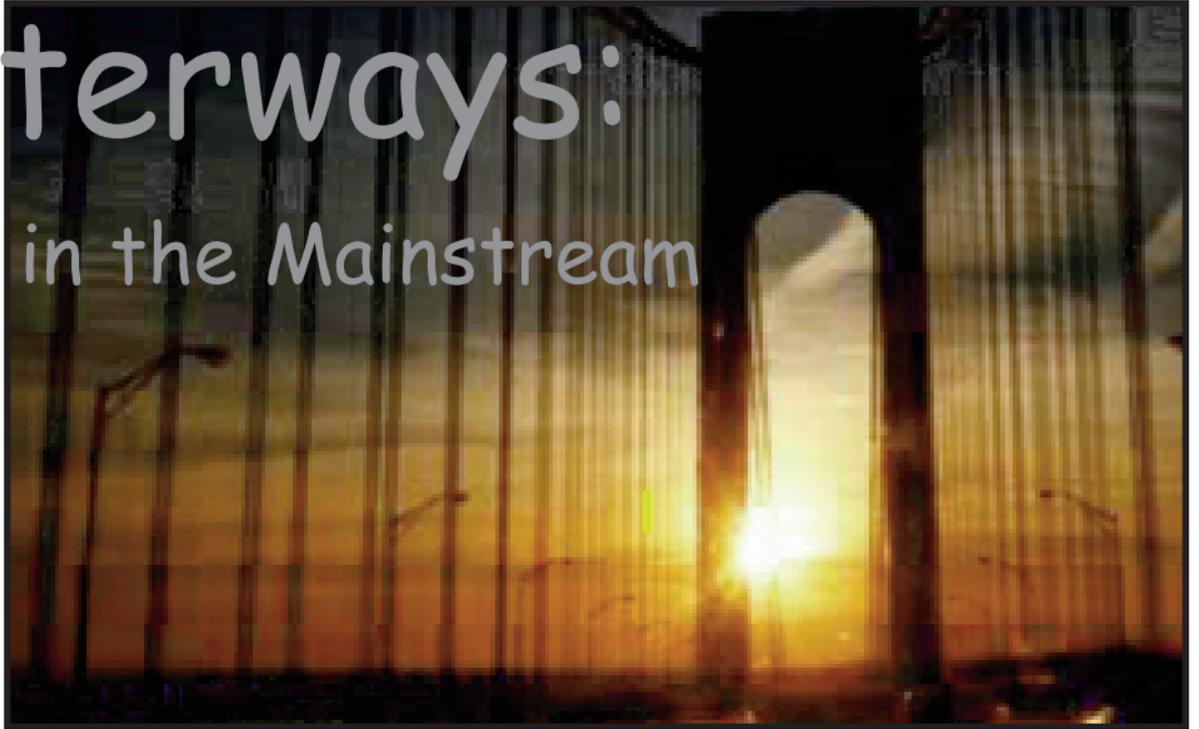


# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

28



## Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #3

Now you gleam softly triumphant  
Folding immensities of light.

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

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 28

Number 3\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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**Spastic Twin: She Learns to Stand — M. M. Nichols**

*Give me a place to stand and I will move the world — Archimedes*

In a corner of my eye I catch  
her balancing act.

She rides the Kiddy Car -

which gives her  
a moveable chair, a handlebar to steer  
docile wheels

across busy rugs, and a place to stand up in.  
I know by heart  
how she seizes the bar with both hands,

Nutcracker-smiling  
all over, from the sway of her silky hair  
down to those

ankle-hiding shoelaces, then, full of glee  
rises  
quirkily in the world while attempting

the sky,  
with a sideways glance going for straightness  
like mine.

She was quiet, stood evolving a stance and  
wobbled it along.  
Archimedes' daughter? She stands, our worlds do move.

