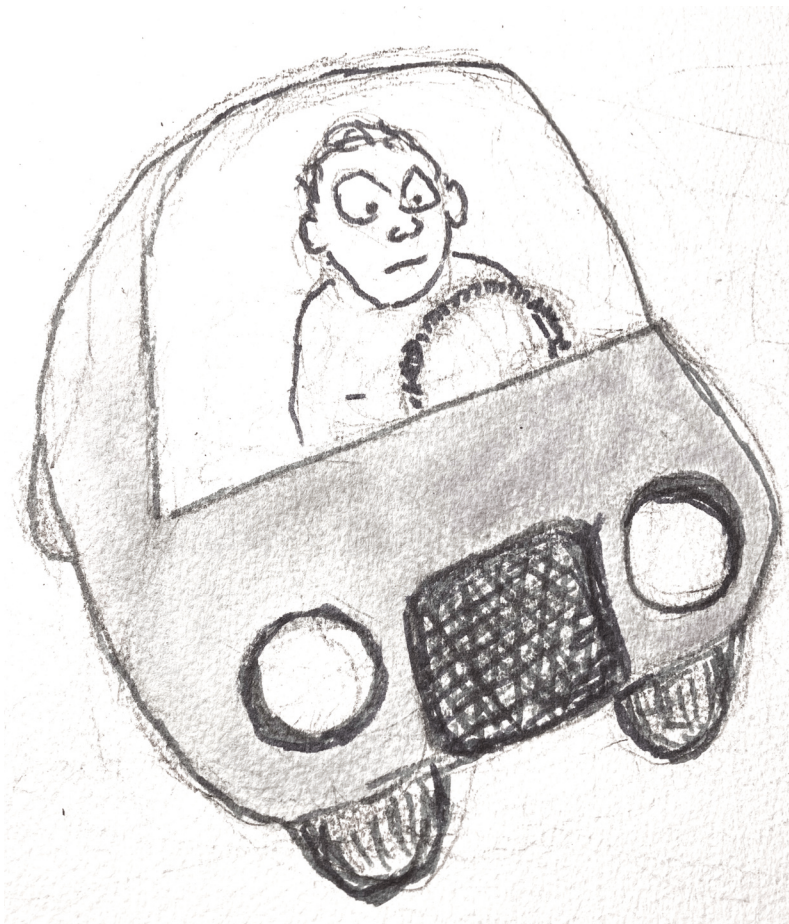


# Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream



July, 2023  
Vol 44 No 2

# Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 44

Number 2

my father and mother to be  
sat in his older brother's car,  
the radio tuned to satiny  
swing music.

from "On the Night of Orson Welles's Radio Broadcast  
of 'The War of the Worlds' October 30, 1938"

by Robert Cooperman

originally published in Vol. 20 No. 11

# Waterways

Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 44 Number 2

Designed, Edited and Published by  
Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel  
A. Thomas Perry, Outreach Consultant

## contents

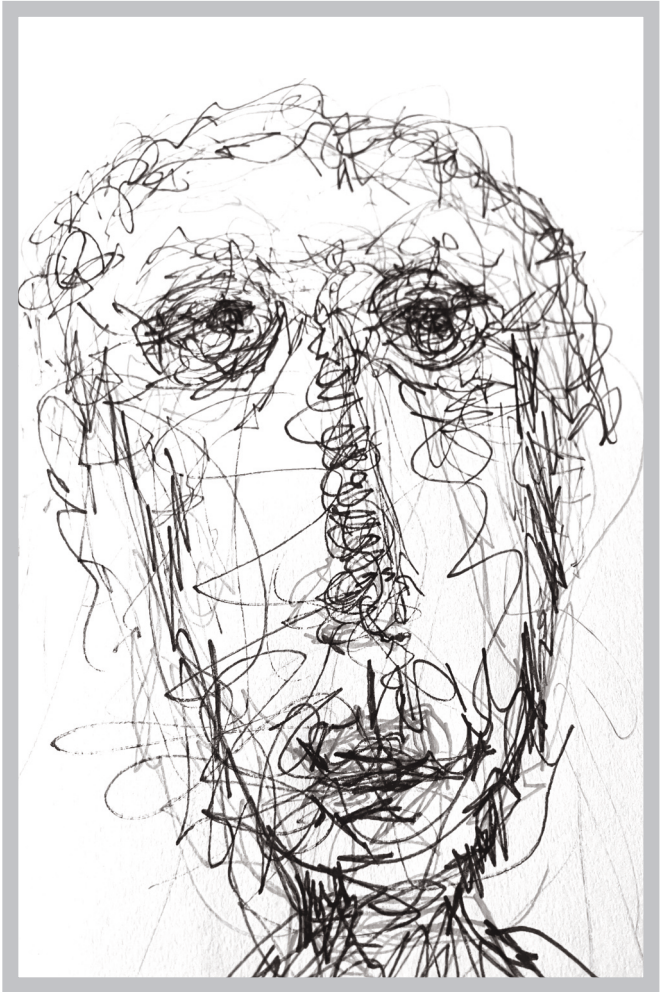
John Grey	4
Pat Anthony	6
Gilbert Honigfeld	7
Sylvia Manning	9
Jennifer Lagier	10
William Corner Clarke	13
James Penha	19
Richard Spiegel	20

