

# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME  
31



#2

# Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 31, #2

Light breaks into a thousand thousand  
pieces as sea lions slide in, splash,  
come up almost standing, head slanting to sky.

**Ida Fasel**

AT THE ZOO

Waterways, Volume 8, Number 4, page 17

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 31

Number 2\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel  
Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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*Self Portrait*  
by  
Barbara  
Fisher

## Self-Portrait of a Poet – Wayne Hogan

This is the self-portrait  
(ah, the “self-portrait” ... that  
most assuming, prepossessive genre  
of genres) of a poet.

It starts with a line rushing in fast  
from the upper left-hand corner,  
one that runs hard exactly one-third  
of the distance down the center  
then turns suddenly away,  
aiming then in a roundabout fashion

back again to where it began.  
The eye picks up some slight motion  
down near the right-hand corner,  
motion that becomes an indistinct blur  
as it races along the bottom edge,  
heads straight up at exactly  
a 90-degree angle for exactly  
three inches, then stops,  
turned exactly ash-gray. Next, four swirls  
form near the middle. At first  
they just resonate. Then  
they break into sloping waving lines

that lie parallel with respect to each other  
and perpendicularly as regards  
the outermost rim of themselves  
as a whole. From somewhere, the  
there's music... "Old Buttermilk Sky"  
by Hoagy Carmichael. Now  
a sudden smudge appears, exactly  
seven inches into the heart of darkness,  
hanging there, spreading out,  
defying gravity.

## Out of Chaos – Edward J. Rielly

Before my eyes saw  
there was nothing. Slowly,  
a murky membrane hinted  
at order, meaning, beyond  
itself. Sunshine was absent,  
darkness grew only gradually  
less dark, and voices  
somewhere seemed to call.  
Then the mist began to clear,  
shapes intervened to pull



vision out of chaos. Sizes  
materialized, colors woke senses,  
the vague became definite,  
the uncertain, certain,  
the insecure, fixed.  
My eyes saw what seemed,  
then saw what was.  
All came to fit, each piece  
in its place, all registering  
through deepening eyes  
that see, order, and confirm.

## **Midnight Poem – A. D. Winans**

Approaching 70 feeling like a Samurai  
with a dull bladed sword  
singing into the blade of night  
Somewhere beyond the horizon  
sailors buried at sea  
rise in ghostly procession  
Skeletons sharing their secrets  
with withered old men lined-up  
like bowling pins  
Measuring them from limb to limb  
like a tailor sizing you up  
for a perfect fit

## Starry – James Penha

Oh, to be a Kirk, yes; to find a hapless  
civilization and bless it with wordly morality, yes,  
to outsmart the perfectly logical,  
to manipulate rogue cybernauts to self-destruct, yes,  
to fight the alien, yes. As likely to be liquidated, yes.

But this unthinkable relationship, no.  
Ship gone. If steel can be, yes, evaporated  
and surrounded by sirens  
of the spheres singing, no. He  
hears, no, feels, understands a softness,

an interest, a gravity.

He floats, alive within sudden color – pink  
and fingers of violet and blue  
across his humanness. And he responds  
with whisks of infinite crayons.

## The Ghost of Dickie – Arthur Winfield Knight

We'd see him  
sitting at the bar,  
nursing a beer,  
each morning  
on our way to breakfast  
at Casino West.  
He'd light a cigarette  
and say, "Hello, kids,"  
although I was  
older than Dickie.

He'd been a singer  
with a small band  
near San Diego  
before moving to Nevada.  
He was never quite drunk,  
never quite sober.  
We saw him on the street,  
barely able to stand,  
his pants pee-stained,  
two days before he died.  
Weeks later,  
walking the dog,

we'd smile  
when Nikkie stopped  
to sniff a hydrant.  
We'd imagine  
the ghost of Dickie  
had pissed there,  
remembering how  
he'd stumble, trying  
to find his way home  
in the dark.

## November Night 2008 – H. Edgar Hix

The first snow of winter  
with just one set of tire tracks on the road  
and no footprints on the sidewalk.  
One in the morning, two nights before full moon.  
The snow is wrapping the autumn colors in white  
this white night. Barely a breeze disturbs the scene.  
The yellow cat in the window tries to get out.  
He is young, and does not know that snow is wet.  
He only knows I am lingering there.  
I, in my short sleeves, just coming out



to put some mail in the box (bills and poems),  
pausing to breathe in first winter night,  
feeling the brushes of flakes on my thinning hair.  
Fifty-four winters before this one. I am just able  
to begin to appreciate the beauty of cold.  
Tomorrow it will all melt. Tomorrow autumn will be wet.  
My world is being christened. The baby is born.  
The season is white; cold and alive.

## Wet Clothes – Hal Sirowitz

“Let’s go see the monkeys,”  
I said. “At least they’re behind  
glass. We won’t get wet.”  
“But I’m tired of seeing  
the world from behind glass,”  
she said. “The whole ride  
home by car.” “Then open  
the windows,” I said.  
“Then the air conditioner  
won’t work,” she said.

“We don’t need it on if we’re wet,” I said. “I see what you mean. Why didn’t I think of that?”

“Because you’re not a sea lion,” she said.

“When you think of wet clothes, you think of pneumonia. A sea lion doesn’t think like that. His nose is always wet.”