## Pimeria Alta (VIII) — David Chorlton

Monsoon thunder gave a final blessing to the fields.  
*. . . for they work hard and pray with fervour  
at all required hours. Few in their possessions,  
they wear humility and are diligent  
as befits your children.* The ink dried as quickly  
as the puddles in the mission courtyard  
before silver light was painted on the stones  
and snails marked their presence in the night  
as unseen objects of belief  
the evidence of which were cursive trails  
shining after dawn between the mystery  
of thyme and that of sage  
as the heat returned with a whiplash.

## Woman at the Beach — Joan Payne Kincaid

This autumn-like day at the beach  
we watch an ultramarine blue harbor.  
A brisk wind blows uncharacteristically  
from the north west. It is too fair  
to be anywhere else  
and she is in the foreground — in a wheelchair  
young lovely tetraplegic sensing a different reality:  
dressed in a sensuous pale lavender spaghetti-strap top  
she chats with an attentive Mother and Father;  
her mother stuffs large chunks of cantaloupe  
into her daughter's mouth in so routine a way  
neither of them gives it a thought:  
the father asks if we mind him playing some music

which comes on a high quality system  
romantic Spanish songs;  
she speaks to us in the car  
including us in her world "Are you enjoying the music?"  
and we are touched by her inclusiveness;  
the mother removes her jacket and very tenderly  
wraps it around the young woman's shoulders  
as she sits smiling with wind stroking her tied-back hair  
considering the artist in this timeless place  
and the many nuances of life.

In lavender spaghetti strap top  
a lovely woman at the beach  
listens to a man singing love.

## The Joys of Camping — John Grey

The reservoir wall is way off in shadow.  
The water it holds back edges toward us  
as if we offer a way out of its cement jail.  
Same for the fire. It surely knows the  
cold ground beneath it is the way of its death.  
But if it could flame a little in our faces  
then maybe it could live on like parents  
do in children. The stars I'm sure wouldn't  
shine but for us. And there's a pleasure  
to the wind when it can flutter the shirts  
of people. We've had a great supper that

surely enjoyed our hikers' appetites. And swapped stories that delighted in being told. Look at those tents. They sit high on rope and pole as happy as dogs doing what they're bred for. Our dog, by the way, is bred for sleep. And soon we too will sleep, a sleep that can't get going now, for it needs our tired limbs to stoke it. And dreams are ever anxious to begin. They've seen us free and happy and huddled around the fire. They've heard the songs, the laughter, smelt the food. What must dreams think! Already come true and we've yet to have them.

## The Last Fan in the Stands — Thomas D. Reynolds

Impassive gaze  
barely registering  
the latest lackluster effort,

he makes a motion to rise,  
coming off the bench  
to the roar of the vents.

From a nearly empty court,  
One appreciative fan  
offers a standing ovation.

The cord on his gold jacket  
Doesn't realize the game is over,  
Still waving her frayed pom-pom.

His right foot launches  
A half-empty box of popcorn,  
But the refs don't even notice.

Inside his chest  
The bass drummer has an off night,  
A half beat off the rhythm,

And the fight song is silence,  
Pumping up the trainer  
As he gathers up the towels.

But all down the bleachers,  
The old man's erratic breath whistles  
Its unwavering optimism,

His hacking bell horn  
Echoes among the banners  
Of long-forgotten championships.

While his digital watch belies  
The darkening game clock—  
9:46 left to save the day.

## Enlightenment — Geoff Stevens

Enveloping your messages  
in silver amalgam  
you take the words wrapped in sunshine  
and cocking your wrist  
as when playing the accordion  
draw out the bellows until they stretch  
the distance you require  
unfolding immensities of light  
for an illuminating mirror-delivery  
in morse code.

## Silverfish — R. Yurman

You're like a silverfish, I said  
meaning to say  
quicksilver

but that small bright unexpected  
creature seemed so right  
I kept its name

while you  
darting to cover  
eluded me

## Outer Space and Souls — Renee Zambo

Few stars are shining through a cloudy sky  
On this quiet, April night.  
Defying the darkness, the death, those stars,  
So few in number, reach my sight.

I imagine you are in that light  
That fights through atmospheres to me.  
Like a mass of heat and energy,  
How could you die in just one second?

