

# Waterways:

## Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME  
31



# Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 31, #7

He claimed to love all humankind,  
but was a despot and a fraud.

**Ida Fasel**

RICH AND FAMOUS

Waterways, Volume 11, Number 8, page 10

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 31

Number 7

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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MULBERRY RING - GROWING FAT  
ON ILL GOTTEN GAINS.

THE  
POLICE RING

JAMES MARTIN  
JOHN C. SHEEHAN  
CHARLES F. MACLEAN  
JOHN MC. CLAVE

ALWAYS  
FOR FINANCIAL  
REASONS

CASH  
BASIS,  
NO  
CHECKS  
FOR THE  
POLICE.



A  
HINT  
FROM  
HEAD QUARTERS  
(MULBERRY  
STREET)

SHUT UP  
OR WE  
WILL  
RUN YOU  
IN !!  
TO THE  
PULPIT,  
PRESS,  
COURTS,  
&  
THE  
PEOPLE.

BUT  
THE  
SIDE DOORS  
OF THE  
DIVES  
ARE  
OPEN AGAIN

14:1007  
1892

DO THE PROTECTORS PROTECT

THE FINEST DESPOTS IN THE WORLD  
ARE WE GOING TO STAND THIS MUCH LONGER

## Watching the fish with J, trying Ruth Moon Kempfer

not to say the wrong thing, or cry  
it all reminds me of the tree toad who lives in my sink  
and drinks whatever scotch I leave, of evenings  
rising, half-paralyzed, to greet me at dawn  
one small green fist groping over the glass-rim. Hi.

The black ones are guppies and the long-nosed ones  
that kiss are kissing fish and one is  
a red and black bastard, going after — the scotch  
will get his adrenaline going; if frogs have  
adrenaline, or tree toads. They play the same old song  
over and over on the juke box, country lover, it reminds me  
the aquarium is a microcosm of the ocean, at its best  
how they eat each other, spit out curls of gravel —

even fish know, some things you can't digest.

# Motorcycles

## Ruth Moon Kempher

He said  
make a sound  
violent or murderous

Some abysses are too deep  
to bridge, and some cuts  
can't be sutured



frightening sound  
like the pump  
sucking at the plumbing --

I don't think I'll listen  
for the wounding  
any more.

# You Might As Well Love Me

## H. Edgar Hix

I am a wolf in human's clothing.  
I walk among humans as an other  
and smell their fear, age and illness.  
I am here to cleanse. To calm.  
To claim as my own those  
who cannot lay claim to themselves.

I am what you want to see in your mirror;  
what you think you see, what you'll never see.  
You think I will go for your jugular or soft underbelly.  
You smell my scent in the streets and sweat in the snow.  
I strike in Spring with a smile  
whose teeth will still your calm heart.

# Shining Moment

## Scott Owens

One memorable line doesn't redeem  
the poem; one memorable poem, the book;  
one shining moment a lifetime.

Defined by a negative it becomes  
even less becoming: the time  
he didn't leave, didn't strike out,

didn't get drunk, all asleep, disappoint.  
Even Norman can claim that once  
in an otherwise good day, with the sky

clear, the temperature just right,  
the past not pushing too hard against  
his hands, he let the boys make too

much noise without the slap and yell;  
he forgave, forgot, foreswore the familiar,  
the comforts of rage and control

# Night Blooming Plant

## William Corner Clarke

This plant, Bella Donna Lacrimosa  
(Sometimes known as  
Break Your Heart Plant)  
Has a special scent  
Familiar but unknown  
It will fill your room  
With longing for a beauty  
You cannot own

When night falls  
And all the other flowers close  
This one will open up  
Its pallid blooms  
But only when it knows  
There's no one else  
But you around

And although it naturally  
Prefers to grow  
In dark, forgotten places  
Where no one sane  
Will ever go  
It will survive and thrive  
In any spot  
Where love has died

# Gulled

## George Held

*He claimed to love all humankind  
But was a despot and a fraud;  
His people loved him like a god,  
An icon ensconced in the mind.  
Who knew that he would milk us dry,  
Like a Ponzi of the spirit,  
Investing beyond the limit  
Of our dull wits' capacity?*

But while our guru took our wives  
And led our children out of school  
And made us husbands feel uncool  
And bankrupted our woeful lives,  
He gulled us with a gorgeous smile  
That drew a veil across his guile.

