

# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

28



## Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #11

This midnight the moon,  
Playing virgin after all her encounters,  
Will break another date with you.

excerpted from *Time Stone*  
Lola Ridge's *Sunup and other poems* (1920)

# **WATERWAYS:** Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 28

Number 11\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

## **c o n t e n t s**

|                           |              |                       |              |                            |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Dave Church</b>        | <b>4</b>     | <b>Susanne Olson</b>  | <b>15</b>    | <b>John Grey</b>           | <b>28-29</b> |
| <b>Thomas D. Reynolds</b> | <b>5-7</b>   | <b>Sylvia Manning</b> | <b>16-18</b> | <b>Bill Roberts</b>        | <b>30-31</b> |
| <b>Lee Evans</b>          | <b>8</b>     | <b>Joanne Seltzer</b> | <b>19</b>    | <b>Madeline Tiger</b>      | <b>32-33</b> |
| <b>Patrick Carrington</b> | <b>9-10</b>  | <b>George Held</b>    | <b>20-21</b> | <b>David Michael Nixon</b> | <b>34</b>    |
| <b>R. Yurman</b>          | <b>11</b>    | <b>M.M.Nichols</b>    | <b>22-23</b> | <b>Donald Lev</b>          | <b>35</b>    |
| <b>James Penha</b>        | <b>12-13</b> | <b>Fredrick Zydek</b> | <b>24-25</b> |                            |              |
| <b>Geoff Stevens</b>      | <b>14</b>    | <b>Rex Sexton</b>     | <b>26-27</b> |                            |              |

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## Poetry 101 — Dave Church

For poets to *poet*,  
They must stay within themselves,  
In the deepest waters of consciousness,  
In the truest sense of *metaphysicalness* —  
Relating existentially to their individual  
Perception of the world in which they live.

Poets can be very boring people...

*back to contents*

## **My Father Takes a Call — Thomas D. Reynolds**

On the first and second rings,  
It is undoubtedly a wrong number.

After the third ring, my father glances up  
To see if anyone will answer it.

My mother is at the end of the drive gathering mail,  
And he gauges whether the sound can reach that far.

Realizing that it won't,  
Or that the wind will not allow the sound to carry,  
Whirring it away into the tall grass,  
Or that she'll never make it back in time,  
Even at a dead run ,  
He waits for the caller to give up,  
As they always do, eventually.

No one attempting to reach him can be as dogged as he  
In his efforts to avoid being reached.

Except this one.

He should answer it.

He clicks "mute" on the remote  
And pops one last cashew.

The phone lies prostrate  
Beside the cactus.

The breeze from the window  
Is blast-furnace hot.

Silence whips across thin weeds  
Rising from the cracks  
Of a desolate highway.

My father is a lonesome traveler.  
The city lies a hundred miles away.  
He has walked for days, years,  
And before the abandoned gas station,  
He stops to wipe away the sweat.  
Kick the dust from his boots.  
Fan himself beneath the faded sign.

And then he hears a sound  
Coming from the pay phone,  
And out of a duty only barely remembered,  
And maybe not averse  
To the sound of a human voice  
Beyond the cries of desert hawks,  
He lifts the cracked receiver.

*back to contents*



## The Familiar — Lee Evans

Peek-a-boo, old friend! I see  
you've waxed yourself to the full,  
beside the right triangle  
of the Best Buys store this evening.

You dance upon the phone poles  
beside me on the highway,  
and pole-vault with the aerial  
when I turn the steering wheel.

Tonight before I doze off,  
you're peering thru Venetian blinds,  
where shadows stripe the shoulders  
of the woman lying next to me.

*back to contents*

## Whispers from the Pier — Patrick Carrington

Beyond the dunes there is a place  
where jetty poles are snapped  
and mark a death, graveyard on sand.

Like scriptless stones, they guard  
the buried days. Split with salt,  
they sag but watch. We were there  
once, beneath the choking wood, dying  
with the pier in shadows. No one

heard us, naked in the rain, whispering  
the wind quiet, crying the clouds dry.  
We could have been anyone. We could  
have been old gulls. Or tides, eroding  
legs and life, returning the dust.

Above our heads, the fleeing feet  
tapped out our grief. They ran  
to rooms in the storm, left us  
to the dark, the swell, the grinding  
rides. Left us, to the rotting heart.

One time, there was a peace  
below the moon, when sky  
and sea held hands. On the flat,  
the boards drew breath and saw  
the sky wheel spinning.

*back to contents*

## Soup — R. Yurman

Now you bid me  
—Come in, eat—  
A soft buttered roll  
Steamed prawns in  
A basic white sauce  
Good with so many dishes  
Flavors that mingle  
Textures that fill the mouth  
Ease the stomach  
A pale dry wine

No, my dear,  
Not this time  
I've grown content  
with the homemade soup  
I simmer daily in a large pot  
thick stock  
redolent with spices

*back to contents*

**Oldie — James Penha**

I press the vine  
of my mind  
for the wine  
of a remembered song.

