

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

26



#7

Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 26, #7

for two seasons i played
the dog in joseph
jefferson s rip van winkle

the old trouper
from ARCHY AND MEHITABEL

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 26

Number 7*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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Kamoro Creation Myth — James Penha

Papua, Indonesia

Folded
upon myself
like a concertina
inspiration
within the great crocodile
I play
my hands and hum
to tickle the inner belly
of the beast until it laughs
me straight out into the river
where I am born
to think of you.

Report From Sleepy Hollow — Joanne Seltzer

I fell asleep early because
my husband was playing
volley ball with the boys.

When the headless horseman
snuck into bed
I mistook him in the dark
for my own billy goat.

After my husband stumbled on
the blazing of the crime
the horseman covered
his neck scars, fled,
left behind nothing
but legend
and volley ball.

Puttin' on the Dog — Harvey Steinberg

An overzealous, jealous cur
stands up on end to bark:
"Behold! A dog of many coats!-
You, patchwork in ego marked!"

Yes you, but quite as much the smell
that's me, foraging through every hairbrush,
turning up in random crowds,
jigging loose on leash, acting flush.

Wouldn't you think the crowd would note
I paw more than I guard?
A digger for my neighbor's bone,
man's best friend for Disregard.

I've dogged my muse to idealize
myself, a ratter who snaps at air,
a lowly bellied belly-low
dachshund heightened as debonair.

Deceptively I snout her coat, I snuff his cuff
to get at what's underneath
my whizzing about to discover me -
perhaps my impetuous sense of death.

And you take it! - you're vain, that "Pooch likes you"
for your doggyness, your all-breed versatility,
your masterly reciprocal pride
in our toothsome furry likeability.

So, shall we at the bull once more?
Nip, dodge, lure, pirouette,
till we stand stinking, each thinking
"It's so nice for you we've met?"

Dashing here, questing there,
once nuzzling, once aloof,
circumlocutory polymath
whose most honest answer is...woof, woof!

Sam — Mary K. Lindberg

WORLD'S UGLIEST DOG DIES AT 14

(AM New York Report, November 14, 2005)

Hairless body crooked teeth
three-time winner World's Ugliest
Dog Contest died last night in San Francisco.
Owner Bill lamented "*There will never
be another Sam.*" Wife Jill snarled
"*Some people might think that's a good thing.*"

News of winning pooch's demise scampered
to Westminster Kennel Club Chairman, who
spoke for many, baying to his wife
in pillow talk, *now we can stop fretting*

*about that unpapered mongrel. Indeed
Peg, he barked, smoothing the satin, remember
that Sporting Spaniel? Best in Show 2002, sire
Madam I'm Adam, dam Greylock's Mystic
Prim N'Proper. That's a pedigree!
What does this California fraud offer
besides ugliness? Peg whined, You didn't
mention that Saluki sired out of
Helluva SeasideLoveAffair. . . Why not?
Bill tied up Sam's secrets with a leash.
His pet photo ordered from
ImmortalizeYourPooch.com rejected:
"subject does not fit our usual*

criteria." Animal portrait
artist pembroke@sympatico.com
politely emailed
"not in my current palette."

Bill understood Sam. When he bought
CD from CoolCanineMusic.com
Sam howled at lyrics "*Good Dog!*"
repeated 25 times. Bill swore when
he came home Sam yipped and ran in letters
C and D to hear the theme song.
For his pet's 15th birthday Bill ordered
a doggy iPod and set up a blog for Sam
@UglyYouBet.com.