Cover illustration and frontispiece by  
Richard Spiegel

Sample issues — \$5.00 Subscriptions -- \$45.00

Waterways is published monthly, except for August, by  
Ten Penny Players Inc., 393 St. Pauls Avenue,  
Staten Island, New York 10304-2127

Submissions will be returned if accompanied  
with a stamped, self addressed envelope.



*John Grey*  
Subway Sax

He's the sax man  
of the subway,  
back to the wall,  
sound facing the commuters.

His eyes  
are passing shadows  
as his instrument  
blows through  
and sometimes over  
the surrounding babble.

No one hears him  
in the way he'd dreamed  
when he was younger.  
This is no concert hall,  
just an underground cocoon.  
The crowd is no audience.  
They're waiting for a train.

They don't know  
Sonny Stitt from Stan Getz,  
Cannonball Adderley  
from John Coltrane.

And, as folks occasionally  
drop coins into his cup,  
they've no idea  
what it takes for  
a musician like him to survive.

But, as driven sax man,  
he can't imagine  
any life other than this.  
Everybody else can.

## The '43 Chevy

sat on the gravel beyond the fence  
shined waxed polished with loving hands  
a winged seraph for the boy  
who had ridden an old coaster bike  
from home to work for years

he took that car to college  
first a two-year then the four  
found a girl in the West  
She'll be the sister you never had  
he told me standing outside  
our front door so our mother  
wouldn't hear such talk of  
pairing off forbidden even to  
the likes of a twenty-two year old  
boymanbrother but I knew him  
well, treasured such a future

until the car parked at her home  
turned dull in wind-blown dust  
as lymphoma claimed him  
and she put him on the train  
for the last time too weak to drive  
that black Chevy and live out the dream

## **A Seminal Discovery**

Bone-weary at the end of each day  
I remember my father shuffling to bed  
each night wordlessly, smilelessly,

but in a flash of adolescent insight  
I realized that could not have been true  
always and ever, having worked out  
the arithmetic of my birth and realizing  
I'd been conceived during a long  
holiday weekend when the federal govern-  
ment made Monday a national day off.



## Vanity Plate

About twelve maybe fifteen cars back  
I drove a second-hand Dodge van  
with an inboard engine squatting  
between driver and passenger,  
kind of an ugly gal with a few  
peeling patches of paint but I liked  
hiding behind her nondescriptness.

Her engine lid snapped shut with  
a couple of cheap clamps you might  
find in an old hardware store so  
it wasn't exactly airtight, the engine  
groaning like an old man running  
uphill, and you'd have to lower the  
window to halfmast most times just  
to drown out the noise and kill the smell.

But that old beast of a van had  
some charm and we had a history  
together some details of which I  
plan to keep to myself except  
to tell you that on her birthday one  
year I sprang for a set of vanity  
plates and christened her META4

*Sylvia Manning*

## **A Thing in Ragged Time?**

But maybe it meant everything  
for their lives and ours to be  
(thus as they've been)  
how their church taught them  
only sinners danced.

Neither ever did, even he  
who left that church  
(after amnesia, et cetera)  
with no musical instruments

But too late to learn to dance,  
after he'd had what Zorba called  
the whole disaster, all of us,

My brother born to never dance  
or even walk for long,  
all of us awkward at life,  
malnourished, unsound.

(Mind: one of us danced  
in a gloriously decadent decade.)

Maybe it meant everything  
that they didn't have that.

*Jennifer Lagier*

## **Moon Over Middle River**

Platinum moonlight flows  
across ebony river,  
splits into jagged fractals  
dissected by boat wakes.

Lunar refraction outlines  
silver tule berms,  
stimulates bullfrog troubadours  
who chorus bass longings.

Splotchy pearl orb  
spans sapphire cosmos.  
Diana guides her celestial chariot  
along sequined star trail.

