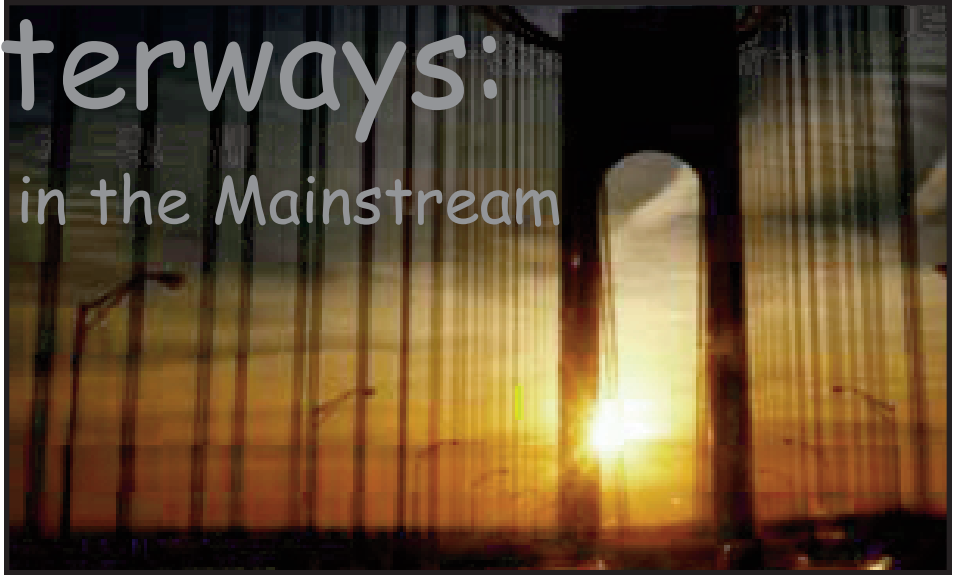


Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
28



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #3

Now you gleam softly triumphant
Folding immensities of light.

excerpted from Mother

Lola Ridge's Sunup and other poems (1920)

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 28

Number 3*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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Spastic Twin: She Learns to Stand — M. M. Nichols

Give me a place to stand and I will move the world — Archimedes

In a corner of my eye I catch
her balancing act.
She rides the Kiddy Car -

which gives her
a moveable chair, a handlebar to steer
docile wheels

across busy rugs, and a place to stand up in.
I know by heart
how she seizes the bar with both hands,

Nutcracker-smiling
all over, from the sway of her silky hair
down to those

ankle-hiding shoelaces, then, full of glee
rises
quirkily in the world while attempting

the sky,
with a sideways glance going for straightness
like mine.

She was quiet, stood evolving a stance and
wobbled it along.
Archimedes' daughter? She stands, our worlds do move.

Pimeria Alta (VIII) — David Chorlton

Monsoon thunder gave a final blessing to the fields.
*. . . for they work hard and pray with fervour
at all required hours. Few in their possessions,
they wear humility and are diligent
as befits your children.* The ink dried as quickly
as the puddles in the mission courtyard
before silver light was painted on the stones
and snails marked their presence in the night
as unseen objects of belief
the evidence of which were cursive trails
shining after dawn between the mystery
of thyme and that of sage
as the heat returned with a whiplash.

Woman at the Beach — Joan Payne Kincaid

This autumn-like day at the beach
we watch an ultramarine blue harbor.
A brisk wind blows uncharacteristically
from the north west. It is too fair
to be anywhere else
and she is in the foreground — in a wheelchair
young lovely tetraplegic sensing a different reality:
dressed in a sensuous pale lavender spaghetti-strap top
she chats with an attentive Mother and Father;
her mother stuffs large chunks of cantaloupe
into her daughter's mouth in so routine a way
neither of them gives it a thought:
the father asks if we mind him playing some music

which comes on a high quality system
romantic Spanish songs;
she speaks to us in the car
including us in her world "Are you enjoying the music?"
and we are touched by her inclusiveness;
the mother removes her jacket and very tenderly
wraps it around the young woman's shoulders
as she sits smiling with wind stroking her tied-back hair
considering the artist in this timeless place
and the many nuances of life.

In lavender spaghetti strap top
a lovely woman at the beach
listens to a man singing love.

The Joys of Camping — John Grey

The reservoir wall is way off in shadow.
The water it holds back edges toward us
as if we offer a way out of its cement jail.
Same for the fire. It surely knows the
cold ground beneath it is the way of its death.
But if it could flame a little in our faces
then maybe it could live on like parents
do in children. The stars I'm sure wouldn't
shine but for us. And there's a pleasure
to the wind when it can flutter the shirts
of people. We've had a great supper that

surely enjoyed our hikers' appetites. And
swapped stories that delighted in being told.
Look at those tents. They sit high on rope
and pole as happy as dogs doing what they're
bred for. Our dog, by the way, is bred for sleep.
And soon we too will sleep, a sleep that
can't get going now, for it needs our tired
limbs to stoke it. And dreams are ever anxious
to begin. They've seen us free and happy
and huddled around the fire. They've
heard the songs, the laughter, smelt
the food. What must dreams think!
Already come true and we've yet to have them.

