

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
27



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 27, #6

Around his Tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his Death, ye Blockheads, hear and sleep.

Samuel Johnson
from *The Vanity of Human Wishes*

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 27

Number 6*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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To Enid on Her 63rd Birthday - June 28, 2006 — Donald Lev

Again there were already stones on your monument when we got there!

We got a break in the weather. Now rain resumes.

Yesterday I stopped in Brooklyn Heights,

to say goodbye to my old shop steward — cabbie turned
public defender Bob Zuss — you met him at least once —
and of course knew his poet brother Mark.

He was born same year as you, '43. He outlasted
his cancer three more years than you did yours.

There were other ex-Dover drivers there. One of them
had written a poem we published in *Poets*. It's a
tiny, tiny world — especially as I ran into Les
Weichselbaum on the street outside the church.

I didn't tell Barbara for reasons you know well.

I asked Barbara if she believed in God.

(I had just been reading Larry Bush in the new
Jewish Currents relate how, in spite of the
allurements of Reconstructionism, he
had decided to stick to atheism.
Barbara said she didn't believe in God,
but did believe in Heaven.
I said that would be good, if there was
a Heaven, to know you were there.
She said she believes in reincarnation too.
You could already have been re-born.
If so, who am I writing to? I feel
you in my heart, dismissing
this question.
cancer, too.

don't call him out his name — will inman

some fifty men living protected
from the world, from themselves,
recovering from heart surgery but most such
still smoking, fed three meals a day, given
prescribed meds or taking them on their own,
some for physical conditions, some
for mental imbalances — he assists in managing
the lot.

some are old — he keeps them
waiting in line for meds, aggravating bladders
getting them anxious about wetting their pants,
one or two will complain. he takes it
personally, blasts them for lack of control, for
blaming him. he forgets they're in his charge.

he has cheerful greetings for each
as they reach him for pills, they
for the most part respond in kind, though some
want to row, he may not suspect how bitter some
may feel. he has the power. for some, their
situations are self promoted, for many
they cannot help being where they are, he
needs to understand how they feel, this tribe
of bitter old men. Amazing they can be cheerful
as most of them most times
are.

Trade — Anselm Brocki

"Don't miss the hangovers,
shakes, or stomach pains,"
Willard says to Harvey
in a swivel stool-chair
next to him at the All-Nite,
the heat lamps above
the order window making
their whiskered faces
younger, less weathered,
"but I sure do miss
the business of sherry
all day and hard liquor
with women at night."

"Hell, I was real busy
all the time, panhandling
for sherry, odd jobs
for the hard stuff.
Had me a real trade,
lifting bottles or glasses
slow day in and day out.
Had something to do
every minute, gettin'
drinkin', gettin', drinkin'.

"Now I'm clean, there's
big holes in all my days
and nights. Just me
inside my head, looking
out with nothing to do
or think."

"Yeah," Harvey says,
staring ahead blank.

Samantha Haiku — Joan Payne Kincaid

August 24, 2006

old Siamese
taken out doors
to memorize

aware as ever
the dying cat
studies a bee

lying in the grass
nearly at an end
she memorizes

nearly at the end
aware of everything
memorizing

old cat in the grass
taken outdoors as a gift
observes everything
bees, flowers, birds, wind, sunlight
to take along with her

Traveler — Joan Payne Kincaid

I could hear the whistle of trains. . . A traveler is hurrying towards the nearby station; and the path he is taking will be engraved in his memory by the excitement induced by strange surroundings, by unaccustomed activities, and the farewells exchanged beneath an unfamiliar lamp, still echoing in his ears amid the silence of the night, by the imminent joy of going home.

Marcel Proust

Now the old computer is dying
some of the best years you wonder if it's too hot
in the 90's to turn it on
no planting now it's June you knew it would be *too hot!*
The Island is hot as any island anywhere and the Alaskan dream starts again
she remembered Bayview Avenue full of life and darkness
and the eternal harbor its boats that were a Grandfather's obsession;
so hot she is spelling things dyslexicly
the children were babies and the animals

if you sit still as a corpse and don't move it's bearable
be a little teapot like the child's song the ice cream truck plays all summer;
she could not reach out to someone who was no longer there so early
passing the block causing the Doberman to *lose it*
the Doberman limps arthritis it seems only weeks since he was a pup

the way they live up there in enclosed building and no one can get in or out
through the drifts and ice they say is melting away penguin polar bear seal
she is in her mind one with them with inescapable relationships bumping into
each other in halls and around corners the way they do on all the Star Trek space
ships lost or gone for decades
the man in the computer store warned it could explode above one hundred

that entire morning gone to tending failing animals who keep on loving
as much as when they were little; trying to complete something before the PC
crashes every day . . . as if the brain will lapse along with it;

there had been dental appointments (without anesthesia), lunch with a college chum in from Colorado, a visit to a sister long having been put off due to time lack,
even so, despite the humid temperatures the day speeds by with such choices as write or submit rarely time for both

