

# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

29



# Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 29, #10

His talons drip with honey,  
His beak is full of gentian leaves  
And blossoms, and his eye  
Shines with a strange kindness  
As his feathers dust the sky.

Maurice Kenny

excerpted from *The Hawk*

published in *Kneading the Blood* (Strawberry Press)

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 29

Number 10\*

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

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## Playthings — William Corner Clarke

In my childhood  
All things were  
Alive with chance  
I played with a wild bear  
In my crib  
For hours on end  
An eagle built its nest  
On my windowsill  
And showed me how to fly  
I had a fine rattle of stars  
Its handle twined  
With a singing snake

And I knew God  
Was revealed  
In the barrel  
Of my kaleidoscope

But when I came  
Of age  
The fallen angel fate committee  
Ruled on childish things  
And gave my mysteries  
The consistency of stone  
The bear and the eagle  
Were consigned to natural history  
The rattle to the rag and bone

But still, sometimes  
I roar inside  
For the loss  
Of my forest friends  
And sometimes in the night  
Strange feathers  
Still sleek  
In the wind

First published '*Fire*' issue #16

**Alta: a requiem, northern Vermont — Sylvia Manning**

A bird I cannot name just dead several feet from cabin west wall.  
Two days now.

This morning I bury the bird who once flew  
    who one last time flew to meet itself  
    in rain-cleaned window glass,  
    who hastened to meet its very source of flight.

I bury it where invasive borage is dug out.

I say goodbye to it.

I remember finding it, back from a walk in what may become  
    a wildflower meadow or an orchard  
    once the machines are done cleaning debris  
    left by other machines.

I thought the dead bird might be telling me  
Lady Bird Johnson had died.  
Claudia Alta Taylor.

(One lets oneself have thoughts like these in forest clearings.)

Then in the real world through real world small machines  
I learned she had indeed gone on, Lady Bird, the night before.

Lyndon is near, I say in my mind  
(just a town nearby, Lyndon —  
but humble thoughts are allowed up here  
in this region its people call the Kingdom.)

I say goodbye this morning to this bird I cannot name.  
I let myself say again, "Lyndon's near."

Glover, Vermont. Summer, 2007

## The Buzzard Roost — Sheryl L. Nelms

every sundown  
it soars  
up  
from the West Texas plains  
a cell phone  
tower  
feathered with  
the black  
of turkey  
vulture  
settled in  
for  
the night

## Osprey — George Held

Osprey, you can see by the dawn's  
Early light  
A fish 'neath the finish of the bay  
In your flight  
As you circle and soar or you stall  
Like a kite,  
Ever ready to dive on your prey  
When in sight;  
Then you drop like a plummet until  
You alight  
On the brine with your talons outstretched  
And they bite

Into scales of that silvery bass, lifting it clear  
Of the bight  
Of the bay with your ten-horse wings to retake  
The sun's light,  
And you land on your platform to tend to your nestling's  
End of night  
Hunger, tearing the bass with your terrible beak  
Into bite-  
Sized gobbets for your fledgling to gorge on, its break-  
Fast birthright  
As your scion, O Osprey, you long-winged king  
Of the heights.

(from my chapbook *Winged*, 1995)

## Geoff Stevens

Come on, he seemed to say  
as he landed on the fencepost  
close to me  
I did it my first time yesterday  
put immobility behind you  
this place is killing you  
spread your wings  
get out of here  
before another heart attack arrives  
He was very young that fledgling hawk  
but he had a glint in his eye  
and he taught me how to fly

## A Break in the Weather — R. Yurman

When the last strength drains from the wrists

When time slides over the edge of light

When the long nights chill our bones

We stretch arms as far as we can touch

We lean back against the hard wood bench

We force ourselves to hold still

draw breath

sing

Then dampness warms

weight shifts

necks begin to ease

Then a sweep of birdwing  
the taut spring unwinding  
rises across a cloud

Our chests release  
And we swim toward the dark  
through unstricted air

## Sea Gulls of the San Francisco Bay — Joanne Seltzer

They circle about  
our sightseeing boat,  
cry like lost children  
in search of bread,  
fight over crumbs  
and even as they eat  
beg for more.

At dockside later  
I find by a trash can  
one broken gray feather  
half-covered with dirt,  
abandoned souvenir.

