

Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 26, #2

we would rather be rowdy and gaunt and free
and dine on a diet of roach and rat
than slaves to a tame society
ours is the zest of the alley cat

*mehitabel s extensive past
from ARCHY AND MEHITABEL*

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 26

Number 2*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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

Sample issues — \$3.50 (includes postage).

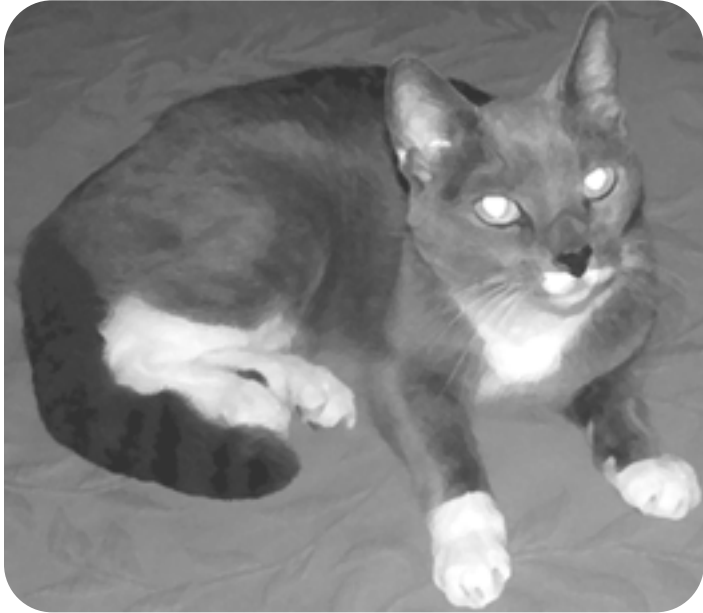
Submissions will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self addressed envelope.

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

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<http://www.tenpennyplayers.org>

photograph by
Barbara Fisher



Must one see? — Sylvia Manning

They expected two million
to view the Pope in state,
and another billion
to anxiously await
his successor.

Our black cat, whom we love,
killed two birds in our yard
that morning. Nobody
gave a farthing,
but we were the lesser.

One may have been the famed
Secret Cardinal, though
I wouldn't know. The shame
of it (I learned through Joe,
the cat's Confessor)

kept me from seeing
their remains.

April, 2005

Some People Take Him for a Mush — Joan Payne Kincaid

This dog will take you down
one hundred pound rebel without a cause
too much wolf to live with
there are bars on the windows
to keep him in
when certain trucks pass by
he will turn on whoever has the leash
when a motorcycle roars
you better be tied to a tree or nearest fence
when another male canine

looks directly at him it's cause
for escalation of fire in the eyes
bared fangs and instinct gone berserk
to the death
at the moment
he is limping from trying
to destroy the front door
and take the mailman to his maker
for being on his turf otherwise
on walks he is happy to accept
biscuits from the man.

Scarcity — Julie Lechevsky

On any given Monday,
 only so much grist
 is allowed in the world.

If you don't use your share,
 someone else will get it.
 Then you can't get it back.

The hand you did not take
 is a chair at a café.
 The whistle on the street becomes a bird.

In science this is called
the principle of scarcity.

Dogs,

Who do not have a whole lot
to do each day,
get many scraps.

Children tagging at your heels
wear the rags of your lost fortune.

How It All Got Started — Bill Roberts

I imagine my father said to my mother something like, "Would you care to do it? Go upstairs and start a family?"

No, it couldn't have been that way. There was no upstairs to their two-room apartment in pre-war D.C.

Probably more on the order of "Hey, good looking. Let's make a baby!" Naw, my father didn't talk like that.

He was kind of shy, probably
came at Mom from an angle. "After
dinner, I thought we might, you know..."

Nope, it didn't happen like that either.
Probably after cooking dinner and
washing dishes, my mother confronted

him and stated, quite to the point, "Say,
handsome, I'm in the mood. How's
about putting down that stupid book!"

First published in the fall 2001 issue of
'Concrete Wolf' Vol 1, No. 3

An Early March Memory — M. M. Nichols

from a 12-month sequence, "Going on Nine"

Is there any neighborhood
but this? We want the way out of it
to be secret and arduous.

Tomboys, legged gang of four,
we explore territory we're
guessing is forbidden as we shin posts

and wobble the wood planks behind garages,
squeeze past fencing barbed or beset with
cantankerous vines or torn open

—invisible, we suppose,
to all but cats & birds those fellow fugitives
from eyes of the dozen houses.

