

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream

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No 10



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Gilbert Honigfeld

Mixup

In a lexicographical mixup,
bread — the staff of life in one
language — is pain in another.

Gilbert Honigfeld

She Who Was the Baker's Once Beautiful Wife

hides her face now in the vacant hollow
between the knobby outcroppings of shoulders
and the sag of breasts, each a wilted flour sack,

her neck, humbled, twisted, buzzarded
on itself in the aggressively docile posture
of a child falsely accused and unjustly whipped,

defeat written into the fixed set of her back,
the attitude of her carriage an attitude of loss,
the bend of her unshawled head, away from God,
the hopeless inclination of those fallen from grace.

Marilyn Braendeholm

In a Cloud

She was like that.

A wheel of wind.

My mother possessed the kitchen
when she made bread.

I watched in wonder at
her gliding motion as she
stood in a white floury cloud.

Stretching, folding dough.

She'd slap her hands on her apron,
flour dust rising into scattered motes.

The kitchen was veiled
in a wintery leak of sunlight.

I was a crumb of a child.

She was the soprano.

Marilyn Braendeholm

That Plastic Bag Bread

I think of Mum when I eat
sliced white bread, the sort
that sticks to your front teeth.

Mum baked bread each morning.
But never on Sundays, and rarely
after the day she came home
with sliced bread in a plastic bag
from the corner shop. She said,

Somebody's doing it for me now.
I needn't do it anymore.

Shortly after, Mum took a job
at my school. In the cafeteria.

Baking bread.

Marilyn Braendeholm

The Sunrise Saturday Market

The sun rises and
preserves the sky.

Metal tables are set about.
Clinking. Clanking. Huddled noises
of barter and banter and trade.

Bread in loaves.
In boules.
In rolls.

Wheaten. Walnut. White and rye.

Good fortune's leaning on the sky.
The baker has arrived.

B. R. Straban

Paris Street Corner

Shaving the edge of nowhere,
the edge where we all
fall down, no drift
of leaf from bough.
When stem separates
not even Occam's Razor
cuts so close

Belle Epoque Fantasie

The sidewalks are crowded with people and their umbrellas; the streets with all those horse-powered conveyances — cabs, carts, coaches, buggies, carriages, and omnibuses — streaked with rain. I dash from one awning to another, stand under the art deco canopy at the corner, wanting to stay dry while the nineteenth-century leaks into the twentieth. No sky-scrapers, yet, except if you count the Tour Eiffel disappearing and reappearing behind the low-lying clouds. I catch sight of it at each intersection, the way it looms over the city's own peculiar landscape of rooftops and chimney pots, spires and castellations. Patrons sit at tidy tables, sip coffee from tiny cups, nibble sweet pastries, waiting for the rain to ease. When the damp street begins to smell just as sweet, I lift my no-nonsense skirt and step right in for nostalgia's sake.

Food Dream

I'm eating French fries:
the thoughtless chewing
of a cow in a meadow
or a teenager watching TV
beside a bowl of popcorn.

The crunch of golden skin,
the juicy meat, the sting
of salt, the slick of grease
on my hungry lips.

Until I reach a last time
and come up empty,
my hunger —
for what's allegedly
the unhealthiest food
on the planet — unabated,

as if a child's present
were whisked away
after he'd played with it
for a few minutes.

At that point, I wake,
still tasting dream fries,
smacking my lips,
reaching one last time,
like a dog eternally optimistic
when it comes to food:

dreams the one place
I'm allowed to eat my fill.

Jerome Berglund

old people love to
cast bread crusts to the baby
birds around their feet

 smells when it rains to
 sensitive nostrils make for
a ripe smorgasbord

delicate petals

 take poorly to harsh nozzles
 drizzle them lightly
 as a pâtissier
would glaze a tart

working in peak highs
could well kill a man, definite
siesta weather

Mary K. Lindberg

No More Will be Baked Here

Villa San Marco, Bay of Naples, Italy, 79 A.D.

Where the sun ripens grapes to pearly purple,
white foam flirts with an aqua bay,
Roman villas loll at the sea's edge.
Inland, farmhouses serve the wealthy
with labor to provide fruits, vegetables,
baked goods for citizen families, guests.

