

Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

28



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #6

Silence
builds her wall
about a dream impaled.

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

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 28

Number 6*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

contents

Susanne Olson	4-5	Rex Sexton	17	Bill Roberts	30-31
John Grey	6-7	Carol Hamilton	18	George Held	32-34
Ida Fasel	8	Anselm Brocki	19-20	Geoff Stevens	35
Joanne Seltzer	9	Mary K. Lindberg	21-22	Joan Payne Kincaid	36
Thomas D. Reynolds	10-11	Patrick Carrington	23-24	Jack Conway	37-38
William Corner Clarke	12-13	Bill Vernon	25	R. Yurman	39-40
Gwenn Gebhard	14	Will Inman	26-27	Paul Kareem Tayyar	41
Ellaraine Lockie	15-16	James Babbs	28-29	Donald Lev	42-44

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

Sample issues — \$4.00 (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

©2007 Ten Penny Players Inc. *This magazine is published 11/07.

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



Last Silence — Susanne Olson

The last time
I saw her
she was angry
caught in her own web
of misunderstandings.

She did not utter a single word
when I left, my destination
half a world away
did not surround me
with blankets of caring warmth
crucial anchor of my life.

Negated, expelled, discarded by the
arms I needed to hold me safe

I closed the door.

The ties to my soul's living source
were broken, ripped apart

by the silence of the lips

I begged to bless my journey.

Outcast, I traveled

across the endless ocean

tossed into a foreign land by

the hands I'd hoped

would shelter me.

Tears of void's despair
salt of regret

and sorrow

paved the stony road

and led the way:

we never spoke again.

Funerals and Loves — John Grey

Our third date, her father's funeral.
down stone church steps together,
hand brewing inside hand,
I in my most somber suit,
she in black, though still shapely
and with much leg showing.
I was the stranger in
that close-knit family group,
felt as if I had
suddenly popped up
in place of he who died.
Weather tunneled the funeral,
cold and gray, an incessant drizzle.

She introduced me to the people
I would not meet again until the next one died.
but a year later, we finally concluded
that our love had died
and it was just like this day,
my face that suit,
her looks in black.
The world beneath was cold stone steps
and the weather around us
dark and dismal.
We kissed the last time,
sadly, pointlessly,
like being introduced to strangers.
When something dies,
you see such people.

The Window — Ida Fasel

Down by the river
where rents are cheap,
in the flats where flood
is always a threat
and houses are
abandoned, fired, vandalized,
old tires, auto hulks collect.
Mother's Day roses just delivered
by Floral Air. In the window
a hand watering.

Painted Silence — Joanne Seltzer

Mint-julep cool as melting snow,
has a nap to it — the velvet
fingered by a painter newly blind.
It hovers like incense
at a *Greek* mass for the dead.

I didn't invite but when it came
offered a cup of herbal tea.
I looked at it and it looked at me,
two strangers with the same destiny
filling the dark hollows of my bed.

Name Bearers — Thomas D. Reynolds

To me, my grandfather is a picture,
boxed in by a solid oak frame,
staring with an inscrutable gaze
from my aunt's faded flower print.

He is not the imperious patriarch.
He neither intimidates into silence,
nor beckons with benevolent gaze,
this small collection of name-bearers.

How often I sat at the table as a child
staring at those eyes squinting at the light,
head cocked as if hearing an inner voice,
one he never seems quite able to place.
Maybe it is our faces he strains to see,
the timber of our voices he leans to hear.
What to make of these new breed of Reynolds.

He appears perpetually to withhold judgment.
As judges go, he's not a gavel beater,
but he's Arkansas shrewd, taking us all in.
In cases involving imposters, you see,
the looks don't quite cut it. Nor voices.
Rather some indefinable tilt of the head.
The glacial drift of conversation.
A beckoning of ancient blood.
A quality of silence.

Abandoned Garden — William Corner Clarke

The abandoned garden
Behind the school
Has a host of orange trees
But the fruit is small and green
From lack of light

Beneath the trees, debris
Cartilage of old and strange machinery
Poking out from pallid grass
Pieces of stone dislodged
From walls and ledges
Washed out colours of sweet wrappers
Tossed from classroom windows
A dead cat becoming dust
All in shadows of a shadow land
Except for the morning
When the light arrives with promises
Long broken by the noon

It's an old house, this school
Built when Zografou still lay
Beyond the city limits
And there must have been a time
When light could linger there
A time when space and living
Mingled gladly, overflowed
When wine was drunk on the balconies
On sultry summer evenings
And children's laughter
Rang around the orange trees
For children, like oranges
Don't thrive in gloom

But the city sprawled and spread
And someone built an apartment block
Right next door
Cursing the garden
With sunless sadness
Of forgotten days

Waiting for Afghanistan — Gwenn Gebhard

Beside a barren desert road
a man sits
on a wood frame rope bed
reading,
one bent knee
up against his shoulder,
holding wide pages
with both hands.
The sparse colors
of his white robes,
pale striped turban,
pink and red blanket,
fade into the horizon
of storm clouds
and turbulent mountains.

