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HAWK &

WHIP-

POOR-

WILL

poems of man & nature

VOLUME ONE / NUMBER TWO

WINTER 2008

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

*“Less than this my lone path is:
a deermouse track in winter’s snow—
less than any mark of hare or crow.”*

—August Derleth, “Man Track Here”

Welcome to the second issue of the recently-revived *Hawk & Whippoorwill*. Here you will find poems that tie the places we live in to the lives and temperaments of the inhabitants; here are moments of nature becoming a window into life; here, human landscapes are made strange by what we perceive as the intrusions of other animals. These thoughts catch me at the moment, writing, as I often do these days, in an online word-processing application. We tend to forget that while humans can create materials, forms, and whole environments not found in nature—and new digital environments daily grow around us—nature still holds the keys to understanding our species. Able to think outside and beyond it, we are as yet learning from (and, therefore, beholden to) the natural world.

Lodged as we are between the organic and the inorganic, we are not always conscious of our place. Something like the unexpected presence of another species has to awaken us to the strangeness of it. Even then, the thought that stuns us is not apt to be how improbable the current state of the species seems, but instead what *they* are doing here, or anywhere: as though they were intruders. I have our poets to thank for these reflections and for their submissions; gathered here, their work helps us in our ongoing recognition of such ideas. These thoughts demonstrate the depth of August Derleth's original theme for the journal as well as the breadth of its potential. Nature poetry speaks, as always, to the deepest persistent concerns of humanity.

—Jonathan Wooding

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HAWK & WHIPPOORWILL

VOLUME I, NUMBER 2

WINTER 2008

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MICHAEL P. McMANUS

Watcher

for Wallace Stevens

A black bird sits in a bare tree,
or does the bare tree sit within the black bird,
or is winter repeating itself in the wind's turning
through a bare tree and a black bird?

Was it true that the black bird moved a bit,
or was it my index finger that moved
the wind that moved the branch a bit,
or did the wind, tree, and bird move as one?

The black bird flies from the bare tree,
or does the bare tree fall from the black bird,
or am I the casual glance from a stranger,
recalling one moment that never occurred?

SAMANTHA MINEO MYERS

Viburnum

In bloom, the bolls
of flowers resurrect
Evening in Paris
from Bergdorf's crystal
vials, or five-and-dime
glass, fogged thickly

through the sliders.
My mother wears Joy,
with its jasmines and May
roses, created, it was said,
for cheer in the Depression.
Once, a bit of the stopper

slid down the neck
of her bottle, trapped
until tapped through
with a scissor
like a fumbled cork.
Her lipstick tube,

dull gold with scrollwork
at the swivel; empty, I held on
to it for years. In May,
the viburnum bush drops
its fruit into the ivy; spring
is for divesting,

but I never could,
even mourning
what I did not know,
but miss: automats,
telegrams, the red farmhouse
my parents owned,

red as the Japanese maple
they took with them
when they moved; unpruned,
it overtakes the backyard
canopy, makes the old growth
seem strange.

E.P. SCHULTZ

Gijik Marsh

Gray feathers came soaring home tipping Elm sticks
stuck at attention in the muck of Gijik marsh.
The swiveled lean of these sentries sent circle-waves
rushing the northern shore.

And captured on this breeze, through the browning
beards of cattails, a fresh, raw, peat-mouth taste,
sailing red in its dripping through flaring primordial
nostrils and across a sleeping tongue.

Through the window morning scent:
an admixtion—
3 parts cedar
2 parts deer snot
2 parts blood resting talon
of full hunted owl.

*

She spoke in late lake light
with half-moon mist on confident breath—
Whoo-hoot, Whoo-hoot, Whoo-hooting
a prayer to prey for their sacrificial crimson aspect.

Wise and swift, silent,
sneaking the unfeeling thought
into the sweet marsh scent.

And as the human stood in his darkness searching
for that inner voice smoking and reticent,

scratching at the burning in his breast:
energy to acknowledgment,
acknowledgment to intent
intent to sound—
and all to the faint wisps of venerated truths
dwelling in the smoldering fathoms of the heart,

the snort of a deer pierced the mind leaving it
silenced and dizzy from all the possible meanings.

