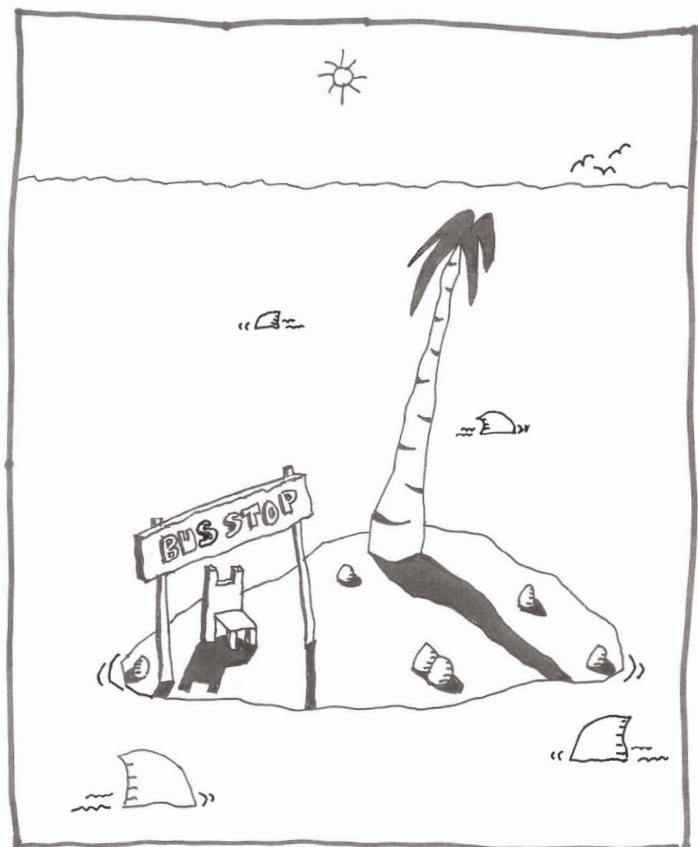
| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| James Penha | 4 |
| William Corner Clarke | 5 |
| Deborah H. Doolittle | 9 |
| Gilbert Honigfeld | 13 |
| Mary Belardi Erickson | 15 |
| Irene T. Winslow | 16 |
| Ron Singer | 17 |
| Wayne Hogan | 18 |
| Sylvia Manning | 19 |
| Richard Spiegel | 20 |

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frontispiece by Wayne Hogan

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with a stamped, self addressed envelope.



Wayne Heegan

Paranoidemic

"And when you die," he said,
"a new plague will be all mine:
they will believe I let you fall,
locked you down on purpose,
knocked you down at auction,
bid for your misfortune,
your fortune.

I will be the hunter, pray.
I will be the hunted, prey."

William Corner Clarke

Black Friday at the Gates of Hell

Long lines
Of eager people
Too many to count
Outside the building
All hunched and shivering
Standing in the bitter cold
Focused on the brilliance
Of the doorway light
Shopping carts at the ready
Hoping to leave
With all the treasure
They can seize

At the stroke of midnight
The doors are opened
And from somewhere
High above the crowd
Trumpets sound
And a massive voice declaims
"Abandon all hope
Ye who enter here."
For a moment panic
Ripples down the line

"What does it mean?
Did we need a ticket?"

“No” “No”
The Voice assures
“Just come inside
And do not fear
There’s everything here
You could ever want
To find
In every other land
Shop forever and forever
Until the end of time”

William Corner Clarke

The Attic Room

In the attic room
Of the old house by the lake
We found a tiny tornado
Caught fast within
A flask of tempered glass
Endlessly curling
Time around a single flame
Also a dusty crate
Of Blackberry wine
Dated 1949
Next to a box of unused
Collodion plates

A large brass telescope
Stood on a tripod
By the dormer window
And on the floor
Lay an open notebook
Dark leather bound
Filled with some kind
Of fine scrolled hieroglyphs

No one knew from where
The old man came
And not knowing what else to do
We took the tornado

To a cave in the mountains
At the valley head
It turns there still
In its own small, stranger's way

The hieroglyphs have beauty
But remain
A mystery to us all
The wine
Was beyond compare

My Babylonian Exile

There were no hanging gardens for condolences. No waters, river or otherwise, to offer my lugubrious libations. No leaning tower—it was a ziggurat, by the way—to indicate the hour when this self-imposed isolation, quarantine of the heart, would end. That you were part of the solution was part of the problem, so soft and warm and tender to the touch, we never did ask for much, and that's what we got, day after day, avoiding each other like the plague, remembering what we could not forget.

Interlude

Think about a meadow you would have to walk to, about the trail crowded with ponderosa pines, the glimpses of blue that could be sky or creek water depending where you look. Think about the crunch of rock and dirt beneath your boot, the songs of Tanagers and Jays as you make your way deeper and higher into back country wood.

The way the clearing first appeared, an exaggeration of sunlight, the tufted tops of grasses crowned in molten gold, the shy faces of wildflowers turning to look first east then west, turning as the Earth turns. Bluebells, buttercups, glacier lilies, Indian paintbrushes dotting the small plot where no trees grew. The buzz of bees drifting through the air, growing louder as you stare, daring you to walk into this place I've conjured up for you.

Then come back to your space with that same look of wonder upon your face.

