

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream

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volume 42

number 7



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Wayne Hogen

Gilbert Honigfeld

The Patter of Feet

It looks to me, doctor said,
pulling off a pair of those
blue latex gloves and tossing
them in the Hazardous Waste bin,
looks to me you've got swollen
ankles with pittingedema (pro-
nounced as though it were Latin),
and that means your heart is
too weak for your body, so
we're gonna start you right off
on waterpills three times a day
and see you in a month, and
if that doesn't help we're gonna
have to send you over to Imaging,
first for sonography and maybe
later for contrast films, depending.

You can put your shoes and socks
back on now. Any questions?

Gilbert Honigfeld

ESL

I feel sorry for my students
not only 'cause they're stuck with me,
but they're stuck with English, too.

For example, on Thursday evening
I'm gonna start 'em off on soundalikes
by taking off my shoes and socks, then
riffing on 'bare' feet, with an on-screen grizzly
behind me raised up on his big 'bear' feet.

I can't bear thinking of their mute stare-
backs when our class has barely begun.

James Penha

Wakeful

“They hang, but do not fly.”

A. E. Stallings

“Night Thoughts”

My feet hang off the sofa; you hang in the air above
as heavy as the blanket below me, the one we
used to share when I felt so alone.

Mary Belardi Erickson

Flash Dance

Prompted by a jazzy swig of air,
a bush's bare twigs
shimmy in bright arctic cold.

Mary K. Lindberg

Do You Have a Greek Foot?

Splayed legs with visible toes
in the Waterways photograph
make me check — do I see
a Greek, Egyptian,
or square foot?

The great toe is as long as
the second. Seems square.
A Greek foot sports a longer
second toe, the Egyptian foot
a more prominent great toe.

Because ancient Egyptian feet
were sculpted mostly in profile,
the big toe looms longest.
Even so, many Egyptian statues
possess Greek feet.

I recall the Boxer at Rest,
the 3rd century B.C. Hellenistic bronze
of a boxer after a brutal fight.
Found in 1885, the pugilist's right foot
reveals a second toe to be
a tad longer than the first.

The Romans — never to be outdone
by their slaves, or artistic models —
carved mostly all their statues
with Greek feet.

Have you looked at your toes yet?

Mary K. Lindberg

The Ghost of D. H. Lawrence

“the sensual passion and mysteries are equally sacred with the spiritual mysteries and passions.”

D. H. Lawrence

Foreword

Women in Love

Mysterious rites in the giant parking lot
on the San Fernando Valley campus;
female students in white shorts stroll,
bronzed boys in creamy convertibles
side up, offer rides. Vehicles rock
with rousing rites as the Earth
shudders 3.4 degrees on the Richter scale.

My goateed officemate Brad welcomes me:
“Out this window you can see the San
Andreas Fault;” he smiles, “Earth’s passions
tore it apart.” A week later he and a leggy
blond dash out breathlessly, flushed as a
Valley sunset, their study of Women in Love
cut short by my key in the door.

Colleagues gossip that Brad seduces nubile coeds. His doctoral thesis analyzed hedonism; quoting D.H. Lawrence, he told the hiring committee: "I find all sexuality spiritual." For tenure, he turned over a new leaf, stopped offering girls rides to their cars.

On a hot Friday afternoon, the chairman, late for his date with the resident poet, concludes the department meeting. Overheated cars fill with cool air, laughter, the promise of after-quake drinks, passionate weekend rites. At the gate, the ghost of Lawrence nods, this is a sacred place, as he beams a smile into each exiting car.

Ron Singer

The Words Not Spoken

Staying awake until bedtime is no joke in what is called “the country,” where sleep arrives like a surprise guest — don’t get me wrong, a friendly, welcome guest. But, if you’re not careful, you’ll wake up on the couch, board-stiff, glasses athwart the bridge of your nose, book still open, as if you’d read while you slept, from eight-thirty, supper done, until one. (Why does this make me think of nails growing in the grave?)

So we’ve adjusted our regimen — not to say, ritual. I organize the dishes, you set up the board, plus accessories: dictionary, pencil, paper bag full of tiles, those little racks where some people hide their letters (we don’t), and, finally, the sheet of paper to keep score. We use each sheet until it’s full, a sort of living history —no, living arithmetic.

Sometimes, I let you pick for me, the who-goes-first letter, while I get things started over at the sink. This works out well. You plan your move and, ten feet away, I wash, rinse, rack. (No talking, though.) Then, I plan my move, while you (no

fear of falling asleep) get on with your book. The game (and dishes and reading) proceed.

Some turns, of course, something special happens —perhaps (though not only) a You-Know-What, which focuses the mind wonderfully. After one of those, we drop book and dishes (not literally, of course) and plot our moves simultaneously, like children absorbed in — what is it called? — parallel play. In other words, we get serious.

Did I imply, at the start of this, that our game is a ritual, as well as a regimen? When one of us says, “Let’s play fast, no half-hour turns,” then proceeds to ignore the agreed-upon rule (not to mention the “no fishing” one, impervious to definition), is that not a ritual, of sorts? Or, at least (to come out and say it, at last), a mirror of married life?

Monique Laforce

Slow Paces

Someone is coming
Don't you hear?
Do you keep your eyes closed?
Someone is coming forward
Sound of leaves smell of fire

Someone is coming near
Space betrays the bird
Hidden in the folds of sky
Don't you hear anymore?
Do you keep your eyes closed?

The snowy nest on the branch
Lulls the moon softly and gently
Sleep captivates you at night
In the recesses of the heart.

Richard Spiegel

Con Sequences

Changed mind

vacillated over

suppressed decisions.

Confessions (repressed)

would write

the poem

in the

middle of

the muddle:

two feet

above/below.

Deborah H. Doolittle

Led Zeppelin Fantasy

I climb those stairs, singular,
angular stairs, but the children
keep crying: mama, mama,
mama! My feet sink deeper,
deeper, deeper into the risers
like I'm falling in love too fast.
Inside my head the sound of rain
drumming the windshield. The wipers
sweeping away the time, the grime
of day. The yellowed newspaper
drips real tears, sliding fat and golden,
but only in the memory. Still,
I'm climbing stairs that keep shifting
from one station to another
in my radio, producing amidst
all that static, a melodious note
or two, and one more chance
at salvation.

Our Geography of Poets

Bali

James Penha

Minnesota

Mary Belardi Erickson

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Mary Lindberg

Ron Singer

Richard Spiegel

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle

Quebec

Monique Laforce

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