Imperfection - Ellaraine Lockie

I learned early on
the complexity of people

How paradoxes teach confusion
when unspeakable exploits
are packaged with compassion

Childhood cross stitched
in a quilt of contradiction
Where betrayal traverses trust
weaving in and out of the same weft

Indistinguishable and insidious
in its undercover destruction
From needle pricked fears
that stuttered the security blanket

Leaving threadbare spots
as though molested by moth
Patches of thin skin exposed

Fifty-five years and
finally unafraid to confront
the bare facts of human frailty

First published in
Sweet Annie Press

The Man in the Alley — Rex Sexton

He stood shivering,
hand in hand with himself,
a bundle of rages
holding itself
in the dead of night,
staring through the darkness —
a frail, wasting, shadow of himself.
Then he took a step forward,
Although he had nowhere to go.

May 10, 1990 — Carol Hamilton

The clock on her desk
had stopped years before,
but my father had bought it
for her, and the clock was
as handsome as he once was.

The clock in her kitchen
made its little leaps
into the future, though, in the night
by some miracle unexplained,
she stopped, too.

Worldview — Anselm Brocki

When my besieged
Inner self can't
stand the thought
of one more day
at work or another
social dinner, a less
partisan, more
wordly part of me
compares my single
well-off life of car,
house, and health

care with the lives
of Cro-Magnons
spreading across
Europe after the last
Ice Age, oarsmen
in a trireme after
being rammed during
the Battle of Salamis,
and soldiers on both
sides in World War I
spending their final
days in senseless
muddy trenches.

Goya's Portrait of Ferrer — Mary K. Lindberg

What would it be like,
he thinks, green eyes
rising from the velvety red book in his hand,
if my wife were really
in love with me?

His dark Byronic hair rushes
forward, as if blown by wind
sailing words off the page.
Three fingers grip the verses,
capturing the idea.

His absent gaze
ticks the moment when
the physical world fades;
he sees only his own thoughts
stirred by word, phrase,
rhyming couplet.

She would; no she wouldn't.
But then, if she did,
we could do what she won't.
That might be quite pleasant,
even sublime. I think she will.

First published in Beloit Poetry Journal,
Vol. 57, No. 1, Fall 2006, p.6.

Leaving the Lowlands — Patrick Carrington

I am in no way the right man for this place.
I try to believe I could learn to live
like the wild animals, to find
nourishment in seeds and berries,

at peace in the thorny chaparral,
independent of baggage. Yet I know
I am totally unacquainted with them,
worried about the bread supply,

troubled I am not in any manner able
or faithful. All men know this — and still
I climb toward the perch of gods
as if I am that angel looking homeward,

where each breath will slowly kill me
because I move there uninvited,
unwelcome, because
I am what I am and no more.

Senior Citizen — Bill Vernon

You walk in a crowd
and no one seems to
notice your presence.

Say something
and everyone looks
around for the speaker.

You've disappeared
beneath gray hair.
It's a disguise.

Few are able
to find you
underneath.

Even a mirror
confirms you are
now somebody else.

a hand in lifts the heart — will inman

he was admonished to keep clean
he was old and weak and afraid of falling in the shower

he asked if a fellow in the men's home

could help him bathe but was told that was against
the rules, that if a fellow resident helped and fell
the home could be sued. he could get help from outside.
the assistant could take risk on his own.

at first a friend from his poetry workshop helped. then
he took his risks and bathed alone.

he had by the rules to keep clean. by similar rules, he
had to risk alone.

what loss! he could not get a fellow resident's help . . . morale could have been raised: trust could be built.

but no: the fear of being sued came first. residents lost a chance to grow stronger together.

priority was fear of loss
to home offices.

No. risks had to be on outsiders. morale could not be raised from within residents. financial security came first.

these old men could live and die alone.

23 december tucson

The Time and Temperature Lady — James Babbs

when I was younger
I dialed her number
late at night lying on
the bed in my room
because
I loved the sound of
her voice
the way she said
the numbers like
she was speaking
just to me and
for a long time
I thought she was

really out there somewhere
sitting alone in some glass booth
waiting for the phone to ring
and even after I discovered
she was only a recording
there were still nights
when I called her and
held the phone to my ear
after she'd finished hoping
if I waited long enough
her voice would come back on
asking me
if I was okay and
did I need anything else

Strength in Family — Bill Roberts

They're so tired of her at this point
That they give a weekend party
To honor her coming passing.
In her bewildered state
She accepts what is inevitable
And will pass on for them.

To spare them further suffering,
As they have suffered terribly
Over her ten years of illness.
Her doctors call the latest episode
A tumor flare, releasing calcium
In the system, confusion to the brain.

It will pass, he predicts,
And she might hang on another two years,
But her family will not have it.
Enough, damn God, is enough.
She, so strong over years
Of unrelenting fight,

Will toss it in, close her eyes and
Quit — to accommodate family,
Most of whom I have never met,
Most of whom were not around to
Meet in these ten years of struggle.
There is a strength in family.

