

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

32

#9



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 32, #9

**The moon inhales
tonight - inspiration in reverse:
it sucks the soul
from the shore and the field
from the grass, the cypress**

James Penha

GRAVITY OF THINGS

Waterways, Volume 20, Number 9

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 32

Number 9

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Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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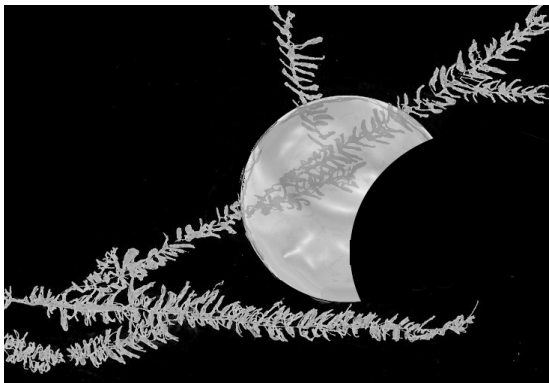
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View

From where I live I can see New Jersey
but not Russia
I can see Brooklyn
but not Coney Island
I can see 7th Avenue
 And maybe a Russian
 (at this very moment)
 is walking
 down the street wondering
 why he left Russia where
he had such a wonderful
view of Alaska.

Frank Murphy

Hard Times 1

All over town the shops are closing,
restaurants,
bars,
boutiques,
salons,
meat markets,
bakeries,
all with signs
in the windows

on the doors

The people walking pass stop
to read the signs with

anxious eyes, indifferent eyes

and the windows look back
reflecting everything...
Seeing what windows see.

Frank Murphy

Pantry Pantoum

The young people left.

Now foodstuffs last forever.

Packed flour you'll have to sift
for oatmeal cookies or whatever.

Now foodstuffs last forever —
if we keep them safe from rats —
for oatmeal cookies or whatever
we hope can feed true democrats.

If we keep them safe from rats —
the staples, especially the grain
we hope can feed true democrats—
the young may come back again.

The staples, especially the grain,
they can relearn how to use,
if the young come back again,
so what is there to lose?

They can relearn how to use
compost, leaves, the moon.
So what is there to lose
by not giving up too soon?

Compost, leaves, the moon,
flour waiting in a big glass jar
not giving up too soon,
not straying off too far.

Flour waiting in a big glass jar —
packed flour you'll want to sift,
since (the sun's stayed a star)
the young people left.

Sylvia Manning
January 19, 2012
The Sonka House

Half a Step Behind Denial

Today at the gym during my lunchbreak
a man lies sprawled
across the locker room floor,
like a broken doll,
foam dribbling from the corner of his mouth,
sweat running in rivulets
through the hair on his chest.

“You need any help?”

The answer’s self-evident,
and when he says no, he’s all right,
I run back out to the lobby anyway.

“There’s a guy down in there.”
I follow the trainer to the lockers,
the man still splayed on the floor
like a gunshot victim,
sudsy saliva dripping from his cheek.

“You all right, man?”
The trainer leans over him.
The naked man waves him away.
“Can I get you anything?”
“Sumpin to drink,” the guy slurs.

“Looks like low blood sugar,”
the trainer mutters,
hurrying past me out to the lobby
to fetch a bottle of Gatorade.

But I remember my boss, Morris Traub,
crumpling to the floor outside his office,
the mute appeal in his eyes,
like a pet begging to be fed,
when they took him out on a stretcher,
the last time I saw him alive.

Charles Rammelkamp

Norman and the Moon

stood still outside her window
for what must have been hours, stared
in silence hoping for a glimpse of anything
more substantial than shadow or memory.
Norman and the moon ignored the bay
of dogs, distant sirens, footsteps,
all the unknown sounds of night,
knowing nothing remained worth fear.
Norman and the moon it seemed
were one, or at least enough alike
to share some knowledge of solitude,
their only difference –
the moon shed light
Norman could only imagine.

Scott Owens

Old Farmer

See the old tree
bent by a storm.

In two summers
it will be gone.

Its top branches
will begin to fall

like old men who
losing balance

reach down with knotted hands
to break their fall.

Lying prostrate soon
in the remote field,
far from any town,
the old farmer
will stare into sky
and breathe wind,
his two companions,
who unable to help,
will hold his hand
and stare with sadness
down at the weathered
face until the end.

Thomas Reynolds

Old Woman With Broom

I'll begin by critiquing my own title,
since 'old' conveys too wide a swath of age
to fit snugly enough around an ancient woman
in a shapeless cotton housedress or perhaps a kimono
its pattern of imaginary roses long laundered into oblivion
leaving a tasteless film of no specific color at all
to cover the sliver of a letter C she has become,
a glass-boned ancient bent by time to her task,
hunched over her square of worn sidewalk, broom—

stick in two fleshless hands, scraping with amazing
vigor for something so frail, so tentative, this
end-stage woman, who, for the same money,
could just as easily be scratching packed
caked mud in front of a hut in Burma,
thatches tied to an old walking staff,
as working the sidewalk spotless
at this tenement in Jersey City.

