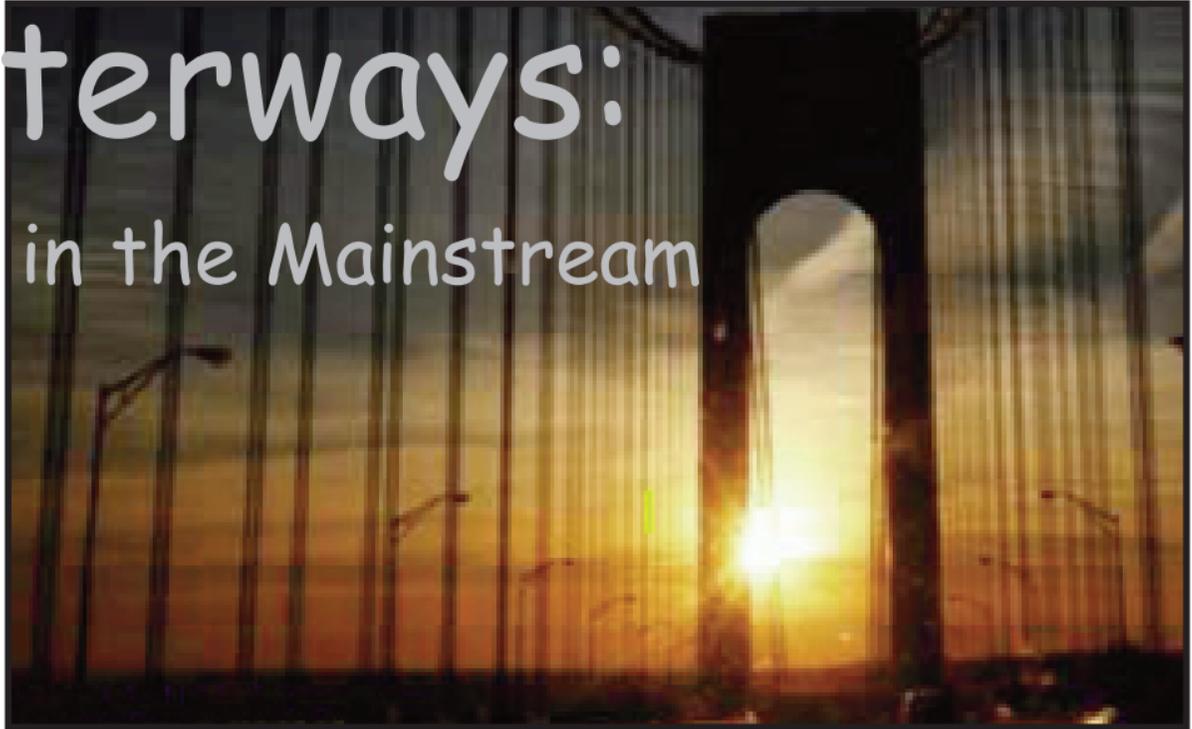


# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

29



#1

**Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 29, #1**

Let my words be  
bright with animals

Joe Bruchac,

excerpted from *Prayer*

published in On Turtle's Back (White Pine)

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 29

Number 1\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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### The Katy-dids — Joseph Bruchac

I love to hear the katy-dids,  
their breathless song  
says summer's here.

From every corner of our yard  
their chorus comes  
from far and near

She did, she didn't, on and on,  
we only think  
they disagree

When all they're saying is I'm here.  
I'm here. I'm here.  
This is my tree

It seems the summer cannot end  
the nights are warm  
the sky is clear

The stars are gold dust glittering  
the August moon  
will soon appear

And katy-didn't, katy-did  
calls echo, echo  
all around

I'll close my eyes tonight and dream  
soothed into slumber  
by their sound.

## Artist's Profession — Noel Sloboda

It's almost too easy to paint goats,  
Stefan sighs, from behind his easel.  
It's cats, you know, that are hard.

How do you make them look  
like the selfish things they are?  
They always turn out cute.

