

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

29



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 29, #10

His talons drip with honey,
His beak is full of gentian leaves
And blossoms, and his eye
Shines with a strange kindness
As his feathers dust the sky.

Maurice Kenny

excerpted from *The Hawk*

published in *Kneading the Blood* (Strawberry Press)

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 29

Number 10*

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel
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Playthings — William Corner Clarke

In my childhood
All things were
Alive with chance
I played with a wild bear
In my crib
For hours on end
An eagle built its nest
On my windowsill
And showed me how to fly
I had a fine rattle of stars
Its handle twined
With a singing snake

And I knew God
Was revealed
In the barrel
Of my kaleidoscope

But when I came
Of age
The fallen angel fate committee
Ruled on childish things
And gave my mysteries
The consistency of stone
The bear and the eagle
Were consigned to natural history
The rattle to the rag and bone

But still, sometimes
I roar inside
For the loss
Of my forest friends
And sometimes in the night
Strange feathers
Still sleek
In the wind

First published '*Fire*' issue #16

Alta: a requiem, northern Vermont — Sylvia Manning

A bird I cannot name just dead several feet from cabin west wall.

Two days now.

This morning I bury the bird who once flew
 who one last time flew to meet itself
 in rain-cleaned window glass,
 who hastened to meet its very source of flight.

I bury it where invasive borage is dug out.

I say goodbye to it.

I remember finding it, back from a walk in what may become
 a wildflower meadow or an orchard
 once the machines are done cleaning debris
 left by other machines.

I thought the dead bird might be telling me
Lady Bird Johnson had died.
Claudia Alta Taylor.

(One lets oneself have thoughts like these in forest clearings.)

Then in the real world through real world small machines
I learned she had indeed gone on, Lady Bird, the night before.

Lyndon is near, I say in my mind
(just a town nearby, Lyndon —
but humble thoughts are allowed up here
in this region its people call the Kingdom.)

I say goodbye this morning to this bird I cannot name.
I let myself say again, "Lyndon's near."

Glover, Vermont. Summer, 2007

The Buzzard Roost — Sheryl L. Nelms

every sundown
it soars
up
from the West Texas plains
a cell phone
tower
feathered with
the black
of turkey
vulture
settled in
for
the night

Osprey — George Held

Osprey, you can see by the dawn's
Early light
A fish 'neath the finish of the bay
In your flight
As you circle and soar or you stall
Like a kite,
Ever ready to dive on your prey
When in sight;
Then you drop like a plummet until
You alight
On the brine with your talons outstretched
And they bite

Into scales of that silvery bass, lifting it clear
Of the bight
Of the bay with your ten-horse wings to retake
The sun's light,
And you land on your platform to tend to your nestling's
End of night
Hunger, tearing the bass with your terrible beak
Into bite-
Sized gobbets for your fledgling to gorge on, its break-
Fast birthright
As your scion, O Osprey, you long-winged king
Of the heights.

(from my chapbook *Winged*, 1995)

Geoff Stevens

Come on, he seemed to say
as he landed on the fencepost
close to me
I did it my first time yesterday
put immobility behind you
this place is killing you
spread your wings
get out of here
before another heart attack arrives
He was very young that fledgling hawk
but he had a glint in his eye
and he taught me how to fly

A Break in the Weather — R. Yurman

When the last strength drains from the wrists

When time slides over the edge of light

When the long nights chill our bones

We stretch arms as far as we can touch

We lean back against the hard wood bench

We force ourselves to hold still

draw breath

sing

Then dampness warms

weight shifts

necks begin to ease

Then a sweep of birdwing
the taut spring unwinding
rises across a cloud

Our chests release
And we swim toward the dark
through unstricted air

Sea Gulls of the San Francisco Bay — Joanne Seltzer

They circle about
our sightseeing boat,
cry like lost children
in search of bread,
fight over crumbs
and even as they eat
beg for more.

At dockside later
I find by a trash can
one broken gray feather
half-covered with dirt,
abandoned souvenir.