## content within – Jennifer Scobie

small mirrors shine across the frozen ice  
where walruses are basking in the sun  
their tusks all long and strong with grand appeal  
a fascinating frolic, motions lag

sluggard

timeless

imposing

evolved

with thick and wrinkled skin they dive on in  
come up with massive form and shatter ice  
their blubber layers from the arctic cold  
they huddle with their kin, content within

## **pulse – Jennifer Scobie**

among the lilies, strong and tall and white  
are echoes of a thousand thousand drums  
the beating of a thousand thousand hearts  
those marches made beyond the realm of time

the universe – it seems to be en route  
and all the stars are eager to break loose  
a pulsing of a thousand thousand minds  
the lilies bloom exalted in their wake

## Fisherman's Where Pier Eats the Sea – Ruth Moon Kempher

down at the bottom of the steepest  
street, steam rises  
bringing odor of lobster  
becoming, blushing, bisque.

Lump bodies of seal  
lie on the sea slick rock, as still as stone  
as usual, but listen. There's a hidden implicit  
chiming of tiny bits of mirror, that give back the sun.

## Picture #1223 – Ruth Moon Kempher

sunnyblue                      ○

the stitchery greed

to pick

the sandpiper

who trips and traipses

through the surf hem

and how (silver)

his tracks

arrive and disappear behind him.



## Heat – William Corner Clarke

The house has hidden itself  
In the shadow of itself  
Taken cover  
From the heat of the afternoon  
Blinds closed, curtains drawn  
The retreat complete  
  
On the abandoned porch  
By the front door  
An insect hangs on a spider's web  
Like a crashed biplane  
It's wings entwined  
With threads of gossamer

Drained by death  
The fuselage  
Has become a flute  
For the dry wind  
Its hollow music underscores  
The creak of the swing

Dusty catkins  
From the forest  
Have gathered in the guttering  
Hanging like the dregs  
Of a dreamless sleep  
Over the sagging eaves

Across the desert waste  
Of the deserted patio  
A Pharaoh's line of ants  
Ferries scraps of orange peel  
Into the underworld  
Beneath the sliding doors  
  
Beyond the mountains  
Iron shells of thunderstorms  
Are being forged  
You can hear the boom of rivets  
As they're fired  
See the welding light  
Against the darkening sky

## House Beneath the Leaves – William Corner-Clarke

At the bottom of a hollow  
In an old dark forest  
Floating out beyond the stars  
There is a house that's buried  
Deep beneath the leaves  
Wind and rain and gravity  
Have layered on the seasons  
Until there's nothing left to see  
Except a single crooked  
Cock eyed chimney pot  
Still sticking up into the air

Inside the house  
An old, grey bearded man  
Sits and sifts and sorrows  
Through his past  
And spends his time on making  
Model sailing ships  
From bits of old guitars  
His wife remembers life  
Above the ground  
As she goes about her days  
— Night blooming Jasmine  
Trailing from a marble balcony  
Wild poppies, pomegranates  
The feel of fresh, sun warmed grass  
Against her naked skin

## Sea Glass – William Corner-Clarke

A small glass jar  
Full of broken colours  
Yellow, green, blue  
Ochre, amber  
And the rarest of clarets  
Frosted by the friction  
Of sand and sea  
Polished in the bowl  
Of the Aegean moon

We picked them  
As we walked the distant  
Tide lines  
Of the summer days  
Admired them on café tables  
With bread and olives  
And Cretan wine  
Took them with us when we left  
Those years behind

Each one is a piece  
Of wave rolled time  
A misted prism  
Of some unknown past  
Refracting the light  
Of our own blue skies  
Each one a work  
Of art in imperfection  
A true reflection  
Of you and I  
In those other lives



## The Sacred Mountain – Rex Sexton

Shafts of starlight break through the stormy sky.  
Shadow beasts stalk the barren woods.  
Our skittish horses shift through thickets,  
Cross frozen streams.  
Dawn is breaking.  
We gallop across the snow smothered groves,  
An odd pair around here – the Angelo and the  
Indian maiden – mount the twisting terraces.  
Rocks like white castles climb into the clouds.  
Lace-like garlands bend the boughs.

There is the sweet smell of dogwood.  
Birds take flight.  
Crystal rivulets wind down ivory cliffs.  
Blazing boulders glitter with ice.  
We scale the cliff crests as they catch fire,  
A rainbow in your womb.

## Cloud Gazing – Bill Roberts

Eventually, they all come back,  
loved ones who've moved to the clouds.

Billowy Grandma most often,  
her 12-egg lemon pound cake in hand.

Fast-moving Mama, always in such  
a hurry to attend to the next family duty.

Dawdling Papa, reading from a fluffy  
stack of books, including the inevitable potboiler.

Brother Max, drifting erratically after  
pretending to take Ritalin, disordered bipolarity.

Shrewd sister Emma, the wispy family  
matriarch, asking why we're all so middle-class.

Mysterious older brother Howard, whom I met  
only three times – he now floats by weekly.

So many aunts and uncles, usually forming  
overhead as if at another family reunion.

Lost friends reappearing, even threatening  
bully Pete, about to rain blows on me again.

Teachers, dear teachers, never forgotten for  
Their wisdom, now challenging me up there.

And the dogs, all my dogs – scampering along  
as if once more I'll give chase someday.

There's something about clouds, so familiar,  
So tempting to fly up, be there with them.

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