

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
30



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 30, #4

Why night after night do I
attempt this poem?

Higgins Again - Donald Lev
Pier at 44th Drive, Long Island City, August 12, 1979

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 30

Number 4*

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel
Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

c o n t e n t s

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----|-----------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|
| Alan Catlin | 4 | William Corner Clarke | 11 | Karen Douglass | 23 |
| A. D. Winans | 5 | Michelle M. Mead | 14 | H. Edgar Hix | 24 |
| Scott Owens | 6 | Steve Shilling | 16 | John Grey | 25 |
| Michelle Chen | 8 | Antonia Clark | 20 | N. A'Yara Stein | 27 |
| B. R. Strahan | 9 | George Held | 21 | <i>Cover and frontispiece</i> | |
| Linda Umans | 10 | Wynne Huddleston | 22 | <i>photographs are by</i> | |

Barbara Fisher

Sample issues — \$5.00 Subscriptions -- \$45.00

Waterways is published 11 times a year.

Submissions will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self addressed envelope.

Waterways, 393 St. Pauls Avenue, Staten Island, New York 10304-2127

©2010 Ten Penny Players Inc. *This magazine is published 1/10.

<http://www.tenpennyplayers.org/mags.html>



False Dreaming — Alan Catlin

where the syntax is
all wrong a fracture
of light occurs and
asphalt storms are
lathered with concrete,
a colorful apocalypse
of star burst honeycombs,
each inward path ends
in a cul de sac.

Writer's Block — A. D. Winans

I stare into silence
Empty space has no vision
Restless ghosts
Eat my words

All I Want — Scott Owens

I want to take this poem for a walk.
I've tried night after night to write
this poem, let it sit on my chest,
nuzzle my neck, infest my dreams,
send me sick of it to the bathroom,
head over the toilet, the poem
holding my hair, and still, nothing
seems right. I'm done with it.
I want to put it away. I want
to take it to the work site, where men
wear hard hats and laugh at the poem,
throw fruit from lunch boxes, chunks
of mortar, half-eaten tuna fish sandwiches,

down to the waterfront, the hobo yard,
the soup kitchen where schizophrenics
curse me, call me *Son, Calyou,*
Sam Ham, pat my back
and say, *It's okay,* until
the poem has finally had enough,
wrenches free, refusing to be held,
breaks loose from the page,
throws off the orthodox notebook
and runs screaming, naked
out the door, into the day
shouting, *Why have you forsaken me,*
transforming everything it touches.

Words, Brackets — Michelle Chen

I catch my breath
in long hand,
hinging on the slant
of your parlance.
The words rest in
flat keys on bars of
air without spaces,
but all I see are the margins.
What you unsay by accident,
I fall through on purpose:
embellished stenography.
The gaps and pronouns jostle
into mutual lopsided
compliments.

I record,
you forget,
so it goes.
I breathe out
and blow curves
into a post script,
indulgently sealed.

Suddenly Fireworks (Skopje, Macedonia) — B. R. Strahan

And death that old back-seat-driver
Shuts up. Color, colors, a Colorado
Of light sears the dark. Thought scatters
The world with all its threats and furies
Shatters, stuffed back into the closet
With the hangers full of ghosts;
Mothballed mourning clothes and jackets
That only your father would wear.

Oh, move on further bright lights!
Short the time, long the work,
But come out and see.

Threnody — Linda Umans

What did I do what have I done what did I do

I withdraw stare watch you creased with pain
(nothing to do with me or what you're saying)
speaking of thwarted contacts (not true)
speaking of hang-ups on my end (not true)
I grab the magnifying glass find nothing honest
nothing worth the salvage (an ink cloud of crazy)
feelings of sympathy seep through nonetheless.

A first . . .

I do nothing (I don't try to snorkel through the ink)
I leave you enveloped skip down the stairs
wave down the just-departing bus thinking
this is America
where a workingclass kid battered and fried
can get to use *threnody*.

Ninety Eight Point Six — William Corner Clarke

Every thing changes
But body heat remains
Just about the same for everyone
From birth 'till death

Perhaps this constancy
Infers a threatened entity
Who needs our hosts of steady fires
To guard against
Some fatal darkness
Not covered by the stars

Treasure — William Corner Clarke

Like a dragon
In a dismal cave
Guarding its pile of gold
I just do not understand
What fear will have me guard

My treasure's light
Has burned me blind
So I know I will never see
The one who'll come
To take it all away from me

Yet still I do
My daily rounds
I check the locks on all
I own
And tap my way
Along the outer walls
Listening for my enemy

Descend — Michelle M. Mead

Now I've gone and done it — one last jostle of the keys,
has sent the letters falling, in a swift but passing breeze,
I can just about see it now, between the "R" and "4",
the word I can't remember, to fit in this rhyming lure

I know I could catch them, with a little creative might,
before they jump off the desk, and wander out of sight,
I have yet to figure out, why I meet them late at night,
with a poet's fool imagination, that I can get them right

Mixed into poems of passion, some primal and some pale,
from the ache of great romances, to the evils that we rail,
with trusty pen and wicked mind, all villains can prevail,
or if you like the sappy type- the "princess" in her veil

It matters not the subject, only that this poem I pen,
repeats its aggravation, each and every time it can,
so why do I sit here, you may ask yourself, my friend-
because it is a poet's aim, to climb though we descend

Uncovered — Steve Shilling

Leafing through an old notebook
today, I found two poems,
now ten years old, long since
forgotten. They were to an old
girlfriend of mine who crushed
what I had then thought of love.

Neither was very good in line
or stanza, but the tone was intact,
sharp and biting on the yellowed
paper. I clearly left out two lines.

