

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

29



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 29, #8

Let's sing about the extinct
Bengal tigers, about giant Pandas—

Marilyn Chin,

excerpted from

We Are Americans Now, / We Live in the Tundra

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and *Unsettling America*

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 29

Number 8*

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

c o n t e n t s

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Genus Mammuthus — Joanne Seltzer

Though mammoths left
no modern footprint
they trumpet still
in bone carvings
found near painted caves.

With hairy skin
and smallish ears
and oversize tusks
they morphed into
frozen remnants
of extinction
felled like the pine forest
gone to climate change,
food for sledge dogs.

Big Game — Ellaraine Lockie

In the backyard my cat
carries a baby mouse
in her mouth
Releases it
so she can catch it again

Again, again
and again
Her needle teeth stuck
in the same groove

I can't catch her
So I turn away
from Mother Nature
at her worst
And re-think
my trip to Kenya

A Herd of Elephants Trample on My House — John Foxell

Out of the window you could see them coming
well something was coming, you could see that.

It was a parade, a parade of whales,
dusty and with their fins all raggedy
since they'd come a long way over land.

They looked exhausted and dejected by their journey.

I could detect this despite not being familiar
with scrutinizing the faces of whales.

People in the houses nearby me
ran out and moved their parked automobiles
as the whales brushing by them tended to overturn them
so that they looked like turtles on their backs
helpless and lacking a sense of purpose.

The whales headed straight towards my house
only now they were morphed into elephants.
When they arrived they created an elephant chain
holding one another's tails with their trunks.
They surrounded my house and pushed and pushed
until they succeeded in picking it up and placed it
delicately in the middle of the street. Nonetheless,
all the stuff inside the house fell over and got broken.
By this time I had run outside and was watching them
crowd into my basement and lie down,
having found their ancient elephant burial ground once again.
Only later when people spoke of it
they remembered camels, not the elephants and not the whales.

And that the camels were wistful and sad
as if the camels had not wanted to make the journey.
But the history books have left me out completely.
There is no sense that I ever lived there
or of what became of me.
Perhaps I never did live there
but I remember the elephants
did offer me money for my ruined house
and I accepted it from them
and spent it on books
which I assiduously read
in hopes of finding there my story
with my name written out plainly in it
so I would know who I once was.

Ghost Town — David Chorlton

Beneath the silver and dust
of a pre-monstrous sky
flash flood warning signs
point along the dirt road to Paradise;
population eight, not counting
the vultures who circle
down from Silver Peak
on thermals and dry thunder
to roost over the mailboxes
near the stretch of Turkey Creek
that was busy back in mining days
before the ore ran out

and the saloons went dry
as the stones on the bed in summer.
It's mostly oak and juniper
coati, fox and deer,
some sycamore and grosbeaks,
orioles and bats
flowing into the gap
between day and night
like silk handkerchiefs pulled
from a magician's sleeve
in a deserted theatre.

When You Could Dream — David Michael Nixon

I remember when you could dream,
when whirling dresses,
masked faces and Mardi-Gras beads
steamed the night away
and the morning opened on
a new land, some live-oak parish
where love could live
and the gators and gar
slipped past in silver water.

Now it's all aches and hunger
and bodies that almost molder
before the breath expires.

Circle of the Seasons — Ida Fasel

Morning air begins to have a bite to it.
Trees widen their arms to let in sky.
We turn lights on earlier, earlier.
Where is the line that precisely
Marks of the changing season?
Who saw the first leaf fall?

Leaves driven by the wind
clog gutters, cram corners,
at all departure points
gather for destination dark.

In their royal gold are they
perhaps not overdressed?
A few overlooked potatoes, dug up,
are frozen solid.
Sweaters give way to jackets.
The sky says snow.

One leaf still lingers on a branch,
green as if it willed to overwinter
and yield its place to no other.
I know how it is.

DUMB — William Corner Clarke

What of the ones who do not speak
Who can but cannot speak
Whose mouths are blocked
By fear suppressed
Who nod and smile
'I'm alright — I'm fine'
When in the general
Shouting of the crowd
Someone remembers
Some face to be acknowledged
Then dismissed ?

Barely seen at birth
In time they all
Become invisible
And forgotten
Like creatures silently alive
In densities of undergrowth
Only worthy of attention
When you find one dead
And burst wide open
Across your path

Patricia Kelly

silent movie
a window-framed T.V. screen
above the rosebush

Forget Me Nots — Roberta Gould

Swaying over the moss
at the top of the rise
they are almost
a blue cloud
flat and magic
If I dove to the depths
they would not seem like hell
If I trampled them
my feet would still see
them almost elude
the grim reaper

But they are a complete failure
alone where no one sees them
atop that hill I ascend
Weak as butterflies they
do not talk our language
and even die as plastic won't
with no mission to seduce
or kill anyone

Seventy - R. Yurman

Death still draws nearer, never seeming near.

Pope, *Essay on Man*

If I knew then
what I know now—

the mantra so many hum
for all they're worth

I stand amidst the crowd
all of us chanting

fools
waiting for the miracle to begin

Geoff Stevens

the dinosaur

the pteradactyl

the dodo

the tasmanian devil

what if man died out

would the birds

sing his praises

or praise his demise?

Squirrel— Ruth Moon Kempher

Look at the child—
grey pelt, steel velvet
with a feathery tail—

he whisks fall's acorns
out of crisp leaves
sitting hunched, hungry
wet eyes—

myself, himself
the world.

The Dead Sister — Lyn Lifshin

when a sister dies, you
kneel in a pile of
old letters, something
inside, a dead fetus
weighted with stone.
You don't need to
google her. In dreams
she is in the emerald
and green that made
her eyes blaze. When
a sister is dead she
can't still hurt you.
She can't still
hold you

the shadow in the bone — will inman (with Clyde R. Appleton)

after reading Toni Morrison's 'Playing in the Dark: whiteness in the literary imagination'

something untoward is happening under the surface
the white eggshell is cracking
that voice in there is no hatching bird
that voice under there is no unknowing child

here i'd assumed my truest tongue was invisible
yet somehow i've known god's tongue is black with suppressed truth
i've done a lot of singing about rainbows curved black in hidden ribs
i wasn't certain what i was being told

i wasn't certain what i was telling
i had a sense of stripping down to skin

i had a sense of flaying off skin surfaces
i wanted to know what skin means and what underskin means

i wanted to march into marrow with my upfront legions of freedom
i was shocked to discover that tunnels of marrow lead deeper on in
i expected to claim a new colony for ecstasy
but ecstasy was there waiting with a different face

ecstasy will brook no serene waters through stolen colonies
ecstasy will grant no peace until peace is indivisible
she will sister me only if I show my real tongue
he will brother me only if I will embrace y shadow

from Ranges (Minotaur Press, 2006)

On the Film Blade Runner — Donald Lev

The 97th best film in history!

Dystopian Los Angeles.

I love it that a fictional Los Angeles can be more dystopian than non fictional Los Angeles but God what a scene we are immersed in!

I still experience recurrences.

We've done it—in 1987—created robots just like us in every way, only they have to die in four years.

Can you imagine?

And these creations are too good! They are our moral and ethical superiors.

Of course they have to be destroyed.

Cool film-noir antihero Harrison Ford
is hired to do the job. His life
is saved twice by robots filled,
unlike most of us, with love and moral grandeur. . .
A "final final director's cut" of a twentieth
century masterpiece (I can't quite follow the arcane)
cinematic history, but
does it matter so much?)
I am grateful to have seen it.
Thank you Upstate Films!

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