Spring and we
together inch toward a new world
sudden with chirps of arrival

or muttered irk, or loud
poor mew, having climbed
higher than we can foothold a way down.

Spiders in the Sky — R. Yurman

Columbus Day

just past noon a predicted
partial solar eclipse
we strain our necks
peering up

and sight tangled webs
strands hundreds of feet long
thin as ghost trails
strong as ship's rope

filled with the millions
of eighth-inch wide
newly hatched
riding currents of air

20,000 feet
above Christopher's ocean
continent to continent
they glide

Ends — Patricia Wellingham-Jones

Thankful
that pizza with anchovies
still tastes good,
that baby jays
learn to snatch seeds
from a suet block
while we watch,
that friends stop by
for a glass of chilled
chardonnay on our deck,
we live out our ends.

Usurpers — D. M. Ross

Business suit pants
Hang on nails in the basement
And dress shirts with threads haywire at sleeve and collar
Father clothes smelling of Old Golds
Loose tobacco stems in pocket seams
Initials on sweatband hats, broad-brimmed
Hats only fathers wore
Sweat on sweatbands
Small feather like a fan
In the band around the crown
Johnny Krieger and I put them on

Stumble up the stairs, out the side door
Dwarfed by fabric, clutching pant waists
Hands swallowed by jacket sleeves
Hats riding the bridges of noses
And pose for their wives

Boring or Worse **Anselm Brocki**

They must be always happier and have less need to be in control of their minds because two very noticeable differences between me and most people at work are that they chatter to each other all day, sometimes straight through lunch,

and often say how much they enjoy a day off with nothing to do, not even chores or taking a shower, whereas that seems stupid, dull, boring, or worse yet, a perfect opportunity for my worrisome mind to take center stage and dredge up a lot of grudges and mistakes that make me feel awful.

Hammock Time — Ida Fasel

Did I fly the Atlantic for colon relief
at a public latrine in an English town?
A Wendy's hamburger at San Marco franchise?
A picture taken before a moss-grown
Roman fountain run (more efficiently than
anything else in the city) by computer?
Airport delays, bus breakdowns,
thin-walled hotel rooms, slammed doors,
nightlong voices, showers, TV.
My foot futilely rubbed cobblestone red
pursuing a Tintoretto stolen, barely
concealed scorn for my accented

but respectable phonetic pronunciation.
Off the beaten path museums open only
at odd hours. Everywhere eyes avid
for the dollar by trade or snitch.

It was the worst of times, the best of times
and the best of it, I need not go back again.
Vacation now in hammock time, basking
in rope webbing, a baby seal in sun. Warmth
works its way within. In Avignon I stand
on the bridge and the old children's song
Sur le pont comes back loud and clear.

Lugano. Just the sound of it. More than
a passing-by on the way to the Italian border:

something in the air of here-long-before.
I shop. I take an espresso amid flowers.
I stroll under magnificent old trees.
The alps a glory. The Lake a familiar.
Via Nassa, Piazza Riforma, Parco Ciani.
Is anything real or sensed real
too wonderful to be true?
Castle more than home to bishops.
Cathedral where I walk the long aisle
In the pure thrill of faith
Undiminished by the conversation of time,
Durham not merely a pass-over to Edinburgh.
Durham for another day.

Called Back — Ida Fasel

1.

I hang from the plane window
like a spider plant,
its ends avid to grip earth.

2.

The island is hidden in morning haze
but the ferry docks in clear
as I am clear of the world I wandered
for what I didn't know I was looking for,
living free. Buoys in the sea world
clang sea-raw. Benevolent.

3.

Scarred bricks scribble the grassy slope.
Crossed-out rooms, might-have-beens.
A panel of wood that glowed
in its dark grain jagged, black-streaked.
My father and mother framed in space
look out at me.

4.

At the solid oak dining room table
mother reading
coming to the part
where the piano got stuck being moved in
and they had to play it from outside,
The best laugh of our lives.

5.

No clock on the shelf, no shelf.
They are there, and they are quiet.
And now I am.

The Cold Dawn — Richard Spiegel

After leaving the Peace Corps,
I stayed a month in Morocco
before traveling to Spain.

On the train from Madrid to León
I sat beside a soldier in Franco's
army.

We spoke of women.
He shared his sandwich.

Wearing a djellabah,
I arrived in León before dawn.

It was February,
my eyeglasses
cracked as I walked off the train.