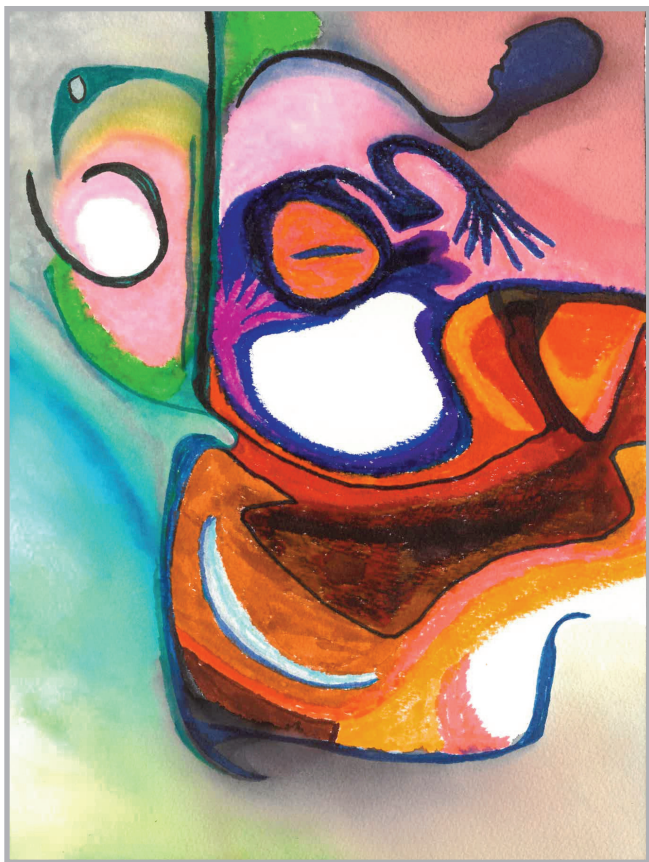


Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



November, 2020

Volume 41
number 5

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 41 NUMBER 5

You kept fiddling with the dial,
as if looking for a station
with a better message.

Enid Dame

excerpt from

What Were You Doing?

WATERWAYS

Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 41 Number 5

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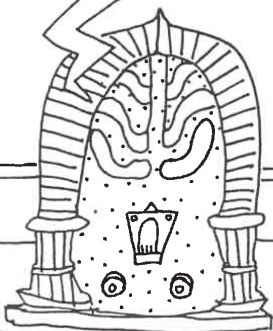
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... FLASH! ... THIS JUST IN! ... SCIENTISTS,
WORKING THROUGH THE BETTER PART OF LAST NIGHT,
HAVE DISCOVERED THAT MAN IS MAN'S BEST
FRIEND! ... WE RETURN YOU NOW TO
YOUR REGULAR PROGRAMMING...



Wayne Hagan

Ron Singer

The Year Of The Woodpecker

This is the year of the woodpecker.
As plague hollows out the human race
(hollowing out economies, in turn),
an old elm tree on our lawn has succumbed
to its own disease. The woodpeckers
descend, in their several varieties,
tapping away, ball-peen to jack-hammer.

Like Covid-19, this disease looks as if
it is spreading to a neighboring tree.
I never saw so many birds in my life!
Not just woodpeckers, pecking busily,
but more hummingbirds than ever,
and even sparrows, whom I swear
are pecking alongside the woodpeckers.

Squirrels, galore, even chipmunks make
their presence known, and in the bushes,
some creature, a small mammal, or bird,
seems to be laughing at the whole thing.
“Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha,” is the sound he makes.
Is he laughing at us? The woodpeckers?
Or just at some private joke of his own?

William Corner Clarke

Voices of the Dead

Listen to the static of the spirits
Hear the hiss and rustle
Of their passing
And the mourning of the rain
Listen to their long grey keening
Within the winter wind

Speak to the spirits. Shout
At the spirits, beat
Sticks against the sacred stones
Hollow out the darkness of the drums
Make the music, charm the fear
Spin the prayer wheels
Till they burn with holy fire
Listen to the voices of the dead
Rising from the graves of rain
Listen to their whispering
Among the creaking
And the whistling
Of rag boned biers
Listen to their calling
Beyond the shadow mountains

But if you listen
For some meaning
In the actions of the living

Listen in vain

Sylvia Manning

My Search Screen comes with EULA

... all caps, like that.

One of my grandmothers,

Eula Lackey Pittman,

comes to mind every time.

I find her in black and white photographs,

stored securely in my mind,

standing proudly

with my mother

and others

at front porch to new addition

to the house behind the store

across from the mill.

