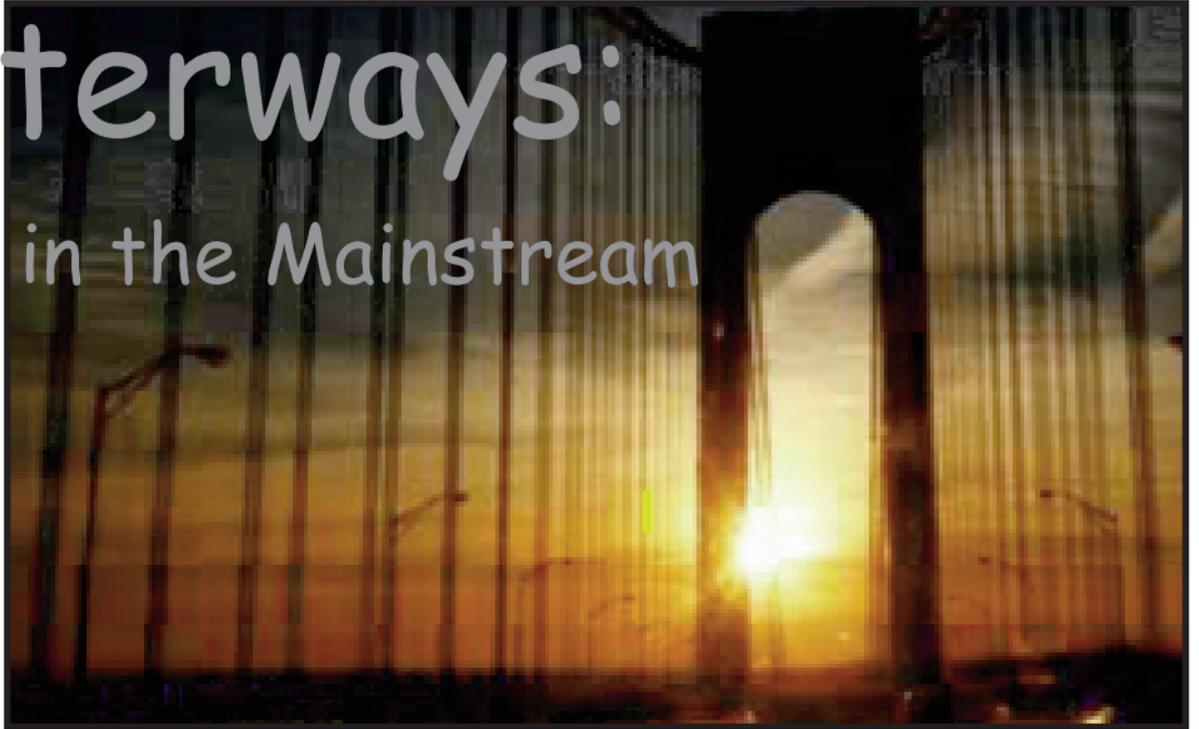


# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME

28



Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Volume 28, #9

Female and male,  
Complete, indivisible, one,  
Fused into light.

excerpted from *Electricity*

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

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 28

Number 9\*

Designed, Edited and Published by Richard Spiegel & Barbara Fisher

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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## Patricia Kelly

I walk into the  
painting of sunlit water  
baby elephants wade

## Diversion — James Penha

Before I focus for the day  
I see the sun in flashes of your thighs whose flesh  
clasped mine one night.  
I've grown accustomed to the smell  
like after-dinner mints of your mouth  
in my cold morning cereal. Pop.  
Snap. Crackle. Pop. Pop.  
Pop. Your cheeks above the horizon  
of my boss's ranting rages raises  
serious questions  
regarding a body's proper employment;  
that corny wise crack appeals to my budding tongue

which shoots and sticks to't.  
Some sleepy secretary says I'm deep as  
she shuffles off without a word. Your  
moment's promise perseverates;  
it still seems and jerks me from the road I miss for miles  
because I see you mirrored in my rear view.  
And when the fat man with White Owl and furry collar,  
in a Cadillac and a vengeance, moves on my tail pipe,  
finally,  
I'll not notice 'til it hurts.  
I'm driving  
you to the edge of things.

## Timeless — William Corner Clarke

The fact that you  
Are waking up  
And setting out  
To greet the sun  
While I am sleeping  
Deep beneath the moon  
Should make Time  
Suspect  
In all its ways

When you are gone  
And I'm still turning  
On this stone  
I'll tell myself  
That birth and death  
Are no more real  
Than up or down  
And that stars remain  
Behind the blue of noon

## Organic High — Ellaraine Lockie

*You look like a sunny day he says*  
It's raining outside  
and I'm not a smiley person  
So how can this be?

