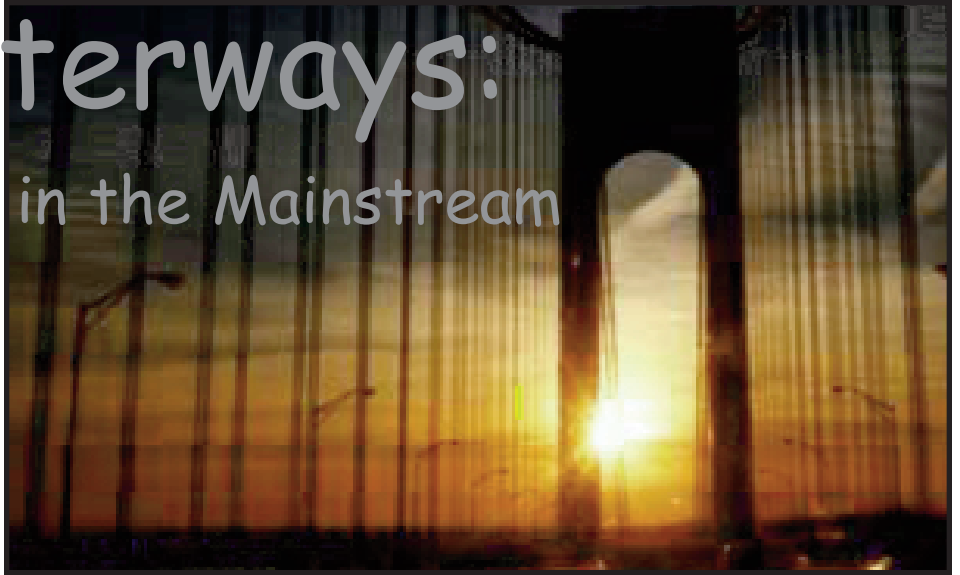


# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

28



#2

## Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #2

Centuries shall not deflect  
nor many suns  
absorb your stream,  
flowing immune and cold  
between the banks of snow.

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

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 28

Number 2\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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## Cradle Song — M. M. Nichols

Six dozen years and more it took  
my memory

to arrive, listening, held  
on her shoulder:

*Rock-a-Bye Baby*  
*When the wind blows, the cradle will rock...*  
*Rest, rest on mother's breast*  
*Father will come to thee soon*  
*Oh, blow him again to me...*  
*Sleep, my little one*  
*Sleep, my pretty one*  
*Sleep*

She wasn't too shy then to sing,  
or too mad.

Did she know if I understood  
the words? or think

I'd ride  
hundreds of moons to hear her

singing again  
in my mind's cozy, incandescent room?

and rest alone,  
sad for her shortness of life,

and sing away  
the pains of growing older.

## A Fire to the Point — James Penha

*after a photograph by Dorothea Lange*

Her face flickers like the candle  
melting into a self  
set on a corroded ring of fingers  
in a dry wind  
dissolved by the hunger  
of her children hugging her  
for a bit  
but a candle's fate is darkness  
and cold, a pool  
as profound as the wax of an ear that hears  
a daughter moan,  
a son whimper,  
an infant silence.

## January Night at the Folks — Thomas D. Reynolds

With the furnace out  
And snow in the forecast,  
They huddle around the wood stove  
And journey into 1897.

The surrounding houses dissolve,  
Leaving a thin horizon of white plains.

Wind lurks around the timber,  
Drawn by the lantern light,  
Howls echoing into the ravines.



Like a gray horse gaunt with starvation,  
The bare oak branch nuzzles the window pane,  
Begging for sustenance.

How did pioneers stay engaged  
On such a night?

Could the same collection of stories  
Suffice to stem the tide of loneliness?

Could imagination surge yet again  
To create a new even if wholly fabricated tale?

Perhaps contrary to history,  
The pioneer's fortitude was not fully tested  
By flood, famine, and deprivation.

Only by such a dark night of the soul,  
Glancing into the countenance of a spouse  
Who has fitted the last puzzle piece  
And now stares into your face,  
Daring you to be interesting.

## The Hudson in Winter — Mary K. Lindberg

A winter that broke all records. Air so  
cold warm became forgotten memory.  
Like eggs of a giant god, snowstorms laid  
impregnable walls of white. I wrote.