Goats, though, I can capture;  
they appear natural, as they  
should, hindquarters toward you,

horns arching backwards,  
making you think twice before  
you move, as you listen to them

chewing on something you never could  
digest if you swallowed. Simple  
animals without any more lives than us.

**Feet — William Corner Clarke**

It's the feet  
That give us away

Despite the secrecy  
Of our shoes  
And the vanity  
Of preachers  
The feet declare us  
Animals all

Essential  
But underused  
Especially  
Their facility  
For peeling bananas  
And hanging  
Upside down

## Last House — Hugh Fox

All the legs, quills, feathers,  
claws revolving around my sun  
days and claws especially on the  
moon roof  
nights, not to mention the whisperings  
of the bushes-trees and the trying-  
to-talk acapelling jazzing arms  
and legs grandkids that (as yet)  
haven't escaped me.

## On the Film *Romance & Cigarettes* — Donald Lev

Accompanied by singing and dancing relatives  
enemies lovers and others, a burly chainsmoking everyman  
wheels, wheedles and wheezes his way to the grave.  
I am watching this, wheezing with pleasure.  
He is buried with military honors, which I won't be.  
He looked so much better after he shaved his moustache.  
I wonder if I should shave . . .

11/07

## Trainer — Anselm Brocki

Let loose idle,  
my mind turns  
against me,  
plainly needs  
a short leash  
or will paw  
every mistake  
in my past  
over and over,  
like what I said

to the Cockney  
girl in an East  
End pub during  
the blitz or  
backing down  
on two pairs  
in my first big  
poker game  
north of Pontoise  
in the 495th  
Bomb Squadron.

Honest to god,  
just walking  
down the street,  
it turns me  
into a mean  
little Nazi trainer,  
jerking the choke  
chain, snapping out  
"Heel" at every  
painful memory.

**Patricia Kelly**

*eye opener*

the used angel fish skirt

fits me just fine

### Tiny Spider — Hugo DeSarro

Tiny spider on the clothesline,  
spinning silver threads  
that glisten in the sunlight  
without substance;  
each day many times broken,  
each day many times repaired.

In your little world,  
your pinpoint of existence  
is as genuine as mine.  
You ply your wily tasks  
without approval or applause;  
building snares to trap  
the unsuspecting traveler  
that ventures into your domain.

There is mercy in your motive;  
you catch and kill to live  
and never catch and kill to kill,  
as we have done  
in our gargantuan world.

## Geoff Stevens

When I say "kitten", I want it to purr for you  
when I say horse, I want to nuzzle you  
gorilla to hug you  
puffer-fish to kiss you  
I want all my words to be like glowworms  
with something to attract you to them  
and when you are,  
I'm an incandescent iguana

**black-tailed deer — R. Yurman**

break the silence  
snapping twigs  
with their delicate steps  
pronged heads dip  
through light and shade  
greens and browns  
I stare after dark flanks  
quicken past

the little one who follows  
has long-lashed eyes  
a spotted rump  
were she human  
I'd be in love

## Little Italy Caterpillar — Sylvia Manning

lemon yellow caterpillar  
over grey brick of  
Piccola Italia Montréal  
moving from young maple shade  
to young August 13 2007 sunlight,  
brave brave brave

pigeons and woman in heels  
whose demeanor has one deem  
she'd step on a little yellow caterpillar

but I think it's going to make it - yes!

it reached the green of grass!  
across all those sinking places  
between the bricks, calmly,  
certainly, in the bliss of not knowing  
the dangers of this little place,  
this little bright yellow  
(citron yellow)  
caterpillar reaches green!

## **I Was a Serial Bug Killer — Dave Church**

The other day a June Bug  
Came through a tear in the window screen.  
A long time ago I would have crushed  
The tiny invader.  
Instead,  
I let it crawl up and down my arm  
Before holding with finger and thumb —  
Marveling at how fast its legs could pedal.  
Then I set that June Bug free.