Tall above stands a volcano, like a planet,
motionless yet churning. One day it awakens.
Heated smoke shrivels fruit, tremors agitate
waves, aqueducts exude sulfurous odors.
The sun closeted, wind quiet, air fraught.
No reason can explain this random event,
no alarm postpone its consequences.

A baker, his wife, two children, hurry,
frightened as star-pointed stones shear their roof,
smother their courtyard's millstones, bags of bread.
No more will be baked here. All those hours
of toil, backaches from harvests, hopes to be
freed from slavery — gone. They pack empty
flour sacks with fruits, oil lamps, old hopes,
new fears. They run, legs soon engulfed in pumice,
grasp hands before roiling hot mud, murmur:

*we made bread
now we're on fire
along with olives
peaches cowsheds
seeds of our life and work
ground to
dead powder
we're the emptiness
of unlived lives
give us air
we can't breathe*

Mary K. Lindberg

Last Supper in Pompeii

Queens, NY, USA, 2021 A.D., Pompeii, Italy, 79 A.D.

A park in Queens, cloudless sky.
The rickety food truck POMPEII
proclaims “*Eat like the Romans.*”
I order grilled chicken, bread, veggies.
Enticing smells, savory taste.

- - -

Two thousand years ago in Pompeii
Romans eat street food. Open bars offer
steaming vats of pork with a pungent
fish sauce called *garum*. Midday cooking
odors lure workers, slaves, freedmen.
They stand to eat, drink, chat;
red wine drizzles in chariot ruts.

Up the street in a villa owned by
Antony Rufus Frontius, sunlight
strikes a bronze Bacchus. Lemon,
cinnamon scents fill the room where
the family dines: Antony, his wife
Cornelia, their two children.

The sea breeze swirls a flowered fragrance
through open wooden blinds.

Parents recline on pearl-trimmed velvet
cushions. Cornelia exclaims:

*What a meal, Antony! Olives, dormouse
stuffed with minced pork, our favorite.
And now, lemon apple tart for dessert.*

Lured by the aroma, a boy and girl
rush over. The slave Gaius offers a tray.

*Those tarts! a touch of cardamom;
you're a promising baker,* the mother says.
Children lean toward the sweets, palms open,
More, please! Please!

At that moment the room, walls, villa, earth —
shake ferociously. The scene shrinks,
yanked by Vesuvius into a dense
cloud of burning black dust. The raging
volcano, its debris, hot stones, lava —
seal an abrupt end to the family's life.

- - -

In Pompeii today tourists are exposed
to air and light again. The Frontius family,
now accidental artifacts trussed in plaster
behind glass, their gestures, pleas
unmapped lives — all trapped
before they could finish dessert.

Instead of tradesmen queued up for
street food, rich citizens served by
slaves, world tourists swarm the city.
They sit in ancient doorways, or
on stepping stones that link walkways,
chew prosciutto, salami sandwiches, drink sodas.

- - -

Back in the woodsy Queens park
at dusk, the POMPEII truck
gears up, sputters, departs noisily.
An odor of garlic floats
over discarded chicken bones.

As the ramshackle truck vanishes,
I wonder what it would be like if
the earth cracked open before me,
with rising flames, roiling waters,
and a wall of soot?

Richard Spiegel

Imagine a Loaf of Bread on Pesach

Ukraine and Russia
are the breadbasket
for the world,
punched in the gut.

I recall
loaves baked
in Liberian clay ovens;
loaves eaten
with edam in Amsterdam;

and the aroma
from the bread bakers
of Greenwich Village.

Barbara Fisher

I remember being woken
by the smell of baking
from across the street.

I Tried

I've worked for hours to try
to get my computer
to let me send you a poem.

Same problem as last month.
It will NOT attach or
copy in text. Even

went to the library
to use their computer.
Wouldn't work there either.

I have to give up. It's
probably too late. Drats.
But just to let you know.

Our Geography of Poets

Colorado

Robert Cooperman

Minnesota

Jerome Berglund

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Barbara Fisher
Mary K. Lindberg
Richard Spiegel

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle
B.R. Strahan

Texas

Sylvia Manning

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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