

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



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Volume 41
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VOLUME 41 NUMBER 8

This menu
is a poem:
8 jeweled chicken
8 jeweled duck
lion head
mother and child reunited
whole golden carp.

Enid Dame

excerpt from

A Celebration

WATERWAYS

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Volume 41 Number 8

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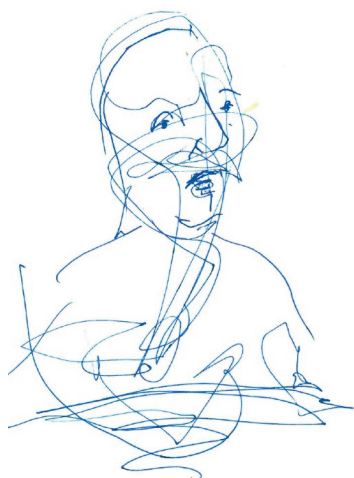
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Robert Cooperman

Daddy Meals

What your daughters,
young and still at home,
called the meals you'd prepare:
like the store-bought ravioli
you'd boil, the already made pesto,
and the salad greens you'd shred,
the cucumbers, bell peppers,
carrots, celery stalks, and red onions
you'd chop and slice.

Mommy Meals were more elaborate,
especially on weekends: delicious
roast chickens, sinus clearing stews
from the Middle East, Europe,
Indian dishes intricate as Navajo rugs.

Still, your girls loved the Daddy Meals
almost as much as those that left
your wife drained as a colander
of linguine ready for the sauce.

Now, just the two of you,
you prepare a Daddy Meal,
missing your daughters teasing
about how hard it looked to do,
missing Chloe taking the paring knife
and chopping the salad veggies,
Sarah stirring the ravioli, the pesto,
or whatever would be the main dish,

while they magpie chattered
about their classes, clubs, girlfriends,
the boys who began to creep into
their conversations the more
Daddy Meals you made.

Mary Belardi Erickson

At Supper

Coming home, I had listened
on Sirius to Bird Notes:
how daunting it is for birds
hunting for spiders and insects
winter-napping underneath leaves
on well-groomed lawns.
And in a garden, dead flowers
could contain seeds for nibbling.

I easily reheat a hamburger
in the microwave
and dress it with pickles and mustard.
But I feel the cold against the pane.

Deborah H. Doolittle

Sugar and Spice

after Renoir's painting,
Chemin Montant dans les Hautes Herbes

Not the culinary kind—sweet basil
or oregano—reserved for haute cuisine.
Could never be the parsley, sage, rosemary,
and thyme of ordinary kitchen gardens
suddenly grown wild and hardy upon
the hillsides. They're more the scraggly, prickly,
bristly sort of plants that produce small brittle
leaves, a plethora of smaller, even more
bitter seeds. When women walk down the path,
dressed all in black as if in widow's weeds,
these herbs reach out, greedily, to boot tops,
cuffs, the hems of skirts and sleeves, clawing
at the dark fabric, clinging to the soft
leather like dust, attaching themselves
to the laces like the parasitical mites
they have become. What joy they bring the world
comes in the form of flowers. Not roses,
not tulips, not the exotic hibiscus
that Polynesians wear behind their ears,
but a vibrant red, red just the same,
sprinkled like rare spice upon the hillsides.

Deborah H. Doolittle

In a Kitchen Where Rice Is Cooking

In a kitchen where rice is cooking,
the aroma fills the room, slowly,
the way a bouquet of flowers occupy a window sill.

Not the way a pot of coffee brewing
sneaks through the house, creeping
into the attic where dust hunkers down, like

but not like rice cooking in the kitchen:
warm, accented with hints of familiar
foreignness. If left undisturbed, the scent settles

into the countertops and cabinets. Cookies,
cakes, pies, never reside on the inside of an oven
the way rice inhabits the pot.

When you walk into such a kitchen, the scent
surrounds you in a warm embrace, not unlike
your mother's perfume or father's aftershave.