Sam had a good life: owner devoted,
music great, renowned for his looks.
Tombstone inscribed: "*Best in Show:
Those Who Beheld His Beauty Knew It.*"
Jill grinned: *They sure did.*

Rasputin, Come Home — Bill Roberts

The figures are fuzzy but stout, teeth missing,
hair imperfect, complexions dubious,
and their words incomprehensible,
but it's easy to guess that the two overweight
women are vying for the attention of the hard-
drinking sailor, who keeps pointing at the insignia
of what appears to be a submarine on his sleeve,
sobbing occasionally, I'm assuming, because
he'll soon be leaving for undersea duty
on a Russian nuclear sub, which is no less sad
a prospect than having to choose which of these
contentious women he'll have to spend the night with,

quite possibly one of his last nights on land,
also not so cheerful a place, in rooms with walls
peeling paint, furniture unfit for our Army of Salvations,
and a family pet hard to identify, part dog, part
something else, almost like an elk without antlers,
who may be, if I were to stick with this soap opera,
the real hero of Russia's emerging television
drama shows, still presented without commercials,
though they'd be welcome as comic relief.
I believe the dog-elk's name is Rasputin,
And it's obvious the submariner will miss him most of all.

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Blows to the Head — Bill Roberts

My father took me to see some palooka
get knocked through the ropes and
out of the ring by young Gene Washington,
a promising black lightweight boxer.

He hauled me to pro wrestling matches,
the Garibaldi brothers, Gino and Chico,
trying their best to blacken then gouge
out the eyes of their opponents.

I also saw my Dad fight too many times:
irritating spectators at ball games,
the referee at a Georgetown hoop contest,
the butcher who'd made advances at Mom,
but most often Mom herself,

taking each of them out with a single punch.
I never cared to fight, lost every match,
street brawl, even shouting contests.
One day, working night shift
At the post office where Dad got me a job,
I found myself sticking mail
next to a puffier, older Gene Washington.
Someone had gotten him the job too,
for he barely could repeat his name,
punchy from too many blows to the head.
Gene's inspiration helped me make up
my mind what I'd do with my future.

Published in the 8/22/02 issue of Spare Change News

Astronomers from Babylon - Julie Lechevsky

Before they scope the universe

with lenses perfectly ground,
they might remember earth as it is,
acid and blithe.

16 Cygni B sports a planet

with an egg-shaped orbit.
Among blue stars, brown dwarfs, black holes,
the search for life goes on.

Affinities - Ida Fasel

Names like fanlights over old doors
reflecting the sun in gemstones —
reverberations from the *Arbella*
anchored 1630 in Salem Cove —
hints endowed with truths
risky as a wish entrusted
to a dandelion seed head —
clues for thought to dally with
when the mind is absent and
the hidden radical centers itself
to be spoken to strike me to the bone.
The Winthrops. The Bradstreets.
The royal lady herself.

I was baptized once in a long white dress,
Lace-spangled with light from the sea.
Where else recorded but on the east wind?
Where else would I hear it still?

Note: The Puritans are to be distinguished from the Congregationalist Pilgrims who came in 1620.

Poet, Like Cat — Ron Singer

These days I might as well be
a bird-watcher as a word-botcher,
for all the good ranting stanzas,
semantic antics, and canting
about the universe in verse
seem to do. So I quit. Better you than me.

Claude, the cat's, a bird-watcher, too, of sorts.
Big orange tabby, terror of birds and mice,
he leaves his lunch at my feet, just to be nice.
Half-eaten squirrels, voles, right up on the porch,
the feline alpha male deferring to his boss,
even though, my dear, I couldn't give a toss.

Or consider marking territory.
Since water normally runs downhill,
a man must know where he stands.
Assume the standard straddling stance,
be sure the wind's behind you, or still,
and keep track of the trajectory,
so that you miss your own pants.

Leaving poems around for my wife to find,
therein, too, I act the male animal-kind,
and, when I send a rant off to the papers,
it's like Claude, taking a flying leap
into an empty bush: pointless capers.
Well, that's it for now. The rest will keep.

Delay — M. M. Nichols

Running beside me
daily
the Dog of my book
pursues
my goal but he has
more fun —
dashing in circles
nosing
the wayward clues I
can't be
bothered with now that
I run

the straight & narrow —
yet here
like angels at play
the Dog
is a friend who hums
& grins
guarding gold bones
I wait
to unbury.

