

VOLUME

32

#8

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream
VOLUME 32, #8

A history of water, color, and oil,
I am this fossil old as time.

James Penha

THE FOSSIL KNOWER
(An Old Pantun from a Java Man)
Waterways, Volume 16, Number 3

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 32

Number 8

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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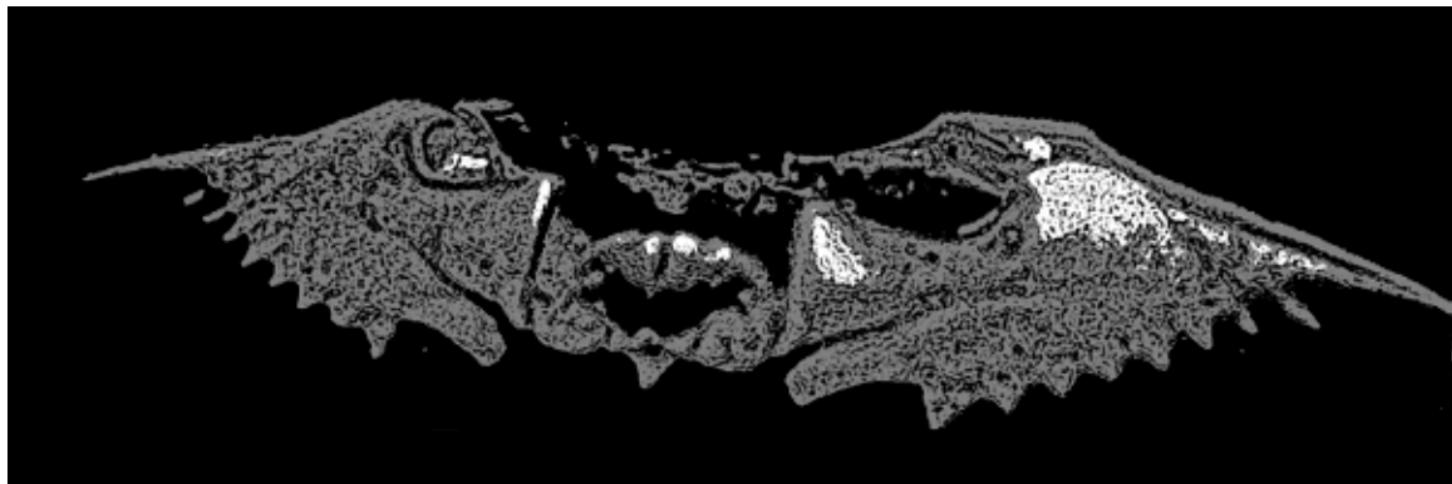
cover & frontispiece by Barbara and Richard

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 February, 2012

www.tenpennyplayers.org



Once Runner

Once runner, wrestling with her walker,
is slower but still moving
at the speed of life.

H. Edgar Hix

Judgment Day

The cherished underbrush must be cleared
if the cruel city is to be appeased.

Cursed councilwoman! Cursed neighbors!
Where will the rabbit nest now? The field mice?
Where will the gray, feral cat hunt
and raise her wild young? Where will shade find a home?

But, the ragged underbrush must be shorn
to the even height of shortness. The underbrush
must not stand, must not breathe, must not nurture.
The old tire must go, too. The one the sparrows hop on
when I put out seed. The water-holding barbequer
is too empty for the dry city's sanctification.

Only buildings may stand tall. Not grass. Not citizens
claiming first allegiance to Gaea and her children.

Only wood, cut and killed elsewhere, may rise.

Only glass and brick. Everything else must meet the qualifications
of the wide, but stunted, concrete sidewalk.

The Devil's boulevard is judging all the natural angels.

H. Edgar Hix

Going Home

She eyes the planets perfunctorily, their novelty worn as thin as their air. Stars can flash eternally for all she cares. Her attention begs off black hole, aliens and supernovae. Constellations cry out for identification. Lumps of rock beg to be named. Strange races can't get enough of her scientific poking and prodding. But she's scoured the universe. She's mapped the clusters, documented the rocks, classified the creatures down to every last bulging eyeball. Now it's someone else's turn, another willing explorer, blasting off to who knows where, empowered by rampant wonder, in thrall to the unknown.

Husband, three kids, farmhouse, fields and meadows,
small town. Main Street old friends . . . freed of
curiosity, her thoughts attract a crowd.

John Grey

The Installation of The Living Word:

at the Morgan Library & Museum

Hieroglyphs, lifeless bones carved and painted,
clear the floor, devolve towards ancient
ideographs.

Floss-hung from floor to ceiling, calligraphic limbs
take wing; shadows fleck the walls, shape
words.

Breaking free of language they fly, toss aside that
which defines them, turn towards the sky
birds.

