

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
30



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 30, #1

They may be initially unpleasant,
But people school themselves to like them.

Analogy and Metaphor — Pat Fillingham

South Street Seaport July 4, 1979

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 30

Number 1*

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel
Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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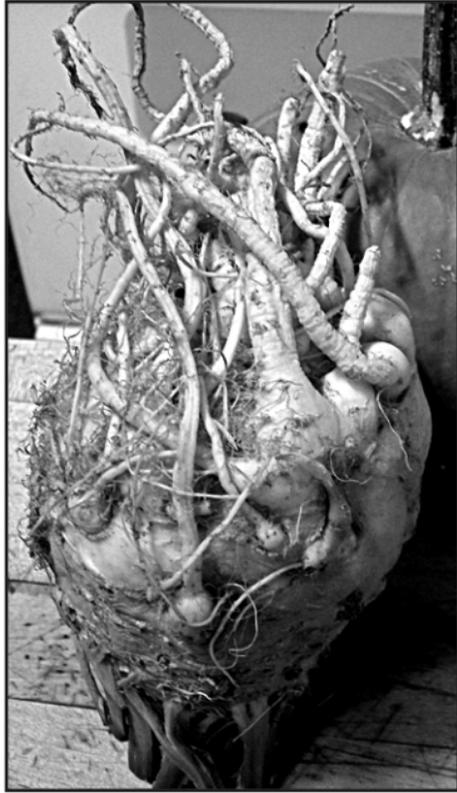
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Dear Editor — James Penha

Decide to amplify these poems,
raise ink to their importance,
make my visions
not better,
but bright
to persist beyond ems and ens.

So I shall have abstraction
to distraction

and images, children. See
synecdoche above, zeugma
below.

I will be parsed
and glossed
and lasting. For
if I'm ever to be deconstructed
I must now be made.

Depending on desire,
I enclose no SASE.

Chaos Theory — John Grey

The wind is blowing fierce.
Volcano's boiling up a stew of fire and rock.
Oceans slam against pier and cliff.
Another addict drives a needle into his arm,
just above the elbow.
The ones who've made it look down from
their penthouse picture windows.
"Pass the herbal tea," she says.
Students are protesting in the streets.
Cops are beating them back with night sticks.
Air Force flows over, looking for a place to bomb.

War in the Middle East, revolution in the Caribbean,
pick your target.

Pastor slips out of the whorehouse.

How old was she? Twelve?

Books are burning in the square.

"Bring your knowledge," says the righteous.

"Toss it in the flame."

What doesn't rage, indulges its brute appetite.

Or drills an oil-well in a pristine bay.

Speaking of genocide, nobody does.

Besides, for whosoever the massacre spares,
there's hunger and disease on tap.

The days are waxing cruel.

Disgust stays caught up in the throat no longer.
No jobs, no civility, no time like the present
to kick who's down, who can't fight back.
In the penthouse, tears that would even shame a crocodile.
"Belgian biscuits, anyone?"
A politician takes a bite,
makes sure he doesn't get his hands dirty.
A lawyer wags a finger.
The jury slumbers on.
The world is cracking like a ghetto sidewalk.
How many billion years is enough?
Better the chaos that bore you than the chaos of the times.

Approaching 70 — A. D. Winans

the words come harder
set their own pace
sometimes the turtle
sometimes the hare
always stripped bare
bukowski told me in a letter
you seem like a man
who knows where it's at
didn't then don't now

just hanging around
with words that dangle
like an outlaw's neck stretched
at the end of a rope

Schooled — Scott Owens

Taxes, schedules, ties,
doing dishes and other
homework, putting commas
in the right places, knowing
how to use the apostrophe,
when to flush, whom to trust,
righty-tighty, lefty-loosey.

To save time I alphabetize
the spices, keep everything
in a folder, carefully labeled.
I save receipts, keep negatives,
recycle plastic containers.

When the alarm rings out
at 6 a.m., I avoid
the snooze, force myself
up and into the shower,
knowing the grog of slowly

waking, slipping in and out
of dreams would stay with me
for hours. If I've learned anything,
it's that everything matters.
Racing down the familiar road,
I stay no more than five
miles over the posted limit,
check my mirrors often,
keep the maps handy,
and always use my turn signal.

