

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
27



#7

Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 27, #7

Yet Reason frowns on War's unequal Game,
Where wasted Nations raise a single Name,

Samuel Johnson

from *The Vanity of Human Wishes*

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 27

Number 7*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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After James Ward's
Miranda and Caliban

In Silence — Sylvia Manning

Have you determined
how you've learned to bear
those clusters of faces of the dead
now and then at the end
of the News Hour with Jim Lehrer?
Has his consistent "We show them
when their photographs become available"
failed sometimes to make any real sense
to you? I mean, haven't you often
instantly loved a grin or a stern young face
and managed to be glad to know even
the place she or he called home, the family name
or even a sweet ethnicity?

Your wounded heart insisting
these faces cannot not exist.

But you won't not watch.
This has been an only way
to honor these mostly young
who ended up among the explosions
of numbers of those who could not survive.
So you learned to let your mind shut down,
lie back, go dark, not scream
against this horrible dearth of reason?

Another smile is coming,
another familiar last name.
You know you've neither time
nor the hubris it would take to feel
your own unimportant heartbreak.
And keening is not in keeping
with "in silence."

Have you found a way
to ask if your mind's damage
may be global, as they say?

Delirium — James Penha

The fever
creates a voice
that will not subside
until one of us
dies.

Destiny - Anselm Brocki

Far as we know,
till now our universe
has been exploding,
expanding, twinkling
unknowingly in black
space for 15 billion
years not able to see
or feel its grandeur
until eyes, developed
in worms and mollusks,
gave it the present,
moment by moment,
for millions of years,

and then in a blink
of time we — with our
words and story-
telling sentences
of actor, action,
and acted upon —
created consciousness
and gave the universe
a known past
an unknown future,
which may be
our destiny to shape
and give meanings to,
ready or not.

Student — Chain Smoking in a Café, while Reading the Communist Manifesto
Matthew Landrum

He should have been in shirt sleeves —
Russian proletariat, 1917,
chain smoking after work.

He would have whispered subterfuge
as if the tsar were across the room
and waved a bloody flag
through the streets of Moscow
when they killed the royal family
and again when the provisional government fell,
while the kaiser smiled.

Comrade, chain-smoker, dear anti-capitalist,
this café will breed no uprising.

The revolution has passed.

The *bourgeoisie*
will sit on the hands of the *intelligentia*,
while you sip your coffee and cream.

Earl (Hansie) Carson — Joanne Seltzer

Most handsome
thus his nickname
of the four Carson brothers
a mensch until
the Great War
my mother's cousin signed up
for the trenches
was returned from France
brain thick with gas.
After discharge
Hansie drifted west

never phoned home
never sent letters
only an occasional
telegram that came collect
saying he'd married
had a kid
herded cattle on the range.
Aunt Minnie grew a tumor.
Uncle Sol retired.
The brothers wired
MA HAS A BROKEN HEART STOP
PA IS GOING BLIND
When a telegram came

saying if he had the dough
he'd hop a train
for the folks' fiftieth
celebration
the brothers wired a ticket
in care of Western Union
and on party day
waited at the station.
Hansie didn't show.
Aunt Minnie wept
but Uncle Sol said Hansie
died long before in France.

Warring Parties — Bill Roberts

It's a temptation to blame
My mother and father

For my inconsistencies and
Irritating short comings.
Tempting though it be,

I won't do it, blame them,
What did they have to do

With my impatience,
Terrible temper,
This need to seek revenge

On possibly innocent people?
They made it through many wars,

Including too many to count
Between themselves,
And they tried to show me,

By example, how *not* to be.
Maybe it's in the blood,

Long-existing family traits
From both warring parties,
But neither Mom nor Dad

Suffered fools gladly,

Omen — Joan Payne Kincaid

Typical summer day here lips called for calorie drinks
gray sky summer lullaby rehearses pills

at the beach low visibility
against the law each in logical murmurs

gray water murders ache vision waves
you can see the front moving toward the Island

