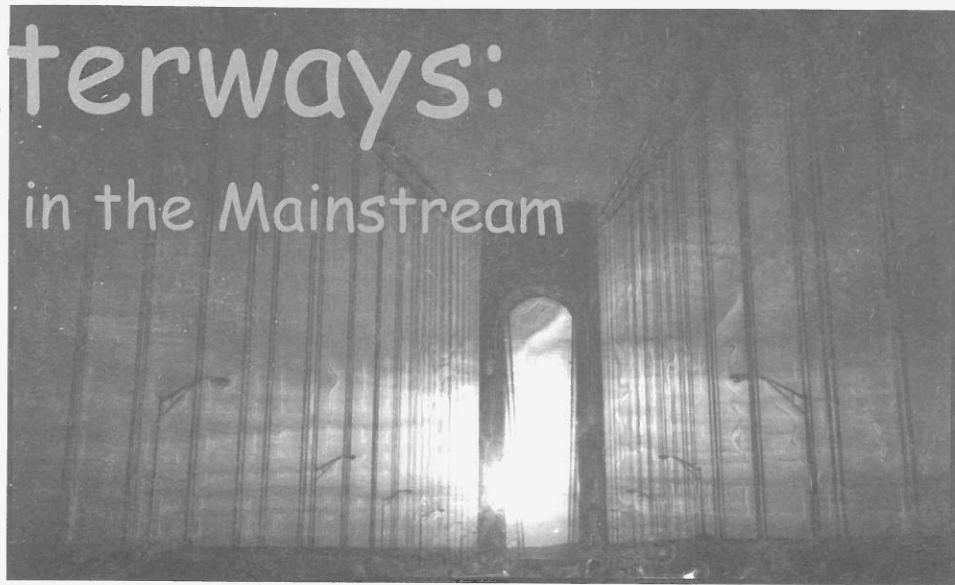


Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

26



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 26, #9

all the history of human kind
is written in the clots and filaments
and quaint patterns and ideographs
of spiders

as the spiders wrote it
from ARCHY DOES HIS PART

WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream

Volume 26

Number 9*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Admirable Factotum

c o n t e n t s

Anselm Brocki	4	Ron Singer	15-19	Jean Keskulla	39-40
James Penha	5-6	David Martin	20-21	Joan Payne Kincaid	41-42
Arthur Winfield Knight	7	Bill Roberts	22-23	Jeanne Whalen	43-45
Fredrick Zydek	8-9	Patricia Wellingham-Jones	24-25	Sylvia Manning	46-47
Julie Lechevsky	10	Mary K. Lindberg	26	Damali Abrams	48-50
Ida Fasel	11-12	Simon Perchik	27-29	Richard Spiegel	51-52
Mark Wisniewski	13-14	Gale Acuff	30-38		

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

©2006 Ten Penny Players Inc. *This magazine is published 2/06.

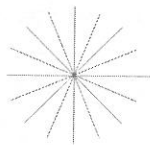
<http://www.tenpennyplayers.org/mags.html>

In memory of
Mimi Pebler,
a Greenwich Village Poet.



Destiny — Anselm Brocki

Far as we know,
till now our universe
has been exploding,
expanding, twinkling
unknowingly in black
space for 15 billion
years not able to see
or feel its grandeur
until eyes, developed
in worms and mollusks,
gave it the present,
moment by moment,
for millions of years,



and then in a blink
of time we —with out
words and story—
telling sentences
of actor, action,
and acted upon,
created consciousness
and gave the universe
a known past
an unknown future,
which may be
our destiny to shape
and give meanings to,
ready or not.

After a Poem by Arnaldo Antunes — James Penha

There are thousands of possibilities still in me.
A good one happens when I go too far,
and the mirage bears the face of my doppelganger
digging for music,
digging for metaphor,
digging for my mind,
and for its mirror for,
somehow, the unclear faces of experience.

