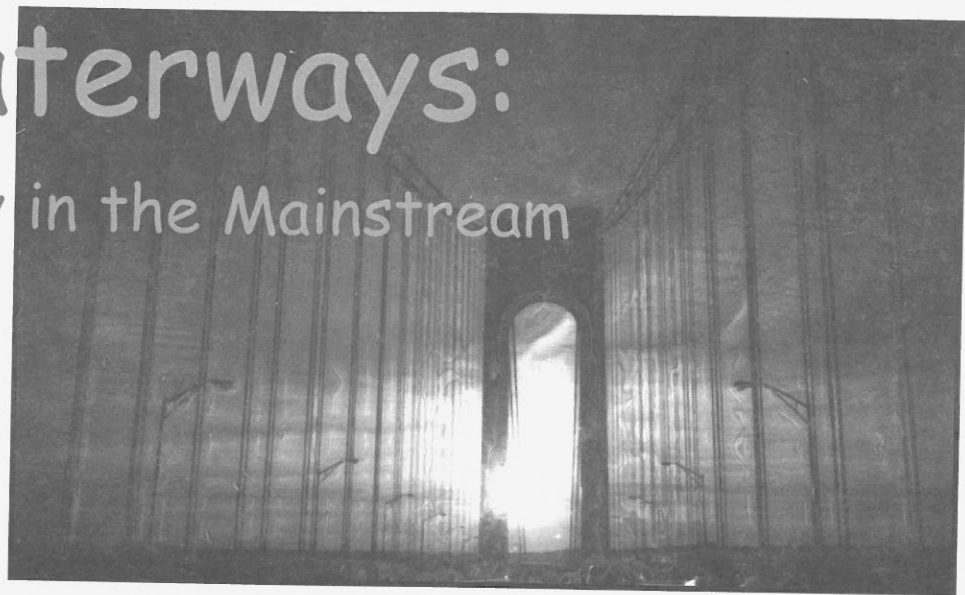


# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

26



## Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 26, #8

you people who say you admire  
my work are always butting in  
and taking up my time

*archy hears from mars*  
*from ARCHY AND MEHITABEL*

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 26

Number 8\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

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

Sample issues — \$3.50 (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

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



## Out of the Poetry Workshop — Ida Fasel

I meet them in the street  
or supermarket parking lot —  
Tracy who worked gigs with a blue guitar  
now water and sewer specialist  
for the city and county of Denver,  
Mark who scraped words to flint-first ceilings  
now delivering mail to house numbers.

Do I remember Sally Bybro?  
(barefoot on stones)

At Hopewell, on lithium,  
She took her mother's crystal pitcher  
for a wedding dress hung in cellophane

and sent out invitations.

Myra? The bomb she made to birth a new world  
Exploded on the way.

(Magritte's shower of light for a face)

They talk of poems that no longer come,  
Air bristling with AUM, with words  
Like gold and silt in a pan  
To be proved in the far reaches of patience.  
Here a line flares the dark out of corners,  
Loses flame slowly; here a poem pops like  
A small Fourth of July over the transom.  
Here the deep, long-held-back breath.

They miss the nudge of my voice, they say.

## Richard Spiegel

Thomas, Barbara, and I  
took Syl and Moishe  
to the Sea Crest Diner.  
Syl gave us a contribution.  
Moishe shopped at Pathmark.  
We returned to their home for cake and tea.  
Moishe spoke of repairing his oven.  
Syl phoned relatives.  
Moishe, who learned only the sounds  
of Hebrew, asked, "Why  
would anyone want to read?"

## Doing Time — Joanne Seltzer

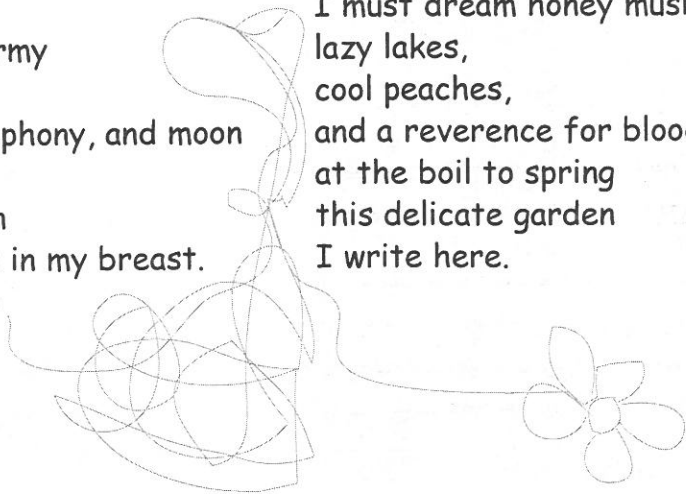
Prisoners at the county jail read books  
of poetry, crave poetry enough  
to rob the cart for users, pimps and crooks  
of every paperback of rhythmic stuff  
and stuff that has no known form. Gangstas write  
elegies for the fallen 'hood and fill  
intensive workshops given free on-site  
by poets brave enough to go to jail.  
And those of us beyond the gated wall  
with books to spare but never surplus time  
contribute what we can: traditional,  
confessional, surreal, sweet, sublime.  
We all are prisoners of time, need words  
of solace, all in a manner jailbirds.



## DELICATE GARDEN — James Penha

I whisper  
wind, sweeten stormy  
showers, fiddle  
with a Mahler symphony, and moon  
away Sundays  
languidly to soften  
the sordid scream in my breast.  
It never sleeps so

I must dream honey music,  
lazy lakes,  
cool peaches,  
and a reverence for blood  
at the boil to spring  
this delicate garden  
I write here.



