

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

29



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 29, #4

I remember
there were horses,
thousands of horses
with beautiful
long manes. God!
they were so
beautiful, those horses,
thundering across
the prairie and
free, free!

Albe-Ort Huffstickler
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WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 29

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Chauvet Horses

Preserve the Wild Horses — Michael Shorb

The last ranchers hold a newspaper
Gracelessly
As prices fall their sheep and steers
Show panicky ribs to the desert sun
Wallow bleating and braying
In muddy skeletons of water places.

They cannot parachute the butcher down.
They cannot crane the lost meat skyward.
They can't prevent the wild horse
From drinking
Can't reason mustang and mare
Onto column inches of a reservation

So they roar out to trade in death (old servant,
Coughing in glade of doom death) that served
The red-stained bison people so efficiently.
Ways of life and modes of nourishment
Aside for a century I swear let burger-
Glyphics and gas pumps grow dormant
Let rice sky and wheat
Be kings, let us learn
Everything we cannot know
But preserve the wild horses.

I cannot sculpt this feeling into reason.
Nature is not a piece of chalk
To scribble blunt or rope to throw.
The wary, timeless stallion
Pausing on a ridge, cocking ears to run
Carries my ability away, over
The dry hills, to love freedom.

Standardbred — Joanne Seltzer

Slowed by the harness, hearing the whip crack,
the ancient symbol of intense desire
gives buggy rides, trots along the racetrack
or poses for deliveries of beer
to places darkly shadowed by blinders
that limit equine peripheral vision.
Emotions there must be (angry, sad, bitter)
but the world grows old and we witness none.

His testicles were sacrificed to make
ashes from the uncontrollable fire
of the wild — evidence that genetics
must yield to convenience whenever
followers of Thor wield magic hammers.

If the horseshoe fits must we put it on?
Where the anvil was we poke for embers,
But the world grows old and we witness none.

Somewhere a stallion arrives at a creek,
sloshes across to a passionate mare,
jumps clumsily upon her yielding back.
The creek becomes a stream, a raging river.
Relieved of devices made of leather
Pegasus flies us through heaven again
in search of God — any god — even Thor —
but the world grows old and we witness none.

Men who wage war put the blame on Thor, Mars,
Yahweh. We are the chorus of women
who look for changes in human nature
but the world grows old and we witness none.

blockade runners — will inman

today's blockade runners are letters.

when i was growing up

i used to see the wreck of a blockade runner
in front of my uncle's Carolina Beach cottage.

in the late 20s and early 30s

upturned hull of the CSS Beauregard

Confederate blockade runner

sat within swimming distance from the beach.

young southerners thought of it

as a heroic leftover from the Confederate side

waves came into shore from the ship
like letters from a hundred years ago
we saw her as a sunken message
from an earlier time
i never swam to her though my brother did
the sight of her brought me pride
but also pain
letters of protest to the President's War
ride today's wave.

from Ranges
(Minotaur Press, 2006)

Fog — Lyn Lifshin

The wind misses
him, the air, the
flowers. He showed
the same incredible
toughness and
determination in
his battle with
cancer that he
showed in his
racing career.

Won the Arisitide
at Churchill Downs
in June, an un-
discovered football
sized tumor in
his belly. A wonder-
full patient someone
says and a true
gentle man
to the end.

Butterfly — William Corner Clarke

Up early in the November morning
I'm sitting on the porch
Having seen her out in the rain
Taking photographs
Of an out of season butterfly
At rest beneath the cover
Of some broad leafed weeds

Her old gray gabardine
Is trailing in the mud
Her long, black waves
Of tangled hair
Are straggled by the water
Streaming down
From a cold and clouded sky

It's plain that she is tired
From lack of sleep
But still she stays
Unsteady but determined
To capture one last image
Of the yellow wings
And as she kneels up close
I see the energy of beauty
Transfiguring her face

Murder One — James Penha

My little old lady dog shuns the hand that would not,
never has struck her but wants
to pet the pet's sixteen fido years—
even two I spent at sea,
a separation pacifically
profound between me
and this black ball born upon our bed . . .

addled, she circles all day
the house a perimeter
secure against nothing
she knows now; she forgets
or fears to wait at the door

and so unlike a Derby winner at the start
she drops her oats,
proceeds carelessly circumferential,
plods to the finish,
slo-mo 'round the house . . .

End her race now,
I whisper,
though if only her amnesia were to die first—
if she knew again the scent of my hand,
would it play this merciful role?

Of course
I cried.

But how easy
to threaten now my cat
who, damn me,
dares to make demands . . .

or my wife
who makes time to see a lover
when once she knew my mind in minutes . . .

how small a second seems.

Geoff Stevens

Wild horses would drag me away
from life in the city
out onto the plains
galloping with the herd
mares following a stallion
free and unrestrained
raising the dust into Monument Valley
captured only in the cowboy films

Centaur — R. Yurman

I call across the open grass
in a voice strange even to my ears
more shout than the whinny I intend.

They turn their heads at the sound
foals and mares among the distant trees
but don't trot over to welcome me
returned victorious from the wars of men.

*Legs and chest and mane
deep in the wash of human blood,
hooves stomping wide stricken eyes,
I rode them down.*

Face of a man, arms of a man,
body of horse they will
not race beside
or let frisk among them.

They hang their heads,
nuzzle the grass, crop slowly,
ignore my neighs, my cries.

Call For It — Davide Trame

1

You have just missed it, the dog's glance,
the wind's eye just passed after a touch.
Quick means clear. One second dream.
You either catch it or are lost to its flight.

The cat blinks, taps your gaze from afar,
taps lines in the air, pats their flickers;
look at the cat's gaze: fully present, a sky
puzzled by its own immediacy, its hushed bloom.

