

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

32

#11



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 32, #11

**At the bird market
we sang our songs and saw who harmonized**

James Penha

BECAUSE FEW MORNING GALES FLY THROUGH
Waterways, Volume 22, Number 7

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 32

Number 11

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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Sample issues — \$5.00 Subscriptions -- \$45.00 Waterways is published 11 times a year.
Submissions will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self addressed envelope.

Waterways, 393 St. Pauls Avenue, Staten Island, New York 10304-2127

Ten Penny Players Inc. This magazine is published May, 2012

www.tenpennyplayers.org



The Bird Parliament

at the edge of Chinatown
held every Sunday
caged birds are given respite
from their solitary existence
two dozen birdcages
hooked high up on racks
a zebra dove
a small and slender bird
speaks in birdspeak
before the Bird Parliament
he speaks for Liu Xiaobo
whose keepers detain him

a bird sings
because it has a song
all sing in harmony
endless possibilities
curiously familiar
no enemies no hatred

Neal Whitman

It Is Pleasant Here

It is pleasant here.
Here it is pleasant.
It cannot be
nearly any pleasanter nearly anywhere
than the pleasantness it is here.
It is pleasant here, indeed.
Then of course there's by contrast
how large the world is
and how small we are.
This by comparison only, of course.
What is *not* being said here,
no, not by a long shot,

is that we are all that small
when judged by some absolute standard,
for by that measure alone
we'd be even smaller
than we already are by comparison
with how large the world is already.
No, what *is* being said here instead
is that, yes,
it is pleasant, here, that
it is nearly pleasanter here
than nearly anywhere else
it could be pleasant

Wayne Hogan

Black Birds

Heading back
From walking
In frozen fields,

We look up
To see trees again
Filled with leaves

Rustling in wind,
Sharing fevered,
Joyful conversation.

How tiresome
To lie on the ground
Throughout winter.

To rest underfoot
And beneath snow
When none yet have

The urge to sleep,
When veins still pulse
With (though diminished)

The urge to dance.
We watch as in groups
They drift to the creek,

Swirling above snow
At the foot of large elms,
And then in defiance

Of the measure of time,
Filling them up in one
Swift surge of memory.

Thomas Reynolds

Lover's Leap

Birdcage soul full of questions

you arrive at the edge,

toes extended, knees bent,

just in time to see your heart

fly away, the only thing of color

in a black and white day.

The solitary moon puts on a wicked grin.

jagged teeth of mountains await you.

Clutching your umbrella,
you ponder the possibility
of pursuit, wonder
what you have left to lose,
stripped bare, almost faceless,
mouth refusing to move.

Scott Owens

A cardinal came around

surely looking for you.

I put out a few seeds, a handful.

Your hello, these black seeds

in a blue metal cup.

a passing

bird wounded
narrow concrete
then asphalt
needed only tree
and grass, other side
of concrete wall, to die
on green not gray.
“It doesn’t matter,”
Ellen judged (she
whose pronouncements
are quick)

but to me it did.
and perhaps to him or her,
exquisite little bird,
black and white,
pic à dos rayé
leaving this world
from soft soil, grassed,
from shade beneath tree

Sylvia Manning

Red River Valley

after we
were
in bed
at night
Dad played
his harmonicas
while the sad
lonesome
music
drifted
thru the house
on the fan breeze

Frog Talk

at sunset

I walk

the beaver dam

to the deer trail

it leads me

into green cattails

and the ooze

of black

mud

sets off

a splatter

of frogs

jumping

and croaking

that echoes

into night

Into Honeysuckle

a spidered
yellow bloom
nipped
at the sweet tip
leaves me
buzzing

Sheryl L. Nelms

Driver

Where are you going
so fast, so fast?

“Going to dread land
Going to dead land

It’s all in your head man

Going to instead land”

so fast, so fast

(Undertaker
take me under
under the grass, under the
stone

take me to bone land
to prone land)

“Leave me alone man?

so fast, so fast
boneman

Co-authorship with Myself

They're always talking about ships
passing in the night poignant
the missed opportunity lives
loves fates passed by with only
the ocean to wave

Actually
when ships don't pass in the night
they go bump

That's where the trouble begins

But when I think of those other ships
I mean the ships sailing on the ends of words

Bipartisanship colliding
Leaderships ramming into each other
Partnerships going down for the third time

It seems the same. It seems the same.
They are ships that should pass in the night.

But when it comes to
Companionships
Friendships
Relationships

I think sometimes a little bump in the
middle of the night
is all right
is all right

Frank Murphy

Of Songbirds & Birdsong

*There is a finer way of studying ornithology than [shooting birds] . . .
I have been willing to omit the gun. — Thoreau, “Higher Laws”*

When Adam named songbirds
And birdsong, he classified
And clarified them for posterity,

And so we say, That’s a robin
Or That’s a thrush or oriole,
Glorious singers all.

Then Adam of the New World
Set sight on birds, his musket
Sounding louder than birdsong,

Diminishing their numbers
Till many were extinct; even
Audubon shot to paint them.

