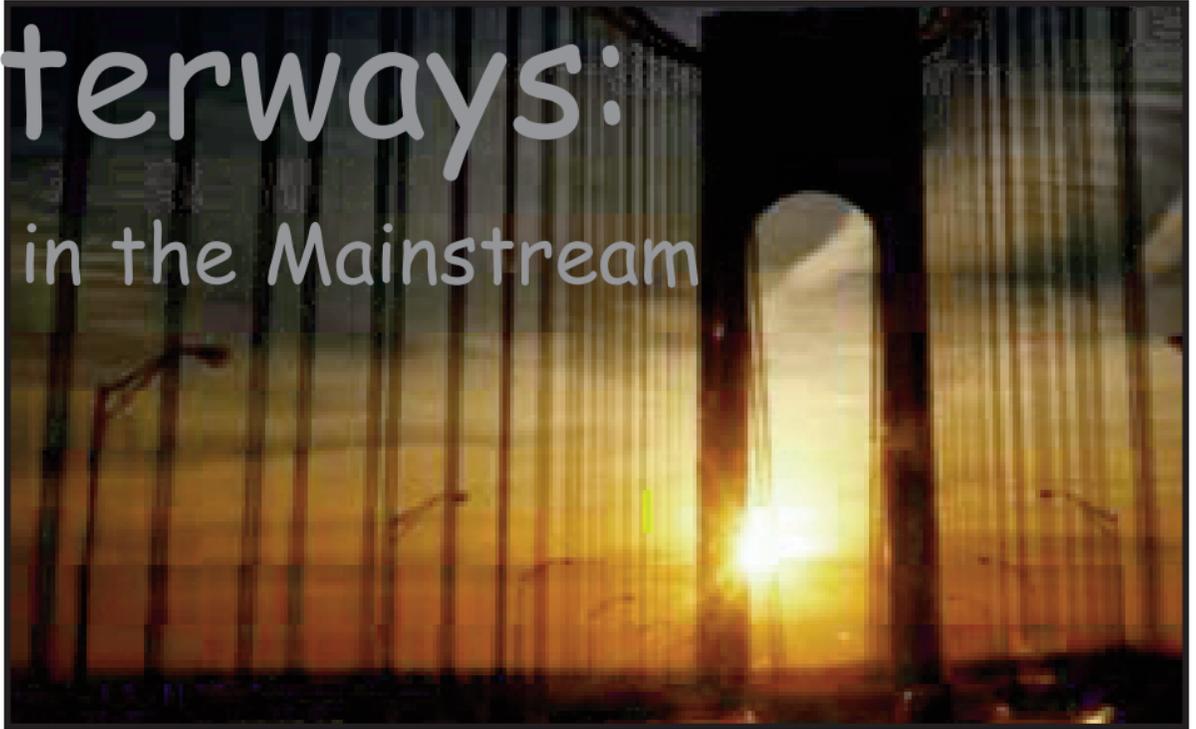


Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
28



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #4

And the faint decayed patchouli -
Fragrance of New Orleans
Like a dead tube rose
Upheld in the warm air
Miraculously whole.

excerpted from *Potpourri*
Lola Ridge's *Sunup and other poems* (1920)

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 28

Number 4*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

c o n t e n t s

Rex Sexton	4	Jody Nash	20-24	Joan Payne Kincaid	32-33
M. M, Nichols	5-8	Joanne Seltzer	25	Sam Calhoun	34
Ellaraine Lockie	9-11	Geoff Stevens	26	R. Yurman	35-36
Anselm Brocki	12-13	John Grey	27-28	Susanne Olson	37
Bill Roberts	14-15	Will Inman	29	Ruth Moon Kempher	38
William Corner Clarke	16-17	Patrick Carrington	30	Donald Lev	39-41
Gwenn Gebhard	18-19	Carol Hamilton	31	Hugh Fox	42

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Flight into Egypt — Rex Sexton

Words again,
some frantic scrawl,
yet crystal clear
in their overlay of the ordinary,
like surfacing from a trance.

*The harried dog hurries along
sensing he doesn't belong.*

"What a jolly fellow!"
The literati laugh.

So this,
it seems to happen quite often,
feverish and unexpected,
and in the full swing of the season —
the festive luncheons, gala parties,
languorous mornings in bed.

*Do you remember when
a tiny caravan
crossed the night
of stars and sand?*

Does it matter?

