

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



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Volume 44

Number 1

yet stars appear in their ancient
and steadfast constellations
and the new fawn wobbles
with growing certainty

from "Juice" by Pat Anthony
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Volume 44 Number 1

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Auriga

Deborah H. Doolittle

Beneath the Mammoth's Sky

Better to lie down, roll around
in the grass. Witness the snap, crack,
sparkle while it lasts. Paw that air
as if a magic pathway out
of dead-end game scenarios.

Instead, be amazed by the maze
that brought you to this cul de sac.

The pristine showers, volcanic
towers of smoke and ash. Ask not
for abstract absolutions. Pummeled
by pumice and scoured by hot lava
you thought a fad not meant to last.

Fear the interloper's spear and
that tiny pinprick behind the ear,
that long tough slog that brought you here.

Deborah H. Doolittle

To Live and Die Under an El Greco Sky

after the paintings, *View of Toledo*
and *Burial of Count Orgaz*, by El Greco

Full of torment and the cool flash of heat
lightning. Where all of the inhabitants

have left their homes and have arrayed themselves
in the church for a funeral, just like

the last judgment playing out before their
eyes (but that is in another painting).

A viaduct bridges the gap between
the tumble-down town and the ragged, rough-

edged country. There are no people, no mute
animals. There's the steeple, righteously

upright among so many down-trodden,
that dares inspire this sub-lunary choir

to draw breath and sing of moonglow and clouds
offering His Countenance as comforting.

Deborah H. Doolittle

**To Wonder Why
Under a Van Gogh Starry, Starry Sky**
after the painting, *Starry Night*,
by Vincent Van Gogh

Once again about halos, penumbras,
and those bright spiky shards that could be stars,
the jingle-jangle of crickets and, in the darkest
part of the thickets, the silhouette of a cypress
dressed up with nowhere to go. Winter skies
are rigid, crack open with one tiny
tap. Summer skies melt around the edges
like a pat of butter. This sky, like this
guy, is neither, walking around with one
boot on the ground, a bare foot in the air,
as if vertigo were the new-fangled
kind of hangover and being sober
so over rated that it is not up
for debate. The hour is getting late.

Deborah H. Doolittle

The Moon's an Aspirin

*after a line by Bert Meyers
and others by Robert Frost*

There's a certain solace hidden
in the moon's pale light. The extra
sparkle of stars contained within
the plain and ordinary air.

I walk the shaded streets as one
who was acquainted with the night,
seek inspiration or advice
from each solitary lamppost
standing guard dutifully through
the night with its steady beacon
of light. Moon, stars, streetlamps just might
get me rethinking that nothing
is wrong or right if taken in
incremental doses at night.

Deborah H. Doolittle

Under This Cellophane Sky

Lucky we are with our own distracted
globes revolving around each other. Thoughts

kept light and dry by skullcaps we wear like
small dainty parasols or umbrellas.

So why do we keep wondering why we
still prefer the gloom of our half-lit rooms

when the sun is often shining. We gaze
out the window as if always raining.

Jitterbug Jumble

Pandemics grow endemic,
 global wars mushroom; mass
shootings, grief — now daily experiences.
 Sacred landscapes
flare up, Yosemite —
 Albert Bierstadt's paradise — burns.

California, once inaccessible
 for most Americans, became
a tangible wonderland in Bierstadt's landscapes.
 In his Yosemite
sunset, a still-blazing orb shimmers the Valley
 with burnt orange.

Today, the Webb telescope, like Bierstadt,
 shows Americans
unimagined frontiers. An endless universe
 outside our Milky Way,
faintly seen until now, appears in a dynamite
 flare of photos.

Our brains scramble to embrace
 a tinsel quilt of stars born
before our birth — or orange cliffs
 harboring a maternity
mausoleum where as dwarfs die,
 baby stars emerge.

Is this the next manifest destiny? One day
 will our starships
look for life, as in a mirror, weave
 among galaxies
that wobble like a new fawn, dance, gyrate
 to unknown rhythms?

Will they be as fearless, determined
 as American pioneers
in covered wagons crossing new lands?
 Why not?

This jitterbug jumble of cosmic dust,
witnessed by Webb
birthing and dying at the same time,
marks our origins.
Once California in Bierstadt's works,
now galactic wonders
from Webb astonish — a quickening for all.

Mary K. Lindberg

Is An MRI A Poem?

If corporations are people, is an MRI a poem?

Does it have words? No

Does it have a title?

No, but has a name -

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Does it have stanzas?

Yes - unexpected pauses

between resonant hammering

Is it an oral form that you listen to?

Yes - requires earplugs, headset

Does it have rhythm?

Yes - immense amounts of erratic banging,
knocking

molecules around in a dance you can't see

Does it have images?