The brightest light of these mortal stars  
That shines even after their death,  
Can not compare to the light that I see  
Six years after you breathed your last breath.

## Neighbors — Kaye Bache-Snyder

Black umbrellas  
at the bus stop on our corner.  
Bundled bodies  
swaying in the blizzard, waiting  
for the red bus.  
Who are they? Where are they going?

Black umbrellas  
folding one by one, and pinioned  
to each bundle,  
lining up and disappearing  
in the red bus  
pausing, then sweeping them away.

My mother knew  
the who and where of everyone  
within a mile.  
She would light their histories up  
like Christmas trees,  
as we sat sipping rosebud tea.

## Pebbles — Robert Brimm

Oh, how I'd like  
to keep walking  
along this path,  
gathering these  
pebbles to fling  
into the pool  
of understanding,  
to stand watching  
their small circles  
reaching slowly  
toward each other,  
embracing, merging.

## An Act of Kindness — Ellaraine Lockie

She is one of the women  
who travels daily from her township  
Singing in the back of a pick-up truck  
with a chorus of others  
Come to clean the rooms  
in my B & B bordering Kruger Park

She sees me walking a path  
parallel to the Crocodile River  
I see her running toward me  
Watch her fall to her knees before me  
Close the lowest five button holes  
that fashion the front of my  
ankle-length straight skirt

She says something in Swati  
Looks up at me as a lilac-blue blossom  
drops from a jacaranda tree  
And under the kindness of shade  
She pats my calves

I can't interpret the words  
but I can read her body language  
*There my dear*  
*I've closed the open invitation*  
*The accident that wrote itself*  
*across your womanhood*  
*I know this because here*  
*no woman would walk*  
*aware of bare thighs winking*  
*between the weave of khaki*

I help her up  
Hold her hardened hands  
Thank her by returning  
the sunshine of her smile  
And waddle like a knobbellied duck  
back to my room where I segregate  
the unbecoming skirt to a suitcase

## The Elephant in Our House — Paul Kareem Tayyar

He is blue. Not that we mistake him for the sky. Or the sea, even.  
He does not like to eat alone, which is fine in the summer, but a bit  
Of a problem during the school year, when I can hear his hunger pangs  
Like a hundred air raid sirens crying out from the other side of  
Town. Dad says he should be with his own, but I don't see many  
Elephants hanging out at the 7-11, or playing softball in the city  
Leagues on Brookhurst and Warner in the evenings, home runs  
Disappearing into floodlights.

I'm his people. The houses and forests I used to dream of floating over he  
Can carry me straight through, scenting out what everyone is having for  
Dinner and pointing to the flowers I could survive on if I ever got stuck  
Out here at dinner time. It's true, I am a suburban survivalist: I could last on  
A bouquet of dandelions and a bucket of water pulled from Langton's creek.

But let's face it,  
I'm going to need a larger house when I grow up. Our yard isn't  
Even big enough for the dog, so you can imagine how tough  
It is for him. But, he's got a sense of humor about it, at least:

"Hey, there's always the pool. I get to perfect my strokes when you're off  
Learning. When my mermaid comes to get me I'll know how to swim."

He's got a good point. It really is how one looks at things. It's all here  
For me, really. The sunlight and bicycles, the school bell that sets  
Me free everyday. Who knows where I'll end up? He says not  
To worry if we should be apart for a long time: the blue elephants  
Always wind up at Catalina living near the shore, watching their  
Finned girlfriends swimming in the sea.

## A Language Not Entirely Foreign — Bill Roberts

The red man teeters in the stiff breeze,  
Speaking in Jack Daniels or Jim Beam,  
Languages not entirely foreign to me,  
With my knack for slurred words.

He's chanting a chain of words to himself  
And for anyone who cares to listen  
That today is his birthday, number forty-nine,  
Or possibly his deathday, having reached  
His parent tribe's normal life expectancy.

I pause to see if he'll celebrate his birth  
Or succumb to the spirit world.  
Nothing much happens, so I leave him  
Behind and duck inside the warm tavern.