At night, circles of snow-laden ice gorge  
the river, now a moonlit bridgepath  
fit for ghosts galloping to a natural  
palisade. I rewrote the letter. Were we

as frozen as the river? You knew.  
Sun and moon climbed over a floor  
of sparkling rings, shining the world new,  
like the days we walked on water. Circles

rubbed each other, forming Gothic lace.  
The post office was closed. Hungry eagles  
perched on river rings, stalwart before  
trolling icebreakers. They made me think

about you, visor of dark hair strutting  
across your face. When I looked up, the  
ice began to move. I made a mess, had to  
write your address again. Black wet waves

appeared, melting the white valley like  
silence in music. I stood in deep snow to  
mail the letter. When the soggy stuff  
melted all over your name, I took it home.

## Survival of the Fragile - Joan Payne Kincaid

How can you find  
what you were before?  
the fragility of definitions: breath move your feet  
what indicator could there be  
a holiday invasion war-like  
like going around stations of the cross  
or sitting in a class where the teacher dictates the mind;  
day to day boredom stifles impulse  
why must you write when it is Christmas  
or try to save it under file or rem activity?  
Quo vadis vanish quotidian coma  
he wrote about the daily trivia  
she called about the war  
a few cards remain to be sent

any energy that had been is gone;  
they asked if we were on a journey to oblivion  
tedium and everyone making suggestions  
still on a Sunday around a Sunday close to Christmas  
Baryshnikov and Kirkland are careening thru  
Nutcracker ethereal as birds  
and there comes a lightness of poetry in space  
the situation owns you.

Yawning links to now, lost again black out  
if it's one thing against advice it's that no one values it;  
on a rainy night before Christmas Eve  
piles of essentials accumulate helpless  
as incoming tidal lips accelerating;  
she asked why they didn't perceive;  
the answer was sleep-walking delusion brainwash

the way things tumble in a machine  
or conflict between passionate ideals and self-protecting bureaucracy . . .  
that you can sail thru the air on someone's fingertips  
yet someone some TV airhead talks of being tall and blonde  
(like Giraffe she goes to Africa to measure  
their eyelashes)!!! Who said if you're happy  
you've got to be missing the point;  
there is something about a Parson Jack that smiles  
walking thru the park today crawls to be with children;  
she loves the world with passion  
and was bred to chase with hounds;  
some times when she's alone out doors  
I suspect she searches horses in her mind.

## Tredegar — Sam Calhoun

I took the familiar path,  
an old railroad grade leading  
into a forest where the sun  
disappears beneath the canopies  
of tall pines;

Crossed the stream on  
a fallen tree, and pushed  
back the brush guarding the  
entrance to the abandoned  
iron mill and sat



down on a granite stone.  
piles of slag and broken  
bricks litter base of  
the remaining stone walls, degraded  
from years of weathering.

Like a book exposed briefly,  
it's preface train wheels,  
on the factory line used to transport  
supplies to the main route across  
the rotted bridge.

And by shovel or by hand,  
we'll blow the dust from  
the cover, remove the  
pages of leaves until we reach  
the chapter summary, all that's left  
for us to read in a mountain of blank pages.

## Geoff Stevens

On the river's deserted mud  
the imprint of a bird's foot  
hopping until it stops  
the mark of failure to find food  
a trademark similar to that of an inept handyman  
that treads in his own cement.  
This is not the weather  
for working out of doors  
the black icy waters  
flow between banks of snow  
and centuries of undesired results.

## Birds of a Feather — Ellaraine Lockie

Each spring the hummingbirds hover  
over the same place on my patio  
Where twenty-four years ago hung  
a red plastic feeder filled with sugar water

Four or five fowl generations later  
through some unfathomable feat  
these offspring flutter wings over  
empty air in worship of this sacred spot

And I wonder if my great grandparents  
fed off the magnificence of the Rio Grande  
Where it divides New Mexican high desert  
Blood of Christ Mountains on one side  
and burnt amber sunset on the other

Where I am blindly led year after year  
to be lit by the sun god's torch  
To burn Taos fuel  
To feel the whisper  
of angel wings on my back

## Likes — Anselm Brocki

If happily married older couples eventually start to look like each other because of all the years of lighting up each other's mirror neurons & cheerful parts of both their brains and contracting the same loving smile muscles of their faces, which has been tested by comparing before-

and-after photos, then surely  
those in a toxic marriage —  
like that of Sonya and Leo  
Tolstoy full of turmoil  
to the extent of his running  
away and dying alone of cold  
in a train station in winter —  
must start after years to look  
alike with lined hateful faces,  
if they can stand to look at each  
other, even across a candlelit  
dinner table for two at Tolstoy's  
country estate Yasnaya Polyana.