Glass Half Full of Myself — M. M. Nichols

It was a bright
Saturday in March
I waited in the warm sun
for a #4 bus
on Madison
next to that artful
optical shop
you know the one where the moon
rests on a stalk,
wearing the establishment's
calm best spectacles
behind which
a face on film
smiles ingenuously and blinks

in blissful wonder at how
He got Here —
a practiced schoolteacher in his prime
or say just a poet
blinking & thinking
in the given light.

My bus unseen,
I turned to re-view
the indoor moon
but first caught
an image in the window -
not exactly me:
taller, elegant in tapered
slacks — the stance ready,

smart little brimmed hat and big
goggles, very
madison avenue She Oughta Be
in Pictures! I stood there musing,
might each of us,
surprised thus by
some bold sight
take any bus that comes, and
ride gladly,
sidetracks & all, toward new
destinies, and begin to say
what we mean?

Spastic Twin Stands Out at Last — M. M. Nichols

If I wore blue, she was in green.
Mother-love
stitched those little pastel frocks

of flowery voile,
sleeveless, the yoke smocked and neckline
simple.

Yes it's fun to have children be small
and dress them
fondly. As for color, the mother said

She must be
inconspicuous. Not call attention.
No gaudy prints.

After the mother was gone, an institution
gave her
a bright orange & red flowered shift.

Everybody
paid attention. I love remembering her brave
new life.

Absolution from Lyn Lifshin — Ellaraine Lockie

*. . . some have tried to ban me but the children revolted . . . and I no longer
define myself by any relationship to men — Barbie speaking from the pen of Lyn Lifshin*

My four-year-old daughter
Born to a mother
determined to deter her
from a Barbie doll ideal

Begged for one of those
eating disorder sourcing
fashion fetish effecting
plastic surgery producing
playthings

*About as healthy a toy
as a hand grenade I grumbled
in Woolworth's while gliding my thumb
over the equivalent of thirty-nine-inch breast bumps
(My only lesbian interlude to date)*

*If you still want one at eighteen
You can have her I said
At four she already knew
I'd put Barbie in the same bracket
as drugs, cigarettes and unsafe sex.*

Not to be subjugated
by any anti-sexist mother
She entered Woolworth's coloring contest
And won the coveted doll of discord.

Fourteen years later when college
called for the collapse of Barbie's dollhouse
I placed each piece in padded posterity

But an ache of emptiness propelled
the unpacking of the heirloom

And the solicitation of an electrician
for the illumination of the miniature household
Hardwired in soft memories
And enlightened by Barbie's liberation
My own Barbie abode

Shoes — Anselm Brocki

"If you grew up in the Great Depression, you got marked For life," Iron Mike says to other guys at the All-Nite. "You never spent a dime without thinking at least twice about it."

"Only thing I ever agreed with you about," Steve says. "Me, I wasn't even alive then, but I've seen what it can do. One time on unemployment when no jobs in construction, they sent me to a fancy house in the hills to do some gardening."

"The old lady tells me I shouldn't be ashamed of being out of work because she grew up dirt poor, whatever that means, when there weren't any jobs. So later I'm down on my knees weeding her roses, and she wants me to drive her in my truck out to a college to read for herself a plaque they promised to put up for her dead husband. Hell, driving beats weeding.

"Turns out to be a huge statue garden and a polished red granite marker bigger than this table, telling what a great guy he was. Must have cost her more than a million bucks. On the way back she asks me to stop at a shoe repair shop cause the guy sells used shoes that the customers don't pick up. She buys a pair of red leather pumps for five bucks. Can you beat that? The person could have died. Me, I wouldn't think of wearing a dead person's shoes."

National Press Club — Bill Roberts

They booked the Hyatt in Bethesda
for our 50th class reunion,
and we had a low-cost room
on the lucky seventh floor.
Eddie Bowers called and said
He'd meet us in the lobby, then take us
for lunch to the National Press Club.
Descending in the window-on-the-world
elevator, it occurred to me
I hadn't seen Eddie in exactly fifty years.
Runty short, scrawny, slow to speak,
not a lot to say if he said something,
I wondered how I'd recognize Eddie.
No doubt similar thoughts were stirring
in his formerly unkempt boyish head.