But Thoreau's epiphany
Led him to store his fowling piece
On future sojourns – Henry,

The new-born conservationist,
Reprising old Adam at Walden Pond,
Though fallen Concord was home.

We are all new Adams today,
Hunting duck and wild turkey
Or taking Thoreau's cue,

Saving habitat and species,
Wetlands, grasslands, sanctuaries
For migrating and nesting fowl.

And still we thrill to songbirds'
Trills and whistles and calls,
Their singing and song.

George Held

Roman

My wife and I would
hire Roman
to rake the leaves
each fall or to
wash the car
during the summer.
Sometimes we couldn't
get him because
he'd be in jail
for getting drunk
and disorderly.
He said he'd been
a gangster in East L.A.
but had moved

to the small town
where Kit and I live
in northern Nevada
to get away
from that life.
He was 45
and had never
met anyone like us.
He told his friends,
proudly, we were
published writers.
He'd tell us, "I'm nobody."
He was wrong.

Arthur Winfield Knight

The Sparrow

(a dreamku)

she draws my gaze to
a tiny dusty brown sparrow
watch its easy way,
she says, how it simply lets
nourishment into its roundness

the ground the source – its feet the gateways

Patricia Kelly

(first published online at Roswila's Dream & Poetry Realm)

Birdville, UT 84777

Gaze up at the cliff face as you walk through Capitol Gorge. There it is: Birdville! Vertical potholes (ventricles -no, auricles) dot the variegated stone: black, brown, gold, white, coral, gray, even some stripes, like fancy suits.

Residents include – just the tip of the bird-berg – the Northern oriole, canyon sparrow, rufous towhee (as in “His *toe*, *he* stubbed”), black-headed, and evening, grosbeak, the shy catbird (as in “catbird seat”), and even shyer, often-heard-but-seldom-seen, yellow-breasted chatbird.

In Birdville, there are many mansions. In ascending order: Bird’s Eye Flats, The Bird Arms (no, Wings), Birdcliff Manor, Avian Heights, and, finally, Eagle’s Aerie Luxury Condos.

Waiting lists are long, for this, they say, is a district to die for, or at least to crow about (though, we, ourselves, could never live here). Would-be occupants hover, tweet, caw impatiently, swooping in as soon as others leave.

Ample turnover, there certainly is: mountain and western bluebirds headed for the high country; snowbirds, sunbirds riding the ribbons of skyway and celestial cloverleaf.

But, leaving Birdville to the birds, did you know that the Yurok Indians used to live on cliffs above the Klamath River, the richest and most respected houses (whose great baskets brimmed with feathers, shells, blankets, fish) ensconced along the top-most ledges, right beneath the sky? Yes, the sky!

Ron Singer

Visions

(for Seamus Heaney)

The Poet tells us: Seek out magic –
Secrets beneath the every day world
Hold a sense of myth and Power.
Find their embodiment in the real.

My eyes touch the dull hairs on your arm
Or stroke the cactus's sharp spines –
I don't have that sense of magic,
Don't feel the secrets buried in things

For me surface bodies the depths —
What's there is there for all to see.
If I look close enough and truly,
That seeing will shimmer with poetry.

R. Yurman

Crows Seen From My Hospital Window

Behind the hospital,
a multi-generation
family of crows
feeds voraciously,
swooping eagle-like
from powerlines,
claws honed finely.

They ripclaw into
old biopsy bags,
slices of frozen tissue
thawing in the sun.

They feed on outdated
organic residues, chopped, cut,
aspirated, wedged and
stained with chromalin,
fixed in paraffin or
bathed in an alcohol vial,
studied once under bright
lights then forgotten, like a child
protégé whose talent
failed in adolescence.

Those crows, squabbling
among themselves, are
fat, sleek and healthy.

Juncos

breakfast
at the foot of my feeder,
with a jaded air of
dissolution

like small-town
playboys
wandering into a diner
at dawn

dressed in seedy
elegance
rumped tuxedos and
white shirts

open at the collars
black ties
dangling unbowed or stuffed
in pockets

sleazy black socks
drooped
around their ankles--hungry,
happy.

Gilbert Honigfeld

Boys

a time so picture
spent when dreaming boys
hold robin eggs
and a horde of hero men
come at night,
hugging ponies,
hugging promise.

a time so shaped
in becoming pants and feet on fire
when dreaming boys catch fear
and blush
and taste anvil
freshly molded, freshly wrung.

a time so loud as roar
makes boys of friday nights
and finger paints
and first cup breasts.

of boys in motion
boys in flight
boys so cherished
to breathe on sight.

and in that spindled
shadow
by glare
and sixpence,
a republic of men happen...

ever so daring
ever so dreaming
holding sweetly,
sight.

Michael D. Sullivan

ISSN 0197-4777

Very limited printing

Ten Penny Players, Inc.

(a 501c3 not for profit corporation)

Subscriptions -- \$45 for 11 issues.

Sample issues — \$5.00 (includes postage).

www.tenpennyplayers.org