

Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 25, #11

You sea! I resign myself to you and also . . . I guess what you mean,
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me;
We must have a turn together . . . I undress . . . hurry me out of sight of the land,
Cushion me soft . . . rock me in billowy drowse,
Dash me with amorous wet . . . I can repay you.

Walt Whitman

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 25

Number 11*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

c o n t e n t s

Patricia Wellingam-Jones	4	Ida Fasel	12
James Penha	5	John Grey	13
Elise Free	6-8	Dudley Laufman	14-15
M. M. Nichols	9	Sylvia Manning	16-19
Simon Perchik	10	Greg Moglia	20-22
Geoff Stevens	11	Donald Lev	23-24

Waterways is published 11 times a year. Subscriptions -- \$33 for 11 issues.

Sample issues — \$3.50 (includes postage).

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

Waterways, 393 St. Pauls Avenue, Staten Island, New York 10304-2127

©2005 Ten Penny Players Inc. *(This magazine is published 5/05)

<http://www.tenpennyplayers.org>

photograph by
Barbara Fisher



House On The Edge Of The Bay — Patricia Wellingam-Jones

Mist tasting of salt gathers on our lips,
seeps through spars in the Charleston marina,
across the narrow road, against our doorstep,
into the house. Smudges the edges
of spruce and fir, turns them
into a Japanese painting. Softens
the clatter of gull, croak of crow,
sea lion bark. Like a mermaid
sliding off her rock, the day falls
into the harbor, rides the outgoing tide
as a fishing boat, late homing,
slips past the jetty. Spaced lights
of the marina prick through gloom.
Outlined in white glow
from stern to bow, flag to waterline,
the boat sails before our dazzled eyes
across the front yard.

We Be Bop — James Penha

Jazz, she is
my woman: in the bend of her piano
I lay hands upon the sweetest black shellac
and light a torch
song so hot the folks out in Radio Land
fan their faces
to hide their tears.
I am her instrument;
the lady is my voice.
A million right feet keep our beat,
want to play our game
take our dare,
can't help but smile

at the tease, our slide to syncopation,
improvisation,
shoobee doobee aba doowexplanation.
And the flesh
is made word.
And my lady bends like a limbo dancer
beneath the blues and blows
her saxy alto all the way to Pluto, "Man,"
somehow she says,
"our notes will never land."
We are audible.
You can dig and dig
and never really touch us.

Hybrid — Elise Free

We began as an argument.

God and Nature, when making

the world — fought for six days and on the seventh day

A decision.

Uniform soldiers — God said — to worship and pray,

like domino children lined up for me

a perfect alignment of beauty and precision — my image

a million-fold.

But — careful never to offend — Nature chimed,

the slightest touch, or breeze, down they go

a million fold.

We must make them strong — able

to withstand blight of the soul, pestilence in the heart,

disease of the mind — each different like prairie weeds — laboring deep

in the earth — seeds waiting for a fire

— a challenge to grow taller.

I see I see, God said.

I'll make them like fish in a river — flowing in my direction —
their souls to empty in my ocean.

But the salmon — Nature said —
swim against your tide — their survival depends
on going against you.

Then I'll give them wings like birds
and I will be the wind — if they fly too far from me,
I will blow them back.

Good idea, Nature said — always diplomatic,

But what is the point of having wings
if you can not fly where you wish?

They will trade their wings for gills to swim into
the dark bottom of the waters — a world so dark even
you will not have light to see.

Maybe I should give up, God said

It's getting too complicated, even for me.

If I may — said Nature —
Apple seeds never grow to be their parents
— each generation — a different breed
the snowflake of fruits.
But they resemble, carry on a purpose,
delighting in their sweet and bitter ways.
Their craggly bark survives cold winters,
the tough red skin, only sweetening in the sun's stare,
Creatures attracted to the taste,
will spread their seeds through bird and wind
across the oceans and prairie weeds
They will bury and rise, blossom and fall.
They will be you — without being you,
and you will be loved.
I will be loved?
Until...
Until?
The red delicious.

New Music — M. M. Nichols

In the great war
they cut off
my ears

I have since revised
the koto and my

approach to the
construction of
all instruments

Granted something is
lost in transformation

But I bring you now
far inland
roaring of the sea

where before a mere
breeze flattered the pines

Simon Perchik

All night the sun wider and wider.
Until I heard my name
nothing lives, like in that lake
where before the sword rises
you hear its name

— from your warm neck its kiss
growing larger.
I hardly recognize the light
or my name breathing
already begins to count

— until I hear my name
your voice had no arms
no eyes — I feed on a voice
that follows from the womb
calling as each mother calls
a word different
surrounded by all others

— these walls and your shadow
roll in my mouth
without the swallowing
— only a whisper
and Earth pulling itself out
heard its name.

Transparency upon Transparency — *Geoff Stevens*

Transparency lapping upon transparency
is transparent but concealing
opaqueness dwelling in the depths
of a sea that is an enigma of science
defeating intrusion by reason of sheer size.
Man has only dipped his toe into its secrets.

