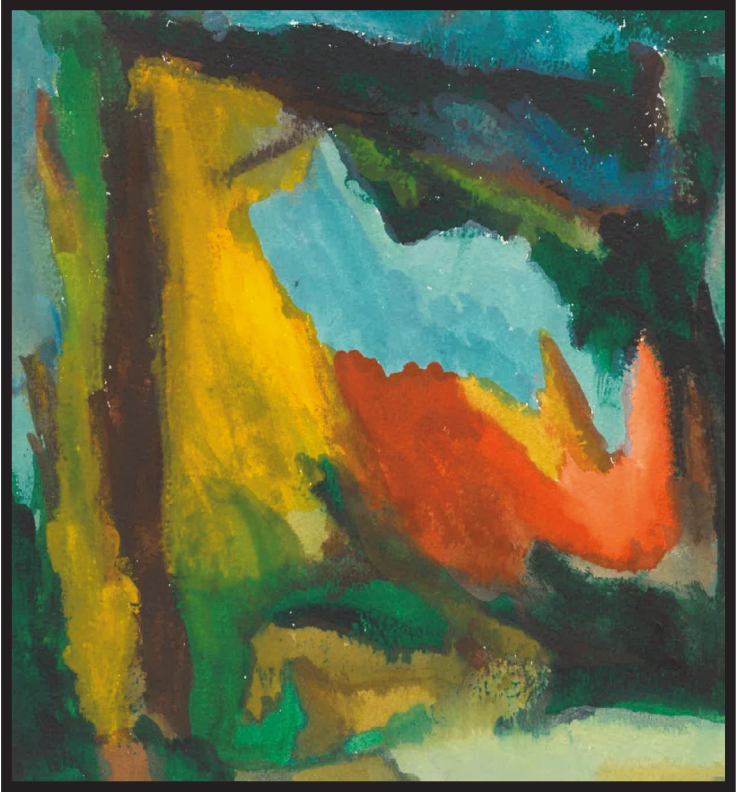


Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



September, 2022 Volume 43 No. 3

Waterways

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Volume 43

Number 3

We can never find each other
in this fog.

excerpted from "Summer Ending"
by Ruth Moon Kempher
(Waterways, volume 41, number 3)

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Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 43 Number 3

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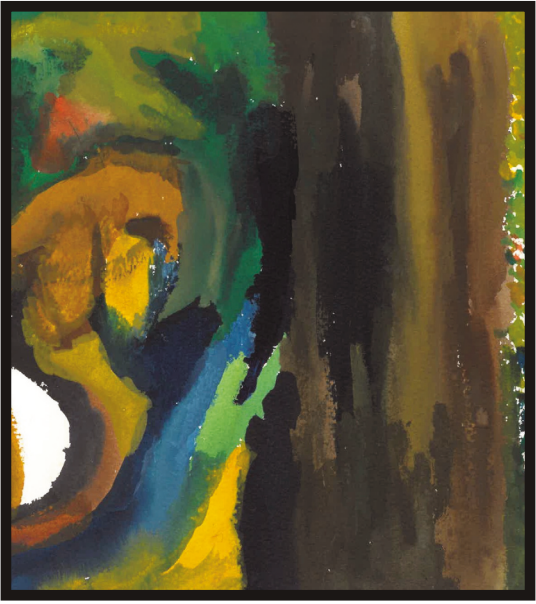
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Marilyn Braendeholme

Gaps Between Our Fog

I'm sitting on a log
that has a heart carved into it.
He's sitting on the log opposite
picking at the bark.

The campfire shifts, sparks
climbing into the night air
to join all those errant stars.

And I ask him,
What are you thinking about,
and he says, Nothing.

I've never been able to do that,
think about nothing, I tell him.

Like this, my finger traces
the carved heart — Who carved it?
A boy or a girl? Was it young love,

and when does young love stop —
when you're not young, or when
love becomes something else?

It's like when I tell you to
unplug the toaster before you
poke your knife at the bread.

And he's staring into the flames,
as if he's thinking, and then he
looks up and says, What toaster?