I turned from the elevator, spotted a bunch
of noisy high school-age revelers,
then focused on a tallish, well-proportioned
gent, cold white hair slicked back,
wearing a blue cashmere turtleneck
and a worldly smile on his ruddy face.
We walked briskly toward one another,
broke into a slow run, arms outstretched,
then embraced as men our age do.
Both of us uttered in unison, as if
we'd practiced this meeting for fifty years,
the biggest lie of the entire weekend:
You haven't changed a bit!
After that, truth spilled out more easily,
and Eddie and I had an awful lot to say.

first published in the Memorial Day 2005 issue of *MOBIUS: The Poetry Magazine*

School Days — William Corner Clarke

Observed by giants
The autumn harvest is gathered in
And the doors are closed on summer days

The children come to play in the grey schoolyard
Falling leaves reveal the winter's bones
Brambles are caught in frozen ponds

The bell tolls for lesson time
Snowballs melt on the classroom windows
Woolen gloves steam on the heating pipes

Boredom grows in the yawning afternoon
A boy in a crow's nest sights a pirate island
Another slips in sleep below his desk

But back at home the cakes are ready
Bread baked in the morning is sliced for toast
The butter's soft, the eggs are boiled
The kettle's on the stove

Pancake Tuesday comes, Easter follows
And then it's Gala day with sports and games
Beneath the sap filled apple trees of spring

The bobbing heads pass down the lane
From school to playing fields
And as their voices ebb and flow
Ancient giants watch them as they go

Oh Saints Preserve Us — Gwenn Gebhard

When wind and water obliterate the streets,
what happens to a city of voodoo queens and vampires?

One thousand six hundred and four new ghosts
but do they have anyone to follow?

How do the psychics interpret the omens
and read the tarot if the air is pulsing like a sore?

Where will the werewolves lurk now that
the moss-hung trees in the city parks are drowned

and ancient mausoleums and crypts
have heaved out of St. Louis' cemetery?

Where have zombies gone, whose belt buckles
didn't clank as they slunk down Bourbon Street?

The smoke of supernatural used to waft around
the Districts like blue notes through the alleys.

Preservation Hall was spared but little else was.
How does a city live if even the dead are dead?

Red Weeds — Jody Nash

I woke to news of the Sierras on fire
Homes destroyed, raging,
Pursued by a persistent wind
The front page photo captured a woman
Arms spread, about to take flight,
Pure fear stretching the skin on her face
Open mouth, black eyes
Followed by the towering storm
Eating the trees behind her like fragile weeds
My cell chimed: You found a fertile juncture
To tell me of the fire that just set down

On the sea, the waves fine spittle softening
The red globe into a peach
A play by play in the absolute now
Cut off by my concerns about the shutters
Hanging free on their hinges, me on my cell,
Hunted: the same sun setting hard
Across the acres of pasture, summer dry
Where I walk fingering my future
Long pastures pushed longer by the coastal breeze
That must have hit you first on the Western shore
Waves spreading cool air, salt lost to the rolling hills
The grasses here an orange ocean
On fire in the eerie light, red weeds

Glowing stick straight barely bending
In the wind: fluffy heads
Rattling their yellow seed pod hats
The center of each stem raspberry
A million raspberry sticks
Bulldozers resting all around at this late hour
A herd of dormant pachyderms
Vultures circling overhead, swelling
Then landing along an invisible line
Settling into a march not ten feet away
Four or five matching me step for step
Paralyzed, it seemed, by the dying day

Fields of Lavender — Jody Nash

For two decades I stayed in this place
With its artificial elements, humble objects
Softened by the arches in the walls that I built
Populated by a busy parade of changing faces
Visited often by the wind that blew my things around
Forcing pictures off the wall and felling trees

There were five to six warm months each year, a minute
Seemed sometimes fleeting and other times dragged on
Even during the highest pain, when it hurt to breathe
When the fever made me dizzy and I felt like Cinderella
With a glass sliver lodged in my foot from a broken slipper:
Sleeping barely five hours a night fighting the ghosts,

My bones shattered and swelled: my lips were chapped
From a mild dehydration: Especially that last winter
When I watched the bougainvilleas die after
The first hard frost: But the lavender, thank God,
Took off within a couple of seasons until it flooded
The old pastures and I stood still in it, my body

Suspended in the roiling orchid plasma of those fields,
Succumbing to the flower's narcotic breath as I fingered
Smooth stones from the creek like a rosary: and with the air
From my mouth and a blade of grass between my palms
I called to you, high and shrill, in the dying light of day
The first stop on the way to the place I promised you

Mardi Gras — Joanne Seltzer

Night is a witch's cat
you had declawed and fixed
and now it will not scratch
as you stroke and you rub
a satyr's ears forgetting
it still has all its teeth.
Blood flows like the fountain
Of unstaunchable piss,
forces you to visit
an emergency room
where you are put into
the certain death triage.
Dawn comes. You levitate.

