

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
26



he turned pale as he thought it
over there is always some
little thing that is too
big for us every
goliath has his david and so on ad finitum

the merry flea
from ARCHY AND MEHITABEL

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 26

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Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

c o n t e n t s

Sylvia Manning	4-6	Joan Payne Kincaid	15	Lee Evans	22
Andrew Fader	7-8	William Beyer	16	Bill Roberts	23-25
Mike W. Blottenberger	9	Patricia Wellingham-Jones	17	Ida Fasel	26-27
Anselm Brocki	10-11	R. Yurman	18	Richard Spiegel	28
David Martin	12-14	Tracee Coleman	19-21		

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Breviary of Martin d'Aragon
14th century
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timid attempt to translate a late statement
by the late, brave Susan Sontag — Sylvia Manning

“Surely we should be ashamed...”

sûrement? (Sounds like *sermon*.)

Sûrement, nous devons avoir honte.

(Or is it subjunctive?) ... Nous devions avoir honte.

“all who truly love this country...”

tous qui aiment vraiment cette patrie?

Tous lesquelles? Fidèlement? Ce pay?

Non, pas fidèlement. Vraiment, cette patrie.

“to know that we have begun to overturn ...”

savoir que nous avons commencé à retourner?

... à renverser? ... que nous avons commencé à renverser...

“the cornerstones of western justice,...”

les pierres de base du justice de l'ouest ...
les pierres au fond? les principes?

“the last solid rocks.”

non, les pierres: les dernieres pierres solides ou
les pierres solides dernieres

“And our excuse?...”

Et, l'excuse? Pour notre excuse?
Comme notre excuse? Comment nous nous excusons?

“We are afraid.”

Nous avons peur.
Nous sommes effrayées.
Nous craignons?

"We are afraid."

Nous sommes lâches.

Sûrement. Certainement. Pas de doute.

La honte.

June 3, 2005

Ernie's - Andrew Fader

Christmas tree lights & Lee
sitting in the corner with
his baseball cap down low
so that no one can see
his eye which is still black
from when Jimmy and him
went at it in the parking lot
because Jimmy wanted to date Carol
but Carol won't date patrons
except Lee. You should see Carol.
She's the brightest light in Ernie's
which really has no other lights

●
●
● except the light that comes in
● from the window that faces the lot
● where Jimmy and Lee fought
● and these strings of blinking
● Christmas tree lights
● she hung over the bar
● and all over the knotty yellow pine walls
● one year, before she started dating Lee.
●
● After the war Ernie & Catherine
● put up the knotty yellow pine—
● the kind you saw in kitchens
● in the '50's. He wanted

to make it feel like home
and he ran it that way
until he died ten years ago
and Catherine hired Carol
and business started to pick up
especially at lunchtime
when construction boys come in
because Carol has this way about her.

Some Fridays it's so crowded
with everyone leaving work early
to stop for a quick drink
and some every day talk.
She gives you that smile when you say

- something nice about her clothes.
- But at six she leaves with Lee
- just as the lights behind the bar
- start to blink but before she goes
- she shows you the cardboard
- party sign she got at Hallmark
- and she staples its Happy Birthday
- among the lights as they blink.
- *Everyone's got a birthday she says*
- And Carol & Lee leave
- By the door near the parking lot
- While Catherine takes over
- For her because the relief is late.
- But it doesn't matter.

Rowing — Mike W. Blottenberger

For Anne Sexton

I row toward the Island of God,
just as you did thirty years ago.
Despite rusty oarlocks and critics,
you and I believe in this business of words.

The salty water stings my eyes,
and the wind is a wall of pain.
Yet, with your compass and map,
I learn the importance of a steady stroke.

I see you now,
through the wicked waves.
There, on the Island of God,
where you play poker and drink martinis.

Well-Wisher — Anselm Brocki

Though obsessed by women
awake and asleep, next to
air, food, and success,
never alive more than an hour
without a thought or touch
of a real or fancied one,
I have no sudden anger
or second thoughts
about their full liberation
and sincerely want them
to have it all—full credit
at banks and welding school;

equality on the job,
at home, and on the trail;
the presidency of the country
or any corporation
with absolutely no harassment
on the way up or down—
because in working,
thinking, cooking, cleaning,
revealing, feeling, and caring
I am in serious competition
with everyone worthy—
men, women, and in-betweeners
of any race or religious faith.