But the chest rose up, coughed out a message
dripping with sooty snot fragmented by fiber-glass
and asphalt; the sound of human nature waking from
its long rational slumber, throwing off the shackles
that steel to rust the archaic response of the heart.

*

On the wind the smells of a hundred-hundred
ancient fires bleed through the air into
lungs ventilating those ancestral truths through
oxidized dreams in disarray; to have them pump
through a heart to disrupt the dismay of the object
of thought in order to find that constant feeling
that arise in Gijik smells of early autumn. Those
tantalizing spores that float and flutter in the
world that resides on the wing-tips of a breeze
feathered to breath.

JOHN MILLER

Marginal

Roadside alarm clock
went off at my feet—
I went wide without thinking

and was looking back
before I realized:
the small dust-colored coil
still buzzed
before its brush of sage,
pebbled gray like the dusk
and the dulled asphalt,
protecting its margin
of stones and trash.

Fifty yards on
I turned again
as a double-carriage gravel truck
throttled past and wondered

if the snake had struck at it
or had already started across.

TODD BOSS

The God of Our Farm Had Blades

and a rudder. All our acres
begged its pardon. Merest
breezes made its rusty flower
turn and whine and shudder.
Its wooden arm a weathered
stump, the god of our farm
no longer pumped the well
that still it lorded power over.

It belonged to another order.
On silent nights in summer,
windows open, many times
its vocal powers found me deep

in dreams and hauled me up.
Unearthly alarm! what ache!
How the vane would groan,
the rotor churn, and with what

moan when a good gust came!
It scared me to the bone, as if
some inner tower of my own
for a foreign water yearned.

NORA CLARK LIASSIS

Memorial Service

for Ramona

I was planning to speak to you about the Memorial Service for Damianos and Anna, but then you sighed, and the pathways in response filled up with amber-colored Virgin's Tears.

"It is only within us that our loved ones don't die," you remarked. But how that voice of yours spread out like the scent of aniseed!

Little branches of light are held captive in the brambles. Such are the wonderful evenings of your August, my Deftera, evenings that fan me and uplift me to the stars out of love. And just look at you dripping with light, all white, silver, and sweet-smelling!

At that instant when the deep purple twilight wraps you in its transparent tulle, the roofs of the houses all at once find themselves emptied of their weight.

The sun has strewn its last roses over the top of the cypress tree and their fragrance drops as noiselessly as a mother's love.

Big moist carnations, geraniums and marigolds are knitted at your feet.

Damianos and Anna open the garden gate and the orchard, like a cooling watermelon, is delivered up to our thirst.

A crow dashes herself into her own shadow. Further down, a ploughman pulls up scents from the freshly-watered soil and offers them to the violet breeze, right on that spot where the sun turns a golden light on the ditch.

Here, where the water has fallen asleep, two chestnut-coloured leaves, the image of little boats, wait to ferry away our souls.

Now we should be able to get drunk on song and mystery. It would be so very easy to get drunk on that peach glow which the sun ignites on a delicate branch.

But the problem you see, my Deftera, is that a cloud of lead is hanging in the archway where, I am inclined to say, your soul is going to blossom forth, but only in black jasmine.

And what will I become with so much black jasmine all around me? And how can I even consider speaking to you about Damianos and Anna, especially now that the silence of the twilight is disrupted by the warbling of the late-departing swallows; or, put it this way, now that the orchards are completely deserted and human beings have abandoned the earth...?

TOM SHEEHAN

Rubble, Barn Style

Dust from last century
settles deeper, rattles
tales when jammed open
by a heavy broom, a toe

dragged through lifelines,
the demise of contours.
Barns this size, kneed
in the groin by January

storms, wet coughs of April,
August retreats from fire
when gummed capillaries
draw back to old dowsing

grounds, always show age,
the way blue ribbons are worn.
Sun, even a dish-bright moon,
occasionally a star if you're

still in your tracks, breathless,
hoist themselves where nails
also fell to mines of earth.
But it is here that iron

and wood trade final secrets.
Under rust's thickest scab
the metal keeps its black shine;
abrade it with rock and stone

and the line of light leaps out,
like the flesh of wood flashes
its white mysteries orbiting
marks of lunar growth.

