

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream

December, 2021 volume 42 number 6



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VOLUME 42 NUMBER 6



Barbara Fisher

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Deborah H. Doolittle

A Stitch in Rhyme

The frown on my mother's face
often could make a grown man
uneasy. She does not look
up from the busy whirring
sound of her sewing machine.
Where clouds of cotton batting
envelope her, she tends to
bend with the fabric. She licks
her lips, mends the seams, finds the
rends, sends the needle ticking,
kicking out time in a straight
uniambic base-stitched line.

James Penha

A Sijo for December

The art shop strings brushes of every hue
and size in order

across its Christmas window to await
the presence of mind

and the artful hands of a painter or perhaps
the lines of a poet.

Monique Laforce

**Poem for Geneviève Amyot,
poet and friend, 1945-2000**

Here we are once again on a stage. Both. Together. Your absence and me. You say one of us is scared, you don't know which one, but it doesn't matter. It is life that trembles never to be sufficient on its own.

Something is lurking behind the doors that we know nothing about. We bury our faces and our hands in the flour bowl. You say that the masks are more real than us and that the disorder should not be stored in any drawer.

The boxes pile up in the room. Our children play to fill and empty them in turn. They wear the costumes of the gypsy party and demand another round of the merry-go-round.

You say we will rebuild the house every time until the last. The train passes in front of us and carries us away. There is no station. Only the trip. Until the end of tenderness.

I tell you that we will never reach Montmartre. You laugh and you cry. You say we no longer know which side to take. We have always been tightrope walkers on the vanishing line of the horizon. I carry you across on my shoulders like a blue shawl on miserable nights. You hold the lamp to cross the darkness. Later we will sleep on the Time stairs.

We stand on the stage once again. Your absence and me. Together. One of us is scared. It does not matter. You say that we already knew about death and that the parts are interchangeable.

Marilyn Braendeholm

Winter Blankets

Winter.

Time to eat fat,
to fight against
walls and blankets.

Winter
fixed in a tapestry and
bleaching in the sunset.

The homeless crouch in
the horizons you ride,
the space you pass through.

Winter is that cat,
the colour of pewter mornings.
Make it be spring,
a porcelain grin,
stars bright as Houdini eyes.

Make it be spring, so the air
in front of you blossoms
in conversation with forests
thickened with legend.

But it is winter.
Time to eat fat.
Time to fight against
walls and blankets.

Pat Anthony

As if Cast in Bronze

She stands transfixed
looks to the stars
for answers as she questions why

Her silent screams born
of raw fear and terror
for her little baby boy

Why does Tetrarch Herod want to kill
all these innocent little ones?

Other mothers already wailing
from nearby streets tearing
their hair rending garments

even as Joseph bundles items
straps them to the donkey
how little they can take

If she's to ride as they flee
while above her stars
begin to fall.

Gilbert Honigfeld

Big Bang Theory

Of course, I wasn't there
last Christmas so can only
speculate on what it musta
been like when the Saints went
marching in and surprised the hell
out of God with their present
last year, a king-size set of
celestial drums that He could
pound like crazy whenever He
got ticked-off at something
we did or didn't do, or just
to see what would happen if He
decided to pound on the big-ass
bass drum all night just because
no one could tell Him to stop

and now many months later that's
exactly what He did last night
as the humidity was getting higher
and the sun was getting lower, that's
when He killed the lights right
before picking up those oversize
felt mallets He likes to pound
with when He's in one of those
moods working for a few minutes
on the soprano cymbals, the ones
that hurt your ears with
their needle-like piercing screams
as kind of a get-your-attention
introduction before turning His mallets
onto the kettle drums — each one of
His twelve tuned tympani
the size of Australia — setting the
foundations of your house atremble,
all the while the Saints are watching,
wond'ring what the hell they were thinking.

Ruth Moon Kempfer

The Stone Angel:
An Obituary

There was only one, in the morning's
news, which was somehow
a comfort, there have been

so many, lately, taking up the whole
bottom third of the page—just
one column of this notice—

the man's in his uniform jacket, not
the usual head shot, arms stripes
and to fill the void

two columns wide, there's an angel.
Stone winged, soft looking,
she's gazing up—

It's Jackie she sees. Nancy's Jackie.
Impossible. One of the best
nice guys alive. The text

agrees. She was his Queen: married
sixty-four years. Six children
survive. A soft chuckle—

a love of feeding, oysters and seafood
and hotcakes, welcome all
to piled high tables, years

of devotion. The angel looks amazed:
stone hands across her breasts
sign a good man's now at rest.

Sylvia Manning

For Babes and Candle Makers

December 12, 2021

Children at deep blue hem
Our Lady of Guadalupe's, maybe,
maybe today, her day now and then
here and there as cherubim at her hem
seeming safe maybe even at play yes
displaying baby sense of happiness
more than awe or reverence
a day to note her appearance,
her beauty, the new world inherent
in her being in the sky,
mother of God, indigenous, and us
grand children of God, then,
to be regarded as hidalgos of eternity
if any ever were worthy of candles
lit for her sake, today,
and for all candle makers
here and there, anywhere

(and for the dead in Mayfield, Kentucky)

Richard Spiegel

Caged

Tom shopped at the Met
Sunday morning
and brought home
a poinsettia
which is now housed in
the abandoned parrot cage
to protect both
plant and cats.

Richard Spiegel

Doin'

How ya doin'?

My fingernails grow quickly.

Barbara petted the long haired
Rumples, and said, "it's amazing

how he keeps his fur so white
– even in this house."

On the radio, Simon
sang to his daughter.

Barbara drank the chai as she
sat with me. We read the Sunday funnies.

Billie Holiday sang, "laugh all
your sorrows away."

Will the ringing in my ears
never stop?

William Corner Clarke

The Mole's Poem

Winter was hard
And bitter
But like all the others
Throughout all time
It came and went away
And at the far end
Of the bombed out
Mansion garden
My old friend
The water rat
Sensed the coming
Of the spring
And left the safety
Of his sleep lined hole
To catch the dance
Of morning sunlight

Glittering
In the shallows
By the river bend
And as he watched
The weeping willows
Swaying in the wind
He decided that despite
The desolation
The Woods had seen
Beauty
Still remained

William Corner Clarke

Songbird Song

Most times
Even the smallest
Of lost things
Are rarely lost forever
And Time itself
Will lend a hand
To make their measure
Whole again

A miniature
Of a Goddess head
Hidden by the drift
Of desert sands
A wedding ring
Swept into the corner
Of a darkened celebration
A love letter never sent
And trapped behind

A bureau drawer
Have all been found again
Long after all
Remembering
Had slipped away

But a songbird's songs
Have neither mass
Nor energy
To keep them safe
From fools and folly
And when in danger
Can only leave
The planet altogether
To sing themselves
Into the Unbeyond
Never
To be heard again

Our Geography of Poets

Bali

James Penha

Florida

Ruth Moon Kempher

Kansas

Pat Anthony

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Richard Spiegel

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle

Quebec

Monique Laforce

Vermont/Texas

Sylvia Manning

Virginia

William Corner Clarke

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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