I find her standing at her sink

she called the zinc, maybe rinsing

some dish, though she said rinch.

Sometimes she would call for me

from the window above that sink,

but she never learned my name

after they'd changed it

from middle, Ann,

to first, Sylvia.

She'd never heard of a Sylvia

so she'd call out for Sybil.

Close enough.

Closer by far than

End User Licenser Agreement

for Eula.

But I wonder, now,
aren't we all that?
End Users of this earth,
our greatest grandmother?
And don't we take license
with how seldom
we think of her,
she who stood proud?

Hope, said Baldwin,
speaking with Audre Lourde,
is what you invent every day.
He'd tried to die by his own hand
after King was shot down dead.
He failed.
So he came home
to be here
every day, for a while,
taking inventory
of what was in store
for young blacks in America,
hoping to serve up hope
with his own hands.

Roberta Gould

In a Time of Fear

A public stance against comets is required
So get near the wheel
and let the flint grind out
a message clear and neat
Broadcast it do not encrypt it
Let our enemies have it
whether you want to save us or not
The question is complex
Keep your words simple
talk in a way
the public understands

Together, then, we will
defeat the sky
shield ourselves from death
in an original enactment
which will, also, make us famous
So don't worry about imagination
It's not important
We can live without it
just fine

Pat Anthony

The Green Breadbox Radio

was the color of muddy sage
and moldy lime, decoupage flowers
on arched ends, the tweed panel
I could kinda peer through
to glimpse lighted tubes
if the kitchen was dark enough

Lowell Thomas every evening
supper could wait while
Mamma caught up on the world
somewhere out beyond our
four-room with the shotgun
bathroom that went straight
through the middle, its three
connecting doorways, rooms

Gunsmoke and Johnny Dollar
scary enough to keep me awake
as we turned knobs to tune
out static, moved the radio
around the table like a checker
hoping for better reception
daytime, didn't waste electricity
except on Don McNeill and
his Breakfast Club, Arthur Godfrey
if the Irish singer Carmel Quinn
was a special guest and then
mamma would sing along
like a movie star apron and all.

Monique Laforce

Je suis celui qui vient d'ailleurs.

D'autre temps. D'autres rêves.

De l'autrefois. De l'avenir.

Celui qui marche les lieux et les siècles.

Sans âge ni nom.

Celui qui abandonne ses traces

mais n'accompagne pas.

Je suis celui qui oublie à mesure et réinvente

des esquisses qui ne deviennent jamais

un portrait.

Je suis celui qui ne s'achève pas.

Je suis l'amorce, le passage et la fuite.

Le voyage sans la finalité du voyage.

Je suis la faim et la soif.

La splendeur et l'épouvante.

J'habite des miroirs où personne ne s'attarde.

Des murmures presque inaudibles où tout

reste à deviner.

Je suis celui qui ne saurait s'accomplir sans
se perdre. L'inconnu.

Je suis celui qui n'est pas même le vide
ou le néant.

Le désir qui se tient entre deux mondes.

L'innommé. La mort en marche.

Je suis celui que le temps traverse.

Monique Laforce

I am the one who comes from elsewhere.

Other times. Other dreams.

From what once was. From what will be.

The one who roams places and centuries.

Without age or name.

The one who leaves tracks

but not in pursuit.

I am the one who slowly forgets and redraws
sketches which never become
a portrait.

I am the one who does not end.

I am the launch, the passage and the flight.

The voyage without a destination.

I am hunger and thirst.

The splendor and the dread.

I live in mirrors where no one lingers.

Almost inaudible whispers where everything
remains to be guessed.

I am the one who cannot be fulfilled without
getting lost. The unknown.

I am the one who is neither emptiness
nor absence.

The desire that stands between two worlds.

The unnamed. The walking demise.

I am the one time travels over.

(translation assistance by Richard Spiegel)

James Penha

Born to Run

In '75 the Vietnam War came to its chaotic end; so did Jaws. And Beta maxed in and out. Springsteen played the Bottom Line live on WNEW-FM: rock 'n' roll future not to mention Microsoft, but Franco finally died. A jury sent the US Attorney-General to jail. I turned twenty-eight and wed a good woman who knew I was gay, but we loved each other enough to try to live a full enough life. And we did. For a while. Till we had to turn the dial.

Ellaraine Lockie

Crazy

Two observers cannot see the same rainbow.
Each eye sees its own.