The saints come marching in.
Led by the Queen of Dogs
you let the good times roll
in French and in English . . .
you let the good times roll.

Pelargonium — Geoff Stevens

Fresh starched cotton and cloying patchouli
the cool breeze of your passing
the memory of the steamy looks
which we exchanged
over the heads of the unsuspecting audience
as you ascended the stage.
Only geraniums have that same effect on me
as they soak up the sun in my window
and emit their humid earthy odours
into every room of the house
in this cool as cotton town.

Carousel — John Grey

It's always the green steed
at the four-horse carousel,
never any other. The red,
the blue, the yellow,
swing by unriden but his
hands grip tight to that
plastic green neck, his
chest presses hard against green mane.

He never asks me
if there's kids in the world
who prefer these other colors,
for whom that crimson stallion,
for example, is the one
that leaps the fences,
tracks down the runaway colt.

He never says to me
what was your color
when you were my age,
outside the K Mart,
almost ripping out of
your skin with excitement,
and a father with
a pocketful of quarters,
enough to ride in circles
for more time than you had lived.

He never asks what it was like
when the carousel
no longer held such fascination,
when a ride became as dull,
defeating, as going to bed at eight,
or being scolded for that busted vase.

I keep my silence on how it is
when the carousel you ride
is no different from
the one that merely sits there,
that you pass by as if you never rode it.

Instead, I feed one more quarter
and the green begins another journey.
I don't tell him that the journey ends
with the coin cold and anxious in the hand,
and then the letting go,
just like this.

naked knowing

Will Inman

listening to Beethoven's Emperor Concerto

where in us do we live deeper
than argument. where is it we know
as wind knows blowing and knowing
indivisible through and around
over and under and beyond. where
do we know

sooner than stopping to
consider. no, i
would not have us stop
stopping: surviving taught us
to mull.

but i would have us also
remember where in us is never forgotten
how to look and see and know and do
in one fell motion

yet to know at once
when we do know
and when we need first
to mull before knowing we know
but
most of all to know when we do not
and may not ever **know**
and **then** to know
the ecstatic humility of
nakedness

28 January 1998
Tucson

Fresh Light — Patrick Carrington

I know the stools they come to
for comfort, the temporary peace
of low light. I too have made
wet rings on pine and mumbled
in shadowed booths. I know
the coffeeshops where they read
and sip latte, alone in corners
with Hemingway and vanilla,
with a darkness that frightens.
The streets they wander I have
known and dreams too loud,
and stars that offer no condolence
for a stumble or shiver,
and people crossing to avoid
my solitary walking. I too

have needed a coat and emerged
from doorways like a drunk,
not caring who or where I am
or was or would ever be,
of home or refuge. I have seen
the storm flag of midnight flying,
been harmed by its havoc
and sought light, moved east
for sun on my pale face.
I have rubbed against the miracle
of dawn and changed.
Like the flow of a flower,
or wound, when liquid runs
not from but to.
Water drawn. The clotting.

How My Mind Works — Carol Hamilton

I am in a No Exit room.
From moment to moment
I have only one history.
So today I think technique,
forget you and supper and travel plans.
How I shift from thought furrow to furrow.
I seem to live in a privet hedge maze,
never seeing around the green corner
or over the leafy top.
My mind is like the radio band
of the spectrum with endless
wave lengths. But I, no matter
what I know of infinity,
can only tune in one station at a time.

Another Long Island Summer — Joan Payne Kincaid

Leaves of the birch don't move
rather they hang malevolently as poison ivy
they shine in a moist sun
alligator green appendages
limp as dogs and cats lying on the upstairs floor
simulating death . . . still as stone . . .
the warning was do not go outside
so you sit typing sticky keys
wondering if the Apple might explode;
invisible itches tease all over your skin
as if no-see-'ums are invading the moist nudeness;
each moment is something hard
to get thru refusing the a/c
in trade-off view of a House finch
still in mating plumage

three feet away popping seeds
and distant bird conversations
invisible in the canopy that resembles
a dangling suffocating Medusa.

Wind Song — Sam Calhoun

From this spot beneath the tall maple
I can tell you it is sunny,
and small branches arch and bend,
rest for a moment
and then repeat in a
near-rhythmic pattern;

and then the occasional chirp
from some lonely Blue Jay,
his simple whistle filling
the forest with those missing notes
before continuing on his way
toward the pasture.

Life here is a wind song
written in leaf,
and wing, and stone,
a tune for those whose travels
carry them to where
they always knew they belonged.