A mole tortures underground,
a host of bats above like gloves
hang to dry in the dim light,
and in twisted byroads

and blossoming paths the termites,
carpenter ants and dust beetles
chew the cud of oak sills, risers
an ash released to two-hand saw,

and green pine checked, stippled,
full of eyes where knots let go.
Square nails, blunt as cigars,
suddenly toothless, a century

of shivering taking its toll,
shake free as slow as worms.
For all the standing still
there's action, warming, aging,

the bowing of an old barn,
ultimate genuflection.

JOHN MILLER

To the Apartment Complex Laundry Room

Irvine, California

Over the tops of the slightly
mildewed towels balanced
in the bulging plastic basket
I saw crossing the nightlit grass
and concrete smoothscape
a lean and scuffed coyote
on an errand of her own.

AMY MACLENNAN

Coastsiders

On California's left edge,
mid-state with cold waters,
populations smear the coast, cluster
on fringed bits of peninsula, outcrop—
descended from fishnet menders,
barmaids, tenders of a lighthouse lens.
New blood, some, but this kind of wet
isn't meant for all, skies cast over
most of the year, and the smother of fog,
slight sawdust tang, can lose
its romance fast. For those
who love ice plant on sand, trees
horizontal in the onslaught of wind,
and a constant bite of salt,
it is a place, the place, to settle
and cling to the end of land,
in coves, topping cliffs, on the verge
and knowing it.

MARGARET BASHAAR

The Girl Who Lives in Caves

There are honeycombs inside her—
she built them wall by wall
and when she can hear the roar
in her head she drops
to her knees and draws them
on the ground, in mud or dust,
in the fluff of carpet.
They hold the things
she always forgets, the stories
she never repeats in full.

She used to think
in pomegranate seeds,
in words that stuck
to the back of her throat,
empties her pockets
in search of a name she has forgotten,
fragments of empty cicada shells
laid out in piles in the grass.

Where she expects to see water
there are only roads and she says,
“I look all around me
and there are days
I can’t tell any more
what’s moving
and what’s staying still.”

She looks up, sees clouds
seep across the sky like oil
and she takes off running.
She runs to catch up with them,
to stay at their edge
and not drown in the wind.

TOM SHEEHAN

From Nahant, Atlantic Rub, Pacific Skip

For hours he'd been
diving for God knows what, a ballistic bursting air
each time he came up fanning for life, amateur at
what I was good at, surviving, reaching under all
of Neptune it seems.

He brought up a stone, gray,
smooth as the millennium, travel yet indelible, still
worth rubbing, he said when asked. Then, For what?
To August sun he marked it, aloft, victor's clutch,
For the Pacific, he said.

Promising to write, he left,
the stone under denim underway. And this he says:
I did the lakes, the Nations, the high grass for miles,
dry lands, Badlands, the Parks burning for weeks,
false mountains

climbing into Idaho's shadows.
Now, mosquito-ravaged, money gone, tired of the weight
of it all, I have flung it into Alaska's Pacific, rubbed it
one last time for you, that Atlantic charm, drowned it
in water it knew

just ten million years ago before I
came along, Owen McReigghily, biker, Christ-bearded
my own descriptor, who pays no taxes, lives no place
but arbor, dry culvert, waddies back where mountains
have beginnings.

I've done my passage here, freed
Nahant Atlantic's stone to taste new salt. Something
will touch it yet, burn it, shape it, clutch the warmth of
my hands where I rubbed in time,

grind it for stars not yet begun.

STAN LONG

Cathedral Grove

Far
carrying
the wren's trill
insists
 this
glade
bounded
all sides
by giants
is his private
demesne
 who
do you
think
you are I ask
 that
I am
he sings so
sure
of himself

CATHERINE CHANDLER

Dandelion

“Love is like the lion’s tooth.”

—W. B. Yeats, in “Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks At The Dancers”

Grown old, she saw a reason to compare
the lowly lion’s tooth to love. I’m prone,
as well, to think it highly overblown,
ubiquitous, a gardener’s despair.
And though its wine is heady, sweet, beware
of leaves jagged with bitterness. Condone
the mad, outrageous simile, and own
your green intoxications, if you dare.
Don’t try to nip it. All you’ll ever get
is a wilting weed, dead in half an hour.
But left alone to flourish, rampant, free,
its milky stem will bear the brazen flower
that winks at herbicide and soubriquet,
and dances June away, defiantly.

