

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

26

NO.
11



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 26, #11

there s a dance in the old dame yet

mehitabel joins the navy
from ARCHY DOES HIS PART

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 26

Number 11*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

c o n t e n t s

Sylvia Manning	4-5	Pearl Mary Wilshaw	14	A. D. Winans	20
Fredrick Zydek	6-7	Arthur Winfield Knight	15	Fran Farrell Kraft	21-23
Mark Wisniewski	8-10	Patricia Wellingham-Jones	16	James Penha	24
R. Yurman	11	D.M. Ross	17	Noel Sloboda	25
Joanne Seltzer	12	Ron Singer	18	Sylvia Manning	26
Sue Ellen Kuzma	13	Jeanne Whalen	19		<i>themes for Volume 27</i>

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

©2006 Ten Penny Players Inc. *This magazine is published 4/06.

<http://www.tenpennyplayers.org/mags.html>



Beside an Open Window — Sylvia Manning

This comes through to me tonight
beside an open window
beneath the fine apartment
of my Juliette, Madame de Montaigne,
whom I have truly loved, albeit
too briefly:

that one earns poetic license,
that there is such a thing,
that one earns it primarily through
loving, even as I have loved
a woman born in 1917

born in the predominantly
revolutionary year of our generations,
on our planet, even as I have loved
her long and generous stories
with bare understanding, less
than a child's

that even as a child earns adulthood
through error
a poet achieves her license
through trying, trying primarily
to say love

but in the end,
what is not love?

In the end, beside a window
open.

Dream Animals: Egocentrus Rex — Fredrick Zydek

Empathy is not its middle name, and its favorite musical instruments are the cymbal and the horn. This creature needs to believe it is the absolute center of the universe and the apple of every eye.

Life for it is a stage where only appreciative audiences may apply. It doesn't matter if you sit front row center or in the third balcony. What matters is that you watch in awe and deep

appreciation while Egocentrus Rex commands your attention and tries to delight you with stories of how it selected its morning tea, saved the day at the office by chiding the incompetent and was

nearly killed when an ambulance hogged its lane on the freeway and forced it to take a wrong exit. Exit is not its middle name either. It believes that every room it enters has been waiting

to be entertained, enlightened and informed by antics it assumes are the surest ways to make friends and influence people. It becomes a sad joke - the only creature for whose extinction we all pray.

Lavender
Mark Wisniewski

your rented car double-parked
on Eighth Avenue in July

there is no time for

second-thoughts

just the goal
of hauling everything

out & down all those
stairs

on which the woman
who never returned
your hellos asks

where you're going

what's your name

what exactly is it you

do

she's an artist
she says after you mention

the damned novel
she offers free
cover art

& says she'll give you her

card if you knock
on 601 before you leave

I'll do that you
say &

after you take down
the cat

the car now fully packed

the cat already
crying

perspiration
in your eyes

on your shins &

soaking the waistband
of your shorts

you remember

you have called yourself
a man

of your word &
you enter

one last time

hit 6

ride the elevator that high

knock

her wooden floors are almost
the glossy white

of her walls & ceilings

the skylight you've seen
on the roof hers

everything smelling
of lavender

& you are standing
just inside

accepting her card

the sweat
long past having
irked

her eyes finally taking in
all of you as if to say

now that hellos
need never bother

you & me here

do with me
as you please

Lounge Act — R. Yurman

Between sips of brandy
she shreds
a tiny napkin
twists

a swizzle stick.
He mounts
an adjacent stool
but she

will not meet
his eyes.
His throat
shuts down

his eyeballs
dry.
He nods
and eases

from his seat
sidles past
the line of bottles
swell of voices

crunch of ice.
Haloed in swirls of smoke
he glances back
captures

her fleeting moment
from the room-length glass
and hurries off.
Spotlamps deflected

by the brass-topped bar
come to rest
in the gilded
swinging door.

My Mother's Life in Ragtime — Joanne Seltzer

Old bones healed
best as old bones can
partnered by a walker
she strutted along
the nursing home hall
wiggled her fanny
sang an old song.

Seven years after
she entered that space
of downhill drift
the staff still talked about
how Ethel
gone horizontal
once danced.