First published in The Comstock Review, Spring 2000 Vol. 14 No. 1)

Good Death — George Held

"I was the treating doctor, and . . . this is the first time ever a man has legally ended his life."
Dr. Philip Nitschke, N.Y. Times 9/26/96

Voluntary euthanasia, that good
Death, dwells with us at last,
Now the Australian has punched the key
On his lethal laptop.

The inexorable crab grabbing at his gut,
His wife's hand in his, he
Starts the process of self-
Extermination.

The computer activates the Rube
Goldberg apparatus
Rigged to release enough barbiturates
For pay-back on death row.

Like the flame-fringed scorpion
Turning tail on itself,
We scarcely know whether to scorn
Or praise this creation,

Brainchild of noble Dr. Nitschke,
known for his bedside manner
and now a candidate for the Nobel
Rest-in-Peace Prize.

Now the rest of us who ebb into
The geriatric sea
Too slowly, whose threshold for suffering
Or self-regard is low,

Know that in the final pinch we may
Elect to play at God,
Author of so many other good deaths,
And end what once was sacred.

Where Grass Is Greener — Geoff Stevens

When young you had your ears greased
to remove your inquisitive head
from between the iron railings.

Your dreams were always of places
on the other side.

And although today the wall is high
with broken swards of glass
cemented to the top
you have learnt to enter through the door
and wonder why you never
thought of it before.

Obedience Re-do — Joan Payne Kincaid

She wants brown monkey and a chew stick
in back of me on the puter chair
tri color Parson Jack Russell
from a long walk and obedience class
where the substitute teacher tried to drag her
on a metal choker until she yelped and I said enough
and then in a corner she got tangled
on an "about turn" and I fell like a stone
nearly landing on her but being a Russell she's used
to barns and horses so was way ahead of it;
never again some stupid heel command on a metal
choke and never forgive the guy for doing
such to a four month old pup who was doing her best.

The Deaf Ventriloquist — Jack Conway

There is a bag lady on Asylum Street who speaks in tongues, which ones, I have no idea. She says that her life has been like a blind man reading lips in an insane asylum.

"You don't know who to believe."

She says she is, of all things on this earth, the ventriloquist for the universe.

"I'm the one who puts words in your mouth and makes you speak," she claims.

"That's insane," I told her.

"You see," she said. "I just did it again."

"Are you telling me you put *all* the words in everyone's mouth?"

"Didn't I just say that," she said. "How could you?"

"It's hard work," she said. "I haven't got the time for this," I said.

"I'm not in charge of Time," she said. *He's* in charge of Time."

She pointed to a man carrying a green plastic bag
filled it seemed with redeemable bottles and cans.

"It's a bad night for mouth-breathers at the redemption center," she said.
I left her there. She's crazy as a loon. What did she think, I was a fool?
Besides, I saw her lips move.

This Child Rarely Smiles — R. Yurman

The long peak of his cap
dips into his food
shades his eyes

He cannot see the screen
I touch his arm
He leaves it on

It cannot bother him

He gives me gifts

a batter at ready
meant to dangle
from some ribboned home-team pin

glasses imprinted
with ballplayers' faces
lost knives discarded watches

Past the objects he hands me
terrors gather behind him

I have nothing to offer in return

For Tony the Cat (We Miss You Already) — Paul Kareem Tayyar

She places seven flowers upon your body,
One for each year that she had you,
One more for good luck as she fills in the dirt.

"I loved you so much," she says, as she closes your eyes,
"If you want to return you know where to find me,
If not I'll see you again when my own heart gives out."

She places the lantern over your grave,
She lights it before blowing a kiss to the wind and going inside.

On the Film *THE QUEEN* — Donald Lev

She looked just like the Queen, and he was a very reasonable representation of Tony Blair and being an anglophile and a little bit royalist I loved them both.

They might have been Disraeli and Victoria in some of those Palace scenes.

I remember on the day King George VI died (he reigned throughout WWII, an age of giants, & left 2 small daughters, Elizabeth the Queen and her sister Margaret Rose

who always used to be interesting copy.)
I was in midtown Manhattan, I guess
somewhere in my teens, I forget the actual year
I was seeing a movie with my friend and second mother, Betty
born in the County Galway, Irish to the core,
who had tears in her eyes for the king, (whose death we learned of
from the Times Square news tower) not that the Irish
loved the British monarchy, just that
things colonial are complex, especially emotionally.
The elder of the two little princesses became Queen.
She was Taurus like I was. This has to be
in this record, it is that kind of record.

The film was basically about the Princess Di thing and of course, in that family Di was little loved, and the Queen had enough tsuris (there's probably a British upper class word for tsuris, but I don't know it) and the queen as I knew she would, kept her famous stiff upper lip stiff and came through it, naturally, with a lot of class and dignity and Tony Blair, who I do not like as Bush's lap dog, I had to like in this. He was this slightly left popular politician who understood everything.

ISSN 0197-4777

published 11 times a year since 1979
very limited printing

by Ten Penny Players, Inc.
(a 501c3 not for profit corporation)

Subscriptions -- \$33 for 11 issues.

Sample issues — \$4.00 (includes postage).

www.tenpennyplayers.org/mags.html