The Last Fan in the Stands — Thomas D. Reynolds

Impassive gaze
barely registering
the latest lackluster effort,

he makes a motion to rise,
coming off the bench
to the roar of the vents.

From a nearly empty court,
One appreciative hair
offers a standing ovation.

The cord on his gold jacket
Doesn't realize the game is over,
Still waving her frayed pom-pom.

His right foot launches
A half-empty box of popcorn,
But the refs don't even notice.

Inside his chest
The bass drummer has an off night,
A half beat off the rhythm,

And the fight song is silence,
Pumping up the trainer
As he gathers up the towels.

But all down the bleachers,
The old man's erratic breath whistles
Its unwavering optimism,

His hacking bell horn
Echoes among the banners
Of long-forgotten championships.

While his digital watch belies
The darkening game clock—
9:46 left to save the day.

Enlightenment — Geoff Stevens

Enveloping your messages
in silver amalgam
you take the words wrapped in sunshine
and cocking your wrist
as when playing the accordion
draw out the bellows until they stretch
the distance you require
unfolding immensities of light
for an illuminating mirror-delivery
in morse code.

Silverfish — R. Yurman

You're like a silverfish, I said
meaning to say
quicksilver

but that small bright unexpected
creature seemed so right
I kept its name

while you
darting to cover
eluded me

Outer Space and Souls — Renee Zambo

Few stars are shining through a cloudy sky
On this quiet, April night.
Defying the darkness, the death, those stars,
So few in number, reach my sight.

I imagine you are in that light
That fights through atmospheres to me.
Like a mass of heat and energy,
How could you die in just one second?

The brightest light of these mortal stars
That shines even after their death,
Can not compare to the light that I see
Six years after you breathed your last breath.

Neighbors — Kaye Bache-Snyder

Black umbrellas
at the bus stop on our corner.
Bundled bodies
swaying in the blizzard, waiting
for the red bus.
Who are they? Where are they going?

Black umbrellas
folding one by one, and pinioned
to each bundle,
lining up and disappearing
in the red bus
pausing, then sweeping them away.

My mother knew
the who and where of everyone
within a mile.
She would light their histories up
like Christmas trees,
as we sat sipping rosebud tea.

Pebbles — Robert Brimm

Oh, how I'd like
to keep walking
along this path,
gathering these
pebbles to fling
into the pool
of understanding,
to stand watching
their small circles
reaching slowly
toward each other,
embracing, merging.

An Act of Kindness — Ellaraine Lockie

She is one of the women
who travels daily from her township
Singing in the back of a pick-up truck
with a chorus of others
Come to clean the rooms
in my B & B bordering Kruger Park

She sees me walking a path
parallel to the Crocodile River
I see her running toward me
Watch her fall to her knees before me
Close the lowest five button holes
that fashion the front of my
ankle-length straight skirt

She says something in Swati
Looks up at me as a lilac-blue blossom
drops from a jacaranda tree
And under the kindness of shade
She pats my calves

I can't interpret the words
but I can read her body language
There my dear
I've closed the open invitation
The accident that wrote itself
across your womanhood
I know this because here
no woman would walk
aware of bare thighs winking
between the weave of khaki

I help her up
Hold her hardened hands
Thank her by returning
the sunshine of her smile
And waddle like a knobbellied duck
back to my room where I segregate
the unbefitting skirt to a suitcase

The Elephant in Our House — Paul Kareem Tayyar

He is blue. Not that we mistake him for the sky. Or the sea, even.
He does not like to eat alone, which is fine in the summer, but a bit
Of a problem during the school year, when I can hear his hunger pangs
Like a hundred air raid sirens crying out from the other side of
Town. Dad says he should be with his own, but I don't see many
Elephants hanging out at the 7-11, or playing softball in the city
Leagues on Brookhurst and Warner in the evenings, home runs
Disappearing into floodlights.

I'm his people. The houses and forests I used to dream of floating over he
Can carry me straight through, scenting out what everyone is having for
Dinner and pointing to the flowers I could survive on if I ever got stuck
Out here at dinner time. It's true, I am a suburban survivalist: I could last on
A bouquet of dandelions and a bucket of water pulled from Langton's creek.

But let's face it,
I'm going to need a larger house when I grow up. Our yard isn't
Even big enough for the dog, so you can imagine how tough
It is for him. But, he's got a sense of humor about it, at least:

"Hey, there's always the pool. I get to perfect my strokes when you're off
Learning. When my mermaid comes to get me I'll know how to swim."