Theirs being the more elusive over the years.

Errands

When our mother died she
caught us, my sister Barbara
and me, out and about to order
drive-thru food for lunch.

I was calling to double-check
which chicken sauce for my wife,
who said, “David . . . ,”
in a tone that sometimes meant

I was in trouble, “your mom
just passed.” Which meant I
shouldn’t order after all? What
was protocol? Is speeding back

what one should fix on
doing next? But, no. No
hurry now. An hour earlier
my formerly feisty mother

lay in medicated bliss, her
breathing finally even, the
hairline wrinkles that starred
her mouth so softened they

resembled a rabbit’s smile —
slightly fuzzy, too, a detail
I might have never noticed
had I never knelt so close,

right next to where she
struggled singly toward
wherever. *Go ahead and go,*
I love you, my wife had said

some whisper at such times,
so that was how I left her.
Which left us to load the van
with the books she'd never

read again—six Micheners
topping the considerable pile—
and head for the local library,
the post office, and MacDonald's.

*They often wait for loved ones
to leave the room,* and who knew
better than my wife who knows
the dying best. The rest was just

as easy: hospice nurse, funeral guy,
Mom's exit from the senior center
in her zippered bag. Downtown
for dinner: deep-dish pizza, for three.

Humble Pie

I was newly wed when I weathered Julia Child's recipe for "Chicken With Forty Cloves of Garlic." Packed the garlic between and over the poultry pieces in my roasting pan. Popped it in the oven. A perfect company dinner on an afternoon errand day. Julia clearly a practical cook.

I returned rounding the cul-de-sac corner to a reek rivaling the Gilroy Garlic Festival. Garlic gone hysterical in my house a half block away. I tamed the traumatic aromatics with watering eyes and open doors. Barely before guests arrived to dine on a disappeared chicken.

We finally found the bantam buried in a garlic grave. Last rites representing culinary miscalculation. Julia of course incorrect.

I tossed twelve dollars of garlic down the garbage. Garnished with Julia. Where she remained rotting in my opinion. Until Betty Crocker rescued her with a string of semantics. Reeled her right out, clinging to the difference between a clove and a bulb. My culinary conceit decomposed.

James Penha

Good Housekeeping

Preheat the oven
to 98.6 degrees.

On a well-lit and flowered landscape,
with flowered rolling pin,
roll some of the dough,
but not all of it, no
not all at once, no
keep much of it in reserve,
in the refrigerator
for the future, but, now,
roll some of the dough:

Roll it.

Roll them.

Using gingerbread-boy
and gingerbread-girl cookie
cutters, cut

as many gingerbread boys and girls as possible
or sensible under the circumstances.

With the support of grannies and neighbors,
teachers and friends, carefully
place gingerbread
boys and girls in large cookie sheets,
a bit apart.

With metal skewer or toothpick,
make a small
hole in top of each
if you want them merely
hanging around later
on a tree
or a wall.
Otherwise, just mind their heads.
And watch them
Rise.



Ron Singer

The Ignorant Naturalist

As the bee sucks honey,
I embrace all nature,
swaddled in sweet belief.

I believe hummingbirds
are so-called for their song,
which, unlike other birds',
is without words. Is the
giraffe the most dangerous
animal? (Slow-footed
hippos, surely, are not.)
Fleet deer are known to eat
their offspring. Never squeeze
a snapdragon! You'll get
your finger stung, or bit.

Thus do I sip nectar
from the Pierian spring.

(Or is it ambrosia?)

Carol Hamilton

The Wild Flowers of Cape Cod and a Birthday Exchange System

Book. Compact. Encyclopedic with color photos.
A gift, but why? She *is* a re-gifter,
a many-gifts-in-a-bag gifter and each package
as strange as the two brown paper bags given
my friend Steve at his birthday bash...
bags stuffed with seconds-store goodies...
boxes and boxes of saltines, dented cans of soup.