Mary Belardi Erickson

Voters' Fog

The sky has become uncinched,
its clouds falling to the ground.

Voters are riders on horses
nosing through the fog.

I have dotted my ballot.
The outcome seems shrouded
in a gray future.

Votes disappear in a fog
since we are saddled
by partisan wrangling.

The candidates are riding on promises
pocked with lobbying and greed.

The country can't see two feet
in front of itself, that's for sure,
nothing else.

Mary Belardi Erickson

Fogged In

When the early morning fog
is like a dense cave with no echo,
it falls in around me
cushioning thoughts.

I cannot see into the misty landscape
where poetry nests in tree branches
and is in the nectar of opening flowers.

August's golden rod could be donning
a well-turned phrase.

Ox-eyes could be rhythmically
bobbing yellow petals in the breeze.

Meaningful words could be growing
like white and purple clover in the grass.

Leaning over a gurgling creek, I could find
lines of minnows swimming one direction
and then schooling a revision.

Yet the very sun hides in the gray
and must rise to burn off
murky droplets and reveal
stanzas on the horizon
a brightened mind can reason,
when what is hidden emerges.

James Penha

Octelle of a Morning Fog

Sunrise is dark before you wake
Clouds have settled upon the lake
As they did upon your brow
Last night when the willow bough
Scraped its fingers 'gainst the glass
Till mercy brought sleep at last
Sunrise is dark before you wake
Clouds have settled upon the lake

Fog

I want to listen for your voice,
 But it's lost in the fog.
I want to reach for your hand,
 But it's lost in the fog.
I want to walk in your footsteps,
 But they're lost in the fog.
I want to see your face,
 But it's lost in the fog.
I want to touch your heart,
 But it's lost in the fog.
I want to search your soul,
 But it's lost in the fog.
I want to give you my love,
 But you are lost in the fog.

William Corner Clarke

Rain in Athens

A sudden downpour
 In Exarchia
A violent thunderstorm
 On a bright clear
 Autumn morning
 Battering the roofs
Dancing hail on the cobbles
 Flooding the drains
 Of the square
 I was surprised
 By its wild urgency
But then I swear I heard
 Three simple words
 “I am Here!”
Come from somewhere
 Deep within me
 And in an instant
The drunken excess
 Of the night before
 And all the heavy
Weight of bygone years
 Seemed washed away
Into the gutters of the city

And a sense of beauty
I thought I'd never
Feel again
Came breaking through
My age-old wall
Of gathered pain
A sparkling, crystallized joy
Shining
In the million billion
Mirrors
Of the rain

Mary K. Lindberg
**Overheard in the House
of Marcus Lucretius Falco,
from his wife Calpurnia, Pompeii, Italy**

*"...there was a black and menacing cloud, split
by twisted and quivering flashes of fiery breath..."*

(Pliny the Younger, 79 A.D.)

Marcus, it seems like yesterday
we made love on the Medusa mosaic.
You wanted to try the lemon garden, *al fresco*,
but slaves were harvesting fruit. Remember?

Our Greek slave Ariston had just painted
Narcissus Gazing at his Reflection —
he deftly captured ultimate self-deception
before Narcissus falls into the pool.

That was after our big argument:
Ariston's art entranced me —
though he was a slave — but you
thought I was needled by Cupid's dart.

I did admire the painter's smooth stride,
dark curls, wide hands, but no more.
After all, you offered a villa with baths,
colonnaded gardens. Most of all, undying love.

Except when you were away for awhile —
designing a Neptune marble fountain
for the peristyle —
at least, that's what you said.

I believed you; you believed me.
A fair exchange, I would say.
That sun-drenched day we lay together
on cool Medusa to celebrate.

High noon. Windows crack, crash, stinging
ash,
fiery blasts pulverize bone.
Vulcan! you howled in that sudden night,
held me close, fumbled for light. Never let go.

Still yoked together by Vesuvius, we lie,
two Roman patricians embracing,
our ecstasy sealed in pumice and plaster,
pinned under glass, peered at by strangers.