The National Center for Atmospheric Research

They call her crazy at the coffee shop
Not while she sits sipping
from a whipped cream topped cup
Her out of the blue tongue-rolling trills
as surprising as the local flock of wild parrots
if they flew in for a coffee break

Except the parrots wouldn't be clapping hands
to piped-in Bob Dylan songs, slapping legs
snapping fingers or smiling their hearts

inside out

Nor would they suddenly say Bless you
WOO in falsetto
when someone across the room sneezes

I order a refill and ask about her
A woman who comes in several times a day
carrying
a recycled paper cup until it protests into pieces
Arms extended from body like wings
Always wearing polyester in pastels
that dress any day in a rainbow

Other customers don't look at her
or at the definition of Tourette syndrome
I peek over the poem I'm writing about birds
Pretend I'm watching people on the sidewalk
She feigns nothing when she hawk-eyes children
like she might pick them up
and take them back to her nest for playtime

Instead she baby-steps out the door
a certain stilted rhythm in her stride
And says Thank you very MUCH
to whatever god guides her
No one calls her crazy until after she leaves

I return to the birds that sing
flutter and feed from my fig tree
Oblivious of the cat still as a garden statue
under the lowest branch
But I'll wait for this woman every morning
For the call of the wild that frees
a coffee house from its cage
For the cleansing flush of a rainbow
Its antidote for impending storms

Charles Rammelkamp

I Feel Good

When I hold you in my arms,
my love can't do me no harm...
the lyrics leap out of the radio
on the boots of a bouncing horn section,
and I drive home after work
feeling like a teenage boy
just after the final bell
on a Friday afternoon,
the whole world ahead of me,
cradled in a forever without a past.

It's like the way you feel listening
to the sounds on the other side
of a telephone receiver whose mouthpiece
has been covered by the caller's hand,
as if a brawl were taking place
behind a closed door,
you safe inside but
on the eternal edge of a decision
to intervene in the interest of peace.
All you can do is risk your life.
All you can be is a hero.

Wayne Hogan

My Intent

My intent here is to do as little literaryin as'll get me by. I'll not be referencin no George Eliots or Graham Greens or Anton Chekovs or Eudora Weltys or any others like them in their similarities. I'm thinkin more here in the vein of a Chuck Bukowski or that would-be radio-poet-guy down in New Orleans years ago who nearly drove all us rapt listners past our past-due dates. Oh, and the Rod McKuens of the world — I'm thinkin in this vein sorta too is my intent here, and not a little along the line of Hermann Goering an him vowin to reach for his pistol ever time he heard the word "culture." Just want to be sayin as little in as little a way as I can say a little like I hope I'm sayin now. Don't want to be sayin nothin what can be diagrammed by some impertnant 3rd-grader in some one-room learnin shack somewhere in deepest Oklahoma, my intent here.

Richard Spiegel

Channeling

My father, listening to Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" on his car radio, took a detour because he wanted to save my grandparents and Aunt Belle from the Martians.

I listened rapt while the Grundig in my Kew Gardens' apartment brought me shortwave signals, international channels, and the dreadful news of Robert Kennedy's assassination.

Now, channeling with a remote I send signals to my book shelves seeking jazz or poetry podcasts, then chance upon exposed asses, would be tyrants, insisting they'll keep the Martians away.

Marilyn Braendeholm

Crossing Bridges

The sky is my best memory of it, a reddish violet, sometimes lavender colour just before the brightness of streetlamps poured down sheets of luminesque. In foggy light it seemed like stardust from a galaxy far, too far away, some place on the edge of my daydreams that played out in the Odeon Theatre.

Our village had a brass band that infected the air with bleating noise. Drove the dogs crazy, the same way the postman set Mrs. Gilbert's Jack Russell into a growl and bounce up and down at the door.

Now my mum always told me that ours was a tiny island surrounded by nothing but thirsty water licking at the shoreline. She said there was nought out there beyond bare horizon, everything was metabolised - I think that's the word she used. So I never bothered, never thought to look beyond that line of seaweed

that knotted itself to driftwood.
Not until my 10th birthday, that is,
when I rode my bike to the other
side of the island and discovered
that there was a bridge out of here.
I didn't hesitate. Speed in my feet,
I biked straight into a tiny village
with streetlamps and an Odeon, just
like our village back home.

But like I said, and often still do,
the sky was my best memory of it.

Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose

John Keats
excerpt from
Fancy (1818)

Our Geography of Poets

California

Ellaraine Lockie

Kansas

Pat Anthony

Maryland

Charles Rammelkamp

New York

Roberta Gould

Ron Singer

Richard Spiegel

Quebec

Monique Laforce

Tangerang-Banten

James Penha

Tennessee

Wayne Hogan

Texas/Vermont

Sylvia Manning

Virginia

William Corner Clarke

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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