I order the red man two fingers of Jim,  
Me a shot of Jack, and raise a toast to him,  
Shivering outside, still deciding which way  
He'll go with his life, painlessly inebriated  
On the day of his birth or his death.

## On the Film Becket — Donald Lev

After 43 years "Becket" again hits the movie theaters. What aesthetics! As close to eternity as we'll come! A beautiful film starring two beautiful male actors . . . women are almost non-existent, and mostly unattractive — except for the one who was so tired of the two boys' games she committed suicide — I guess she would have been their straight cover if they had wanted one — and another one, who, in her incarnation as actress, was married to Peter O'Toole at the time, asks Burton/Becket "shall I take my clothes off?" and is immediately dismissed. Hah! And Becket is presented as a Saxon, when all the while he was a bloody Norman! (thank God for Wikipedia!).

Frame for the film — and high point for me —  
is Peter O'Toole as King Henry offering  
his slim white body for whipping —  
something he sort of reprised in "Lawrence  
of Arabia." He might have been said to be the Judy Garland  
of the sado-masochists, if Judy Garland wasn't  
the Judy Garland of the sado-masochists.  
The question, it should be warned, of Church vs State  
in the age of Feudalism, is not  
the same question it is in the Age of Bush,  
Aesthetics should be the only religious, or political,  
message one receives from this film.

3/07

## Age of Iron — William Corner Clacke

A Greek god is performing  
In the flea market in Monasteiraki  
Calling himself Samson  
Man of Steel  
He's been hurling sledgehammers  
Into the blue sky  
And head butting them as they fall  
Blood is leaking from his forehead  
And staining his skin like rust

He's getting old  
His long black hair  
Once thick enough to swing  
A woman from  
Is thinning on the crown  
Varicose veins have wrapped themselves  
Like vines around his legs  
Gravity is gathering  
In his feet

He calls for a volunteer  
From the crowd  
Sits him in a café chair  
Grasps one leg and with one hand  
Whirls them both around his head  
Then brings them back to earth  
The crowd goes wild  
And he begins to smile  
But it's tiring work these days  
Especially now that few believe  
That Gods can pass as men

Breathing heavily after the show  
He picks up the 100 Drachma notes  
Thrown on the ground around him  
And stuffs them in a leather bag  
They mean a flagon's worth of nectar  
At the scrap dealer's bar  
In Thissio tonight

He's almost always there  
Sitting alone, remembering  
That first morning  
When it all began

## Turning — Hugh Fox

Turning into gleaner bird-clouds wheeling over  
just-picked artichoke fields, a meditative crane standing  
satoriing in a next-to-a-pond farm, part of a gull flock  
exercising over the enchilada bay, *nuage* - fog burned  
off by the midday sun back again by (Salinas River)  
midnight.

## Spastic Twin : Sinatra Fans — M. M. Nichols

Almost 50 and far apart, we had  
dollars to spend,  
each of us "my way" nobody else's.

As if we were  
identical, not just twin sisters,  
I couldn't see

why she had to go swoon with a crowd  
for Ol' Blue Eyes.  
She couldn't sing, but loved the sound

and could scream  
for joy & rapture. Then who was I?  
piano player -

Leclair, Hindemith, Poulenc, cultural smarts -  
with my cronies,  
Didn't listen to the "Chairman of the Board".

Time flew and she's  
gone. I'm listening: his heavenly songs still alive.  
Rapt, myself too.

## Upcoming Waterways' themes from the poetry of Lola Ridge

Number 4 (September 14, 2007):

And the faint decayed patchouli -  
Fragrance of New Orleans  
Like a dead tube rose  
Upheld in the warm air  
Miraculously whole.

*excerpted from Potpourri*

Number 5 (October 14, 2007)

I shall know you, secrets  
by the litter you have left  
and by your bloody foot-prints.

*excerpted from Secrets*

Number 6 (November 14, 2007)

Silence  
builds her wall  
about a dream impaled.

*excerpted from After Storm*

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