Yes - a striped line down the center of a tube,
longer but not wider than a very tall human
being —. if you open your eyes.

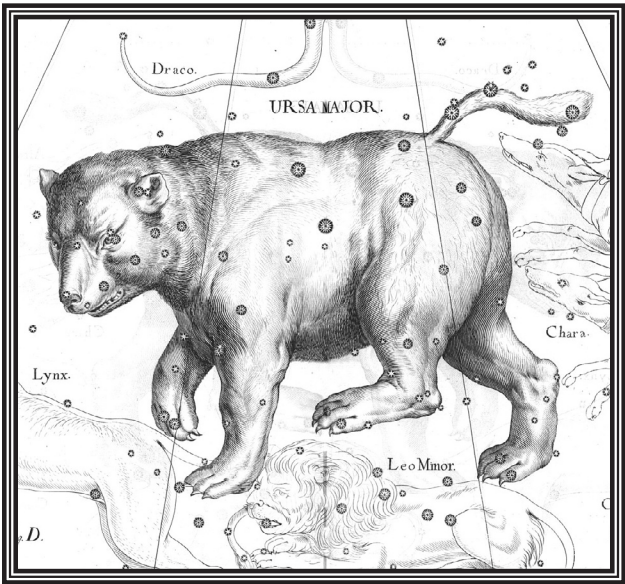
Does it have an overall feeling?

Yes - claustrophobia.

Does it move from a concrete particular
to a universal?

Yes - from trapped on a table to how-
the-hell — can-I-get-out-of-this-coffin?

Does it give you something more than you had
before the MRI? Yes - Agita



Wayne Hogan

A Brief But Helpful Guide

Be on guard. Better, be a guard.
When answering questions of a
questionable sort, take, don't give,
the fifth. The fifth of July, preferably,
the fifth of six, secondarily. Have
at the ready a clean change of
underwear when approaching
eternity. Love your vowels like you
love your mother. Love your
consonants like you love 3rd cousins
twice removed on your grandpappy's
side. When planning a trip into
the deep south, take several
hand-made signs, one reading
AH'M A-COMIN NOW, HEAH?
Take good care of your flowers,
knowing they're just about the
only thing that'll never ask to
borrow a Jackson till payday.
Have as your guiding philosophy
that "First the line, then the circle."
You'll find this helpful.
Believe me, you will.

Charles Rammelkamp

Yin-Yang

“My husband and I
go to bed
at the same time,
but we get up
at different times.”

“We’re just the opposite.
I go to bed
before my wife does,
but we get up
at the same time.”

Is this the opposite,
Or is this the same?

Sylvia Manning

for the weir, for the mill, for a lost friend

after Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold

But listen! Even miles away and years
since the mill in the end was shut down
(through memory or really) you can hear
the sound of water still falling over
the weir, built for power for the looms
not yet a century after Manchester, town
where it began, the revolution to doom
us each to the beach of Dover

But where we are unquiet differently
than the poet, unsettled by crashing
pebbles against the cliffs that then, over
and again, are to be swept back
in the sea's dominion, lashing
their return, demanding slack.

We, rather, feel restored to know
something's not yet disappeared
of what we knew, long ago
when we were mill town folk

who proud but humbly persevered
above the weir, resounding below.

A man who'd been a fixer died young
recently, someone who wrongly thought
he knew everything (because he did --
in the mill, with the looms, if not beyond).
We'd disagreed, not really fought,
something touching how things work politically,
so he suddenly became unfond
of me. We didn't clash again, just hid.

Ah, we need good fixers now as much as ever,
even more than when machines began to rule.
But such as he, with no chance to be schooled
in defense against demagoguery, the clever
masters of our own and our planet's destiny,
can only, we must trust, rest now in peace
in a place safely deeper than the beast's
darkling plain -- where dry and ignorant certainties
would kill the sound of flow for all eternity.

March 11, 2023, Seguin

Marilyn Braendeholm

A Field of Daisies

White and bright as shining
passion. Its centre
a flash of yellow smile.

The air wraps
its grassy breath in silk, and

I'm heady in pastures of spice.

A mantle of clove. Of air and light.

As if every star
was born here, to fledge
and fly by night.

Pat Anthony

Every Night

when dusk seals western sky
you are hanging in the air
suspended within Gemini
and even though a planet not
a star you shine consistently

the two of us circling space
moving in ascension and decline
wondering wandering in our orbits
we are sisters ancient and sure
in our solitary existence
whether there is anyone
looking past gingham curtains
on a lonely Kansas farm
to see us.



Our Geography of Poets

Kansas

Pat Anthony

Maryland

Charles Rammelkamp

New York

Mary K. Lindberg

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle

Tennessee

Wayne Hogan

Texas

Sylvia Manning

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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