Our soul cultivates a hunger,
yet we serve no hot meals on an empty white web.
The sand and the snow are such cold blanks . . .
So is everything clarity makes.
But in the comfortable maze of our jungle
we walk in circles,
not knowing the size of an idea,
if it goes deeper, or farther.

From inside, it's the size of our world.

The Morning News — Arthur Winfield Knight

You were waiting for me
when I came home
from the post office,
you and the dog.
The radio was playing
an oldies love song,
and you were laughing
about something you'd read
in the newspaper.
Nikkie wagged her tail.
The morning news was good.

Dream Animals: Dormasaurus — Fredrick Zydek

There is nothing to prove they are covered
with feathers: no images locked in sandstone,
no imprints on coal, no etchings on stones,
no drawings in the caves of southern France.

Yet what they bring is a thin, feathery sleep,
dreams that move from the moon to the wind
more gently than lilies bloom or as sudden
as spring's mauve first appears on the trees.

These creatures can be translucent things
to a mind slumbering in its past or giddy
as leaves caught in a quick wash of rain.
I knew one that could breathe fire and ice.

He could step into a dream quiet as a cat,
talk with angels, stand against dragons, sing
with the heart of bear and fragment into
butterflies - these flying flowers of the forest

who know intimate things about the geography
of dreams, the inner land of the soul,
the ceremonies old men use as required
reading to reach the voiceless shore.

Astronomers from Babylon — Julie Lechevsky

Before they scope the universe

with lenses perfectly ground,

they might remember earth as it is,

acid and blithe.

16 Cygni B sports a planet

with an egg-shaped orbit/

Among blue stars, brown dwarfs, black holes,

the search for life goes on.

Safe — Ida Fasel

Death the hidden switch on my lamp
will cut me off
from the supreme acts of civilization
and the degradations of humankind,
from countries that are bad examples for
good relations among people, from people
who withhold their hearts from people,
from all I live by, the waning classics
and the great ideas practice fails.

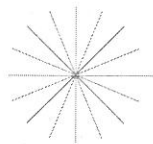
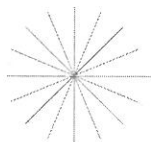
All the same it puts off
taking me from among the living

for no clear reason of significance.
I break out of contemporary primitive
as I please. I run after the fleeing
star of a word or cross a rock field,
shaking all the way, angels of danger
threatening disaster at every step,
to the footpath safe. And safe

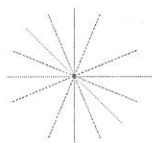
my green chair where everyday routine
yields to a green peace, green sleeves
the matching place, my arms to its arms
at rest, where I am privileged
something neither in nature or mainstream
rest itself vouches for.

As I Avoid a New Novel — Mark Wisniewski

I don't know
if I can take
another war
another argument on the news
another shout from a driver
waiting for me
to make a left safely
another re-fi commercial
another round of illogic
from the bribed tax assessor
another instance
of fame for those
who've murdered
someone they'd pledged to love till

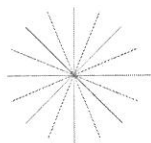


death do them part
I don't know
if I can sleep
like I did in 1965
sometimes it
feels as if this house
has been squeezed
into a cave
wherein those of us
who talk to raccoons
would prefer to keep
all of our words
from outsiders who use
human language



The Amoeba's Motto — Ron Singer

Unlike, say,
the fruitful fruit fly,
the amoeba's motto's
"Divide and multiply."



Cat Scrabble Ode — Ron Singer

While you were out tonight
the cats played Scrabble.
Of course that's not to say
they played it the way
you and I would play.
But that's a cavil:
the cats played Scrabble.

Once they'd knocked it to the floor,
of course they ignored the board.
Playing as a team, together no slouch,
if you assume intention from proximity

and count the "L" half under the couch
as an "I," their best word was "GTIER"
(by chance), though neither spotted "TIGER,"
which would have been obvious to you or me
(as obvious as that little irony).
But humans are mammals of a different stripe,
and each mammal plays according to type.