Finding Out — Anselm Brocki

That's me, back of my head and left shoulder showing above the booth partition in the corner of the café, absently eating an egg salad sandwich, two books stacked on the tan formica tabletop in front of me, a third one propped against them, open to a chapter on the latest discoveries using PET scans on consciousness, me trying

to learn everything possible about the physical nature of my brain for the satisfaction of at least knowing how it works, no matter what all this is about my being here on Earth for a short number of years, spinning around the Sun with several other planets, and what can possibly happen next.

BULLHEAD — David Martin

Nights I lay awake sweating with Ernie Harwell and the night game and the diesel moan of the freight hauling lumber to Detroit. To beat the heat I snuck a flashlight and read my brother's Boy Scout Handbook: to learn how to swim, tie a plastic bottle to your waist and practice paddling. I emptied mom's Clorox and rode my bike to Crooked Lake. I waded in the leech-colored water and bounced on the spongy muck until I reached the dropoff, and the bottle bounced up and plunked along, buoyant, I was suspended like some awkward chlorine-smelling astronaut taking his first walk in the hostile depths. I thrashed like

Johnny Weismuller knifing through some African lagoon but I didn't move, I just spazzed there splashing like some spastic duck, the bottle slapping my head. But if I swam with deliberate strokes I learned I could float and thump my way herky jerky, I kicked and trundled through slick lily pads and the ruckus of bull frogs—I felt the cool slickness of weeds snake my legs and I shuddered. I swam out deeper, until the water grew cold and my toes tingled. It was strange in the middle of the lake—I heard screen doors slam and kids yelling for Kool Aid, the sound of someone stacking plates, slow waves sloshing the docks, the buzz of primordial dragonflies skimming the marsh. I floated there in the center, where gravity

pulled me nowhere, I was floating like a bobber
when I felt it, it was slippery and thick and when
I bumped it the shock tore through me, electric.
I twitched, rigid, then floated the dead man's float,
the sun scalding my burnt head, the bottle gently
nudging my ribs.

**They Say You Really Don't Want
To Be There Alone
Joan Payne Kincaid**

A day in May we all went up
the fake mountain known
as Inwood Hill Park
at the northern tip of Manhattan
to do some birding
following the Doberman
who was having a ball tracking
everything that had been
and people were lagging behind

and there were brown thrushes
with lush predictable notes
as we reached a steep approach
a dangerous place were one
alone or not could be dizzy
and easy to exit falling
down broken stone steps.

A Father's Death: in Retrospect

William Beyer

Missing for twenty five days,
your body was found
by two boys
in a dense area
of woods;
far from home.

Your funeral
was simple,
unopened casket,
brief eulogy,
a favorite hymn;
final prayer.



We never knew what happened
in the woods,
how you died;
why you were walking
miles from home.

In your small room,
on brown coffee table,
you left a jigsaw puzzle
of a beach in Tahiti
half finished,
large Hershey bar
unopened,
and a gold pocket watch
still ticking.


Freeway — Patricia Wellingham-Jones

Three frame houses shudder
in the shadow of the overpass,
stranded when the neighborhood
was arched and bracketed
with concrete and steel.
Dented hardwood floors vibrate
in the roar of 18-wheelers.
The residents lean on walkers,
wait for the 3 AM lull.


The Heating Game - R. Yurman

Old people stay cold
They need houses whose rooms
flow with heat
They feel drafts
wherever they go

My grandmother worried
she'd catch a chill
and die



My father insisted
the thermostat
must be kept
constant and moderate



Over that numbered wheel
their battle raged
while the rooms
steamed then froze

Running — Tracee Coleman

Dive in, slide in, glide in,
through the crispy cold green river
where we loved so many days,
so many ways inside
to leave your secrets
still flowing
lava through the earthquake.