Gilbert Honigfeld

The Desert a Sound

In winter the desert speaks softly
as it slips between grey clouds
and the glow
of a rock face in the sun
with a canyon wren's call
dripping through the air. The spring
finds you staring across the bed of stones
the map shows as a river
and away into the blurring of dry light
that recedes until it becomes
a purple slope on a mountain.

Now you hear a string vibrating
on a guitar tuned for summer,
which arrives soon enough
and falls silent
beneath the heat's weight
until the monsoon, when it coughs
out the boulder
trapped in its throat
with a drumbeat of thunder
and the wild rain runs
in all directions. When it stops

with an hour of daylight
still to burn you will hear
mourning doves but think
they are calling to someone
who was drawn too far
by the desert's sounds
ever to come back.

David Chorlton

Last Days

if there's any justice
God's hand won't be able to reach through
the lead-lined walls of private bomb shelters
the last refuge of the huddled rich, the underground cities
of the elite

this way, the Rapture will only lift the broken, burnt bodies
of the people outside, littering the streets
take the children barricaded beneath the kitchen sink
the housewives hiding under the bed
the young men dying on the battlefields, the poor men
driving to work

if there is any justice
the upper echelon of society
will emerge from their protective cocoons
filled with tinned meat and sparkling water
to find they've inherited a world burnt beyond recognition
unfit for habitation
abandoned by God.

Holly Day

The Phony

When my wife and I
met the poet
more than 30 years ago
he was always writing
about all the women
he'd had sex with,
but after an early dinner
with us in North Beach
he went home to watch
Hawaii Five-O
alone. These days
he's made a career
writing about

his “close friends”
who’ve died –
Bob Kaufman,
Jack Micheline,
Harold Norse,
Hugh Fox – and a lot
of others. I tell a friend
in Sacramento
we need to
outlive the bastard.
He’s probably written
our obituaries already.
I didn’t like him
when we met.
I don’t like him now.

Arthur Winfield Knight

This rapacious universe purses
Its acquiescent lips
To swallow its creation whole.

Wayne Hogan

Moonwatcher

I've become a watcher of moons —
crescents, quarters, halves, fulls —
Signs of time's passing and doom's
approach as age and disease
take friends, family. How long
will my reprieve be,
how long might I watch the thirteen
annual cycles, the one blue moon?
I'm gibbous waning to nil,
while the old moon's fraught
with the new and will rise to full
again, and I shall be naught.

George Held

Under the manmade bridge

is a depression
eating its wall of mud.
You peer for fish
which swim elsewhere
where green reeds sway.
By what you have known
you seek reflection
in a liquid mirror,
but water streams
from your gaze.
From smoothed banks
you consider water
being diverted under

and water's tendency
to outstretch itself
being controlled.
Stepping down,
you observe water sloshing
within its barriers
and a sizzling butt flung,
floating like a burning boat.

Being here, you favor water,
blood-relation of you.
Inhale, you desire molecules
splashing from misty airs –
water's song on your tongue.

Exhale, you push forward —
your arteries like tributaries
leading into the heart of delta
and fresh flow commingled
with open brine, its urging tides.
Your nose wrinkles, respire —
keen for the rippling gulf
of kingfish and angelfish
and even the less holy,
your portion of salty tears.

Mary Belardi Erickson

Insomniacs

suppose sleep is not what science claims—
not restorative, not palliative at all
but a real thief of energy—those dreams.

Drawn to a land where mountains mole
and static oceans stand impressed wave on wave
in child-scrawled crests, we're lured, but
fearful of that lull coved in the maelstrom—
afraid of finding Time uncurved, the sea, science
and ourselves unnerved.

Balanced between dream and dilemma
like those foolish sheep we're taught to count
hung up on fences they thought to leap—
we're hung up on stiff, semantic traumas, but seek
a moon-wrought place where dew rises on a leaf
refracting light—a place of peace

Just on a chance, we lapse
and dream, however dangerous, of sleep.

Ruth Moon Kempfer

September Morning in North Texas

the moon
hooks its

fingernail in
black velvet

Orion
stands firm
above the burr oaks

frost cricks
the scruff

of rhodesgrass

the bantam rooster
next-door

trills his
dawn

cock-a-doodle-do

coyotes do
a surround

sound in
the north forty

the Walnut
Creek Cemetery

looms through
the lifting
fog

as I flick
to brights

Sheryl L. Nelms

Eagle Mountain Lake Fog

it flumps in

to the
live
oaks

filters down

to dampen
the door
knob

that slips
in my

hand

as I
disappear

Sheryl L. Nelms

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