*[back to contents](#)*

## Dunes — James Penha

Music of wave and wind  
amplifies sunned sand  
and I wish  
for love and poetry.

Rock  
and roll  
rhythms  
race me to the surf.

I see a bobbing face,  
hear a voice,  
dive into the blare and beat,  
but impatient passion  
forces the metaphor  
before I am prepared  
to smile and say yes.

Later alone  
and air-conditioned  
I write the poem

*back to contents*

## Geoff Stevens

After a night of passion  
the moon  
head bowed in the early morning sky  
blushes with embryonic revelation  
reddens with the rising sun

*[back to contents](#)*

## Soir de Paris — Susanne Olson

Perfume lingers  
in the soft wool of her coat  
aroma of elegance  
sweet taste of desire.  
Beauty radiates  
woman's star-lit wonders.  
Unknown worlds beckon  
dreamt-of in adulation  
of her exquisite style and worldly flair.  
Bitter flavor of sorrow  
of being left behind in silence  
mingles with the scent of yearning  
for existence  
initiation into that wanton magic.

*back to contents*



moonlight your last night at cabin — Sylvia Manning  
*for Tony*

our glowing as if clear glass tureen  
or slender curving bowl  
held for first moment of sharing  
some gold colored liqueur  
aged and with honey  
moon

our late in our time in this place  
this time  
this still quite quiet place  
where we slept without seeing yet  
this moon

our assuring each the other  
    in night dark morning  
    that in the East first one  
and then the other saw  
this moon

after our sleep after earlier wonder  
    for believing we saw stars  
    above a rainstorm, then slept  
then woke for nature's call to see  
this moon

my dear one one, remember  
    in noisy streetlight night  
    where sky long ago became low  
remember through sudden electric storms  
    where mere ornamentals grow  
remember in shallow nights apart

this one darkest morning  
moon

even if all our years of moments  
ended in a threatening rain  
without hope for any truly perceived glimmer of stars  
above the storm

without then any chance  
of having you say, later,  
in rich darkness,

"Look: moon shadows.  
How strong it is,  
this moon."

*July 2007*

*back to contents*

## Travels in Missouri - Joanne Seltzer

To experience a place  
you have to make a commitment  
of one complete moon.

You will witness the obese moon,  
the anorectic moon,  
the agoraphobic moon.

When you and the moon  
do a belly dance  
she will wave her purple cloud  
through your red silk scarf  
of earth's expression.

First published by The Arts Institute  
in *Havens for Creatives*

*back to contents*

. . .And Cream — George Held  
*for Cheryl*

June's full moon gets its name from the strawberry harvest  
that happens every year at this time.

That lemon lozenge dissolving the night  
In strawberry season gives pause  
For thoughts about shortcake and cream,  
Vanilla ice cream or Cheerios topped with red  
Fruit, about strawberry blondes like Basinger,  
Daryl the Mets' monster slugger, whom some fans  
Cheered and others gave the raspberry.

Ever notice that the smaller strawberry tastes  
Authentic, while the humongous ones grown to ship  
Where berries are out of season have no flavor,

Aroma, or lush texture? Who ever tastes  
A strawberry today like the ones we picked  
In the Fifties, sucking our red fingers  
Like a piece of sugar cane? Fruit then  
Was seasonal—tomatoes from July  
Through September, apples from then  
Till December. Remember how they tasted  
Edenically true?

Today's gassed, synthetically  
Colored facsimiles remind us of our fallen  
State. Even the moon bears garbage,  
But the old full moon still tastes sweet  
Dissolving the old night over the old  
Strawberry fields, forever.

*back to contents*

**A Translation — M. M. Nichols**

. . .his curls like thick hyacinth  
clusters/ full of blooms . . . .

The Odyssey 6.231 (Fagles translation)

When blossom shrouds the pear trees,  
earth is deepening its bow to the sun.

We wake before today part  
from the uneasy moon

in a room where hyacinth  
has pushed aside the points of its own

shiny leaves, splitting them wide,  
and become fresh, perfumed, purple

beard of Odysseus :

whose dreams, alphabet-oared,  
have roamed the drowning years and come  
to a teeming, tall city,  
farthest cry across the western sea.

Sprung out of clay encirclement  
from processed soil, we spy

his wily shade: this watered, curly bloom,  
bought for a book-lined berth in rented rooms.

*back to contents*



## The White Oak — Fredrick Zydek

It isn't white at all. Its leaves are brimming with chlorophyll. Photosynthesis goes on like crazy and the tree is as green as any fir, birch or stately poplar. At least the trunk of the white birch is white. The trunks of white oaks are as brown as sparrow feathers. The leaves aren't even white in fall. They may not become as bright a yellow or orange as maple trees and cottonwoods but white oak leaves do turn a brisk light brown more akin to a robin's breast than pumpkins. It's a slow growing tree with fine-grained

wood so hard it is considered one of the best for flooring and ship timbers. The great Charter Oak of Hartford was such a tree. In 1687 the charter of Connecticut was hidden in this tree after the despotic governor of New England, Sir Edmond Andros, tried to seize it by force. The famous oak blew over in 1856. They say the governor's desk was made from its timbers and that somewhere a baby's cradle is still graced with rockers made from its branches.