Entr'acte — M. M. Nichols

HELLO, Big Dog
with soft black ears and muzzle.

I'm outside your window.
Maybe you know me, though.

Plenty of big people
think I'm somebody else,

think I never talk out loud
because I'm happy as a cat,

don't suspect they couldn't stand to
hear what I'd have said.

Let them go! Doesn't matter
if they don't know me.

YOU know, Big Dog,
Know what they mean, "Play dead!"

Lent — Damali Abrams

in a delirium of p.m.s.
and caffeine withdrawal
the answers seem even less clear
maybe this is my punishment for
giving up Jesus
for lent

my throat tightens
with over-inspiration as
he walks through the door wearing
the nervous expression i
contort to hold in, forgetting for a moment
that prevention of frown lines starts now
my shoulders grasp the words
that threaten to expose me

he leaves neglected,
but still calls later
curled in fetal agony,
i swallow my last
prescription cramp-killer,
praying it can fill that hole in
my personality

spring smirks through my
window too early the next morning,
my body aching with
every question, every compliment
with the language of him i
cannot speak

Voice Lessons — Anselm Brocki

"Had a delightful time,"
a socially correct but
painfully trained voice
within me says to my
usual waitress at lunch
and to fellow workers
at the office upon my
return from a weeklong
vacation while another
inner, more reflective,
honest voice almost chokes,
groans in embarrassment

at the oversimplification
and humorous white lie,
but says nothing, having
learned how foolhardy
to tell what you actually
feel about anything—
vacations, heavy love
scenes in movies, courage
personal goals, even living
itself — because of danger
of not only surprising,
disillusioning, or even
heedlessly insulting them,
but also of exposing how

flimsy your grasp of your
own feeling is, or worse
yet, of taking the time
necessary to listen to how
they actually feel and
pretend to be amazed.

Actor's Resumé — Charles Leggett

Nature uses the instrument of human fantasy in order to pursue her works of creation on a higher level.

—the father, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

"The only thing worse than not getting an erection when you want one," quips John Worthing, sipping champagne, "is getting one when you don't."

Elyot Chase snickers over his martini. Mirabell grins through thick streams of pipe smoke, takes a swig of sherry. Deputy Governor Danforth raises an eyebrow; Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Ignatyvich Vershinin heaves a shot of Smirnoff and a sigh; Major Sergius Saranoff scowls privately into his cognac. Pastor Manders bums a smoke from Elyot and orders another decanter of the house red as the father slams down his fist in protest: "Why do you laugh? It's awful, isn't it, when you don't have control?"

"Oh dear," moans Elyot, suppressing a giggle.

"Control over what?" queries Danforth, his eyes narrowing in a leer.

An unconscious Bob Acres belches underneath the table. "Good heavens," mutters Jack.

"Control over appetite?" offers Vershinin with a guffaw.

"Or execution," adds Danforth with a yellow-toothed grin. Sergius cackles violently and slaps the barmaid's behind as she clears Bob's empty schooners. Manders nearly knocks her over rushing to the men's room. Mirabell buys the next round and toasts:

"To talk control is all quite well and good;
A woodpecker is naught without the wood;
Some birds know much more than they really should—
But here's a branch you won't see *under-stood!*"

Hilarity erupts.
Even the father cracks
a meek smile. Bob
wakes up, drooling, hits his head
on the table bottom. Manders'
sheepish return from the bathroom, to think that they—
Sergius his cackle, Vershinin his belly laugh,
Elyot's snickering, Jack's exclamations
couched in tense giggles, Judge Danforth's bared yellow teeth
venting of shallow, unvoiced exhalations,
Mirabell's billows of pipe smoke through sherry-red
lips stretched in self-satisfaction, the father's
wan, guilty grimace, Bob's agonized grunting—
all, Manders thinks, must be laughing at him.

Finally, Oberon arrives
out of nowhere with the herb
and they all vanish into the forest.