The Tiniest Shoreline Creature — J. J. Steinfeld

the sun is an illusion
the moon tells you
during a night
of crying
and remembering
youth and all the sand
that fell between
your fingers

the sand is a coward
the tiniest shoreline creature
declares in a voice
louder than the sun
or the moon

the sun and the moon
and the tiniest shoreline creature
conspire against your belief
in flying past the moon
and the sun into
the mind of
the tiniest shoreline creature

you have an argument
for renaming the sun
for reshaping the moon
for capturing the tiniest shoreline creature
but language today
is too elusive for memory
and you are tired
of redefining words
and worlds that find
the sun too hot
the moon too mysterious
the tiniest shoreline creature
too clever for capture

What Drama in the Night Woods — J. J. Steinfeld

what drama in the night woods
owlish ears and eyes in the dark
predator as artistic protagonist
hearing the fear of a speechless prey
its lines and cues forgotten
hidden in the undergrowth
large dark owlish eyes
seeing the desperation
predator of devotion and theatrics
within the darkened night green
of eyes seeing in the dark
of dark owlish eyes
seeing the night green
dark, nearly colourless,

seeing and hearing
silent flight
a pious performance
a simple dramatic lunge
quick as the dark
quicker than breath
a predator gains wisdom
and a hearty meal
swallowed as whole
as the night and fear
the drama a perfect production
without the slightest applause
or critical acclaim

from 'An Affection for Precipices' by J. J. Steinfeld, Serengeti Press, 2006,
first published in YAWP (Volume VI, Issue IV, Summer 2005)

Premonition — Sankar Roy

A bunny crosses the lawn in hurry
and hides in the blackberry bush. Squirrels jump
from branch to branch. I fill the bird feeder
with seeds and look up expecting birds to arrive.
In the glass-clear wind, birds fly in circles—
they know something which I do not know.
I don't think it's a storm.

The sky glows olive with edge-sharp light,
cloud's slight brushstrokes
here and there are orange-colored.
I am certain that it is not earthquake—

ants always sense an imminent earthquake.
It can't be a flood—no river or ocean is nearby.
This is something else.

May be a new Lord will be born.
May be the Lord's mother is weeping now
from the pain of the contractions.

My Books, Like My Clothing — Frank Murphy

Today, as I put on my Robert Service tie,
my blue Dostoyevsky shirt, and my
Wallace Steven's pants, Heinlein socks
and T.S. Eliot boots

and stand in front of a mirror in my
Keats overcoat, Mallarme hat,
and white gloves of Poe, and

thinking myself meticulously dressed
in my books, I will go out

"Now there," Someone on the street
may say, "Is a man without style."

Style? My closet is filed with books
I wear. And in truth, I've never
given a thought to matching them,

Even my underwear, Greek Myth briefs
or Bible shorts, with Darwin undershirt,
may not complement each other.

But everything fits me perfectly.

Border Monsoon — David Chorlton

With the elegance of ocotillo
bending to the pressure of the wind
and the sharpness with which
its spines will bite
the man who comes too close,
the border runs
between two worlds standing
in a thunderhead's shadow.
It is here the scorpion curls its tail
to show the poison tip,
here the oriole sings

while a jaguar's ghost treads softly
toward the scent of water,
and rainfall is a country
whose border is marked
in a sky of silver and ash.

van gogh's paints — will inman

been looking through a book of van gogh reprints
along with notes.

I could be sorry for his pain,
his seizures, his rejections.

but anyone who has been so often
in the presence of the most high
and shared those moments with us
is to be thanked and not pitied.

his irises, his workers with bruised souls,
his fields, his neglected cafes,
his thatched cottages
speak from an interior land landscape
and his language of paints.

From Ranges, Minotaur Press, 2006

A Feathered Future — Ellaraine Lockie

I'd like feathers
covering my body
That insulate
From frigid people
Waterproof from grief

That repel the heat of anger
Retain that of passion
Caress with
skin-tight down

That camouflage
from enemies
Flight-jacket airmail
from danger
Keep me chic-coat current
in annual molting

That is my contribution
to the world for comfort
on cold nights
So the need for nesting
is replaced by philanthropy
The need for immortality
met with feathered resolution
When I reincarnate as an eagle

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