A spider swinging the air landed on the sill.  
A long time ago I would have blasted that spider  
With chemical warfare.  
Instead,  
I followed its chase of June Bug —  
Rooting for both of them.

## Do Animals Have Souls? — Joanne Seltzer

Do people have souls?  
There's no emotion  
in our DNA  
that was not shared  
by two rabbits  
of different species  
at the farmers' market  
one early spring day  
shivering in a cage  
the larger licking the small  
waiting to be sold.

First published in *The Pegasus Review*

## Loner Whistling for Your Dog — Marguerite Maria Rivas

Loner whistling for your dog,  
don't you know the musked air calls  
both creatures low and highbrow?  
Fireflies signal lamping looks,  
distract me from my careworn books,  
enchant the heart to ponder these  
more rutting, howling rites of spring.

Loner whistling for your pal,  
she's gone the way of weary wives  
and worm-sick apples o'er ripe  
to dream the nightmare vernal  
where heavy fruit hangs pendulous  
but she's forbidden to pluck it sweet,  
for underneath its red skin, taut,  
mealy, brown flesh bruises.

Loner whistling for your dog,  
today the cool air beckons her,  
and she, uncaring, fearless roams  
the streets in search of heart's blood rich  
to subsume the obvious  
and then eschew all sentiment.  
Called to roaming, rolling, rutting,  
she and I are element.

First published, 2007,  
'Pet Shoutouts and Poems',  
Ten Penny Players Inc.

## The Window as Meditation — Ida Fasel

Frost on  
the window pane —  
little by less whittled  
away — the morning sun at its  
busy

routine —  
spring approaching:  
As if they had never  
been — all these beautiful strange beasts  
wiped clean!

## The Sleep-Over — Madeline Tiger

Sally tried to go to sleep but she couldn't, she missed her Dora doll and her old baby-sitter and her dad and her cousins in New York and the doggy she'd wished for but didn't have yet and her old school and the new one, her kindergarten and the teacher who, Sally said in a thin voice, between noisy breaths, is — nice, sort of.

She missed her pink rain-boots and her high bed and the ice cream she couldn't finish and her mom whom she didn't mention and the pony at Turtle Back Zoo.

After we'd whispered the list and I sang the old songs — My Little Nut Tree, Loola Loola Bye-Bye, and she hugged Fishie, she fell into the long night.

## Opposites — Davide Trame

You watch the opposites of your anxiety:  
the flotsam and jetsam your dog jumps on,  
picks up in his teeth and shakes in a frenzy so that  
even the hazy sky smiles and stirs,  
the tide out and the pools it has left on the strand  
and the scattered feet crunching shells  
and the meandering trails of silence  
that is the water lapping among the stones of the dam,  
the flock of gulls on the rotunda taking off  
as you go near them, just gliding  
not much further on, skimming the water  
and re-grouping in unison,  
the cormorants on the edges, wings open,  
very still or just quivering, heads tilted upwards  
for ages,

the swishing of the digressing air,  
the unpredictable courses of small pebbles in the wind,  
the universe's lace your dog loves playing with  
and in the door's shadow your crouched cat  
who knows the door will be opened on his shore  
and whose knowledge is too strong to let him mind  
each passing instant.

**It was their turf — Barry W. North**

until we emerged,  
from the pain in the eyes of a gorilla,  
determined to press our advantage,  
and throw our protests up against the skies,  
until we crumble the keystone of eternity,  
'and bring everything below God  
crashing down upon our heads.