Asleep, myself, on the self-same couch,
from a hard day's work and a beer, I avouch,
catatonic, completely zonked,
contemptuous of concerns ergonomical,
while the cats spelled "MIA" and "AWOL,"
I dreamt of old ladies in the Bronx.

At a big green table on a summer's day,
having tired of manifold hands of cards,
to gossip continuo, a buzz-saw of words,
they slapped away at a game of mah jong
while a small red radio sang them a song.

My dream was triggered by battled tiles,
the cats cavorting all the while.
In scribble-scrabble, mix and match,
they skidded, scampered, in and out of turn.
Little Albert takes a pipe while at play.
Claude the Orange likes to scratch,
to pill and pull at cloth and fern.
In chaos and fury their play is war,

though no one dies or even keeps score.

Well, dear, how's life at the old PTA?
I'm glad you're home, it gets lonely here,
my only company two cats and a beer.
If we could but find some twenty-odd tiles,
might we ourselves try a bit of play
(admittedly not in feline style)
to wile the rest of the night away?

Fission — David Martin

Today the woods is
transformed by snow floating down
from the trees. The path is covered
with cottonwood fallout. I'm walking
in a miracle, hovering at the
river's edge, and staring out from
the landscape's frazzle: there, writhing
inches from my face, a fist of
caterpillars, a vibrant ball
of tiny wriggling snakes! I stand
struck to stone, as if I'm witnessing
some atomic freak, an isotope
rippling with fission, the core of

madness. My brain shrivels. And then
a single worm unsnarls itself
from the mass and inches itself
straight up! As if climbing what? I see
no thread, no filament. And then
another! A string of green
worms defying the old physics.
Like a sideshow illusionist
I pass my hand over and under —
no strings! Apocalypse!
Do I run for the hills with my
wife and children? Warn the president?
Or simply stand here and pray
forgiveness?

At War in the Third Grade — Bill Roberts

The first half of third grade was in the fall of 1943
At Hyde Elementary in sleepy Georgetown,
Within spitting distance of the muddy Potomac
And firing range of the wide-awake White House.

Miss Polikoff was an imposing figure with sleek
Black hair and an enormous hooked nose.
I don't remember a thing she taught us
Those days about addition, spelling or reading

But she reached me about Nazis persecuting Jews,
Some victims members of her family in Germany

And Poland, geographic areas then unknown to me.
Miss Polikoff often fled from the room in tears,

Leaving us in stupefied silence until she returned,
Still moist about her eyes and prominent nose.
We moved across town between semesters
And I had a very different teacher who made us

Memorize terse, boring facts, none of them to do
With Jews persecuted in Germany and Poland.
I learned to keep quiet on the subject until long after
The war's end. Most other people did too.

Salt — Patricia Wellingham-Jones

You hand me
for the last time
the key to your car.
Salt water trickles
down your withered cheeks.

That same day
my old mentor
now wrung out of words,
is helped aboard
the hospice van
for her final trip

to the ocean
foaming salt spray.

Days later
a young friend delivers
a healthy infant
from a body salty
with sweat, tears
of gratitude drop
on her squalling son.

After autumn fires,
winter rains
rush down canyon

to the Pacific, mix
their mountain waters
with the salt sea
which, in another season's turn,
rises to a sun-blasted sky,
then waters a seed
planted in a new bed.



Hanging Loose — Mary K. Lindberg

No more mountains,
just small hills,
fancy street bumps.
Skin, like breath,
begins to flag,
hang loose.

Exploring reveals
fault zones and
hairy surprises
rising, startled

from a deep sleep
near spawns
of speckled dermis.

Not a sudden
landslide bringing
down homes
nor a tornado
whirling skinny debris—
more like a glacier,
thinner skin

exposing twisted
purple and blue rivulets,
adipose deposits

swaying in spite of
inner denial.
This is
what sixty
looks like.

And the gray that granite — Simon Perchik

And the gray that granite
left on my teeth, your name
slips on the smooth stone
growing old in my mouth
—for a long time this taste
almost a lovesong
and footsteps just by listening.