In flight, words become birds.

Margo Roby

There is this

There is this watercolor
painted by your father
of a camel in the desert,
and below it, on the bureau's top,
this little fossil your brother got
in a museum and offered you
some Christmas night, years ago.
The best gift you ever received,
you said, so thrilled were you.

And now, just beside it on the bureau,
the urn containing your ashes.
While I stay there looking,
I remember its weight in my hands
as I placed it there,
just the same as a new born baby's.

Monique Laforce

Memories Are Fossils

Memories are fossils, she said,
And left him on the strand;
The carnival was whirling around
Food, family and dancing
On the Day of the Dead
He walked to the sand
And ran for miles, apocalypso miles,
Tumbling down to the exposed bone,
curving bone that rims the sea
And there memory came as a tsunami

And all the fossils on the shore
Were particles of I;
After love has swept by,
Memories are fossils and I
I'm Waiting

Mary Clark

Landscape awakens in
big brawling Cezanne canvas
French countryside in Spring,
brush strokes imagined,
so you almost feel you can touch the wind,
its tangible color laden wind
twists through your hair impatient
and like blue Easter egg time machine
you go backward through mossy green meadow grasses,
dandelions sensing warm rain and lazy cloud sky wisp,
till we're left standing under some neo-classical
suburban mall ruins (ivory carefully planned) reliefs,
your high heeled shoes click-clacking

forward by pedestrian crossings and changing
spring styles, (it's getting to be there's a new
ancient scent of flowers free of dirt hibernation)
life is crossing some time-dilation
without us, living linear in the dark matter of space
where you're always standing just out of sight
and laughter carries over paved pavilion roads

Thomas Pescatore

Stone, stone, stone, not a drop
some watermark that witnessed
here was once a sea — all that's left
is stone, still obsessed
floats out, falling back twice every day
in the same place — you can't leave.

You on one side and my shoulders
bent under the stone so you
could follow it out forever
cover the Earth with waves
that have no sound — even the rivers

are stone, their banks warning stones
as if your name would have no meaning
when read aloud and love
is such a blessing
with nothing but stone between us

— you on one side can't see how my skin
torn off, my knuckles lock in place
writing on soft paper, over and over
and over and over though your name
has just two words
used to the bandages, scars, silences.

Simon Perchik

Wade in the Water

Gospel tunes, sung by a tilting chorus,
do something special for the spirit.
I'm listening to Kirk Whalum and his
jazz combo play "Wade in the Water,"
his brother providing the vocal, with
backup from, wailing female voices.

Hard to concentrate, peck out words.
I'm transported back to D.C. in
the Fifties when I still went to church,
answering the call of church bells,
after passing a Black church whose bells
also beckoned, rollicking gospel music
spilling out of its open portals.

I wanted so badly to stop, head up
the steps of that Southern Baptist temple,
clap my hands, join in the singing,
standing and swaying with those joyous
Black folks, all of them my neighbors.

But that wasn't done back then.
We, my friends and I proceeded further
along to the Methodist church,
sat for an hour praising God, examining
our souls, me berating myself for lack
of courage to turn, wade in the water.

Bill Roberts

The Future Knower

A New Pantoum from a Virtual Man

I am not now man nor woman
no Pygmalion or Dorian Gray
no more than fossil of this time
your mind wishes could spring alive

No Pygmalion or Dorian Gray
alive only virtually
your mind wishes could spring alive
from high resolution pixels

Alive only virtually
I am not now man nor woman
from high resolution pixels
not even organic in form

I am not now man nor woman
petrified of the end I already know
not even organic in form
no history of water, color, and oil

Petrified of the end I already know
I am not now man nor woman
no history of water, color, and oil
could be more than fossil of this time.

Scott Owens

The Flower Arrangement in the Window of Jane Austen's Writing Room

Late Spring sunlight through
thick beveled glass, garden
arrangement of blue iris, dried
wildflowers and lavender stalks
nearby low writing table, scuffed
and tarnished by decades of use,
abuse, seems almost child-sized,
fit for coloring books, find a word
puzzles, Sudoku, instead of
escritoire for timeless, of a time,
novels: Pride and Prejudice, Sense
and Sensibility, Persuasion....

writings she hid from family and
friends heard outside her writing
room door or seen through this same
scratched glass where lilting flowers fade.

Alan Catlin

Rock Face

From the bluff
above the river
near the bend,

the grim visage
stares into water
and into sky.

None can read it,
or move it,
or hold it,

though many
climbing up
have stroked it,

running a palm
above the brow,
or sat with it

through a long
shadowy afternoon,
before climbing down

like a well-meaning friend,
who having done all he can,
leaves the rest to time.