Sanctuary

If our bodies are our temples
with symmetry and the clean lines
of well-defined musculature,
like in ancient Greece, I will then
enter with my own thoughts mingling
with the columns meant to contain
them. Stones stacked like bones of the spine,
I shrug my shoulders back, wish for
balance, if not grace, and hope not
to stumble or fall. Appalled at
the possibility, I shed
my shoes, let the soles of my
feet sink into the dusty floor
where no other footprints have gone
before and into the inner
sanctum, the holy of holies
where my heart lies like a relic
safe and snug, and I can listen
to the soft counting down of my
time on the surface of this earth.

Deborah H. Doolittle

A Fairy Tale

after the painting by Leon Herbo

Always, there is the Bear
at the door or the Wolf
in the woods. One of them
a prince, cursed, or worse:
the beast himself. Sisters,
they sit together, shift
through the pages and look—

One could be Snow White
with her pale skin and good
teeth, the other Rose Red,
with three little red buds
folded behind one ear.

Neither speaks of their fear
of becoming old maids.
Instead, they let the story
roll itself out like strudel
dough and hope for the knock
at the door to turn out
to be the bear's brother
and just not the bear.

Gilbert Honigfeld

Killing Grandma During Spring Break

They're spiking volley balls along South Beach, college kids determined to party hard in March despite the public service notices about the killer virus knocking off old people by the hundreds, but the perennial combination of tits and testosterone is too tempting to override so Grandma will have to handle this on her own, you know no one lives forever.

Night on the Town

Just when they thought the new epidemic was under control and the bars were open to the public again, all hell broke loose in Korea when a guy they call a superspreader desperate for some kind of action hit five clubs in a row on the same night, an inconspicuous death machine.

Science has not yet advanced enough to have a cure for this new plague but they're real good at figuring out things like genetic footprinting as a function of individual mortality but I don't have the space to explain it to you, so just take my word for it.

Turns out that 80 people so far have come down with CV2, all knocking down shots at the five clubs this one guy hit that night and the proof was in the test-tube that this guy, Case Zero, was responsible for all 80 infections, which at an average of two-hundred-fifty K each costs 20 mill, not counting the extra charges for the dozen who've died so far.

Oh, Case Zero? He's back home with the wife.

Forecasting Bidders

It's another one
of those September days
when the prairie wind blows
and falling leaves fly
across the open in chilly rain.
Attending an outdoor auction,
bidders shiver under hoodies.

On a late October day
I drive into strong wind and then
count hopes at a town auction.
The dry leaves scurry
across the street--
pedestrians of weather.

Mid-November
light snow shelters
the resting leaves.
High gusts jolt many
bare branches. Some break
and tumble. Online auctions
hereafter might keep bidders safe.

Fingers scroll estate items,
seemingly endless virtual
possibilities Thanksgiving week.
Forecasts predict more snow
and winds 40 mph, gusting
higher, blowing away
autumnal auction excursions.

Irene T. Winslow

On-Line Auction

I can't see
 the shimmer of the silk
I can't hear
 the rustle of the silk
I can't feel
 the smoothness of silk
I can't smell
 the freshness of silk

Bidding on-line is a nonsensical experience

There is a mulberry tree
 in my backyard
Perhaps
I can taste
 the crispness of silk

Infinitesimally

When you wake up in the middle of a black night —
a moonless, starless one, in which a rainstorm
causes a power failure that further obliterates
the sky —
and grope around your known world, a dresser top,
for your “Energizer”™ goggles, so you can grope
your way down the bannister-less staircase,
steep and narrow, to pee, then gape at the fridge,
you sense what blindness is, infinitesimally.

Over morning coffee, with the power back on,
having been restored who-knows-when,
I say to my wife, “When we get back to the city,
tomorrow, be very careful, We won’t be used to
all the crazy traffic: the bikes, electric bikes
and motor scooters, not to mention skateboards,
and Ubers and taxis hustling for a fare.”

(Our neighbor was blindsided at a corner
by a hustling pedestrian, knocked off her feet,
and eventually had to have a hip replaced.)

“Think what it would be like,” she said,
“for a blind person.”

“I know,” I agreed.

“We’re all like the blind, infinitesimally.”

Wayne Hogan

Where to Now, Mr. Magoo

Here's one for you. From virtually the start, our humanoid Plan A has been to leave less and less desirable earth and go to and live on a more hospitable site in the cosmos. But whoa, there, Mr. Magoo — here's a thought: What if we humanoids have already existed on one or more of those other dreamed of faraway planets that we'd mucked up so bad that the Good Lord took mercy on us and resettled us here on earth, the one last remaining place He could take us? Yeah, what if? Where to now, Mr. Magoo?

A Tuesday Manhattan Morning

Hardly a honk on Horatio Street
when I went hoping to see
Hopper at the Whitney.
Nothing of Hornblower
either, even.

Sitting

Where young woman in Anarchy tee-shirt
sat before me (red A in a circle).
I gave her thumbs up and when she was gone
sat down.

Orange Tulips

needed touching
for you to believe them real
in late October, West Village,
on a Tuesday soft as silk.

it what
we think

a viral germ
left with
yesterday's snows

that flow
under
Pont Mirabeau

a long way
from what

was

Our Geography of Poets

Bali

James Penha

Minnesota

Mary Belardi Erickson

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Ron Singer

Richard Spiegel

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle

Ohio

Irene T. Winslow

Tennessee

Wayne Hogan

Texas

Sylvia Manning

Virginia

William Corner Clarke

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