# In the Graveyard, With a Gun

## Robert Cooperman

He walks from town,  
taking his gun from the safe  
where he'd stored it  
when the boys were young.  
With the note in his breast pocket,  
he sniffs the crisp autumn air  
as if his mother's pumpkin pies.

He stares at his mother's grave  
as if he can see her, and knows  
she'd never forgive him for this,  
or for separating from his wife Connie,

for a woman who left him  
after his business failed; with it,  
Connie's chemo coverage,  
her death sentence, unless  
one of their sons can help.  
Neither Ron nor Willy will talk to him  
except to sneer they never  
want to hear from him again.

He and Connie used to sneak  
into the graveyard at night with a joint,  
a six-pack, and some condoms.  
Now, he brushes aside dry leaves,  
pulls weeds, and takes out his gun,  
heavier than his mother's granite.

“Stand straight,” he admonishes,  
as if his father, who never approved of him,  
and left his mother and is buried  
in another state, next to the space  
reserved for his young, second wife.

The barrel is so cold he gags.  
He breathes deep as an oil drill  
and tries again.

# JANUS

## Gregory Liffick

Though  
wanting  
to put up  
a front,  
breaking  
into a grin  
would  
fracture  
the features  
of his face.

An urge  
to care  
is  
smothered  
by the  
muscles  
of his  
dark heart.  
Hard to  
conceal  
the dragon  
in the  
would-be  
knight.

# the hand that feeds

## Jennifer Jayne Scobie

the lottery  
such a lucky thing  
a lifetime's fortune  
rained down upon him  
and he was lost  
to the glimmer of gold  
forever

it did not change  
his children  
his wife  
who cowered  
in fear  
of the bludgeoning  
when late at night  
he would arrive  
whiskey-soaked  
and stammering

by daybreak  
his check book was out  
empty hands were filled  
shelters for stray animals  
shelters for the homeless  
shelters for the abused

and no one would suspect  
the journey  
so often taken  
by his very own fist

## Death and Its Visceral Aftermath – Bill Roberts

Just laying there, minding my own business,  
trying to nap when all of a sudden  
this long line of people approached,  
gazed down at me, and singly or in pairs  
uttered these totally obnoxious,  
highly personal, edited comments:

*Gotta admit, he looks better dead than alive.*

*Bastard still owes me twenty bucks.*

*We worked together. I did all the work.*

*Never knew him to be like this...speechless.  
Look at those hands. Couldn't keep 'em off me.  
What, no children? Well, that's a blessing  
Wonder how long it'll take his wife to remarry.  
No religion? Going straight to hell for sure.  
Heard he became a poet. Now there's a waste!  
Paper said he was only 37. And dyslexic.  
Ladies' man? I thought he was a laddie's man.  
Ah, at peace at last...and so are we.  
Weapons nut? Like maybe a hit man for the Mafia?  
Damned guy could eat and talk at the same time.  
Funny man, don't you think? Just not ha-ha funny.*

*Whatta guy. Never knew when he was kidding.  
Only one thing on his mind. Can't remember what  
Thanks for all the laughs, Billy . . . but  
you never did finish cleaning the basement.*

Never thought they'd go, let me get some rest.

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# Mystery

## Rex Sexton

The new leads promise nothing except exhaustion and more black magic tricks in the Dead Zone's matrix, where missing persons wander in a trance through labyrinths of chance filled with secret passages, false walls, corridors cluttered with carnival mirrors, stairways to nowhere, trap doors — the only way to negotiate the maze being Ouija boards.



*tablero de ouija*

“All the measures have been recorded in ledgers.”

They informed me when I began my round of the underground. “But they disappeared altogether when the center fell apart forever.”

I move through light and shadow past doors which have no numbers, down streets which have no names, amidst shapes which have no faces, under clocks run out of time. Impossible to prove I reconstruct the clues, formulating fresh equations from known relations, shifting speculations, new suspicions, the whole mind devoted to the question, like a storm closing in from all directions.

What does it mean? When did it begin? How did it happen? Where will it end? The diners that were seated at the table, the dishes that were served, the drinks that were consumed, the conversations that ensued, the omissions, contradictions, affectations, the lies, asides, miss-directions – like rigged roulette wheels, loaded dice, shell games, stacked decks, parlor tricks. Who stole everyone's soul will never be established.

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