Dancing the Polka by Herself — Sue Ellen Kuzma

Beneath a halupki rump
held proudly behind
she feathers her fleet
gold-sneakered feet
in rapid little hops

holds her arms, rabbit paws,
close to her
pink sweat-shirted chest
as if to basket
the polka music against her heart,
keep it close,
bumping little pierogis
in there,
sending the thudding happiness
to her feet.

A solo turn
for her husband before her, housebound,
declining in his recliner, his walker
caging him, his blood needing changing
every 3 days
give or take.

*Halupki - Slovak cabbage roll
Pierogi - potato filled dumplings*

Daymare... — Pearl Mary Wilshaw

There are hazy,
fog-bound days when
a fish out of my element, I
flop across the
splinter-ridden
stage of life,
a veritable insult
to sensitivities of
artistic creation,
the ballerina who
flails her arms
during an arabesque,
misses a jete,

plies behind the beat,
trips if glissading,
fails to catch the
corps in pas couru,
lands too soon from
skimpy sautés, a
total distraction
wobbling en pointe,
unable to anticipate
disaster as her
danseur in a very
unique pas de deux,

tosses her high up
midair, suspended...
elevation unknown,
where mangling their
coda, she mimics a
participle misplaced
...dangling.

Happiness — Arthur Winfield Knight

For Bob and Nadine

He phones from Carmel,
telling me they had martinis
at the Hog's Breath. Now
they are drinking Margaritas,
overlooking the Pacific,
waiting for the sun to set.
Their lips are salty.

He has lived alone
for almost two decades,
but he no longer
has to go to bed early
so he can dream more.

Everything is vivid:
the crystalline sky,
the golden sand,
the ring the woman wears.
He cannot remember
when he has been so happy.

Fingers — Patricia Wellingham-Jones

The finger that picked up a dead fly
by its wings under the window
stirred scotch in swirls among ice cubes
melting fast. That finger then
swiped itself dry on navy trousers
just back from her hospital job.
The owner of the fingers
watched yellow flames flicker
in a fat red candle, thought
of the masks and germs
and diapered babies of her day.
Took a deep swallow of the dark
golden drink and mused to herself
that alcohol sterilizes everything it touches.

Diner — D.M.Ross

The waitress, who has whiskers
plants a knuckle on the counter
pivots in the narrow space
between stainless steel and Formica
She is part of the landscape
like the farmwomen from my childhood—
Aunt Jesse's harelip made her pucker
as if she was blowing out candles
my grandmother Katherine's boxer's chin
crosshatched with scars
after the Nash Rambler ran off a country road
into a ditch

This waitress issues orders
Arrayed around her
sierras of scrambled eggs
phalanxes of French toast
a pond of opaline maple syrup
Famished, we search the menu for reassurances
Which is why all diners look familiar
Which is why the waitress didn't shave

In a Stranger's House — Ron Singer

Middle-aged men wake up in the night
and (not stopping for toupee)
toddle off to pee.

("He never met a pun he didn't like.")

In a stranger's house, blind dark
and full of barking furniture,
slowly, stiffly rising,
flashlight left behind,
feeling for walls, the door,
out and round the corner,
shuffling forth placatingly.

("Some footage from your dotage,
smacking of senility.")

Let's hope it's only that,
and not a foretaste of
some ghastly afterlife
where you stumble till you find the hole
and then they push you in.
Be glad that, though you pee so long
it seems like immortality,
you have a bed to go to,
the voyage home, easy, quick,
a wife to wrap you in her arms
and ask your back what time it is.

Townie — Jeanne Whalen

Saturday night
in a karaoke bar
isolated
from mainstream society,
Neil the self-proclaimed Townie
tries to convince us to stay.
The diversity here is diverse,
he ventures, and you're all very kind.
He tells me I'm arrogant, but not stuck up,
and I have goddess energy.

He's worked
in a stained glass gallery
downtown since 1979
and he wants to take us there.

But not tonight.
It's too late tonight.

He insists that he doesn't need
to know our names.
I'll take you to my gallery next time.
I'll remember your features.

My tattoo? I ask.
No, sweetheart.
Your goddess energy.