Seminary Arbor — R. Yurman
(for Pat Farewell)

Maybe after all it is the religious
who will save us
not because
they speak to God

But because they hold the world
in parcels they preserve
a form of wealth
quiet retreats

Where moss and vines climb the tallest trunks
and sunlight pours
a frenzy of colors
as through stained glass

At night the buildings go quiet
islands of dark
in the raucous sea
of an electrified city

Whoever dreamed this arbor
then made it real
knew trees must
stretch in air root deep

Live filled with fervent pulse
not fall to exalters
of the practical
who prefer a measured grace

Soir de Paris — Susanne Olson

Perfume lingers
in the soft wool of her coat
aroma of elegance
sweet taste of desire.
Beauty radiates
woman's star-lit wonders.
Unknown worlds beckon
dreamt-of in adulation
of her exquisite style and worldly flair.
Bitter flavor of sorrow
of being left behind in silence
mingles with the scent of yearning
for existence
initiation into that wanton magic.

"French Quarter": A Postcard/Photograph — Ruth Moon Kempher

mostly of fog; grey vapor, a miasma that's reminiscent of old horror movies, that drift that whispers violence somewhere or maybe it's the host steam, cayenne of crayfish boiling in pots and the smoke of old wet kindling, damp and it's drifting here thick; but in the bottom left, one fence corner of wrought-iron sticks up through the mist to give an impression of depth.

Hard to say if it's an early morning or late afternoon scene: it's some time with no people swarming, unless you see wisps of ghost creatures. A very faint tree, spindly and O yes fog-shrouded, my Lord, it's the Cathedral. Look twice — in the distance streetlamps are shining, blurred halos of light.

On the Films *Gosford Park* and *Black Book* — Donald Lev

Went to a book fair, then to "Black Book."
Like in "The Perils of Pauline," the heroine
survives everything, including almost drowning
in a bucket of shit.

She was beautiful undressed, and
one felt her pain when her boyfriend the
'brutal but honest nazi got done in
by the brutal but dishonest nazi
(demonstrating, apparently, the settled
world view of the film's *auteur*).

"Gosford Park" I rented last month but didn't have time to
write a poem about it, so it
must share this one.
Helen Mirren was in it

and was still Queen,
though her realm in this one was below stairs.
What's more, she dunnit.
(This is a whodunnit you don't see to find out who dunnit)

I think I'll try to see "Black Book" again, as I notice
The Upstate Theater website says it is in
Dutch and German with English subtitles
and I am pretty sure when I saw it it saw in English...

I had a great deal of wine to drink between the book fair and
The Black Book
which may account for the English I heard
and I think I slept through a third
of the film
and I'm
half asleep now. Goodnight.

On the Film *Pan's Labyrinth* — Donald Lev

I'm not the best audience
for special effects
or, for that matter, fantasy.
The little girl, her mother,
and their friend the Loyalist's sister —
all sharers in the common doom
which is the picture's theme —

of course lay claim to our heartstrings;
but the Fascist Captain,
with his inability to be liked
and his hang-up on clocks,
captures the lion's share,
or maybe the jackall's share,
of my somewhat sordid empathy.

Sophie — Hugh Fox

What tonight, Sophie, carpentering on
your hill overlooking your avocado groves,
old-lady-wrapping-herself-
around-herself-waiting-for-
her-end,
or
there I am batmaning over the moon,
sharking along the beach,
as impossible to forget me
as it's impossible for me to forget
(especially because you're blonde/white
lithe, Lithuanian, balletic seductiveness/
innocence
aging)
you.

WATERWAYS

POETRY IN THE MAINSTREAM

THEMES FOR VOLUME 28

2007-8 DEADLINES & GUIDELINES

The 28th volume of Waterways will be published in 11 issues during 2007-8.

Waterways has been published and co-edited for 28 years by Richard Spiegel and Barbara Fisher.

Our monthly themes are from Lola Ridge's *Sunup and other poems* (1920)

Number 5 (deadline October 14, 2007)

I shall know you, secrets
by the litter you have left
and by your bloody foot-prints.

excerpted from *Secrets*

Number 6 (deadline November 14, 2007)

Silence
builds her wall
about a dream impaled.

excerpted from After Storm

Number 7 (deadline December 14, 2007):

Heave up, river...
Vomit back into the darkness your spawn of light.

excerpted from East River

Number 8 (deadline January 14, 2008):

Austerely greeting the sun
With one chilly finger of stone...
I know your secrets.

excerpted from Skyscrapers

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