Vagrant — William Corner Clarke

In an old, ragged greatcoat
Salt encrusted seven league boots
And canvas sack slung over his back
The old man
With the beard of a holy fool
Stained with nicotine
Used to curse his way down Sixth Street
Every goddamned day

Some who professed to know
The legends of the vacant lots
Said he'd written a masterpiece
Of infinite regression
Using the secret alphabet of Cain
And then had sat and watched it disappear
Together with his pen
And everything he owned

I met him once one night
In a bar on Avenue A

Sitting alone at the table next to mine
"McMinn is dead"
He whispered from the corner of his mouth
As a convict does who knows he's watched
And fears reprisals from above

I asked him what he meant
By that
But he just smiled and looked away
Tapping his beer glass slowly
With a dirty fingernail

**The Mad Girl Remembers When She Stood Behind The Girl
Who'd Be A Model Then Dumped Being Too Old At 19
Lyn Lifshin**

how she longed for Sally Smith's long
long legs, thighs that weren't always
kissing each other but let light thru. The
mad girl hated her fat thighs on benches
for basket ball games. Even at six she scowled
in the mirror seeing her soft fat thighs
in a bathing suit, belly she didn't
believe would always betray her. She

remembers being weighed in front of the class and how Mr Dewey belted out the numbers, how she weighed more than most of the boys in the class. "Chubbette" an uncle with a clothes store nagged, "the regular pre teen skirts won't fit you." But the mad girl refused. She would, even pared down, lying on her bed to zip jeans at least one size too small, refusing to wear anything over size 0. But it's the early days when kids yelled fat out the window, worse to her than kike

or two eyes or kinky hair or book worm. Now she
wishes she could dance depression out of her,
write this one man into so many poems in
real life she'll be too numb to have feelings
about him, paint him as dull. Her legs no longer
smack each other as if applauding or kissing
but hold the little that is left of her, so light,
almost air, if she danced with the one she'd
chose, he'd hold her up and she could easily
follow where ever he wants her to go

My Struggle — Lee Evans

The grass of my lawn grows
even as I speak;
and even as I sleep,
the grass grows.

The grass of my lawn grows
while I am away—
at work or at play,
the grass grows.

The grass of my lawn grows
even as I watch;
yea, even as I snatch
at my lawn mower's throttle.

As soon as it is cut
it starts to grow again!
I just can't keep it down.
I just can't seem to win.

I just can't make it look
the way it ought to look

when everybody's looking
at each other's handiwork.

And everybody else
has lawns that put to shame
my failure to contain the growth
that covers my good name.

The grass of my lawn grows
even as I speak—
and even though I sleep,
the grass grows in my dreams.

Pedestrian Traffic — Karen Douglass

Drunks and dogs wander into traffic. Jay walkers
are cursed, maimed, killed for their insolence.

A Good Pedestrian cares where she walks,

plans ahead to transact business

in the middle of the block

on a street like the River Styx — once over

there's no crossing back, the intersection

a no-man's land, fit place to bury suicides

and vampires. Mathematical lines like scars, cannot stop the coyote grabbing a mouthful of roadkill, loping across whichever lane gives her a better chance, the pragmatism of nature: eat where the food is, run where there's room.

Sonnet π — H. Edgar Hix

"What distinguishes the mass murderer
who takes his own life afterwards
from the person who just commits suicide
is the externalization of blame."

James Alan Fox,
Northeastern University
Professor of Criminal Justice.

Bloody poems published and unpublished!
If we cannot point the finger, we cannot write the poem!
Each word of these aggrieved lines is a bullet in another reader,
Another not-innocent bystander who put the book to his own head!

The job of the poet is to throw mirrors!
Break them to pieces in people's eyes!
Leave the bloody shards on the tile floors!
Eliminate on them!

then, of course, we take the cup of ink ourselves
and bless the world with our passing,
our words sufficient to consecrate our union with death.
st. john and st. sylvia will understand.
calliope will open the book of heaven and escort us
to our proper, self-chosen, panegyriizing hells.

The All-Day Cinnamon Smear — Bill Roberts

I place two cartons of hot coffee on the shelf
and pull up two tall stools in Scott's Bakery
when something begins tugging at my jeans —
a little boy with blond curly hair and inquisitive
blue eyes that look up into mine as he asks if he can
sit on the stool intended for my wife who is
paying for a loaf of bread and getting two free slices
battered to couple with our breakfast drinks.
I find another free stool and pull it over,
pat the seat so the little boy, maybe four,
will sit there. He has trouble climbing, so I help

him up. He surveys his world from several feet higher, then rearranges the newspapers that are scattered on the shelf space in front of him - Scott provides the local newspapers free, and the little boy selects this morning's *Boulder Camera*, points to it and asks me to read. I read the headline and part of the story about another suicide bombing in Iraq. The little boy takes the paper when I proffer it, seriously studies the print, then says with a frown, *Nothing good today*, just as my wife arrives with thick slabs of still-warm bread. I offer mine to the kid and he takes a confident bite, smearing cinnamon on his cherubic face. He reaches for a napkin and vigorously

wipes across his smile. His Mom and Dad come up behind us with their bakery purchases and an older child in tow. The little boy's mother whispers something in his ear. He grins and motions with a finger for me to come closer to hear his secret. I lean down and he kisses me moistly on the cheek, then jumps from the stool and takes his Mom's hand. All wave to us as they leave the bakery. For the rest of the day I wear a cinnamon smear proudly for all to see.

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