## Before the Beaver Slits — Lyn Lifshin

pewter's silk  
this warm spell  
with dandelions  
in bloom, a coppery  
glow thru dark  
cotton, I walk  
thru bleached grass,  
light rose as cats'  
feet, before a  
buttery lemon sun  
or crows wild as  
hands on fire,  
black ducks float  
on silk and stars

**This December — Lyn Lifshin**

It's almost 70  
after dark.  
I stop by the pond  
instead of  
shivering back.  
Shapes in clumps  
like tumbleweeds  
floating on  
some prairie,  
the moon in haze  
dazzling as  
pale teeth of cats.  
Silver light, a  
blaze of willow.  
Lights from the  
metro, rhinestones  
thru trees,  
branches of stars

**A Wedding in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California, July 14, 2007**  
**Paul Kareem Tayyar**

I stand on the hill and watch the wedding down below  
The veil of the bride being teased by the wind, the laughter  
Caused by the priest fumbling the name of the groom

What luck for the fog to have settled on some other part  
Of the city this morning, the warmth of the sun matching  
The warmth of the ceremony

Diego Rivera, *The Flower Carrier*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, July 13, 2007

Paul Kareem Tayyar

You are the painter of strangers,  
You are the painter of soldiers,  
You are the painter of slaves  
Who will never be free.

They see that you regarded  
The working poor as divine,  
Rugged saints whose prayers  
Would never be answered,  
But this does not mean that  
They ask what those prayers  
Might have been, or whether  
Your saints left children behind  
When they passed.

## The World's Last Traveling Circus — Bill Roberts

A leather-clad brown bear smugly riding a Harley,  
a heavily-lipsticked monkey clinging to his back.

Two dozen powdered elephants in tutus,  
tiptoeing out of a vintage Volkswagen.

A blue-collared seal glistening from exercise,  
tooting a truck's horn with its nose.

Oblivious giraffes, their heads in the clouds,  
searching for the missing tattooed lady.

The skeletal-thin man, bent over double,  
peeking up the fat lady's tent-sized dress.

The intoxicated trapeze artists flying first-class,  
with neither luggage nor a safety net below.

Mischievous clowns looking at us cross-eyed,  
catcalling from windows in a stretch limo.

High-stepping ponies with stand-up bareback riders,  
all circling and in full control of their sphincters.

The Wild Man from Borneo in a gilded cage,  
tossing love notes to adoring ringsiders.

A double-jointed beauty fired from a cannon,  
one shapely leg landing in handicapped parking.

The world's strongest midget perched on one finger,  
swollen as thick as one of his stunted legs.

The bombastic barker taken with sudden laryngitis,  
stuttering through the voice box of a ventriloquist.

### **In Old Chicago — Rex Sexton**

the ragman's horse drawn wagon . . .  
the vendors and the junkman . . .  
the blind man tending his news stand . . .  
the derelicts picking through trashcans . . .  
the knife-sharpener bent over his whetstone,  
sparks flying in every direction . . .  
his shouts of "scissors, knives, axes!"  
in a duel with the wagoner's "ripe watermelons!" . . .  
the pushcarts clattering through potholes . . .  
the pigeon lady tossing her bread crumbs . . .  
the organ grinder's uniformed monkey  
tipping his cap to everyone for money . . .  
the storefronts' food displays,  
gathering flies under the awnings' shade . . .  
the maze of narrow, ramshackle, streets  
crowded with houses, tenements, factories . . .

the pig trucks, cattle trucks, poultry trucks,  
criss-crossing from every direction,  
(chased by the mutts who add to the bedlam)  
the ward heelers passing out chickens,  
the day before an election . . .  
the nuns sweeping down the parish steps,  
winds rippling their holy black habits . . .  
the priest in their robes and vestments  
praying in candlelight and incense . . .  
the old women in babushkas  
telling their rosaries in sanctified stillness . . .  
the legions of raggedy kids  
swarming the walks and streets and parks  
(amidst a menagerie of birds and cats and squirrels)  
each day flew through the air  
landed in fairy tale dreams . . .

## Breaking Rules — Michael Hathaway

i love guys who never wear ties,  
gals who laugh too loud,  
women who beat wife-beaters,  
& men who cry  
when animals die.





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Hoping to fly like birds,

But utterly exhausted,

One can only watch the twilight pass away.

Phan Thuan

excerpted from *American Moon*

(translated by Ai-Jen Lin Chao)

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Include your home address when submitting by email to [tenpennyplayers@si.rr.com](mailto:tenpennyplayers@si.rr.com)  
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