Maybe she knows I love wildflowers,
but never again will I travel there
or anywhere. We drove to Cape Cod
in our youth, up from Connecticut
with our new car. All these years of living
way way west of there, I have no memory
of lovely Jewel Weed or Birdfoot Trefoil,
no Hope Clover nor Sea Lavender.

All that remains in my Cape Cod Memory Bank
is the boiled lobster I ordered, not knowing
I meant broiled with bread crumbs

and drawn butter.

The dish arrived staring at me

with bead-glassy eyes,

a lemon speared on his snout.

I am thinking some re-gifting
of my own is in order. Sadly, at my age,
I have few gift-receivers likely to hike
Cape Cod, nevertheless search out

oddly-named plants on the shores and
in the brambly, flowery places of Cape Cod.
So I am condemned to seem as strange
as the above mentioned givers, passing on
the many things I will never ever use.



Gilbert Honigfeld

No Thanks

Call me pigheaded if you will
but once I've made up my mind
there's no going back, maybe 'cause
it's easier than rethinking decisions,
fr'example the chicken wings,
I don't eat chicken wings, hot
or cold, won't even touch those
evolutionarily decrepiti appendages
lopped off birds too dumb to fly,
same with crabs and other bottom-
crawlers I saw creepily crawling
at the aquarium the other day
when seeing them in the flesh, so to speak,
did nothing to whet my appetite,
nothing at all and I find it quite
incomprehensible that folks living
along the Bay will actually
order blue crabs by the dozens
served on leftover copies of the
Baltimore Sun cracking their
crusty carapaces with wooden
mallets then sucking out the contents
in loud slurps their eyes rolling
in near-sexual frenzies, no
I just don't get it, never will,
so I'm sticking with bananas.

Gilbert Honigfeld

The Four-Way Cheeseburger

I had to be downtown
for one of those occasional
visits to an administration
office where you wait on
well-worn wooden folding
chairs along with sundry
others in a large room
with two-tone grey walls
dark on the bottom, light on top,
each of us waiting for a
civil servant to call our turn.

The visit over, the papers
signed I drifted down
the metal-edged stair-
case and into the street
finding myself staring
at a freckle-faced picture
of Wendy inviting me in
and I said to myself
damn, it's nearly 2 al-
ready no wonder I'm
hungry so worked my
way toward the counter.

The place was mostly
empty, a few stragglers
here and there but
on my way passed by
a table with a mom
and three kids, the
oldest maybe six or seven,
none of them smiling,
none of them crying,
while the mom took one
of those sterile plastic
knives out of its cello-
phane wrapper and carefully
cut their one cheese-
burger into four equal
parts, while the kids
waited stoically for
their share each with
a crushable plastic
glass of water at their
place and a spread-out
napkin marking their space.

On my way out I
slipped a twenty on
their table and kept
on walking kind of fast.

William Corner Clarke

In the Tea Rooms

The beautiful, well-groomed lady
Taking tea and cake
With her young daughter
Dressed in the uniform
Of an exclusive school
Obviously a physician
She's quizzing her child
On the structure
Of the human condition
Fibula, sternum, clavicle, pelvis -
— A private game
Wealthy with intelligence
And deep affection
Beyond my experience
Beyond my connection
And yet
Despite my disdain for privilege
I find myself entranced
By their unaffected elegance
Listening
To their soft and measured tones
Watching the graceful movements
Of the mother's and the daughter's hands

— The interplay of question, gesture
Point and answer
— Clavicle, humerus, ulna, phalange -
And in between — A sip of Oolong
A taste of Carrot cake
Topped with cream

Our Geography of Poets

California

Ellaraine Lockie

Colorado

Robert Cooperman

Michigan

D.R. James

Minnesota

Mary Belardi Erickson

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Ron Singer

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle

Oklahoma

Carol Hamilton

Tangerang-Banten

James Penha

Virginia

William Corner Clarke

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