Dive in, slide in, glide in, bubbles
of the clearest springs boiling.
Ice it solid, please,
just crunchy would do
oh no, away I go,
no fight, just flight,
dragon fly

tail dip a ripple to the surface
and break away, lift up higher then higher
a fire roar back at you
then soar for shelter in the tame sky's clouds.
I sense your chase for years,
over happy homes,
rolling hills, alfalfa fields,
old broken fences,
and ponds full with years of muck.
I fly over everything,
even the part I know is yours
or mine

still currents pull
back to the flow, still Gliding,
Caught and locked,
into your gentle guiding
Up then down then over then round
Rolling into your rapids,
Left dip, right roll,
Follow every bend,
Secrets racing for an end
I cannot tell

Dive in, glide in, to the sea
Ride up, and round, and up,
Over and under and round we go
So many ways inside
To leave your salt crashing,
always stinging
Vapors off my igneous wanting heart.

.....
Fear drops, rain drops, tear drops,
down and down so low we go
splatter and ripple,
dive in, slide in, glide in,
to the crispy cold green river
where we loved so many days,
so many ways to run.

Spinning — Tracee Coleman

Something left behind by ancient swirls
into infinite blasts of beginnings and ends
spirals through your eyes and mine and back again.

One right glance and you're already in so far it hurts.
There is no pretense, no protest, no denial.
I take you in just barely knowing your name—
a thing never done before or again with another—
and we will never be the same.

Even now, so long without you,
some of my best moments come when least expected—
when my eyes close and they go folding back into you,
the only one that could ever spin me so free,
paralyzing my heart and mouth.

Rabbit's Milk — Lee Evans

I poured his life
on my cereal this morning--
a few drops in my coffee.

Last night he leaped
through the darkness,
as my headlights burned
his brain through his eyes.

I just knocked him out.
Not much consolation:
The car that came after me
finished him off.

To Dream — Bill Roberts

There are those odd, surprising times
When everything goes right: thoughts,
Words in a string, deeds, the weather —
Foul or fair, it seems perfect — the whole
Damned constellation of my world clicks.

Why are they odd, causing surprise, only
Once in a great while? Why not always?
Ah yes, I remember now: we were
Made, each of us, to suffer (probably
Self-inflicted for me) before we luxuriate.

Money may buy tranquility for some, but

Toys break and soon enough, the spirit, too.

God can do it, so I hear, but why do

God-worshippers war on one another?

Peak health feels great if you have it,

But is it enough, paired with weak brain?

Any pathway to Nirvana, the tranquil inner

Self, peace of mind is wonderful and not

To be dismissed as trivial, as perhaps too

Often I do, but surely not maliciously.

Here I am sixty-nine and no nearer finding
Answers to the most basic questions than
I was as a schoolboy, perhaps less so
These days, but don't ask why, please.
It's peaceful, on occasion, just to dream.

My dreams, peculiarly, are not of what
Once was. Only rarely. Instead, they're of
What might be, may be about to happen,
Vague hopes I have of achieving something,
Nothing special, but I'm quite sure I will.

A Few Words — Ida Fasel

Does it matter that my poems will never
be reviewed in *The New York Times*
or quoted in Bartlett updated?
Even those that have a diamond look
tough not diamonds
are quick to please, quick to pass.

Does it matter that practice
fails the great ideas? Plato himself,
uncovered in shade by some future
digger's axe, bushed clean,
may never find his name put together again.

Enough for me to take these small steps
to his giant ones, between us
the same iron will to let longings
for the unattainable increasingly
direct the almost-there of attaining.

Looking for meaning, looking for the word
to link present to perpetual
I notice a bead
that has spent a long time
in its dark corner
looking for me —
bead that completes the string,
dusky glass a little brushing
clears to light —
nothing ever lost.

He had his say — Richard Spiegel

When he was taken
from Briarcliff Manor
the ambulance went
the wrong way
up the Saw Mill.

In the ICU at New York Hospital,
the corporate counsel was dying.
His doctor told him
he had cancer
and it was malignant.

He puffed
on his medical pipe.
His lungs were gone.
His eyes rolled
up into his sockets.