## White Fence Farm — Bill Roberts

Before she was taken into the embrace  
of Alzheimer's, Kay's mom,  
"Grams," often took her two great-  
grandchildren, Jess and Willy,  
to the White Fence Farm  
for Sunday after-church fried chicken  
where the chicken is still almost as good  
as Grams made it years ago.  
Jess preferred chicken legs and  
older Willy liked breasts and wings.  
Grams, as she did in her youth,  
always snared backs and thighs.

The boys went to visit her  
after Grams had settled in at her new  
living space in Pleasant Gardens,  
but she was puzzled by their faces.  
Finally, Jess went up to her,  
Gave a gentle hug, and announced  
"Jess!" which still puzzled Grams.  
Then he bent and whispered  
In her ear, *White Fence Farm*.  
Grams smiled broadly and  
settled back in her easy chair  
for a feast of fried chicken  
Kay and the boys had carried out  
From their favorite restaurant.

## Whimsy — Anselm Brocki

Like skin, bones, hair,  
and muscles, my sense  
of humor, which didn't  
light up every minute  
of the day in the first  
place, has been slowly  
going downhill since its  
giggling peak at the age  
of six with my sister  
in the back gray mohair  
seat of a 1929 Buick  
touring sedan on long

cross-country trips, when  
everything was funny, its  
decline due to onslaught  
after onslaught ever since —  
the serious need for high  
grades and a college degree  
to be somebody, the bone-  
marrow body impact  
of making bomb runs  
in World War II, the work  
shock of feeding a growing  
family even during affluence  
and the same time feed

the need for doing things  
larger than a paycheck—  
and meeting all onslaughts  
with the whimsical choice  
natural selection made  
to hinge all my creativity,  
love, social dominance,  
and hope on the strength  
of my coarse death drive.

## Witnesses — R. Yurman

Three of them wherever he goes—  
he sees them through the bus window  
as he rides downtown  
and at the corner mailbox  
when he buys his Morning Globe.

They dance quickstep along the sidewalk  
glancing at him, pretending,  
if he catches them,  
it's not him they're giggling at  
behind their hands,  
their eyes slicing toward each other.

Alert for the inevitable breakdown  
and ready to call a technician  
to fix him, they act  
like they're having fun. It's all  
in their job description.



## You Can't Write Fast Enough — Ron Singer

You can't write fast enough  
to chronicle the visible world.  
A pair of breasts on  
the subway platform  
pass before  
you can chart their jiggle,  
let alone properly  
gauge the whole girl.  
And before you can even  
compass the girth  
of a fat man's hips  
or guess his living wage,

you've crossed him on the pavement,  
swift as a giggle.

And to turn again, in either case,  
would excite opprobrium  
or —best case— mirth:  
breach of form, loss of face.

Thus squadrons and battalions  
of corpulent men  
and comely girls  
are gone before  
the flag of Art  
can be unfurled.

## Dream Animals: Betrayalasaurus Rex — Fredrick Zydek

This creature doesn't just lead you down  
the garden path, it escorts you to hell.  
Disloyal is its middle name and treason  
its reason for getting up in the morning.

This is a creature who divulges secrets  
the way other people give out favorite  
recipes. It delights in knowing what others  
do not know, in watching surprised faces.

If it doesn't know enough gossip, it will  
make some up, and no one can stretch

the truth like these masters of deceit.  
Whole families disband because of them.

The most interesting aspect of these beasts  
is that when they tell their tales they assume  
that no one will share them. We also do.  
There's a bit of Betrayalasaurs in all of us.

But, of course, when we do it, we're just trying  
to trap them in another of their lies, another  
of the traitorous manners that keep us guessing  
and them spouting off like underpaid spies.

## Central — Thomas Reynolds

Above the switchboard, squatting on a yellow doily,  
the clock with monstrous legs barks away the minutes  
until the next plea lights up the board, possibly  
the far right corner, signifying the northern province,  
Crowley's Grocery or Bennet's Quarry, whose  
disembodied voice, suitable mechanical, describes  
accidents, even death, with the precision of gears.  
An aficionado of voices, the operator knows them all.  
(Playing a game, she runs her hand across the board  
and brings the whole county to mind, each imagined face.)  
Determinedly plain, equally anonymous to all,  
her own face examines the room, pouring over

the azalea wallpaper with ever-widening water stain;  
scanning the ceramic pioneer, forever holding  
the ceramic grizzly bear within his sights;  
scrutinizing the beastly clock still gripping her  
in locked stare, digging claws into polished oak.  
In her mind briefly flashes a vision of God seated  
in his broad-backed chair before his switchboard  
tediously examining the mildewed water stains  
and rows upon rows of ceramic knickknacks.  
Feeling alone, she relives a reoccurring nightmare  
she refers to as "Heart Attack on the Prairie,"  
in which she repeats to a line suddenly cold,  
"Hello. This is Central. Can you hear me? Hello?"

## Safe Haven — Damali Abrams

"When life starts going too fast,"  
said my Zen dance teacher,  
"you must simply slow down."  
Lying on the pavement  
in unseasonably warm February rain,  
I pause briefly

My eyes fly open at the image  
of my face peeling off  
that keeps me awake  
and of Malcolm X staring through  
the TV screen into my overcast eyes, asking

who taught me to hate myself  
Immediately I fall asleep

The exact point at which I became  
callous escapes me,  
and all over campus there are  
stickers pointing out  
"safe havens", so

Why am I  
waking up every morning  
afraid?





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 — \$3.50 (includes postage).

[www.tenpennyplayers.org](http://www.tenpennyplayers.org)