Where were you in May when planting was essential beyond a kitchen garden? No one came to visit . . . and won't this summer either too hot for New York City so who would see the flowers anyway? But they were bought as tiny things in May, their futures set on the porch: if you just watch the Yankees losing streak and let the living room a/c do its thing it's almost a renewal or study the *future* canvas she seemed to disappear at the age of six months from both sides of the family, of course it was they who did the withdrawing once her father died, they considered her a rock around the neck of a once small-town glamorous mother who flapped her way through life, the Charleston and Lucky Strikes all the way to cancer. Once she rose from a cocoon with a surreal burst of energy to plant some seeds

that summer you thought she might make it . . . what was it . . . petunias, portulacca she loved and knew flowers well though when he passed everything was let go; (still she mopped with a cig and cooked to provide an oasis for my unlikely reality); in the best of times she preferred her own head

and other than such appointments there was the way each day vanishes like clouds floating away or water down a drain . . . or that awesome shape shifter who dissolved into water . . . caught in a pail;

after they move she seems to be reading one hundred greatest books for years borrowed from the library dreaming she was Scarlet or some creation of Mann or Dostoevsky after he died, she never really came back; there are so many telling one how to sing, where to go, when to perform, how to survive . . . the local Countess' scholarship, suddenly from Welfare to silk; the artist always beholden one way or another nearly un-survivable; there was the commute to a settlement school on the lower east side, Juilliard teachers, the setting sun late spring with opera characters madly in love

made her lonely and passionate to be there, sitting there at in the dark in awe of the local Italian girls who didn't have to study what Mimi or Violetta were saying before she even knew romance she observed herself move with amazed detachment . . . as if some thing was saving her from danger . . . a child alone on trains, walking through strangers . . . a certain light around six thirty at night brings it all back vividly as if it were now;

She decides not to read Proust before writing because everything winds up being memoire. Maybe at dusk you could take a few zinnias out and pull up the for-get-me-nots that crowded out May.

three weeks — Michael A. Flanagan

work and home,
meals to cook
and eat, he
had to find a
stapler, attach
checks to bills,
find stamps, find
the mailbox, the
television was put
on sometimes at
night, the radio
in the car, he
had a child and
a wife, a tele-
phone that rang

three weeks he
failed to find
time to look at
the sky, the many
shapes, the great
dark clouds moving
with great speed,
the oceans of
blue with white
streaks and pur-
ple and pink, the
moving sun
until
it sinks and is

gone, twenty-
one days buried
without honors,
other things,
but not the sky

On Reading Allen Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead" — Joanne Seltzer

War used to be a guy thing, and the dead
members of a club endowed by Cain
and Abel, characters with nameless wives
who shared the grief but not the pageantry
nor the celebrity that follows triumph
nor the post-traumatic stress of peace.

War used to be a chess game lost or won
by boys deployed as pawns that marched in step
with fife and drum, banner high until
blood spilled on color-coded uniforms
and cries of pain turned into death rattles
and birdlike silence hovered overhead.

War used to be romantically perceived
by Byron and his like before they found
quietude while volunteering for
intrusions, forays, raids battles, wars
and other forms of bellicose expression
and other triggers of adrenaline.

War used to be one cannon pointed at
another, eyeball at eyeball, amputations,
tombs of unknown soldiers, row after row
ID'd from name tags found at Gettysburg
and pastures bloodied less: Fredericksburg,
Antietam, Shiloh, Malvern Hill, Bull Run.

But modern war is fought without the smell
or sight or sound or feel or taste of death
by soldier boys and soldier girls recruited
for the key to heavy-duty doors
that open on the new reality
of bodies bagged and flown far from their fall.

At Death's Door — Bill Roberts

I have cut my hand badly
Playing at the forbidden place
On the way home from school.

I start to run home, crying,
Dripping blood all down my front,
Cursing the all too familiar sound

Of a noisy ambulance
That races past me in the street,
My mother applies a fancy handkerchief

From her purse to the cut
And walks with me across the street
To the Emergency Room entrance

Of the old Georgetown Hospital,
A blue-faced child in a nurse's arms
Is being carried from the ambulance

To the same door we seek
I have watched death go through this door
Too many times at my young age,

But this is the first time I enter.
The thought of my own mortality
Descends suddenly, and I begin to pray.

Late November — Robert Collet Tricarò

For BB

Only the rose's gray thorns
remain. The eyes
of jack-o-lanterns, spent
and sallow, stare. Curbside
maple and sumac have turned their
smokey, ochreous faces
away; their acid sours the air.

No passion in dawn.
I hear twilight
in daybreak's song.

Sentence — James Penha

The banished poet Li He Qing
mourned bitterly
the death of his beloved crane
for no man's exile
should outlast
the symbol of longevity itself.

Courtney Lee Weida

sometimes we need things to be whole,
even hatred.
in my head (heart?) i deny this,
but it **was** my father who
first taught me to use
the pottery wheel.
i remember only my own hands
turning clay
and delicateness swirling.

sometimes i imagine him
centering things for me
on the wheel so i could hold
the clay.
still, i usually deny
this happened at all
thinking instead about
what didn't happen,
what he didn't do.

A Chaucerian Scholar — Edward J. Rielly

He translated Chaucer, cried
at the plight of Indian chiefs,
came late sometimes to class,
left early from time to time,

knew more literature than one could
shake a stick at, almost always
seemed red-faced, and his hands
rose and fell like frail sheets

of paper. We knew well his affliction,
the demon rum if we wanted to be
poetic, but never smirked, complained,
or cracked jokes at his expense.

He was a kind and gentle man, only
a little failed as a priest. I last saw
him in his hospital room. He was grateful,
as I was, but for different reasons.

Hard Evidence — David Michael Nixon

So far,
there is no way
to know what the dead know,
but I know a way to find out —
join them

Instructions To Be Followed at the Time of My Death — Ron Singer

The service is optional.
Cremate me,
that would be best.
Have a party
in the living room,
but, for god's sake,
no matter how cold the day,
don't make a fire!
Not only would that be
in dubious taste,
but our faulty chimney
would smoke out the guests.

On the Film Thank You for Not Smoking — Donald Lev

Practically a one man show
By an acrobatic humorist —
a Mark Twain on ice skates.
What a performance!
He touched all the bases.
Who ever told anyone that tobacco was good for you?
Or booze, or horseplaying, or schmaltz?
I wonder if he would take a job fronting for
My favorite advocacy organization: DDAM —
Drunk Drivers Against Mothers?
A good show, I enjoyed immensely,
written by William Buckley's son;
how could I?!

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