## December — Susanne Olson

Darkness invades my veins  
frost covers my eyes  
lost days like shadows barely exist  
nights endless shiver, naked.  
To what end will this lead, how soon?

Yet not the end, days will brighten  
wood smoke scents the evening air  
clouds bare now and then a star.  
Dead leaves decay to feed the earth, and snow  
is nothing but a blanket. Where  
lies the road from gloom to light?

Soil's frozen crust hides seeds in sleep  
slumber waits for spring's first ray, dormant  
sprouts dream summer's short delight.  
Covered by ice the brook keeps murmuring  
its song, vision of freedom's tumultuous  
play. Will there be hope, be life?

Not death awaits me, love will blossom  
lift into strength, fill with new blood.  
The cedar tree, arms green through dark  
and cold, reaches for breath. December  
far behind, I touch new joy  
and with the mockingbird, the water-snake  
I dance the sun, I sing the rain.



## Highway 17 — Hugh Fox

Coyote-evergreen (Pasa Tiempo Drive) mountain-hills,  
eating the Apples of Immortality, sanity a new roof,  
oatmeal flax strawberries for breakfast, whatever-scampi  
for lunch, Cabrillo College fog burnoff

Territory

Sect

Less

Language

Credo

dozing into resurrectionless  
as-long-as-I've-got-left-ness.

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## **My First World War — Bill Roberts**

My playthings were heavy toys of war.  
Lead soldiers in Hun's gray or SS black,  
Their crooked rifles raised to misfire.

Battleships and flattops in red, white, and  
Chipped blue settled to the bottom  
Of the suds-filled ocean in my bathtub.

The to-scale model planes were embellished  
With rising suns and swastikas on wings and  
Fuselages, menacing bad guys in the cockpits.

Heavy tanks and armored trucks scurried back and  
Forth across enemy lines, having difficulty  
Telling which was friend, which was foe.

A careening Red Cross ambulance, filled  
To capacity with the warfront wounded,  
Was always overturning, spilling out bodies.

I personally invented the feared atomic bomb,  
A heavy brick, that crushed all of these toys,  
Ending the first of my world wars.

## On the Film *The Madness of King George* — Donald Lev

I thought I would check out  
my favorite queen's former realms  
so I rented *The Madness of King George*.  
Some mess! Did she have her hands full!  
The crazy husband, the nerdy son  
(fifteen kids she had. Fifteen!)  
who became regent and gave us all that furniture —  
I don't know which of the Georges, maybe all four  
gave us that elegant architecture around Washington Square.  
So a total loss it wasn't.  
England got out of the slave trade, a bit of a plus,  
and set fire to Washington, not necessarily a plus.  
So history marches on, and Queen Helen (Mirren)  
certainly improves *her* lot!

3/07

## On the Film *Volver* — Donald Lev

I think

Penelope Cruz,

the star of this,

wears too bright a shade of lipstick.

I liked looking at her sister/daughter Sole better

(Sole, it is revealed rather matter-of-factly, so you

almost miss it, is her daughter by her father, therefore

also her sister) come to think about it, it is probably the

young daughter of Penelope that is also her sister — subtitles

can be confusing. In any case, the men, what there is of them,

in this film are only good to butcher, refrigerate, and bury

next to their favorite fishing holes.

There is a bit of magic realism, I guess, in that  
grandma returns (*volver*) as a ghost, only  
she is just pretending to be a ghost, well...  
some critics say this is one of the best of the year,  
but I don't think so.

1/07

## She's an Artist Now . . . Because She Said So — John Grey

Cliff drops a foot or two in front of her.  
Easel shakes in wind, begs her find an inside studio.  
And sun is riotous and hot, sacks her cheeks,  
scorches her legs.  
But she loves the air, that nothing by definition,  
that everything in reality.  
She's with the canvas no one can intrude upon.  
A face gives quite a performance. Self-portrait.  
Took a dose of ocean breeze so she could see straight.  
Ruffled hair that seems as neat as summer.  
Sad eyes that give such intimate pleasure.

And a mouth wet with gratitude that the brush  
chose her expression.  
So it's goodbye to forty four years  
on the verge of a complete waste of time.  
It's step back from the edge, turn to talents  
Abandoned in grade school.  
Whatever churns up inside, she thrashes out.  
Whosoever drowns in her oceans,  
Her ripe hands rescue in paint.  
She brushes longing away like sand-flies.  
And desperation is the dog she chases with a stone.  
A pale woman on a cliff,  
who could be dazzling her friends with sea-scapes,  
discovers it's the sea-scapes that cry out for dazzling.





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