Spring-Hearted — Ida Fasel

All winter long in that city by
the sea, I waited for Clem Cobb's
"Come early" when he was ready
to put the first yacht overboard.

I was 9 or 10, gleeful to get
nicked with spray, pelted
by wind, bound for a line
of dancing golden yellows,
sky blues, rosy pinks,
pearly jades — line never
reached before the test was over.

Now from a mountain top
I muse a horizon of mountains,
yet my view is not blocked off.
I am wind-swept far and wide
over a universe still deep
in mystery. Quietly thrilling
to the deeper voice within,
I cross to the shining
I never have to turn back from,
the glowing heart at the heart
of unfathomable things.

Impact — John Grey

Here's the river
before I wrote a poem about it
and here's the poem after
though it's the same river.
Respectable, brown and slow,
though that's not what I said.

Vein, I called it,
because I couldn't write about my own.
Beating heart,
though I knew all along
what was really beating.

This is a river
that can handle allusions,
delusions, and still be a river.
I don't even tell it
that it's in the poem.
Water this deep
could drown imaginings.

Sea Burial — Dudley Laufman

The old Swede
old merchant mariner
Old Sten Oldenburg
desired a sea burial
Scatter ashes on the sea,
he said, having moved inland.
His church oversaw it.
My mom was on the committee
she says to one of the other members
We have a job to do
and he says
I took care of it
and she asks Where?
hoping of course for

someplace coast of Maine
maybe Ordiorne Pont
or at least Nahant.
City Point he says
and all Mom can think of is
oil refineries and dumps.
When she asks When
he says Yesterday
St. Patricks Day
and she thinks Lord
all those Irish and green beer.

Years later I get into Southie
see all those old three deckers
with wonderful old oak doorways
look out into the harbor
through those islands
all the way to Spain
and if Mom were alive
(she had her ashes scattered
on Lake Winnepausaukee,
all those summer folks)
I would say to her
It's ok Mom,
Southie is ok

One Red and Green Christmas Past — Sylvia Manning

(in memory of Albert Huffstickler)

You with us, still alive —
although we made five
with the child well grown
whom you helped bring home
from hospital to rental
kindly warmed
by space heaters you had lit
that morning for woman-friend
with baby not your own.

You with us, still alive —
gracing our small town
your last Christmas.
Besides the child we five

included both of us, older than sin
(a cliché you avoided even
in your defense of them)

and the working-class St. Anthony
whom, as I realize now,
you gave my hand
as a father might have done

and my brother who is very like
Faulkner's Ben, if more so —
me, his Caddy, almost.
Only us.

You with us, still alive.
After a meal we went out-of-doors

to see a Christmas garden
full of tomato trees,
as they can now and then be called,
full of red and green balls,
full of sustenance and
proof of how tradition
slightly changed
can nevertheless live on

if to celebrate the plentiful,
the given,
the reality of what is and will long be
for those who, to honor beauty, see:
the red and green balls
on tomato trees,
the child whose name was not to be

her father's, Brown, but whose life
was formed around
a sense of warmth, a trust
that kindness would lead her home,
first and last:
you still alive, and with us.



First published in '
Fire 21 (Sept. 2003)
Oxfordshire, England

Wretched Times — Greg Moglia

"If the world were perfect, it wouldn't be." Yogi Berra

With his left hand my professor passed out his exam
With his right hand he passed out the answers.

At the International House of Pancakes I ordered
Three scrambled eggs with bacon, home fries
And wheat toast. My best breakfast ever.

On my afternoon walk in the park exactly two feet ahead of me
A redheaded beauty wearing a paper thin skirt.
I caught each move of the whisper of her legs

At the dance I met a raven-haired Armenian
Asked about her plans for the next twenty years.
She reached down for her purse
Took out a four page outline said
I waited so long for someone to ask

My daughter a first year teacher said *I can't be a commander*
Kids are going crazy, help
I said *At first, the new feels inauthentic*
Later she said *Dad that was the best advice*

My father wonders what fish to choose at the restaurant.
I say *Dad, get the halibut*
His mouth full he blurts out *What great fish*

My lover looks hard into my eyes
Asks *Are you crazy about me?*
I look hard back and say *What do you think?*
She reaches under her blouse, unhooks her bra.

That night I walked to the halfway point
Across the Brooklyn Bridge. No wind.
My climb to the railing was easy.

Journeying — Donald Lev

I have traveled
a good deal
back of my head
back of my spine
into what I guessed
was some sort of
seat of truth.
I'm staying there yet
And remembering things.

Come on.
You've got to have something
from all that sitting.
No,
but
hey maybe later.
You never know.

Number 2.

Hey.
Let you off with that?
Negative.

3.

There is a place between two rocks
where there is a secret.
It is everything you wish to know.

Beyond this
I cannot go.

Father Abram
woke up
one morning.
It was a place
in war-torn Iraq.

Who can say what that
god was
who led him
but he
journeyed
and we
journey with him.
More than this
is more than is
revealed.