

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



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Volume 43

Number 10

Emily's supposedly
afraid of everything but robins,
butterflies, moths, spiders, snakes

lines excerpted from
"for Emily who taught herself to whistle"
by Sylvia Manning

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Volume 43 Number 10

Designed, Edited and Published by
Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel
A. Thomas Perry, Outreach Consultant

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Ron Singer

Little Children's Voices

Heard at a distance,
little children's voices
sound a lot like flies.

Not that I mean
to complain
(let alone whine),

but they do.
It may defy sense
(or sensibility),
but it's true.

Marilyn Braendeholm

In the Corner Table of the Coffee Shop

In the shadows
where spiders spin invisible webs,
and breakfast crumbs
collect like colonies on the floor,
sits a woman
wearing a red and black silk sari,

and as she takes
short sips from a glass of water,
her gold beaded bracelets
ring out like wind chimes.
But it's her necklace with those
silver skulls that has me wondering.

Robert P. Hansen

The Chase

Flutter by
butterfly
but be wary:

The robin's
been robbin'
the prairie.

Its shadow
shadows your
shadow:

You're prey —
you pray —
and it's over.

Mary Belardi Erickson

A Playhouse Spider

There's something about a
wooly spider in my playhouse--
a slant-roofed brooder shed--
which makes me scared--
its red, yellow, black furs
and ample, nimble legs.

It's not a gangly daddy long-legs.

A fear takes hold of me
and I must grab a board or hoe.
The spider may be poisonous.
I must oust its furry body
from my kitchen of crates
and cast-off pots and pans.

Gilbert Honigfeld

Two Mantises

The praying mantis
arms folded, motionless,
eyes shut tight, rapt,
lost in her devotions.

The preying mantis
legs crouched and ready
to spring, eyes half-lidded,
wrapped in his plan of attack.

Deborah H. Doolittle

A Moth Came Fluttering

At that moment, the lights flickered.
At that moment, the leaves on all
the bushes and trees shivered. And
at that moment, a barred owl
on the prowl hooted like an old
man snoring,

my husband asleep
beside me. My small clock ticking
got me to thinking from that one
moment to the next, I should be
sleeping, not simply watching nor
listening for the world to break.

Deborah H. Doolittle

One Butterfly

One tree, one hill, one cloud in the sky
is how I stand still

or the butterfly that migrates through.
Among all those

monarchs, painted ladies, swallowtails,
holly blues, green hairstreaks

listed in my fancy field guide book, I look
for the little yellow fellow

with the lavender dot no bigger than a spot
on each wing.

With its own certain kind of stumble-bumble
it tumbles across my yard,

When it exits, another one enters, a flower
loosed upon the wind,

followed by another and another, each one
light as an eyelash,

tender as rice paper, we admire
but dare not touch.

When is one butterfly, even little yellow ones,
ever enough?

Deborah H. Doolittle

In My Dreams

I run so fast down flights of stairs
my feet become a whirling blur

of activity, toes barely
brushing the tops of each tread, I

could be flying, and then I am
joining all the robins and wax-

wings on their next migration south.
I churn the air into a route

of evanescence, feel that urge
to fly so high that the trees look

like tufts of tie-dyed cotton balls;
my house, a semi-precious stone

cut to reflect the sun. Which is
more glorious there in the wide

open air. Come spring if you fail
to find me at home, look up there.

Two Thoughts

November. The sky is still
blue as summer. All day, sun
light ripens twilight, the chill
of shadows cling to more than
just trees, even as leaves let
go. The crickets seem to know.
Their silence a sign even
I cannot ignore. My thoughts
migrate soft as butterflies
to warmer weather as I
bundle up my mind and pull
on my mother's old hand-made
Irish knit sweater, that fits
just like a snake's second skin.

Irene Mitchell

**She Prunes Her Redbuds
and Saves the Robins**

Dedicated as she was to collecting arachnids,
mounting more specimens
became a sticky wicket
similar to the conundrum occurring outside
her window and toward the hill
concerning the over-branching redbuds
which had been pining all summer
even as she formulated her plan
for their resuscitation.

Are there any outstanding curses
upon these redbuds? she wondered.

