

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



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Volume 44

Number 10

Why keep a clock that can't tell time?

from "In Her Eighties" by John Grey

Waterways: volume 28 number 9

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Drawings by Wayne Hogan

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Wayne Hegan

Waiting on the Music

It sat the piano for years
an old mantel clock heavy as lead
with curved top and waving sides
delicate hands with fluting
elegant roman numerals
round the face

Oh she took it once on the cars
to get it fixed but couldn't
afford the estimate so
brought it back home then
to grace the snowy white scarf
she ironed monthly

Placed it just so at back center
as if it would lend some semblance
of elegance even sophistication
the hands never jerked forward
even though she kept it plugged in
You just never know, she said,
the music might start it up
and then we'll know the time

Wayne Hogan

Infrequent Events

Occurring Independently at Random Times

Meaning; unmeaning: distinction
without adequacy. Ah but this
is not the real thing, which,
with reasoned elucidation, goes
without saying. The Law
of Small Numbers says visual
syntax plus first-but-limited
edition plus growing discontent
equals truthiness plus empathetic
marginalization of cheap
flourishes leads directly to the
geometry of disappearing silence
and communism for kids. In this,
the spread of humankind.

To Be Translated

Why I like dogs is
a dog won't up and say
"implementation" or "hard
core" or "in the final analysis"
right out of the blue just 'cause
it hasn't nothing better to do.
A dog won't sashay into a
room and say "Ya talkin
'bout me?" just cause it hasn't
nothing better to do. A dog
won't wag its tail 'less it's to
exchange a little kinship with
you. A dog won't tell you
you're better than butterbeans
before it's licked you
sillier'n you ever wanted to be,

**Opening Scene In A Remarkable Play
About A Strike In A Minnesota
Meat-Processing Plant And A Flash
Flood That Rips Through West Texas**

In this scene there are loose leaves all over the nearly bare stage, signifying a substitute for experience, so the Play Bill says. Story is that the play was originally meant to be about a Hungarian fairy tale, having just three performers whose ears never stop growing and a lot to answer for, telling a story that would have been illegal just a few years earlier. A small table holding a fresh stack of waffles and two Ritz crackers sits in the middle of the stage in this opening scene. Very authentic. Beyond political. Real. Curtain rises to reveal a lone feather-bed at the beginning of the play's second scene.

Wayne Hogan

His Car

He lives in a handsome little frame home on Lowland Road, the second house to the south coming east from Washington. (He's been to San Francisco several times, and to lots of other places too.) There's a semi-circular driveway that cuts through his front lawn, where he parks his car. It has 11,109 miles on it and it's already three years old. His car is white. He mostly drives his car to Panera and the Post Office and then straight home, parking in the semi-circular driveway that cuts through his front lawn. From his comfy chair there in the living room where he watches TV, he can look out and see his car.

Wayne Hogan

The Golden Sutter Buttes

Walk straight and carry a big book. Have the book be titled “What California Means To Me: Part 6.” Not “Part 5” but “Part 6.” “Part 5” doesn’t yet get to the part in “Part 6” where all heck breaks loose in the golden Sutter Buttes. So you just must see “Part 6”! Seeing is believing! If you really want to know what California’s golden Sutter Buttes mean to me, you have to have the book titled “What California Means To Me: Part 6.” Don’t get me wrong — the book that’s subtitled “Part 5” is a very good book, maybe one of the best there is, but it’s the “Part 6” volume that gives you the cheeky lowdown on the golden Sutter Buttes.

Wayne Hogan

In A Manner Of Speaking

It just makes sense that
there's war all the time and
that love is a dog and mockingbirds
wish me luck and screams come
from the balcony are what
matters most. Like the recess
bells at school, it feels good to
be in a new neighborhood. 'Course,
in theory, on any morning there
might be fire. Legend has this
being a fine madness as seen in
the mirror while listening to
the radio. Bayonets are drawn
as Buddha tries to figure it out.
I laugh, I grit my teeth, I listen
closely to the weather report.

Wayne Hogan

The Woman In The Yellow Pages

Flags fly over Finland
at half-mast. It's cloudy and
getting cloudier. Rain
throughout the land has been
predicted just as planned.
Yes, dear, it rains a lot here.
It is evening now and the people
are all seated in their cushy
wing-back chairs and soft-seated
sofas scanning the listings
in their telephone books, looking
for the woman in the yellow pages.

The Fickle Hour

The fickle hour
holds nothing of itself,

gives into the glass
stare of futility.

What we have to bear
that cannot be borne:

all the tomorrow
where we don't belong,

the song that escapes us
spilling uselessly

down a crowded hall,
all we had to say

that never could
like the empty words

of what we thought
might be true poetry.

B. R. Straban

The View From Eternity Station

Scrub the map clean
Blank the page

Colors flow black
a transform of tears

as time tortoise steps
slower and slower

while unstained
earth spins down

B.R. Straban

Counting Halfway To Nowhere

So far I've counted last minutes
for over forty years, yet somehow
can't recall how yesterday
was once tomorrow.