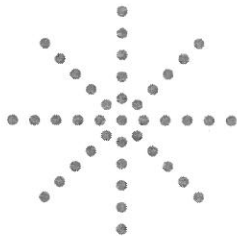
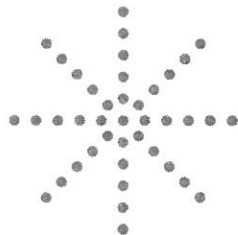
You will recognize these tears
and across my lips
almost bleed from between my arms
—each tooth scraped to the bone

and rain clouds that disappear
into the cry for mountain water

for the beautiful dark stones
that belong on the Earth: a tiara
whose majestic setting is covered
with a shadow that no longer leaves by itself.

You remember the sun
the way each stone simmers
calling its mother — day after day
my mouth refilled with icy streams
frozen into stone

and your name. What do you know?
Even rain has its doubts
falling on faces as if it were
some warm dirt — you leave me your name
the way light and the silence
almost that stone still on fire.



Curious — Gale Acuff

My father and my brother are sitting on a fallen privet tree trunk in our back yard when I walk up to them. I'm tired of playing ball and army and with the dog —I don't remember but I always played alone, we lived so far from other folks. I'm ten. Brother's nineteen, too old to play with me. My sisters don't play ball or army or with the dog. Mother's in the kitchen. What are they discussing? It's man to man with them, Father smoking a True, Brother with a Marlboro between his lips.

He's engaged. Her name is Debbie. She came for dinner last night. We had fried chicken, mashed potatoes, pole beans—and apple pie for dessert. I drank two glasses of milk. She sure is pretty, not like my sisters at all. Long blond hair she straightens, she says, by ironing it flat. After supper she goes into Mother's bedroom with my sisters and shows them how it's done, with no scorching. The door is shut, even locked. I see little through the keyhole but can smell hot hair through it. Girls' secrets, I reckon. Her skirt is short, too, and she has big hips and when she leaned forward to spoon some

more potatoes I could see her bosoms split at the top, the way father's butt-crack shows when he's working around the house—his trousers sag, all that stooping and standing, stooping and standing. He hitches them up but they still droop, especially when it's hot. What are they talking about, Father and Brother? I hear Father say, Well, once or twice a week keeps your mother happy. I'm invisible at first. Holidays are good, too, Father continues. She likes holidays. Christmas. Thanksgiving. Easter is good. New Year's. Hell, even Halloween. What are you all talking about, I ask.

What makes Mother happy? Run along and
play, Brother says. Make like a tree and leave.
Ha ha, I laugh. That was funny. Ha ha.
Go help your mother, Father says. She don't
need no help, I say. When I try to help
she tells me go help you. They're sitting on
either end of the bench. Ain't there no room
for me in the middle there, I ask. Nah,
Brother says. We need this space between us.
That don't make no sense, I say. I think of
a see-saw but they're not moving up
and down. A see-saw: now that would be fun.
Git, Father says. Go play with the dog. I
done played with the dog, I say. He's wore out.

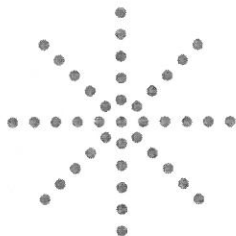
If you don't get out of here, Brother says,
I'm gonna pop you. Beat it. You can't talk
to me that way, I say. Can he, Daddy.
He looks up at me. I mean, Father—that's
what I mean. Son, just run along, he says.
This is a private conversation. Man
to man. We need to talk. He ain't no man,
I say, he's my brother. Onliest man
I see here is you. Brother rises. Help,
Daddy, I say. I mean Father. Now, boys,
he says. David, sit back down. Tiger,
go find something to do or I'll swat you.
What was you all talking about, I ask.
None of your beeswax, Brother says. Get lost.