He's got a good point. It really is how one looks at things. It's all here
For me, really. The sunlight and bicycles, the school bell that sets
Me free everyday. Who knows where I'll end up? He says not
To worry if we should be apart for a long time: the blue elephants
Always wind up at Catalina living near the shore, watching their
Finned girlfriends swimming in the sea.

A Language Not Entirely Foreign — Bill Roberts

The red man teeters in the stiff breeze,
Speaking in Jack Daniels or Jim Beam,
Languages not entirely foreign to me,
With my knack for slurred words.

He's chanting a chain of words to himself
And for anyone who cares to listen
That today is his birthday, number forty-nine,
Or possibly his deathday, having reached
His parent tribe's normal life expectancy.

I pause to see if he'll celebrate his birth
Or succumb to the spirit world.
Nothing much happens, so I leave him
Behind and duck inside the warm tavern.

I order the red man two fingers of Jim,
Me a shot of Jack, and raise a toast to him,
Shivering outside, still deciding which way
He'll go with his life, painlessly inebriated
On the day of his birth or his death.

On the Film Becket — Donald Lev

After 43 years "Becket" again hits the movie theaters. What aesthetics! As close to eternity as we'll come! A beautiful film starring two beautiful male actors . . . women are almost non-existent, and mostly unattractive — except for the one who was so tired of the two boys' games she committed suicide — I guess she would have been their straight cover if they had wanted one — and another one, who, in her incarnation as actress, was married to Peter O'Toole at the time, asks Burton/Becket "shall I take my clothes off?" and is immediately dismissed. Hah! And Becket is presented as a Saxon, when all the while he was a bloody Norman! (thank God for Wikipedia!).

Frame for the film — and high point for me —
is Peter O'Toole as King Henry offering
his slim white body for whipping —
something he sort of reprised in "Lawrence
of Arabia." He might have been said to be the Judy Garland
of the sado-masochists, if Judy Garland wasn't
the Judy Garland of the sado-masochists.
The question, it should be warned, of Church vs State
in the age of Feudalism, is not
the same question it is in the Age of Bush,
Aesthetics should be the only religious, or political,
message one receives from this film.

3/07

Age of Iron — William Corner Clacke

A Greek god is performing
In the flea market in Monasteiraki
Calling himself Samson
Man of Steel
He's been hurling sledgehammers
Into the blue sky
And head butting them as they fall
Blood is leaking from his forehead
And staining his skin like rust

He's getting old
His long black hair
Once thick enough to swing
A woman from
Is thinning on the crown
Varicose veins have wrapped themselves
Like vines around his legs
Gravity is gathering
In his feet

He calls for a volunteer
From the crowd
Sits him in a café chair
Grasps one leg and with one hand
Whirls them both around his head
Then brings them back to earth
The crowd goes wild
And he begins to smile
But it's tiring work these days
Especially now that few believe
That Gods can pass as men

Breathing heavily after the show
He picks up the 100 Drachma notes
Thrown on the ground around him
And stuffs them in a leather bag
They mean a flagon's worth of nectar
At the scrap dealer's bar
In Thissio tonight

He's almost always there
Sitting alone, remembering
That first morning
When it all began

Turning — Hugh Fox

Turning into gleaner bird-clouds wheeling over
just-picked artichoke fields, a meditative crane standing
satoriing in a next-to-a-pond farm, part of a gull flock
exercising over the enchilada bay, *nuage* - fog burned
off by the midday sun back again by (Salinas River)
midnight.

Spastic Twin : Sinatra Fans — M. M. Nichols

Almost 50 and far apart, we had
dollars to spend,
each of us "my way" nobody else's.

As if we were
identical, not just twin sisters,
I couldn't see

why she had to go swoon with a crowd
for Ol' Blue Eyes.
She couldn't sing, but loved the sound

and could scream
for joy & rapture. Then who was I?
piano player -

Leclair, Hindemith, Poulenc, cultural smarts -
with my cronies,
Didn't listen to the "Chairman of the Board".

Time flew and she's
gone. I'm listening: his heavenly songs still alive.
Rapt, myself too.

Upcoming Waterways' themes from the poetry of Lola Ridge

Number 4 (September 14, 2007):

And the faint decayed patchouli -
Fragrance of New Orleans
Like a dead tube rose
Upheld in the warm air
Miraculously whole.

excerpted from Potpourri

Number 5 (October 14, 2007)

I shall know you, secrets
by the litter you have left
and by your bloody foot-prints.

excerpted from Secrets

Number 6 (November 14, 2007)

Silence
builds her wall
about a dream impaled.

excerpted from After Storm

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