

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME
32



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 32, #4

**The camera
does not lie
but I must**

James Penha

MAZEPPA FRAMED

Waterways, Volume 18, Number 3

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 32

Number 4

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

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Photos courtesy of 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

Ten Penny Players Inc. This magazine is published October, 2011

www.tenpennyplayers.org



The Light – Holly Day

you give me refuge from everything real, wrap
me in cool water, bright thoughts of tomorrow.
demons howl outside my door, vampires hide in
my shadow, persistent salesmen rap loudly
at my window – my life tries to get back in.

you make the dead buildings and dusty smog and
bloody road kill disappear, fade to creeping
ivy and tall, fork-toed waterbirds, present
me with talismans dedicated to some
silent, strong god, one that never interrupts.

Masked – Margo Roby

Its blank simplicity
its minimalist nothingness
says: I will not give nor share.
You must take what you find:
me as I am.

The mask hides and
in hiding gives much away –
the eyes that say:
my eyes are not windows to a soul.
Its blank simplicity.

The mask smiles with
its mouth not its eyes
greenly tissue,
themselves masking
a minimalist nothingness.

A spring of hair,
mere distraction,
draws the gaze away from
the smile not smiling that
says: I will not give nor share.

No windows to the soul yet
in their blankness is the soul
and the eyes become the mouth
that speaks through the mask to say:
you must take what you find.

Mask and soul
hidden and unhidden
revealed and unrevealed.
You may look in but may not see,
me as I am.

Scenes From Foreign Films – William Corner Clarke

Charged with grief and remorse
For my crime of indifference to love
I am heavy with sideshow chains
Bound tight across my chest
I wander the desolate beaches of the moon
The circus idiot strongman clown

Defiant with despair
Monstrous with vanity, and madness
I drive the fast car full of ghosts
Right off the broken bridge
And then I fly, a coward, from the wreckage
A cold eye with blue wings

A revolution betrayed, defeated by Fate
A bitter, hated exile
I drift on a wave washed raft
Into a white mist of sea and sky
My arm of fire
Embered helpless at my side

I turn to hear
The wind through the forest
I watch the smoke from burning cities
There is rain coming through an open ceiling
I am eavesdropping
On a conversation with my own lost soul

And I am possessed by mystery
Speaking unknown words
The lost poems of a foreign tongue
Prophecy, delirium, precious stones
Forgotten under running water
Rust, fragments of music, sacred visions

In an abandoned seaside town
I sit alone in an empty movie house
Watching for a thousand years
A film of silence
While sand drifts and gathers
In the doorways of the promenade outside

Boardwalk Dream – Ruth Moon Kempher

We were together, last night, me
and my parents, how young they were, how happy
together, and yes, I repeat, smiling, together.

She had a hat on, yellow straw with
flagrant poppies flopping on the wide brim,
she laughing up at him, coquettish

“O,” I said (I heard myself say it)

“Isn’t this lovely,” until I realized
they were pushing me in my wheelchair, along
some boardwalk. Atlantic City? Asbury Park?
with clowns and sea gulls and cotton candy
which smelled pink.

On and on they pushed me, into a house made
entirely of doors, each door continually opening
 onto another, until I woke sweating
and my mother who above all hated
 liars and lying said
 “Oh, Dolly, don't worry; one door
 closes and the angels open
 another, and everything
(it echoed) will be okay.”

Album – Scott Owens

Norman is always looking away.
In every photo ever taken
he seems distracted by what just
happened behind him, off to one
side or the other or somewhere beyond
the photographer's shoulder or hand
saying Look here. Smile. Cheese.
And all you get are partial profiles
and inexplicably puzzled looks
almost as if he wanted to look
away, avoid the straight-on shot,
knowing the picture would never be right,
knowing none of it could ever be perfect.

Residual Hauntings at Bronte's House: a Triptych – Alan Catlin

Domestic scenes enacted
in period costumes for
the camera: making bread
in the kitchen, hand sewing
in the parlor, all the girls
writing at once, shot in
long exposures, leaving only
these ghost images behind.

black branches/ white wall – R. Yurman

(riff on an image from David Wojahn's "Wartime Photos of My Father")

not a digital nexus of points
but the old-fashioned stuff
black and white negative

ambivalence caught by inversion
a small true moment locked in
light for dark, dark for light

stick shadows slashed
across "the sun's incendiary
merciless bright"

Say No! to Old El Caminos – Wayne Hogan

I say No! to
old El Caminos and
No! to fresh tomatoes.
I say Yes! to beckoning
boats and Yes! to
roadside relationships.
O send us back to Science
Fiction, deliver us from
threatening factualization and
the over-wrought necks
of sophisticated women about
my age (more or less).

If you're going to eat chicken,
then eat chicken. (No, eat
more chicken.) Have
escargot thoughts. Shirk not
those who deign. Be
of apparency. Lo, yon Western
Wind, blow us your best
al dente fettucini. Give in to
philosophy; be not unduly done.

I Do Not Ride Roan Horses Bareback – Wayne Hogan

Let me see
if I can get this
straight. I'm going
to try real hard, yes, *real* hard:

I was not born in Texas any-
where, nor did I not
try to set my schoolhouse on fire
when I was about eight.