When I look out this winter window
Kennedy's grave flowers have blown away
while Reagan's wilted prose
has birthed a litany.

This is a foolish story
my practical partner snipes
and like every coat with empty sleeves
I must admit she's right.

The Point Of It

The more the universe
seems comprehensible,
the more it seems pointless.

Steven Weinberg
Nuclear Prize physicist

You miss the point,
if that's what you're looking for.
Existence is a small song
sung over and over.

But, like good jazz,
it's never the same twice
and the audience
is always changing.

Ancient Rites

The pattern of the dance

Is broken.

Grotesque shadows

splay across the floor.

The music shatters

on cracked tiles.

Now the votaries sprawl

mouthng dust.

Fragments of sunlight

bleed from colonnades.

Turning toward the dark,

the worshipers

have left their eyes to dry

in spider webs of light.

Gilbert Honigfeld

Longer Than a Moment

Many, many years ago,
a young woman wearing an
angelic face and a button-up
red blouse held my eyes for
longer than a moment as she
was entering a store, an old-
fashioned place with a brass
knob, well-turned, set in its thick,
oak-framed plate glass door,
and I understood immediately
what she'd said though she
spoke not at all.

She'd said,

Not Now, and I've wondered
for a lifetime since: When?

Differently

A deliberation on the question

"Could I have done it any differently?"
is as blue as her dress —

the one with the tear at the shoulder -
catholic school,
university dropout,
two failed marriages,
no recognition for her art
and whose morals – even by her reckoning –
went into a swift and fatal decline
at the age of thirty –
her answer was always the same – “No” –
because the opportunity can never present itself
so why choose “yes”
when it’s in league with a different yesterday?
she shocks herself back to business
with the smell of oil and paint
and the sneezing of her latest lover
from the bedroom below –
she’s tired, which leads to a mediation of the topic
“Could he volunteer to get out of bed
and make coffee?”

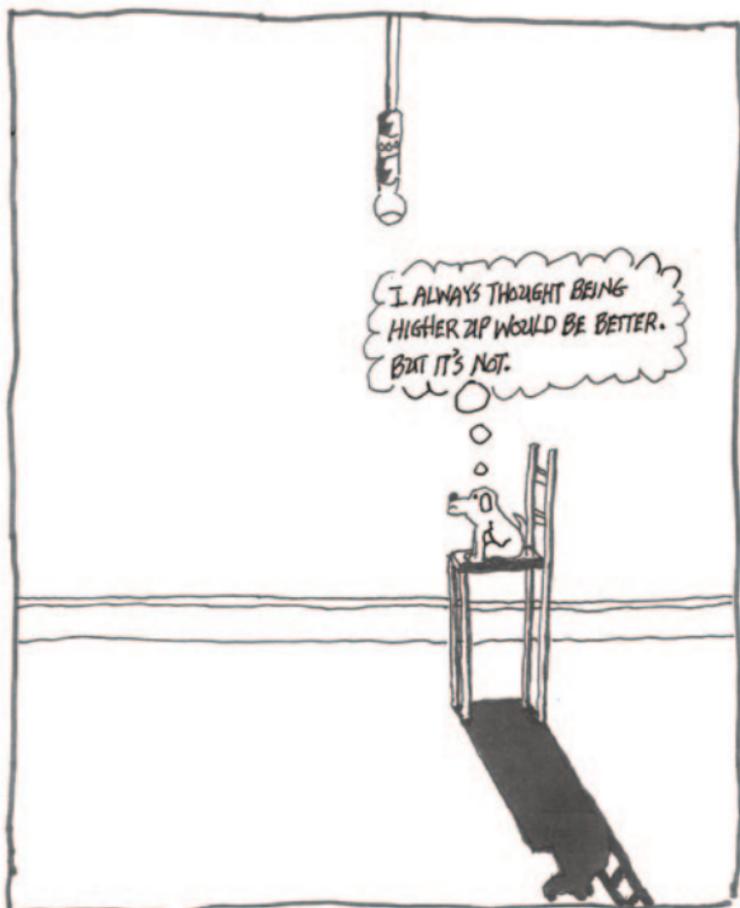
It’s answered by another question.

“Could I have done it any differently?”

John Grey.

It Ain't Easy

saying farewell to all your happiness,
your fake gold trinkets, all those barroom saluds,
the bashfulness, the blooming.
the promises, thousands of them,
half of which you kept,
the bad behavior that felt good,
the deceits, more self-protective than spiteful,
the late-night phone calls,
the kindnesses to stray animals,
the untrue loves, the hapless wanderings,
all of it – say farewell now –
you've got a birthday coming up -
so, no matter how hard it may be,
say goodbye to all that,
and then, when you're done,
say hello to it all,
let it know you're back.



Wayne Hogen

Our Geography of Poets

Kansas

Pat Anthony

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

North Carolina

B. R. Strahan

Rhode Island

John Grey

Tennessee

Wayne Hogan