*back to contents*

## Blind Mice — Rex Sexton

*"The world began  
without a plan  
and soon may end."*

Moan the toxic winds,  
As the children skip along  
And sing their songs,  
Beneath my window,  
About witches, spiders,  
Bridges falling down.

*"Ring around the rosey (They sing.)  
a pocket full of posey  
ashes, ashes. . ."*

PLUTONIUM up...I monitor  
The market on my new PC . .  
POETRY down...OIL is still  
Royal...ECOLOGY in Entropy ...

*"Oranges and lemons  
say the bells of St. Clements"*

"Buy Sell Buy Sell Buy Sell"  
I type in furiously.

*"I owe you five farthings  
say the Bells of St. Martens"*

Dollar signs, like visions of sugar  
Plums, dance before my eyes.

*"Here comes the candle  
to light you to bed!"  
The children sing.  
"Here comes the chopper  
to chop off your head!"*

*back to contents*

## Or Get Out the Camera Instead — John Grey

You're a good lad.  
Here, take the pistol.  
Such fine wavy hair,  
clear skin,  
warm blue eyes,  
who better to be  
my assassin.  
Twenty years you've been  
on this planet.  
I'm past sixty and counting.  
Your life's ahead of you  
like route 80 across  
the Utah Salt Flats.

Mine is glaring into  
its own shadows.  
Once, you needed me  
to do everything but breathe.  
And what good am I to you now?  
A rheumatic guide to my pistol collection?  
Luckily, the most expensive one is loaded.  
Nothing better than to be blown away  
by a really good deal I made  
some thirty five years ago.  
Better this than banishment.  
The usual falling out over time  
can't compare.  
Or even the facile recharging  
of affection  
at family get-togethers.

And useless wedding photos  
On the mantle.  
Snaps of grinning  
toothless grandchildren.  
Love conquers all, so they say.  
And with a bullet to the heart,  
it stays conquered.

*back to contents*

## Tomatoes from the Garden — Bill Roberts

Grandma would feed me lettuce and tomato sandwiches, the tomatoes freshly picked from her backyard garden. Fresh petunias of every color decorated her back porch table.

I never wanted summers to end back then, but cold weather killed off the growing things in the tiny backyard where Grandma loved to work on her knees in an old flower-print dress.

She missed the bottom step into the backyard one day on the way to her garden, breaking a hip. Ten years in bed, without tending her garden, Destroyed her garden and her ability to think clearly.

Occasionally, I'd bring her a lettuce and tomato sandwich, store-bought, but she still loved it. Always she'd ask if someone worked in the garden And if the tomatoes had been taken from there.

I don't think it was wrong of me to lie, do you?

*back to contents*



## CNN Version of the Slaying — Madeline Tiger

We interrupt this program, this war, this era, this millennium, this prayer  
We interrupt this honor of anointing and following and boasting and fulfilling the boast; of foot beats and sword flashes and groans and roars of celebration, we interrupt these Amalekites and Bethlehemites and Israelites and Philistines gathering, gorging for the attack and the pull of the sturdy branch and the stretching of the leather thongs, the stone held, the stone nested, the stone pulled back, the muscular arms, The shining eye, the release and the flight  
Of that stone.

We interrupt the story of the kingly brave boy and that huge horrific, drooling growling hollering hairy giant coming down toward David, shouting him down



## The End of the Mind — David Michael Nixon

I saw the end of the mind  
where a great abyss lay  
and stretched beyond imagination.  
Since I could not enter that void,  
I turned and strolled back toward  
the mind's center, but soon my pace  
was slowed by a great welter of clutter:  
endless golf tees, plastic flamingos,  
semiautomatic weapons,  
computers, TVs, magazine ads,  
clear roll-on deodorants, beer cans,  
until, stifled, I turned and fled,  
desperate to struggle back toward  
the abyss, where perhaps some entrance  
could be found or forged.

*back to contents*

## On the Film *La Vie en Rose* — Donald Lev

I thought I would play this record, this really good Piaf LP — I have a CD that except for "La Vie en Rose" has only more obscure Piaf. I could not find that LP! I went through my entire collection, which has so diminished over the years, as I have diminished over the years, but, though I am positive that recording is somewhere in this House of Usher in which I temporarily abide, I could not find it. Which put me in a mood - angry, frustrated, and of course very drunk.  
Perfect

*back to contents*

Waterways will inaugurate its  
29th year of publications with  
a poetry reading at the  
Saint George branch of the NY Public Library  
5 Central Avenue, Staten Island, 10301  
(718) 442-8560  
on Saturday, May 17, 2008 from 2-4pm.

The free public reading will feature poets who have been published in  
Waterways  
& an *'open mic'*.

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