* Previously published in the British poetry magazine *Candelabrum* in April 2007

JEFFREY WARZECHA

Looking for Frost's Woodpile

And when I think I may have found
The spot, I stop; and among wrenched
Undergrowth, spoiled stumps,
Whole felled trees left to rot
Beside the river—I find no neat pile,
But step back instead to watch the trail
Coil and fill in behind me, the briars
Spindle over the path, ruts repack
With lush soil—a whole sudden
Breathing that rises up to reclaim.

NEW & RECOMMENDED READING

- The World Without Us*, by Alan Weisman. \$15.00 from Picador, 2007. A hypothetical but well-researched account of a global ecosystem without humanity (though not an inhumane one).
- Back from the Far Field: American Nature Poetry in the Late Twentieth Century* by Bernard W. Quetchenbach. \$19.50 from University of Virginia Press, 2000. Wherein close attention is paid to the nature poetry of Robert Bly, Gary Snyder, and Wendell Berry.
- Reign of Snakes* by Robert Wrigley. \$18.00 from Penguin, 1999.
- Carolina Ghost Woods: Poems* by Judy Jordan. \$16.95 from Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Nature Revealed: Selected Writings, 1949-2006* by E.O Wilson. \$35.00 from Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. A collection of articles and scientific papers by one of the country's most revered living biologists.
- Egg & Nest* by Rosamond Purcell. \$39.95 from Belknap Press, 2008. Purcell's beautiful photography of rare and common eggs makes this history of egg-collecting a rare pleasure.
- The Dream We Carry: selected and last poems of Olav Hauge*. \$18.00 from Copper Canyon Press, 2008. Bilingual edition of the Norwegian poet who earned his living as a farmer and gardener in the fjord region of western Norway.
- The Rock Crystal* by Adalbert Stifter, translated by Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Mayer. \$12.95 from New York Review Books Classics, 2008. W. H. Auden, in his introduction, writes: "a quiet and beautiful parable about the relation of people to places, of man to nature." Reviewed in *The New York Sun* (to which excellent publication we bid a sorry farewell).
- The Passionate Gardener* by Rudolf Borchardt, translated by Henry Martin. \$30.00 from McPherson, 2006. Reviewed in *Third Coast* by Diether Haenicke.
- Life, A Natural History of the First Four Billion Years of Life on Earth* by Richard Fortey. \$15.95 from Vintage, 1999. The author quotes from Yeats and Browning, and incorporates Lewis Carroll's "Hunting of the Snark" and Edward Lear's wonderful poems of nonsense botany.



'White-footed mice & red oak acorns'

THE AGENT WAS bewildered to find members of the *H&W* editorial staff sprawled on the floor of the Alewife MBTA station. We were there, with paper and graphite pencils, to make rubbings of the animals and plants depicted in low-relief bronze tiles set into the station's mezzanine floor. One hundred of these tiles had been installed in 1981 as part of the T's "Arts on the Line" initiative, by artist Nancy Webb. She sculpted over a dozen different versions, each featuring a different species of plant or animal indigenous to the marsh-and-meadow Alewife Reservation, the largest intact wetlands in Cambridge.

The image above began as a rubbing taken by Nora Delaney and Zachary Bos off one of these tiles, which was thereafter scanned at high resolution before being rendered as shown using photo-editing software. Ms. Webb has kindly given the editors permission to publish twelve such altered rubbings in future issues of this magazine and on the journal website. Readers may enjoy learning more about her work at www.nancywebbstudio.com.

Thanks are also due to the commuters who paused in their hurry to watch the goings-on; though many must have wondered what breed of vandalism was afoot, none reported our odd activity to the authorities.

In this issue:

MARGARET BASHAAR

TODD BOSS

CATHERINE CHANDLER

NORA CLARK LIASSIS

STAN LONG

AMY MACLENNAN

TOM SHEEHAN

MICHAEL P. MCMANUS

JOHN MILLER

SAMANTHA MINEO MYERS

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JEFFREY WARZECHA



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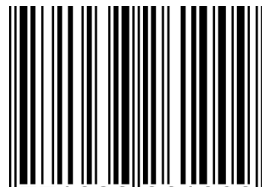
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