**Full Moon vs Atmospheric River**

Storm clouds photobomb curdled sky,  
squeeze between rising moon,  
fading confetti stars,  
erase platinum refraction  
striping ebony waves.

All night lunar orb hides  
behind wet tinsel scrim.  
Her washed-out face emerges,  
a pallid ghost peering  
through rain sequined willows.

By noon, monochrome disk  
persistently lingers,  
outshone by March sun,  
white fingerprint above the mirror  
of flat Monterey Bay.

*Jennifer Lagier*

## **Cosmic Canopy**

*“Even the sky was bigger than we were.”*

*~ Francine Witte*

Sparkling constellations  
orbit eventide sky,  
torn fingernail moon.

Distant plane lights flicker.  
From oak limbs, night owls croon.  
Possums disappear into shadows.

Ghostly mist crawls ashore,  
unleashes drizzle,  
erases celestial clutter.

**River Eden (Xanadu)**

Before the Word  
Was formed in flesh  
Before the sign was sealed  
Before the runes  
Were carved and cast  
Before the creatures  
Of the cold arrived  
To build their forts  
And draw their lines  
The Sacred River  
And her wild green lover  
Lived their bliss  
In the valley  
Of the magic mists

But now no magic  
Rules the land  
And all that's left  
Are broken forests  
Where no birds call  
And bombed out  
Pleasure Domes  
On the western shores  
Filled with dread  
And drifting sand

Yet still the Lovers  
Continue loving  
In their way  
Still flowing through  
The blue and crystal  
Caverns down below  
Heading for the ocean  
And the endless open  
Sunlit days  
Beyond the walls  
Of Xanadu

**Time Machine**

Recently I accidentally over wound  
An old Mudu watch  
Given to me by my dearest friend  
And in horror  
I saw the second hand had ceased  
Its circuit round the dial  
But the hour was late  
And I had to sleep

First thing next morning  
I went to check the watch again  
And to my joy  
Time was back again  
For some unknown reason  
The hand  
Had resumed its rounds

Later, reflecting on my reaction  
I realized that I had treated it  
As if it were a living thing  
And in an instant I travelled back in time  
To when I was a child again  
With a precious birthday gift  
A sea blue watch with a crystal back



And I was watching  
Its tiny cogs and gears  
Giving grace and power  
To its slender hands

And once again  
After all those years  
Thrilled at having  
Such a thing of magic  
In my hand

## **House of Memory**

The last place on the list  
Was full of empty depths  
    Shadows  
Of half-closed doorways  
    And narrow corridors  
    Void of interest  
    - It seemed as if  
    Everything of value  
    Had been lost  
    Or taken by looters  
    Long ago

And yet there was a sense  
That even after the house  
    Had been condemned  
    And all the windows  
    Had been walled  
    Someone or something  
Still remained, nameless  
    And abandoned  
    In the silent gloom

But beyond that feeling  
    Of strange unease  
    Hanging in the air  
There was no real reason  
    For physical concern

And so we continued on  
Moving from floor to floor  
Taking measurements  
Until the survey  
Was completed  
And we could get back  
Into the sunlight  
And fresh air  
Just glad to be alive

## **Landing**

Our flat on the second floor of the Tudor owned by Harry Helmsley, ailing husband of Leona, Queen of Mean, had a window looking out on the flight pattern incoming with certain winds to LaGuardia. Engine sounds somehow we got used to; we slept well if not often in each other's arms. But the lights, headlights, of DCs and Boeings stared straight into our rooms threatening never to land but to crash right into our lives the way the planes would in time bring down the twin towers. Well before we only survived by descending the dark stairway separately.

*Richard Spiegel*

## **My Memory of the Towers**

Barbara and I were married  
on the Brooklyn Bridge  
on June 21, 1983.

As Father Proud administered  
the oaths, Susan pointed  
to the sun setting  
between the towers.

Thomas held  
the wedding ring.

# *Our Geography of Poets*

## *Bali*

James Penha

## *California*

Jennifer Lagier

## *Kansas*

Pat Anthony

## *New Jersey*

Gilbert Honigfeld

## *New York*

Richard Spiegel

## *Rhode Island*

John Grey

## *Vermont*

Sylvia Manning

## *Virginia*

William Corner Clarke

ISSN 0197-4777

Very limited printing

Subscriptions -- \$45 for 11 issues.

Sample issues — \$5.00 (includes postage)

*Visit us online at*

**[www.tenpennyplayers.org](http://www.tenpennyplayers.org)**