

Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



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Volume 43

Number 6

The moon is a large bellied yellow bird
over the trembling ash trees.

excerpt from "*Tree Shadows*"
by Mary Belardi Erickson

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Selene and Endymion

Francis Job Short via Wikimedia Commons

Jane Stuart

Winter Bird

Gliding
almost flying
over the trembling trees
the fiery bird scatters living
ashes

Coming
from its talons
curved and curling under
twists of wind and leafy branches
purple

Shadows
in the moonlight
falling over patches
of gold starshine and broken song
shadows

Mixed
with memory—
ashes in the mirror
a trembling bird landing
somewhere to the north of an old
cold moon

David Michael Nixon

Cold Moon

The moon is colder than it looks,
where it seems to hang, a yellow
lantern among bare branches.

When sunlight bounces off the moon,
no heat is carried to our eyes.

Science is sometimes overcome
by longing, so we feel the moon
drawing lovers to mingle
in a warm tide.

David Michael Nixon

Surviving the Five Winter Moons

The moon was moving the tides about
and tricking lovers without trying,
when a wind came out of the north
and chilled the blood of many.

Trash-barrel fires saved a few
till morning, when they tried to walk
to the Mission for the noon meal.

Some might trudge winter streets
until the Frog Moon sings.

David Michael Nixon

Lunar Earthscape

Under the iron-deficient moon,
a pale form moves along alone.
A rustle of footsteps on the duff--
the meadow bathed in silver light ahead.
Even the owl holds his breath--
no noise so loud as blood's white beat.

Irene T. Winslow

Night

Moonrise at midnight
Silver crescent overhead
The brook runs swiftly
Water plays a symphony
Moon is broken upon rocks

Moon

Above the tree tops
The moon hovers
Full and round
A yellow cauldron
Floating in the night sky

Gilbert Honigfeld

June 27, 1927

His night began with
a tortured view,
a moon they'd once shared
now thin and anemic
in a sky tormented by
carnivorous stars.

But by an alchemic
transformation possible only
by transport of poetic
imagination, he re-creates
her in holograms of his
vision, framing her in
every door, every window,
in faces of passing strangers.

He draws on the indelibility
of imagery, her essence
etched now in his blood and
his brain, lighting a darkened
world even while she's away.

Gilbert Honigfeld

July 26, 1927

The passion of poems
he'd penned changed,
as her face had changed
after a month away.

Her face, he finds,
is now implacably grim,
even when they lie
in bed separated
by nothing, nothing,

yet distanced by
a frightful overlay
of the cruel cosmetic
of thought, that one
area he cannot con-
trol, cannot penetrate,

thought now rendering
her flesh tasteless
under a summer moon
as dead as a scissored
crescent of thumbnail
on the floor of the sky.

Gilbert Honigfeld

August 29, 1927

Two nights earlier
he'd paced the streets
of the Village, sweating
under the lunic spell
of an oversized moon,

and tonight, tossing down
cheap shots, he'd answered
Why not? to a stranger's
offer trying, but not
hard enough, to find
Lilly in the matted jungle
of her crotch, then leaving
the unnamed woman there,
just like that, uncovered,

reporting to Lilly later his
failed betrayal as testimony
to his commitment to her,
to Lilly, to his beloved.

Charles Rammelkamp

America's First Stripper

Born before the Civil War –
my dad, W.C. Gardner, named me Lida,
but I changed it for the stage –
I could see so many people just wanted to be
entertained.

As the star of Madame Rentz's Female Minstrels
(later renamed Rentz-Santley
to accommodate my popularity as Mabel Santley),
I knew just the thing those guys wanted to see.

The first American-born burlesque star,
called "the Queen of Burlesque," in fact,
on Arthur Goodman's famous lithograph,
the posters of me advertising the show,
brought the men in like ants to honey.
They thronged to see me at the Casino Theater,
in New York; we also toured the country –
a chance for me to wear elegant outfits,
show a little bit of skin.