Breathe the grains that shape this pantheon of gazes
around you, be ready for each speck, each dart,
each silent birth in the glances of the silvery dust.
The sound of one hand only is the heartiest gold

you can imagine, hear it as if you were reaching
the only one-in-a lifetime blossom in a field of grass,
the bright darkness of a sky, closer and closer, brushing
all over, like the pools of the horses' eyes.

2

Do not pass unnoticed dear Hermes, in the meantime.
You, who like hiding in the child's cradle, who slide through locks
like a mist. Wake us up for a blink in between your blinks.
Let us catch the word beyond the word when you talk

into ears, all aglow with the night, stuck with the resin,
stuck with smiles on the mercury line. In the meantime,
when the road runs with its score of stripes, the radio station
sings and talks and wheezes, the commercials break.

Do not stop keeping us awake, dear Hermes and dear Auden,
marking with lyre and drum what comes to pass
with the tiger-striped, unceasing swarming hum
of the roadways, along which your valves, our valves

close and open exactly, and our vessels at their right moment
contract and expand. Your forests have been razed to the ground
for a long time now, but we can still get a glimpse of a deer
that more shyly than then, peers through chinks into the debris.

3

Meet the stone, after the wave; meet the shot
of the sea's eyes. Meet the stone, the instant stone
all aglitter; after flash and lash
infinitesimal stars peer through.

One second sea. Call for it, all is ready.
You come to a sudden clearing in the wood,
nobody's there but the air, gazing. Mark
this vacancy, each of its dots with the marmot's

still eyes when it stands and scrutinizes the openness, ready.
Listen to the ticking space in the grip of the sky's blue,
it's Pan's pulse who stands waiting for the zenith,
the midday shadow straight into his body.

Look at the lemons in the orchard, the sun's specks,
the pine needles in the wind's stares,
Pan bides his time in a crack cut in the mouth of the light
and his breath sparks the horizon.

Lemurs at the Bronx Zoo — George Held

Unlike thousands of horses "thundering
Across the prairie" to make us feel free,
The handful of lemurs at the zoo,
Newly installed in small arboreal habitat
Meant to mimic their Madagascar home,
Seem like the spirits of primitive human
Beings, eerily complement in captivity.

Unlike the thoroughly equine horse,
The mystical lemur has hands and feet
And mournful eyes that make us feel
Like cousins - if we discount

That prehensile tail, so deft as balance,
Hook, and rudder. Wouldn't people be better
Off with one of those?

O horse, with mane flung back
As you race the wind across the prairie,
Do not let yourself be locked
In paddock or pasture. O lemur,
Enclosed in cage, do not let the gawkers
Distract you as you receive signals
From a place beyond our ken.

I Remember — Sylvia Manning

1.

I remember Marilyn Monroe the scene where she screams against the capture of wild mustangs. I remember her bent double, fists tight at her thighs in skin-tight denim, a human adult crying out like a child in tantrum for justice. For herself and humans like her, not just horses, for women long bridled, made to be show ponies never free to run on their own true prairies.

2.

I remember Mara, Bread & Puppet member from New York City.

Peter tells attendees in his English with accent of Silesia that the Lubberland Dancers come together to ride their noble steeds like Genghis Khan. Jeen gus, we hear, and the noble steeds we see are brooms of straw, but only until Mara reins her own horse high and everyone in company does the same. Then we see horses.

Later they'll have brooms they've made themselves from gathered twigs, made the oldest way. They'll ride these behind Mara, their lead dancer.

And later at the Lubberland (Glover land) library, a little space, I`ll tell Mara how fine it is to see her graceful strength. She thanks me and says soon to a young man at the one table with us, says neither shyly nor coquet-tishly but freely, to explain : « I want to be able to tell myself when I'm old that when I was young and strong I used my body as fully as I could. That's what I want.

3.

I remember the statues of Joan of Arc in Compagnie.

I think I must go see my friends in Compagnie » engraved on one, in Old French. She'd be taken prisoner there, May 23, 1430.

La pucelle, they called her. The young animal.

4.

I remember how the poet thought often for the poems he'd sent out — where they were, how long they'd been there, where they were taken, where they'd appear.

He tended them, speaking softly to them, telling them they were beautiful — somewhere out there on the poetic prairie.

Untethered — Robert Goligoski

Written for Ellaraine Lockie for their 19th anniversary

A creature fine
With moods as ever-changing
As a winter Montana sky.

Proud as a mustang
In full flight across a mountain meadow.
She knows no master.
The touch of a bridle is foreign to her flesh.

She wavers at nothing.
Fear is a stranger
As she plunges into the unknown.

She has never been part of the herd.
Nothing can ever cling to her back.
Life swirls around her
As fast as the sand devils
Whip across the plain.

Her life is rich.
She presses on alone
Heading for a purple-haze butte
That keeps slipping out of sight.

The mustang grows mute
And savors the night.
A light flickers in the distance
And life starts anew.

As the words of creation
Run like a river
Unleashed in a torrent
That flows through the terrain
Untethered.

On the Film *MONGOL* — Donald Lev

Coming to age of Ghengis Khan
who started up a notable empire
out in the east somewhere.

Horrible country. No wonder they
seldom got off their horses.

Politically I think we are all better
off for what we have. The film,
I think is Russian, so of course
the first audience would be more
at home with thirteenth century
Central Asian dispensations.

I have to tell you, that, more and more
I find justification for these movie going
excursions in the after film high you get
when the film's really good. This time, for instance,
women, in the que-ups for the restrooms after the show,
and on the way back to the car,
seemed peculiarly stunning, and a little bit scary.

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