see the violence naked floating in froth
the birds know something is coming

some sort of relevant missing local
like sore hissing valves melding in modo d'una Marcia

you want to wish something so small to be safe be happy
swishing all fast ebb and flow payoff

lightning thunder is coming for sure
tint montage under referred ignition

it has nothing to do with the war or the occupation
tied to raw occurrences and over dose things or a Quintet in E flat

summer enters the house with the a/c turned off
foraging urns and using entropic sums

the Mourning Dove's gentle hoo clinches it
in inches get out the votes for a war chest

all the camping days where they were in thickets
and crickets came pinging maps at twilight

soft gray birds almost lavender at times
seems some might land in a loft with ribbons

the days are typical triple digits of blooms
lips called for low calorie drinks. (with piano and strings Op. 44),

pills or all linking of colored pillows
in laps of forlorn kinked dolor.

Eight years in White House? Enough — Rochelle Ratner

Eight years is a long time, Laura says. She's anxious to get back to Texas now, sit in her yard, drive her own Mercedes, ride a horse, maybe even do a little cooking. She thanks God that He thought to limit American presidents to two terms. She wants to just sit back and put her feet up. Truly, these eight years have been fun, but very tiring. A little voice in her ear reminds her it's just been a little over six years. Laura takes a deep breath, lets it out slowly. Her head's suddenly heavy. She feels like she needs a toothpick to prop her eyelids open.

Opening the Dictionary — Gwenn Gebhard

She gave me
the first word she saw: Israelite.
And I mistook it for the modern noun,
and thought of walls through cities,
walls through the countryside,
helicopter pilots inspecting checkpoints,
wary bus riders worrying
about the next passenger on,
wedding parties becoming funerals,

olive and lemon groves growing half-tended.
Israeli and Palestinian are mentioned
in the same breath
but rarely in the same room.
How easily the mind reduces
a million vibrant souls
who read poetry, grow flowers, cook dinner
To a flurry of snapshots
in blurry monochrome
on a newsprint page.

A Brief White Grace — David Michael Nixon

Somewhere the moon
pauses in its
long journey and
an owl weeps
white tears for the
one who must hear
that owl's call,
but no name falls
from the hooked beak
tonight; now is
prelude only
and the owl's
tears water the
Easter lily
which opens in
the moon's bright gaze.

Difficult Inspiration — David Michael Nixon

I wanted to let the wind's breath guide me,
so I could float from ease to ease and tack
a hard course when the journey required,
but after the air buoyed suicide planes
to murderous ends and thousands of lives
explode in New York, Pennsylvania
and Washington, I soon began to know
that I must try to guide my breath and what
I could of others' into pursuits of
peace, so that at least some human winds might
turn to an updraft of forgiveness and
not a path to bear more bombs, whomever
they might erase, for once the breath entered
us, we should have used it to spread life and
not as another freezing winter wind.

first appeared in *Poets Against the War* — online version

The Attack — Arthur Winfield Knight

I bring my greyhound home,
shaken and bleeding,
attacked by a black Lab
while I was walking her.
The Lab came toward us
wagging its tail,
then it bit Nikkie
before I could use
the pepper spray I carry.

Now, hours later,
I sit on the floor
beside Nikkie, feeding her
thick pea soup and ham
out of my hand.
I keep telling her,
"You're a good dog,
you'll be all right,
you're a good dog,"
while she licks my fingers,
whimpering,
tail between her legs.

Why Do They Call It Air — Mary K Lindberg

"Israeli Student Killed by Suicide Bomber"
New York Times: Jerusalem, February 2004

Her face rivets
on what remains
of the son she raised.

She inhales the purity
of his infant breath,
waits for a laughing toddler
to rush into her open arms.

"Why do they call it air
if you can't see it?"

"Do you have to die, mama?"

"That body there," her face shouts,
"is not my son. No.
My son is
not dead
My heart
is dead."