A cavalier on a sturdy steed
came to her rescue, citing too many spiders
and snakes.

They have slumbered long enough, she said.
What is your fee for pruning?

His fee was as high as the treetops
so she undertook the rescue mission herself.
Such is the glory of battle.

By high noon the sun's red radiance
photo-sensitized the hills
and the redbuds renewed their promise
to shelter robins and butterflies
for her continued observance.

As for the other trees,
there was not a snide remark among them.

Diets

On my walk, I met a man
laden with leafy strands of water
spinach “for my pigs,” he said.

I explained how I love veggies
steeped in broth, onions and garlic.

“Pigs eat ‘em raw; they don’t do soup.”

Emily's Flight

Emily can climb so far!
up to and over the stars
then across the sky
with clouds floating by—
if she falls, it will not hurt,
down, down, it won't hurt
but she says she is scared
of earth turning and shaking
floating and quaking
and full of what you cry
when it won't go away,
when night is like day,
when robins, snakes, moths, butterflies,
even spiders fill her house
and the harder she tries
the fuller it grows—
not even a mouse
can tickle her toes
but she reaches, she cries
for the stars.

The Matterhorn

Emily, they said,
was a sweet young lass
afraid of her shadow
among other things —
but not of the whistle
that calls down the snake
in the forest
where the wild bird sings —
she says there are things
made of metal, glue
and joined by sassafras
that escape at night
to frighten the flibbers
and conklins that rise from the pass
to scare pretty maidens
— a long time ago —
when the snake made his way to bed
flipping the strangers
he found in his way
and leaving the company dead.
The river won't run,
the sky won't fall rain,
no clouds will float
through the sky
if Emily won't overcome her strange fear
and kiss all the goblins goodbye.

Wayne Hogan

What Madness Is Like

Madness is like being on a wet pavement in Paris out somewhere near that big arch thing just before sundown on the Roman holiday that always falls on a Friday, the one lots of the more native sorts spend in hotel rooms, some in places like L.A. and D.C., the others in strip mall joints just outside Dubuque, writing letters, making appointments to have cavity work done, playing Wordle, having hot chocolate sodas sent up to their rooms, practicing the seven elemental forms of communication most commonly practiced by their kind, some reading Gogol's "The Overcoat," others preferring not to, the twain never quite meeting except for that small cabal of Russkies who've chosen to focus singly on the first sign of the day they've picked to invade, quite unannounced, the strip-mall joints just outside Dubuque.

Pat Anthony

In the King Edward

They didn't know about
the cigar box, with its cotton
balls salvaged from prescription bottles
and aspirin glued to the bottom
a golden King Edward still
smelling faintly of grandpa's cigars
here her hoard was pinned
after she killed them in the mason jar
cotton drenched in alcohol
the only thing she had and she thought
it merciful, watched as the butterfly's
wings beat ever more slowly
how she lifted them out, arranged them
like she'd seen at the museum
grasshoppers and tiny moths
now and then a real find like a luna
pinned to the grill of the old Ford
after awhile the smell changed from
cigars to putrifying bodies but
she breathed it all in, combed bushes
and caught specimens in cupped hands
still they thought her strange with
her long braids and books and glasses
her preferring corners to center stage

so they wrote her off but she had
volumes of Thoreau and Gene Stratton Porter
to keep her safe from prying eyes
that terrified her more than tobacco juice
from a pinched grasshopper
skritch legs against her fingers
no worse than a kitchen knife.
up-attic beneath the day bed
visited daily like going to a cemetery.

Federico Garcia Lorca

El Maleficio de la Mariposa
(an excerpt)

Tienes el cuerpo frío.
Ven conmigo.
Que es mi cueva templada
y desde allí verás el prado verde
perdersse en la distancia.

1919

Our Geography of Poets

Bali

James Penha

Granada

Federico Garcia Lorca

Iowa

Robert P. Hansen

Kansas

Pat Anthony

Kentucky

Jane Stuart

Minnesota

Mary Belardi Erickson

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Irene Mitchell

Ron Singer

North Carolina

Deborah H. Doolittle

Tennessee

Wayne Hogan

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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