

The background of the cover is a watercolor painting. It features broad, expressive brushstrokes in shades of green, yellow, and blue, set against a light, textured background. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a natural scene, perhaps a stream or a field of tall grasses.

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 1

Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 32, #1

"I've had a life," she said
and smiled, satisfied.

James Penha

PART OF YOUR LIFE

Waterways, Volume 19, Number 1

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 32

Number 1

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel
Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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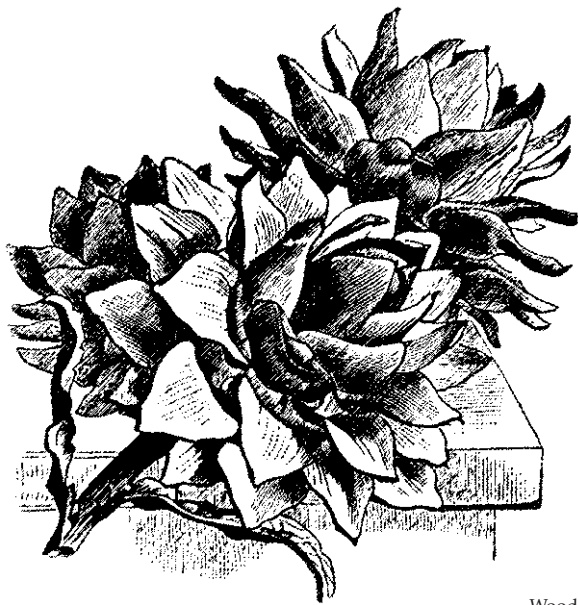
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Wood engraving by Johann Daugull 1893

Of the oleander blossom

Blossom now dried to mauve
in a spring like summer
by some phenomenon of
breeze beneath mother
oleander, just above,
comes alive as if to dance for her
and for countless sibling others
still attached to deep green
branches (bearing also yellow
leaves, a few, to bespeak drought)

Dances as if smallest marionette
in a miniature world without
puppet mistresses or masters,
merely graced by slow breezelet
and thus let become petite dancer
dressed in unpressed organdy
softened through letting go,
worn for last homage
to whatever watches over
her dance beyond time (after all,
she has gone on)

Through morning drought-late moments
beneath waving still green boughs
whence she fell lightly, once,
to petalled shade.

– *Sylvia Manning*

*April 28, 2011
Martindale, Texas*

A Dancer's Reflections

Has it really been fifty-two years since I spun across the floor of that gritty Manhattan studio, sleek in Danskin leotard, while a retired Martha Graham dancer beat her drum: one and two and one and two.

At sixteen I loved the dancers' ethereal look. After class I'd float down the stairs to the subway, chin high, gaze distant, imagining myself on a world tour that did not include a third-floor walk up on Pitkin Avenue.

Last night my muscles twitched, my posture elongated, as I watched Company C Contemporary Ballet's Ashley Ivory, elegant as her name, levitate to Corelli's Sarabanda.

Next I became a siren, wooed by two men. With my confident New York attitude, I jazzed to the smoky sounds of Chet Baker's You Don't Know What Love Is.

Though I left the city long ago, as the music swelled, I was once again that Brooklyn girl, chin held high, ponytail swinging. One and two and one and two.

– *Arlene Mandell*

Christmas Cheer

Doctor Taylor stumbled
into the living room littered
with toys, board games,
bright tattered wrapping paper,
a blast of cold winter air
circling him like the fumes
of alcohol on his breath.

He'd been summoned
from his own celebrations,
enjoying the holiday
with his family across town,
daughter Karen back home
from her first year at the university.

“She’s upstairs.” My father’s funereal voice
blew away any lingering awkwardness.
Doctor Taylor followed him
to my grandmother’s room,
holding onto the handrail for support,
trundling like a beaver
in his heavy winter overcoat,
leaving a suspenseful silence behind.

Several minutes later they returned,
Doctor Taylor, weaving slightly,
formally shook my father's hand,
patted my mother's heaving shoulder.
He let himself out the door,
back into the cold Christmas night.
He hadn't even removed his coat,
having only come to certify
my mother was now an orphan.

– *Charles Rammelkamp*

You're Allowed to Be Naked

I'm sitting in the hot tub
next to the swimming pool,
the only place you're allowed

to be naked —
sort of. I'm wearing my blue trunks,
billowing out like gills

with the hot water jets.
Beside me Matilda,
the tiny retired lady, reclines

in a swimming cap and
flowery bathing suit.
Matty's talking to Jenny, the lifeguard
about her tattoos.
Matty has one that looks like a bruise
on her spindly arm.

Jen got hers at a parlor,
forty dollars an hour.
The guy stitched the unicorn
in under two.
She lifts her shirt to show
the design under her breasts.

It's not provocative at all.
We're all so "natural."
Feels like we're all friends.

Matty's polite but I notice she holds
her fingers over her own
like a cage concealing a bird.

From her age, her accent,
the way the smudge looks like numerals,
I can only guess what her tattoo signifies.

– *Charles Rammelkamp*

In The Summer, Middlebury

even the oldest widows
put on white shoes

and walk to Main Street.
It could be the last

time Otter Creek rustles
their tight snow curls.

They remember stopping
at road side stands

for raspberries still
glistening with

night water, the silk
of corn gathered

under hot light
with some

one no longer with them

– *Lyn Lifshin*

Going Slow

It is all you ask,
a stopping place
where all the world's
heated motions
go somewhere else
leaving you
to get to know
finally
the slow traveling shadows
at your feet,
the changing hues of the
mauve vase
on the
table in the window

Not so much the light
in all its busy omniscience but only its
quiet resting place
on this
this vase
that carries so much of
our history
here in this house
of youth
of aging
of the eventual
conclusion.