## The Tiniest Shoreline Creature — J. J. Steinfeld

the sun is an illusion  
the moon tells you  
during a night  
of crying  
and remembering  
youth and all the sand  
that fell between  
your fingers

the sand is a coward  
the tiniest shoreline creature  
declares in a voice  
louder than the sun  
or the moon

the sun and the moon  
and the tiniest shoreline creature  
conspire against your belief  
in flying past the moon  
and the sun into  
the mind of  
the tiniest shoreline creature

you have an argument  
for renaming the sun  
for reshaping the moon  
for capturing the tiniest shoreline creature  
but language today  
is too elusive for memory  
and you are tired  
of redefining words  
and worlds that find  
the sun too hot  
the moon too mysterious  
the tiniest shoreline creature  
too clever for capture

## What Drama in the Night Woods — J. J. Steinfeld

what drama in the night woods  
owlish ears and eyes in the dark  
predator as artistic protagonist  
hearing the fear of a speechless prey  
its lines and cues forgotten  
hidden in the undergrowth  
large dark owlish eyes  
seeing the desperation  
predator of devotion and theatrics  
within the darkened night green  
of eyes seeing in the dark  
of dark owlish eyes  
seeing the night green  
dark, nearly colourless,

seeing and hearing  
silent flight  
a pious performance  
a simple dramatic lunge  
quick as the dark  
quicker than breath  
a predator gains wisdom  
and a hearty meal  
swallowed as whole  
as the night and fear  
the drama a perfect production  
without the slightest applause  
or critical acclaim

from 'An Affection for Precipices' by J. J. Steinfeld, Serengeti Press, 2006,  
first published in YAWP (Volume VI, Issue IV, Summer 2005)

## Premonition — Sankar Roy

A bunny crosses the lawn in hurry  
and hides in the blackberry bush. Squirrels jump  
from branch to branch. I fill the bird feeder  
with seeds and look up expecting birds to arrive.  
In the glass-clear wind, birds fly in circles—  
they know something which I do not know.  
I don't think it's a storm.

The sky glows olive with edge-sharp light,  
cloud's slight brushstrokes  
here and there are orange-colored.  
I am certain that it is not earthquake—

ants always sense an imminent earthquake.  
It can't be a flood—no river or ocean is nearby.  
This is something else.

May be a new Lord will be born.  
May be the Lord's mother is weeping now  
from the pain of the contractions.

## **My Books, Like My Clothing — Frank Murphy**

Today, as I put on my Robert Service tie,  
my blue Dostoyevsky shirt, and my  
Wallace Steven's pants, Heinlein socks  
and T.S. Eliot boots

and stand in front of a mirror in my  
Keats overcoat, Mallarme hat,  
and white gloves of Poe, and

thinking myself meticulously dressed  
in my books, I will go out

"Now there," Someone on the street  
may say, "Is a man without style."

Style? My closet is filed with books  
I wear. And in truth, I've never  
given a thought to matching them,

Even my underwear, Greek Myth briefs  
or Bible shorts, with Darwin undershirt,  
may not complement each other.

But everything fits me perfectly.

## Border Monsoon — David Chorlton

With the elegance of ocotillo  
bending to the pressure of the wind  
and the sharpness with which  
its spines will bite  
the man who comes too close,  
the border runs  
between two worlds standing  
in a thunderhead's shadow.  
It is here the scorpion curls its tail  
to show the poison tip,  
here the oriole sings

while a jaguar's ghost treads softly  
toward the scent of water,  
and rainfall is a country  
whose border is marked  
in a sky of silver and ash.

## van gogh's paints — will inman

been looking through a book of van gogh reprints  
along with notes.

I could be sorry for his pain,  
his seizures, his rejections.  
but anyone who has been so often  
in the presence of the most high  
and shared those moments with us  
is to be thanked and not pitied.  
his irises, his workers with bruised souls,  
his fields, his neglected cafes,  
his thatched cottages  
speak from an interior land landscape  
and his language of paints.

From Ranges, Minotaur Press, 2006

## A Feathered Future — Ellaraine Lockie

I'd like feathers  
covering my body  
That insulate  
From frigid people  
Waterproof from grief

That repel the heat of anger  
Retain that of passion  
Caress with  
skin-tight down

That camouflage  
from enemies  
Flight-jacket airmail  
from danger  
Keep me chic-coat current  
in annual molting

That is my contribution  
to the world for comfort  
on cold nights  
So the need for nesting  
is replaced by philanthropy  
The need for immortality  
met with feathered resolution  
When I reincarnate as an eagle

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