Cupid's arrow withered to rust; the artist a pile
of powdery dust; our villa, a wall of layered
lava.

All that remains of the day Apollo's sunny face
burned to black dismay — is our fidelity.

Talent

On the Bowery
behind a pair of eyes
painful in their sockets
there lives a man old
beyond his calendar,
a man in a khaki over-
coat pocked and blotched
with anonymous exudates,
a man with a remarkable
talent — he can foretell
the future with uncanny
accuracy — and thus is
cursed by God to spend
his light peering into
a chronic fog, head
fixed in a shaky grasp
between his hands, the
pain behind his eyes
barely narcotized in its
wash of Thunderbird,
his talent dimming
slowly on the marble
steps of the Bowery
Savings & Loan.

Route 1

Fog-swathed, the highway is hobbled,
traffic groping silently with the wary fright
of the newly-blind, headlights useless,
four tons of moving steel helpless in the grip
of micro-atomized H₂O

oh, to inch home-
ward, workward, anything but this, trapped
in the peasoup, praying to be anywhere except
tomorrow's front-page photo of the 32-car pile-up.

Sylvia Manning

fog predicted

Talk is cheap and proves nothing.

Charles Wright

It's to "burn off" by mid-day tomorrow
or so says someone on public radio
heard passing a Drifting Snow sign
roadside, back road from Orleans
red leaves on the left already
mountains still green-blue beyond
here where winter is more than a word
to rhyme with hinter as in hinterland
here where the affluent have flown up
or driven with their high-bred sedans
to purchase beauty and property
here in Appalachian north country
with no public transportation
only recently a destination for any
except mavericks of the economy
like K., hitchhiking in his elder years
telling me I picked him up before
doing what he has to do up here:
keep moving on somehow
today toward rowboat or kayak
someone lets him keep for free
somewhere above Lake Willoughby

until
the fog of poverty
and wrong priorities
like wars by proxy
on behalf of plutocracy
burn off.

September 9, 2022
Glover, Vermont

Sylvia Manning

Thinking of your two winters here, Ella.

Your image in the postcard ad enlarged,
“purest of spring water” in copy on the back,
for the Hovey Sanitarium, this house, then,
your hands at wheelchair handles, a resident’s,
summer, front porch, 1910, that year you entered
the Glover census, widow, 28 years old
up from South Carolina to work as practical nurse.
Glover still has no glovers
to sufficiently warm our hands.
By a second January mine were red,
blistered, chilblained. It became plain
I had no practical nor sane excuse to remain.

Your hands were younger, stronger, for
working with splitting and hauling wood, yes?
feeding it to fires for washing bedclothes,
underwear, hanging them to freeze stiff?
emptying bed pans? making meals,
serving them, feeding fires again for
water hot enough for dishes.
Ears yearning for a voice you’d not hear here,
southern-deliciously slow and warm,
strong with wordless faith that you could hold on.
The village census records you, Ella Goodwin,
as the only Black woman resident here

for 110 years (and there's been only one
I know of in the century and more since you left)
To find your own place to rest
from having done your best
in cold wintry white loneliness
through two winters in this house
where your photograph remains,
where you're remembered.

June 8, 2022, Glover

Sylvia Manning

Through Triple Panes

waiting to protect us when
winter comes in
even if nobody's here by then
volunteer squash vines offer gold
the shade of starshine, old
enemy of darkness and cold
where at center though we cannot see
there's probably some bumblebee
working for its kind, while we
notice in a tree just beyond and above
a red bough nods to that river we love
that knows, as must we, whereof
these first leaves turning color speak —
to warn against foolish hope to eke
a flow of security from winter, bleak
as it inevitably will be
here in this north country
regardless of our panes, these three
we sit behind today
(though you've already gone away)
do what we may.

September 13, 2022

Glover, Vermont

Our Geography of Poets

Bali

James Penha

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

Minnesota

Mary Belardi Erickson

New York

Mary K. Lindberg

Ohio

Irene T. Winslow

Vermont/Texas

Sylvia Manning

Virginia

William Corner Clarke

West Sussex

Marilyn Braendeholm

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