I never attended
Vassar (as best I recall), but
didn't graduate with Honors.
I was never a member
of the French Foreign Legion
when I didn't sail across
the Pacific alone on a rubber
inner-tube yanked from a tire
(won in a questionable raffle)
off a gray-and-yellow
'57 Studebaker my Uncle Henry
swore he never had.

When I wasn't on Guam in the '50s,
I didn't play "Taps" for all
the left-over dead Japanese soldiers
that kept turning up
under *very* suspicious circumstances
while I wasn't there.

I do not ride roan horses bareback,
and wouldn't if I did.

Well, I tried, really I didn't.
This is the best I couldn't do.

Enough – Edward J. Rielly

She is a young girl in
the picture, standing in front
of a small schoolhouse,
boys in dark coats and knickerbockers,
girls in plain dresses, all somber,
seriously facing the camera,
photographs still uncommon then,
a rare event, especially for children
attending a small country school
in the early years
of the twentieth century.

I would tell your story,
my child-mother, thoughtfully,
factually, if I could,
but I cannot roll back the years
to ask what you were thinking,
hoping, on that day.
I cannot even see much of you,
obscured by that boy in front.
Your face, though, is unmistakable,
the adult one little changed,
and on your head some sort
of hat, seemingly with a bow on top,
your preparation for that so-formal
school picture, that rare glimpse of you.

So I will tell of you later, the child grown,
dreams either living or not-only you
could tell: but those red geraniums
you planted every spring, bursting above
the old tractor tire you painted white,
placed in the front yard, and filled
with dirt. A rooster crowing you awake
on a warm summer day. Green rows
of corn swaying in the wind, a dance
you might have liked to make yourself.
Ice cream cones you forced-never needing
much force, really-on grandchildren.
I will focus on such images and call them you.

From Montreal images, poetic or prosaic in themselves – Sylvia Manning

1

the truly old woman bent at waist above long skirt
as peasants wear in our dreams of long ago,
kerchief, pushing cart with purchases or debris (and
one feared the latter) on rue St. Hubert beneath its
Market Place St. Hubert awnings but this twilight
in the long nearly night dark emptiness, only

some young glamour near and around for their own
perhaps commercial reasons

and her slow walk not trying to see but the sidewalk
beneath her

yesterday the young middle-class woman with 2
children and husband waiting at newish car, he not
pleased she was going through thrown-out
vegetables at Jean Talon Market

(greedily, I might add, like a predator's face to us,
other takers — a grimace, not a smile)

for especially potatoes;

another woman, older, guessed her mother, wasn't,
because the family left, the young wife-mother with
them, her bags heavy with little potatoes

as did the older woman, soon, but alone.

I never figured out what language to use to tell her the parsnips weren't white carrots, not exactly, but no language worked very well, then

a smiling young woman came up. She knew the word for what they were, the parsnips. We took big bunches.

I saw the woman of peasant demeanor again, in
daylight on Chateaubrian,

Less garbed, still bent, still pulling her cart full of
not much, looking down, down, moving slowly
through, one must suppose her past.

Like a Dream But Not – Rex Sexton

When I was a student in Boston, the newscasts featured the tragic story of a young, and very beautiful, African American woman who fell four flights to her death when a fire escape, on which she was hanging clothes collapsed. She was wearing a white summer dress. The dress billowed as she tumbled, toppling head over heels in her freefall, arms outstretched. There were photographs of this. A photographer was passing. He heard her scream as the bolts of the fire escape

cracked and the platform snapped. “I put it on automatic.” He told the tabloid in which the pictures first appeared.” And the camera captured it all.” Not all — nothing about her hard life in the slums, negligent landlord, corrupt city officials orphaned children, indifferent citizens. The page was turned; the commercial messages followed; we shivered and forgot the nightmarish images; life went on.

Bureaucrat – Gilbert Honigfeld

Blinking, he emerges,
his gaze the daze of someone
just awakened, a look easily confused
with a dumb stare, in reality a rare study
of a man unaccustomed to life beyond his cubicle,
a fortress of paper in bulwarks and barricades of his own
design, behind which a shrewd intelligence hides, a man moling
daily deeper and deeper

Gédéonne – Monique Laforce

The four-years old child knelt on the cement square tiles, observing the ants. That one, transporting the grocery for a crowd on her back.

He blocked her way three or four times. She went on, carrying her load, getting back to her puzzling way with a willingness and a patience that forced his admiration.

“Gédéonne, what a special and wonderful being you are,” he said.

Soon he lost sight of her. But always, popping out from nowhere, he recognized her, going in and out, tireless.

“Gédéonne, here you are!” he greeted out, addressing her as a personal friend.

Since then, almost three decades later, every ant I see is my younger son’s friend, Gédéonne. Never getting old. Never dying. *THE Ant.*

ISSN 0197-4777

Very limited printing

Ten Penny Players, Inc.

(a 501c3 not for profit corporation)

Subscriptions -- \$45 for 11 issues.

Sample issues — \$5.00 (includes postage).

www.tenpennyplayers.org