World War II — Lee Evans

The names of states were carved in stone around
The wall of the Memorial, where posed
Beneath each wreath old men in veteran's caps
Embroidered with the companies they served.
One struggled from a wheelchair parked beside
The state of Maine and stood expectantly
Beneath that word, and someone who passed by
Said blithely, "Well now, you must be from Maine!"
But one who might have been the soldier's son
Replied, "Not really; he's from Illinois.
He don't know what it says," and guided him
With tenderness and patience to the state
Where he should pose. The crowd flowed slowly by,
Like water from the bright Reflecting Pool.

Into That Silence — Robert L. Brimm

Fresh off what we thought was one of the last of the troop trains, we liberated Texas barracks from the head-high growths holding them captive, ushered clouds of gritty dust out the doors, swabbed the floors, cleaned the windows which had not seen humans, likely, since some war before we were born, attacked the cobwebs which had invaded the bare pine walls echoing loudly now with our young voices cracking jokes and laughing. We battled incursions that come with neglect, busied ourselves with putting the barracks back into shape for our own use during our turn at basic training, for purposes which would not

become apparent until years later. Then the merriment subsided and we drifted toward a place where someone had found a brittle newspaper, orphaned in the clomping departure of those who lived here before us, a paper covered with red dust, announcing the end of a war, the Big One, it said. We passed it around, took note of its date, glanced at the main story, passed it along to others who stood around quietly now, waiting their turn. And that night, into that silence which follows such adventure, came thoughts of them, their fates, what might lie ahead for all of us. How little I knew then as I lay awake all night. How little I really knew.

From *Adventures at the Upstate: Poems on Films*
Presenting *Some Doggerel on Mrs. Henderson Presents* — Donald Lev

For me, Bob Hoskins steals the show:
His sparkling eyes, his great "Jewish" nose
(for from *British Dames*, whether
Dame Judi, Dame Judith,
Dame Iris, or Dame Edith,
one expects,
and usually gets
the best).

Like forties
"gay nineties"
Hollywood musicals, this
is a period piece.
But Theater being Theater, how can anything miss
that involves the London Blitz
and throaty voices of plucky Brits?

Finally, let us be thankful
young lads are less often sent to war
without a look at a woman's tits!

3/06

Loosen the Headstraps, Make Sanctuary! — Will Inman

1

no more room in the mountains of Guatemala!

bean patches and maize stalks are burnt
no more trees for firewood on the rocky slopes
no more lime in the pits for bleaching the maize

the Mayan people are driven from their villages
men are killed or trucked off to labor on great plantations
women are killed or given to the soldiers
children are killed or hidden by old people in caves
small fires give them away, some of the government men love
children, even the indigenous ones
carry the making of pleasure in their thin bodies

villages are burnt by U S napalm dropped
from helicopters, the free world cares, oh whose taxes
pay for the napalm for freedom

2

no more room in the mountains of Guatemala!
on the slopes of great volcanos, sisters and brothers
tote whole tribes in straps around their heads
and down their backs in bundles, tote Mayan gods
with names of Catholic Saints, tote hot lava
in their blood, tote the waking of volcanos
in their eyes, tote their future
children, tote invincible love and fury

loosen the headstraps! let volcanos awaken!

3

when we make room among us, make Sanctuary,
we create room for ourselves, inside us make Sanctuary
in our own lives. we who would grant Sanctuary
for refugees, ourselves have no sanctuary
under the moral majority of the Arizona
Attorney General

the President of Guatemala
and the President of the United States
refuse us Sanctuary. They
want no more room
in the mountains of Guatemala, in the high places
of our human hearts

the Presidents want bodies for their armies
and for their great farms and workplaces
they will keep our sisters
on plantations of pleasure
they will raise our children as livestock
on plantations for future
armies and labor battalions

no more room in the mountains of Guatemala!
no more room in the high places of our human hearts!

loosen the headstraps! let the volcanos awaken!
let us make room for our sisters and brothers
let us make room for ourselves

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