It was my partner Mike Leavitt's brainchild –
give credit where credit is due –
and by 1871 at least eleven troupes
of female minstrels had sprung up.

But I started it all!

Mary K. Lindberg

Woman Breathing as a Work of Art

In Gustav Klimt's first portrait
of Viennese socialite Adele Bloch-Bauer,
painted with oil, silver, gold on canvas,
one of the artist's lovers stares out
of woven mosaic, a wall of splashed gold,
red lips parted, black hair bouffant
over pale skin, eyes riveted on the painter,
fourteen claims of patrimony to his name.

His jeweled choker enshrines her
like the mask of an Egyptian sarcophagus.
How can she bother about his numerous
lovers, offspring? He's given her a moment
in eternity. With flushed face, bare neck,
gray-pink flesh embraced by a girdle
of gilded hieroglyphics—in spite of
paint or the artist—she becomes
woman breathing as a work of art.

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<https://www.galleryandstudio/2022/07/29>

Richard Alan Spiegel

Endymion In Fragments

Amid the parameters
of sleep, Endymion
downs a peach;

and chews
on the pit
of fortune.

A dead match lies
in its ochre residue
upon a page

from scattered journals
and drawing papers.
A bottle of bourbon

spills its last drop;
and a sepia roach
approaches.

Drawing an idea,
the line leaves
the pencil point,

gains momentum,
crosses itself and wounds
the white paper.

Alone with his visions,
Endymion ponders the stars
that define his limit.

An orange cat peers over
the ledge; her ears move
to distant sounds.

Selena will move
the moment beyond
his reach.

She resumes
her ballet beckoning
from a constant orbit.

An electric lark wings
the neon forests and sings
of the evening chill.

No one's death turns
despair to dust (pangs
persist past all equations)

and moonlit memories
pirouette *en dehors*
from gravity's grasp.

Sylvia Manning

Not All Alone Notwithstanding

We had a first rest stop in shade of live oak tree, huge, standing alone in a field at edge road. He said he'd want his ashes spread beneath just such a tree, an old live oak, when his time came.

And then by autumn he was gone, dead by accident. The incidental power of siblings stashed his body in a box to bury in a treeless church yard. Sad to have been too sad in those first hours -- after his last -- to be able to hold out against their lust for normalcy, I bought a piece of land next to the creek bed where he left the earth. It has three grand old live oaks. One, misshapen from a lightning strike, spawns a motte of young, along the street blacktop.

Frederick Law Olmstead on his trip by horseback through the South wrote that our town was the prettiest he saw. It had black walnut trees, then, all gone now. But we have pecan, and we still have the live oaks.

I sit beneath these trees of ours, especially
after dark, to look for constellations.

I smoke and let the ashes fall to soil. I wait
for the day in spring when all the leaves,
ever-green through the Texas winter, turn
golden together, to then fall all at once, even
on the wild flowers, a fall in spring.

I tell him not to worry for the seasons.

I tell him he's not buried in a box, that his
ashes are where he hoped they'd be. Then
in shade of night made doubly dark by live
oak boughs, our own live oaks, we smoke
and let our ashes fall.

Perhaps

Meadowlarks spin off
roadside fences flurries
whirling in miniature maelstroms
summer's bright yellow gone
to winter dull on their B52 bellies
black neckerchiefs faded to gray
so that they blend into dull
cornstalks even six and seven
searching for whatever left
with autumn no singing courtships
from cedar posts or shouldering
through puddles in muddy gravel
after a spring shower no
now it's just the gleanings and
getting through a sheltering
in thick cedar beneath snowy boughs
and perhaps remembering when
fields were green with a thousand
grasshoppers waiting to be savored.

Our Geography of Poets

Kansas

Pat Anthony

Kentucky

Jane Stuart

Maryland

Charles Rammelkamp

New Jersey

Gilbert Honigfeld

New York

Mary K. Lindberg
David Michael Nixon
Richard Alan Spiegel

Ohio

Irene T. Winslow

Texas

Sylvia Manning

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