So I go to the kitchen to see what
Mother's doing. She's washing the dishes.
Mamma, I say. Mother. What's Father do
once or twice a week that keeps you happy?
Huh? she cries. She freezes like Road Runner
leading Wile. E. Coyote on a chase
and suddenly stopping to say Beep Beep.
Why, nothing, Dear, she says. Nothing at all.
I go back outside to where they're sitting
on the natural bench and say, Daddy,
—Father—Mother says you don't do nothin'.
Well, your mother's spoiled, he says. Got that,
Son? (He's winking at Brother). I go back
inside and watch Mother dry the dishes.

Father says you're spoiled, I say. Does that mean
you ain't no good? Like a rotten apple?
You tell him he ain't no JFK,
she says. I don't know what that means, I say.
JFK. You mean the coffee? She says
No, that's JFG. I mean the President
—you go tell him he ain't the President.
Then come back and tell me what he says.
I stand before the bench again and say
Father, Mother says you ain't no JFK.
Brother starts to laugh. Soon I'm laughing, too.
He gets up for a third time. As he walks
past me he tousles my hair. I like that
heaps. Sit down, boy, my father says. How much

do you know about the birds and the bees?
Birds sing—bees sting, I say. What's there to know?
Your brother's getting married soon. He needs
to know how to keep a woman happy.
There's a special way between married folks,
so I'm teaching him everything I know.
Teach me, I say. When you're engaged, I will,
he says. You'll pick some up along the way,
don't worry. I mean what really counts. Then
you come to me and I'll show you the rest.
I'm going inside to read the paper.
Now I'm alone at the end of the bench
where my brother sat. I can still smell his
Aqua Velva, breath spray, and tobacco.

The dog comes over and licks my fingers.
He wants food or petting, I'm not sure which,
but he'll take both. I go to the kitchen.
Where did I come from, I ask my mother.
Ask your father, she says. I forget.



Mothers — Jean Keskulla

Outside the vacation cabin
an energetic spider spins
her web afresh each night
while I wash dishes.

On her pale gray abdomen
there's a mark like a stenciled
zigzag, resembling a stitch:
an emblem of her trade.

She uses my light to catch
her dinner by; stores extras
in the larder (a corner of her web),
wrapped in a homemade shroud.

She reminds me of one of those
mothers of our country
who did it all: spun, wove, sewed,
milked, wrung the young hen's neck,

but with a mere four limbs,
like my own mother, who bore children,
cooked, washed, shopped, stitched,
and in spare moments, painted, sketched.

I think she must have kept
an invisible orb as a blueprint,
each spoke radiating out from the center
a different obligation to family, career.

With a sideways stroke, she'd make
a bridge from one task to the next.
Yet, I felt that the pattern
trapped her at the core.

Last night I dreamt that a woman
burst through the locked cabin door,
wrestling me to the floor. We fought
until dawn, like Jacob and his opponent.

Whenever I find a spider
above my bed at night, I catch it
in a cup, take it to the outside
door, and shake. But sometimes,

I find that it's with me
again, attached to my knee
by an unseen thread.
Sometimes, they don't let go.

Season Change
Joan Payne Kincaid

sunlight and shadow
waits patiently
in the hawk's shining eyes

in the pumpkin scattered garden
Buddha and a squirrel laugh

fool
thinking the little downey
was for you not the hawk

indian summer
naked even the a/c
isn't cool enough

the dogwood leaves resign
silent
as last night's freeze

the tufted titmouse
relishes hot-peppered fat
squirrel lost the war

at the rose garden
Buddha smiles
belly-deep in snow

it acts bored
still bird in tight talons
waiting

yellow leaves
on the roof
summer gone

snowflakes flying to the headwaters
gulls at dusk

two hawks appear out of nowhere
hover wildness then vanish
leaving you wondering why
like this sudden snow on
shivering crocuses

Flea Market — Jeanne Whalen

A sick-sweet something that might be syrup
or coffee of some sort
attacks the languid patrons of the flea market
that fills a vacant department store
and spills into a parking lot
in desperate need of repairing
in a parcel of poverty surrounded
by gratuitous wealth and lakefront property.