– *Doug Bolling*

Festus

I considered
writing a poem about
my wife's crush
on Festus,
a character
on *Gunsmoke*,
but realized
almost no one
would know who
he is these days.

They'd think Festus
was a scab
that didn't heal,
unless they were over 40,
then I thought,
The hell with it.
I'd just have to find
an old editor.

- *Arthur Winfield Knight*

Light on Their Feet

You would swear they were younger than whatever – seventy, eighty, one possibly ninety. All women, of course, their men having disappeared years before they gathered here.

Why do they seem so happy, so diligently engaged, so light on their feet though seated, playing cards? They're like quilters without thread and needles, just the hand they've been dealt, though they discard a few, examine, arrange new ones with nimble fingers.

And these girls play for real money –
Nickels and dimes, no worthless pennies.
It's a joy to see them, watch their faces,
study their moves. But, holy crap,
their language often sears the air.

– *Bill Roberts*

If Once I Wished
[After Granger's the letter I]

I wonder what if death were nothing
a waking to snowfall
ice comes undone
thaws.

Eighty springs beat through me in whispered floods.
The end of my life sounds a retreat
from a time where my mind lives and the sun shines
and the days seem forever.

Once I sang
of hill and sky of earth and sea,
plucked a stalk of grass
and took away the ocean in a shell.
I thought that grown-up people chose
and flew as high as Icarus,
an idle visitation.

I tried to live small
a girl waiting for her lover
when love was gone like a breath
and I was alone then looking at the picture of a child.

I wish that I were so much clay. A fragment.
I wish I could remember the first day.
I wish I had the voice of Homer reaching through the years.
I wish I knew the names of all the stars.
I wish I lived in a peddler's caravan no known destination
and wonder what I mean by sanctuary.

I am tired of being a woman
considering the outnumbering dead.
I will not be inhabited.
I want my house with open doors
as I wait for him who restores my fingertips.

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow
and walk, a prisoner to the road.

I walk by the seashore facing against the wind.

I walk out into the country at night
through a snowfall to the hill where he and I were young.

A blanket of stillness surrounds me
and the loamy black earth lies fallow
under a rime of frost.

The moon glances off the surface
and I know

all my life
has led me to this winter
when my body will sleep
beneath the cold, black earth
and tomorrow will be as dust.

Life shines sweetly near my winter moment.

– *Margo Roby*

Turning Amateur on National TV

I watched an old pro on TV last night,
a singer (you'd know her name if I mentioned it),
in a format that was nearly as painful for me
as for her, her talents betrayed by last-minute surprises,
no coordination and no rehearsal, that smile of hers,
a painted trademark she patented at age 14,
burned into the phosphors of my 19 inch colortube
where it will remain, etched like a cheap epitaph on stone.

– *Gilbert Honigfeld*

Check Out

Behind her register
wearing her virgin nametag
with the stick-on TRAINEE label
she was a dead-ringer for one of those
cabaret waitresses who'd rather be a singer
except this one told me in that 15 second window
how she thinks she's going to like this better than being
a research assistant at the Smithsonian which is where
she used to work 'cause here she'll get to meet and talk
with people which she really couldn't do at the other place.

– *Gilbert Honigfeld*

if I return
it will not be
as I was

– *Scott Owens*

snug in her wheelchair
head drooping to one side
eyes fluttering on the edge of sleep
wearing her flame red party dress
she snaps awake

“Where’s my piece?” she asks
“I’m sure it tastes
as good as it looks.”

we slip her a plate
small neat chocolate wedge
whipped-cream, raspberry filling

her third
she wolfs it down
licks the fork
drifts off
and returns
ready to celebrate
shakes her head
"It's *my* birthday.
Why don't I
get any cake?"

– *Richard Yurman*

Bread and Ashes

A shadow in a shadow land as time goes on and memories fade and you weather the years and visit the graves, until your dream falls asleep, too, and all that remains of the ashes of winter is the warmth you once gave. A ghost even then, in her faded print dress, dusted with flour and white as her hair, I used to sit at the kitchen table and watch my grandmother bake Sabbath bread—a weekly miracle which I could never fully comprehend. Her wizened face glistened with affection each time she glanced in my direction. Her cloudy eyes squinted for perfection as she molded the mysterious dough and we listened to phantom voices on the radio.

— *Rex Sexton*

Secret Song

Each word she speaks
Is really just
The presence of her soul
Made music
By her body and her blood
And all the love poems
That you may
Write to her
Will have no meaning
Unless you first can hear
The secret song
Her flesh is singing
Just for you

– *William Corner Clarke*

Another Montreal note, summer 2007

Then on Sherbrooke I see a proper little bourgoise slap (yes) a bicyclist passing her.

The bicyclist is not deterred nor does he even seem bothered, but the nice little lady tells me, who has stopped a moment just in case she wants to say something besides what she said to him — which I didn't quite get — and yes she does but I only understand that she doesn't like it — oh, no,

She switches to English and tells me it's dangerous, they're all dangerous —

And I consider that he's not supposed to be on the sidewalk, and he is moving fast (too fast to be even dissuaded by her hitting him)

But anyway Montreal isn't yet too friendly for bicycles. After July 18 they can't go on the subway Metro, though this morning I did see one — an older man who must have convinced the attendant who knew him, from many rides, to let him take it home one last time?

— *Sylvia Manning*

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