Woman on the Balcony — A. D. Winans

I see her two
three times a week
sitting on the balcony
when the weather permits
here in old Italy town
in what is left of North Beach
her robe slightly open with sensual
thoughts left to the imagination
thumbing through the pages of a book
taking no notice of the people walking below

standing to stretch, she yawns
legs like sturdy pillars that stretch
to reach the sky into the boundaries
of my mind

my eyes begging to read the pages
she turns with sensual fingers
wanting just one quick look
one intimate journey into the pages
or the parting of her robe

a journey to forbidden places
a flight back in time
another place another world
high on a balcony where I too
ignore the people walking below

Dancer — Fran Farrell Kraft

Once I was an Arthur Murray dancer
It's crazy what you do when you are young
The dingy sublet flat that served as home
Just barely saved me from assault and harm
I learned that I could take care of myself
Though getting it together took some time

The fifty's was an interesting time
And it was fun to be a young dancer
I rarely bothered to look to myself
Cause any time looks good when you are young
I didn't think that folks would do me harm
Although my shelter was not quite a home

I still looked on Seattle as my home
And would continue to over some time
I 'spose I sometimes courted foolish harm
Being immortal and a young dancer
It happens that I am no longer young
And still I seldom scrutinize myself

I look around and find I'm still myself
I've reached a stage where I'm happy at home
Which hasn't changed that much since I was young
Some souvenirs reflect passage of time
With little trace of the naïve dancer
The moves from phase to phase did little harm

I've lived a full life doing little harm
I now find I can be fond of myself
I never was an outstanding dancer
And I have made myself a pleasant home
I do, of course, look back from time to time
To think if youth is wasted on the young

It's crazy what you do when you are young
The crazy things I did caused little harm
What wounds there were have healed with passing time
I look around and come back to myself
I've managed to create a pleasing home.
Once I was an Arthur Murray dancer

When young I did not look much at myself
It didn't do much harm and helped me home
The young dancer receded some with time

**A BALI DANCER;
A NEW WORLD
James Penha**

My mask

faces dead moons
breathing breasts
sun bursts
eruptions
of language
when you stare silently

into the corner
terrified of your seeing
my geometry

I turn away

Knots — Noel Sloboda

The hernia hurt but did not
scare me. The cutting,
then the patching, I did not
in theory mind. But when I could
not tie my shoes 10 days later, I
discovered something new
grinding inside. In
Velcro easy-walkers, my feet
carried me to the doctors. Sutures,
they explained, safe in
white coats, wearing smart shoes

tightly laced. Those knots
affixing your patch, under
stress, can irritate. Not
to worry. Suddenly mute, I
nodded. In my bed I
stayed, four days straight,
waiting, while the irritation
ground my guts. Rather than
unraveling, as I'd supposed
I'd do, I knew then I'd
soon be bound in
an impossible knot.

Bryant Park, 8/10/2005 — Sylvia Manning

and this is one gray woman's
truth: I'd rather be here tonight
than in the City of Lights,
here in this City That Never Sleeps,
having coffee (too late for me) beneath
old lamp post above a little round green
metal table with an empty chair too for you,
unless you were in a wheelchair and needed
empty space there, instead.

("Let's go to New York," my brother said.
"We would need help," I told him.
"We would need somebody else to go with us."
But he said "No! We can do it. Let's go!")

The 27th volume of *Waterways* will be published in 11 issues during 2006-7.
Monthly themes are from Samuel Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.

Number 1 (deadline May 14, 2006):

How Nations sink, by darling Schemes oppress'd,
When Vengeance listens to the Fool's Request.

Number 2 (deadline June 14, 2006):

Wealth heap'd on Wealth, nor Truth nor Safety buys,
The Dangers gather as the Treasures rise.

Number 3 (deadline July 14, 2006):

Once more Democritus, arise on Earth,
With chearful Wisdom and instructive Mirth,
See motley Life in modern Trappings dress'd,
And feed with varied Fools th'eternal Jest:

Number 4 (deadline September 14, 2006):

Where change of Fav'rites made no Change of Laws,
And Senates heard before they judg'd a Cause;

Number 5 (deadline October 14, 2006)

Deign on the passing World to turn thine Eyes,
And pause a while from Letters to be wise;
There mark what Ills the Scholar's Life assail,
Toil, Envy, Want, the Patron, and the Jail.

Number 6 (deadline November 14, 2006)

Around his Tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his Death, ye Blockheads, hear and sleep.

Number 7 (deadline December 14, 2006)

Yet Reason frowns on War's unequal Game,
Where wasted Nations raise a single Name,