Thomas Reynolds

Rock Hounds

1

One Friday in Franconia
the Old Man in the Mountain,

thundered through
the tree canopy.

Super-fans rallied,
calling all masons
to fashion a prosthetic
like Brahe's nose.

But earlier chains
broke away

to crowds' dismay,
proof that neither Heaven
nor New Hampshire
is without flaw.

Hard core
leaf peepers
ate ice cream
in drizzle,
bought postcards
of the missing man.
Local stoics stared,
empty as granite.

Wanting in after
just going out,
our dog presses his nose
against cold glass.

At night his reflection
is transparent.

At one hundred twelve,
our hairy man
is falling
to pieces.

Between midnight
and two AM
he just may
break away.
For now, his muzzle
rumbles prophetic.
No statuary.
Don't stuff me.
Think of my profile
in the glass,
which should be
simply, enough.

Maria Marsello

Biography of a Hanger

Sorting through a closet crammed with too many clothes, I pull out a thin wooden hanger holding a flowered skirt. The hanger's price, stamped in faded black ink is 49 cents.

I remember buying it at Woolworth's on Liberty Avenue in Brooklyn when I was 16. I needed hangers for straight skirts and modest blouses before starting my first job as a secretary at NYU. I was paid \$54 a week plus eight free credits a term.

And I remember that September, sitting in Washington Square Park, holding hands with Robbie, who spoke French, Hebrew and Arabic. We passionately discussed Franz Kafka and Ayn Rand.

Fifty-four years later I'm a retired English professor, getting organized for spring in northern California. I fold the skirt into a bag for the women's shelter, then replace the hanger wondering if Robbie returned to the Middle East, if he's an architect, if he's a grandfather.

Arlene Mandell

Gliding Into the Day

I remember getting up
to teach a class
at the university
where I worked,
to write a poem,
to work on a novel.
It was always something.
Rushing, rushing.
My blood pressure high,
nerves shot. Now,
retired in rural Nevada,



I read the paper
when I awaken,
have a glass of
cranberry grape juice,
then watch the news,
while I drink a glass of wine,
gliding into the day.

Arthur Winfield Knight

Lu Watters: Blues Over Bodega

Louis Armstrong called him
the greatest cornet player
in the history of Dixieland,
but he'd retired
by the time I met him.
Lu and I drank cheap sherry
out of gallon bottles
and talked about literature.
He was a Henry Miller fan.



Lu drove north to Anderson
the year I taught there.
He was having an affair
with a red-head who claimed
she was descended from
the Lost Continent of Mu.

I remember Lu standing
in a fine rain, practicing,
preparing for a comeback
in a canyon west of Anderson,
the notes echoing around us.
He wanted to raise money
to stop the construction
of a nuclear power plant
at Bodega Bay, and he did.



When my wife met him
a decade and a half later
she said, "He looks like
he might have been
someone once." He was
smoking marijuana
to alleviate the pain
from prostate cancer,
his hands shaking,
still drinking sherry.
"He was someone," I said.

Arthur Winfield Knight

Donald Duck Orange Juice

I have a glass of Donald Duck
Orange Juice, followed by
a glass of wine, for breakfast,
wearing the blue robe
I bought 40 years ago.
At the time I bought a red one
for my late wife, Glee,
who died at 27
before she had
a chance to wear it.

I gave the red robe
to the daughter
my present wife, Kit,
and I have,
but I don't know
what Tiffany did with it.
A lot of people I knew
have died in 40 years,
but Donald's still around.

Arthur Winfield Knight

Fall in Old Mesilla

dry
yellow
cottonwood

leaves

wind tumbled
in a flurry

spin
crackling

across the square
like a Spanish
flamenco dancer
ruffling her satin skirt
castanets snapping

Sheryl L. Nelms

Some Things I Know

I know a city
is made of water.

I know a banana-walnut muffin
is sometimes a cloud.

I know finger smudges
make good literature.

I know a single autumn leaf
Will color a whole mountain.

I know God
Loves all things dragonfly.

Wayne Hogan

Burner Man

You can only come home so many times
drenched in the stench of #2 heating oil,
coveralls permeated with the stuff,
its ooze pervading your hands, face—
the man, to be fair, a hard-worker,
ready to go back out whenever called—
but you can expect only so much from
a woman after all, and can't blame
her for wanting something a little finer
from life, something else to fill her
house besides the smell of #2 utility crude.

Gilbert Honigfeld

Sheridan Square Park

The fallen
dead leaves
along the side
of the park
are mixed
with cigarette butts,
plastic coffee container tops
white paper
and dog shit of
various colors
and sizes



In the spring
you can sometimes see
condoms
tossed
between the
black bars
Of the fence

But it is winter now
and everyone is in
a hurry.

Frank Murphy

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