Lone male figures, heroin-wiry-thin,
shuffle their feet between ammunition booths
and those selling publications

forbidden to most eyes with their reading level.
Rotund women loosely herd their broods
of grubby-faced kids jaded young
in their filthy hand-me-down jackets
and ignorance of grooming practices.

Ancient eyes,
suspicious eyes,
despondent eyes
hover on my leather jacket, my cell phone,
the diamond rings I fondle for comfort,
picking through glassware I'd pay a dollar for
at the Salvation Army. Twenty here,
but I suppose it's somebody's next meal.

These unkempt scowlers were once my people,
but by the age of three I lived in comfort
in a coven of conservative Catholics,
private schools, three-bedroom ranches, Aerostar minivans.

I feel guilty for not blending,
and the stench of syrupy commerce smothers my hair for days.

Question for Dr. John
Sylvia Manning

You wouldn't remember
my brother with me
in his wheelchair, Gruene Hall,
months before now.

(You know the levee broke.)

And we didn't speak to you,
just moved aside so you could get by us,
slowly walk up onstage.

(You know Fats Domino survived
but Clarence Gatemouth Brown died
in San Antonio, after getting out
of New Orleans.)

Here I am wondering
about my brother,
and I think of you.
He was right beside me
while we watched you
play, play and sing.
You walked past us again
when you were done.

Nervous Conditions

Damali Abrams

For Nyasha

I feel like they want me
to erase myself
bit by bit
and though I try not to,
their messages are powerful
and I feel myself
morphing
or disappearing, rather

For so long
I've dreamed of a
more glamorous soul
but where does dreaming
ever get me
I want to wallow
in my own confusion
until I am suffocated
with answers

Who is this girl
that I can't be anymore,
how do I get rid of her without
hurting her feelings

I long to be remembered
but only for the good stuff
only for the warm smiles and
fresh-baked cookies,
and door that's always open

They can never see the
razors on wrists, head down the toilet,
slipping off the edge times 'cause
then that's what they'd remember
and they'd forget I was
ever strong enough for all of us.
and worked too hard but
still laughed too loud

they'll shake their heads sadly
in my direction, as tears
stroll down my face and
ask themselves why
they never noticed,
why they never knew
but I'll be too broken to explain

So when I leave,
make sure to remind them
of how good and sweet I was
how I was all things to
all people,

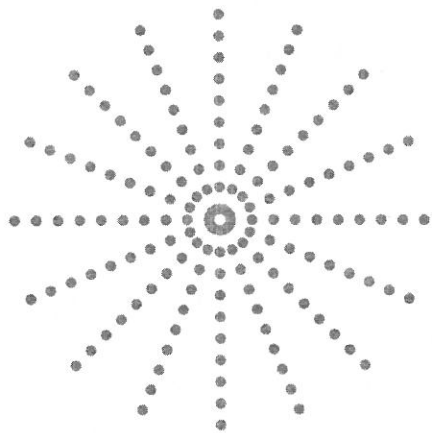
send them my kisses one by one
never tell them how much I hate them
or myself
but before I go,
please remind me
who I really am

Richard Spiegel

Bernard Shaw asked Michael Dukakis,
"If your wife, Kitty, were raped and murdered
would you still oppose the death penalty?"
Undifferentiated cathexeses swirl.
Electromagnetic forces attract and repel.
Libidinal energies become conscious.
New York cops shot Amadou Diallo forty one times.
They said it was a mistake at their trial in Albany.
The trials in South Africa enabled the society to get at the truth.
The volcano's crater filled with water, then broke sending mudslides
over an entire village in Nicaragua. It was the worst natural catastrophe
to occur in the Western Hemisphere. Thousands were killed

and hundreds of thousands left homeless.

The fat man turned the corner, stared at his own reflection,
held his cock, and shot sperm into the threads of the universe.



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