The hole seems correct, yet
unintentional representation
of how she left me.

It need not be filled in.

I never think of her.
Tuck the poems in the pocket
of my notebook. Put her
one step further away.

The Triggering Town — Steve Shilling

The poet has decided to take
a walk, escape from pen and
paper. He finds himself walking
down main street, with the sweet
smell of the bakery overlapping
the fried grease of the diner.
Each crack in the sidewalk is
closing, the gaps of scorching
summer heat giving way to
the push of cold October air.
Turning south on 2nd Avenue,
the poet follows the railroad
tracks out of town, past the
high school football field

and the gas station on the
edge of the city limits,
the same path that brought
the distant morning howl
of the coal train that woke
him. Far out on an old
farm road the trees are
beginning their shift to
red and yellow and orange.
Led by the old wire
guard rail that has turned
to rust, the wet of the
morning rain is patchy on
the asphalt and the poet
is conflicted with words

in his head, like conduit
and effervescence. He passes
the last big white farm house,
the last big red barn,
the last mailbox leaning on its post.
He stares up at the big
silver water tower against
the low covering of thick
gray sky, toes firmly planted
on the county line, spins
and begins the long trek
back to the poem
he will sit down and write.

Ghazal of the Contrary Poem — Antonia Clark

I sing a lover's praises, but cannot woo this poem.
Why night after night do I attempt this poem?

I set out bowls of apricots, honey, almonds,
a glass of sweet gold wine to tempt this poem.

It sleeps in a tangle of sweaty sheets, refuses
to dress. wanders the house unkempt, this poem.

Gunshots, flares, and sirens in the street.
Emergencies conspire to preempt this poem.

I undress slowly, offer myself, urgent, trembling.
It has nothing for me but contempt, this poem.

It rears, retreats. It flies. It slips beneath a wave.
Tonight, I'll try again, for it is not exempt, this poem.

It's Not — George Held

It's not that I've written my last poem —
This might be my last poem
(Did you say, "Is that a promise?") —
The last leafing of an old bough

From which some sap still sometimes trickles,
But it's not easy budding green these days.

Birthng an Idea — Wynne Huddleston

A stick figure whispered . . .
inspiration stoked, I
filled in with pencil-thin lines.
Then you *became*;

you spoke
in LOUD bold strokes,
jumped off the blank page
and took off on your
own.

Brussels — Karen Douglass

One street dies into the arms of the next,
bent around huge buildings. Alleys
squirm and confuse. Bodies defy
the lumber of words — French, Dutch, English.
Language is exhausted. Not one
bus or coffee cup described.
Alone, I sit in Grand Place, watching
the beggar in her black veil.

Genesis and Revelation — H. Edgar Hix

I will not share my tears as I am commanded.
I will hold them to my own time.
I will eat them, days old and full of worms,
in my own tent in my own desert.
Yes, I will follow the smoke by day
and the fire by night. But I will continue to drink
from the blood Red Sea on the sand of Canaan's fall.

I will speak to the angel and eat the tiny book.
It will be bitter in my mouth as well as in my belly,
but I will say, "It is sweet. Sweet."
I will see the four horsemen in mirrors.
I will see the Beast rise from my ocean of tears.
And I will say, "I see a lamb. An uninjured lamb."

My Dream People — John Grey

My dreams can't help reviving dead people.
Everyone from grandparents to Lisa
hit by a drunk driver
become Lazarus when I sleep.
Even those I hardly knew get the resuscitation treatment,
like the kid in seventh grade who hung himself,
or the distant cousin, that I only ever saw at funerals,
most recently his own.

They're in my house. They're in the bedroom.
They're a hundred times more animated
than they ever were in life.
Grandpa's playing racquet ball.
Sid, the mailman is patting Ben, the Rottweiler.
Shaun, the suicide, is giving me the layout of the next world
though my head can't hold the details.

Why them, I wonder. Why not the living.
Why not the one in the bed beside me that I
profess to love absolutely,
but who rarely plays the lead in any dream.
My fantasies are weirdly populated.
My visions eschew central casting
for the outer edge of my personal universe.

I don't just surrender consciousness,
I send it back to where it came from,
the all-engulfing constant reverie
where the dead are dreaming me.

Catch and Release — N. A'Yara Stein

The man from the slaughterhouse is blind and deaf
with infatuation; he has a wide-legged walk
as though there were a swinging weight between his thighs.
On the street he dives headlong into the easy girls,
follows the click of their high heels for blocks.
He wants the tall ones, believes that
without women he couldn't survive.

In line at the grocery he leans slightly forward
toward the faint aroma that seeps from the pores
of the new mother; he had almost forgotten
how heavy and sweet a full breast is to a baby.
He remembers the silky nipples of the first girl
who gave him a taste, who taught him
the word, "love," saying it patiently again and again.

On these autumn voyages home, the days darken
with the black river water calming as night comes.
He travels an hour by train with the one paper bag.
This man thinks again of those first pale breasts
that in starlight turned greenish-white like wave caps.
He knows that every day he is wooed and conquered.
But he doesn't mind. He feels that love is
something you can eat over and over again.
He could whisk it away with a flip of his hands,
but he will never get enough.

Voices touch and part the air of fall; he slips off the train
and nips the air as if it were spring clover.
He drives the river road and leaves a single track.
Evening falls down quick as a lover's clothes.
The white stars wear nothing but a shroud of steam
and he loves, almost fearful, to remember love.

ISSN 0197-4777

published 11 times a year since 1979
very limited printing

by Ten Penny Players, Inc.
(a 501c3 not for profit corporation)

Subscriptions -- \$45 for 11 issues.

Sample issues — \$5.00 (includes postage).

www.tenpennyplayers.org/mags.html