Unless my excitement  
seeps like sun rays  
Into the chill of the  
frozen food aisle  
My secret light so strong  
that a supermarket  
stranger feels it  
My energy source not solar  
But singular

Plugged into your  
electrical outlet  
Elusive extension cord  
Melding the miles between us

## Poetry Night @ Pegasus Books — R. Yurman

Tucked in a corner  
dense with folding chairs  
they huddle like refugees —  
stateless conspirators  
breathing together  
just above a whisper.

High laughter wafts  
through the open doors.  
On a warm evening  
assaulted by cell phones  
skateboards truck gears  
a fire engine's uproar  
they read and recite to each other.

It's called an "open mic" —  
once a month or more  
they gather despite  
contagious ambient noise  
and the general disregard  
in which they're held  
by other literate types  
who march through the store  
scanning shelf after shelf  
for that one perfect book  
deaf to this passionate troupe  
of word-drunk exiles.

*(An earlier version of this poem appeared in Bay Area Poets Seasonal Review, Spring 2005)*

## Snow and Lace — Gwenn Gebhard

Strong sunshine  
softens the snow  
on the steep hill.  
We don't need  
to dig our heels in  
to slow  
the toboggan's  
downhill dash.  
Stiff stalks  
of Queen Anne's Lace  
poke through hillocks  
of hayfield snow.

Bodies nesting,  
we lean back  
contemplating  
sky.

## Some Bad Moon — Patrick Carrington

As a boy I saw these fields swollen gold  
with wheat. I loved watching  
the combines, the men  
of calloused hands  
and their satisfaction  
as they grabbed the wheels  
as tenderly as their women,  
knowing it was time to top.

They're gone, and the harvesters  
sit crooked and grim  
in reflected moonlight. They wear  
the tired posture of old aunts  
propped in porch chairs  
to lose their dignity, to sway  
and be sad until they die.

They have that vague, insulted look  
in their shadowed headlights,  
the silence and rusty stink  
of stillborn phrases  
on their tongues. Darkness bursts  
from them like frightened blackbirds.

In the cracked ground there's a footprint  
pressed in hard like a fossil.  
A boy's perhaps, or the man  
grown from him. Waiting long  
for a rooster to bring nothing  
but that same familiar crow,  
and taking its own good time.

## **Confusion — Geoff Stevens**

Although we appear as close  
as violet and indigo  
and are seen as united  
the prism triangle  
of dividing love  
splits our invisible bond  
and casts a dark rainbow  
on the future sky

## Over Sunday Coffee — Robert Brimm

Just sitting in a tunnel on a Sunday  
morning at the state university,  
having a hot cup of coffee — no sugar,

thank you — (a cautious sip) while  
Phyllis is engrossed in a local tabloid  
insert left behind by some hurried,

harried student, no doubt (sip),  
and I'm just sitting, wondering what  
it would be like if I were a student

today, pursuing my education now,  
plodding these building connectors  
where the echoes of footsteps have  
  
settled like invisible dust on the chairs  
and tables arrayed as far as the eye  
can see (another sip), and I'm just  
  
wondering, as old men sometimes  
will do: Would I become the lawyer  
I wanted to be, or the doctor that I  
  
dreamed of becoming, the teacher  
I thought I was meant to be (sip),  
or would I find my way blindly again

to this same point, this befogged  
mile marker where I am now, sitting  
in a tunnel, scribbling on this scrap

with the tiny stub of a found pencil,  
watching as the words appear almost  
at will? Would I have any regrets?

I think not (sip), as I look back over  
this long journey, as I savor this  
destination I have found — this trip

with you as my traveling companion,  
Phyllis. I really could ask for no more.  
I could (a final sip) ask for no more.

## Two Packs a Day — Joanne Seltzer

My mother the smoker  
loved the ceremony  
of whipping out that mother-of-pearl  
inlaid cigarette case  
and that flame-throwing lighter  
fit for a thirties' movie star.

Her sister died of emphysema.  
Her husband nagged.  
Grandchildren played musical chairs  
at restaurants  
to sit away from Nana's fumes  
but she wouldn't quit until  
her mouth grew raw patches  
that turned straws into knives.

When breath turned into gasp  
the former glamour girl  
entered a forgiving  
smoke-free environment.

In the dark living room  
of memory  
my mother and her boyfriend  
inhale, exhale—  
still two spots of light.

## Reason Why — Anselm Brocki

What is somewhat reassuring about the findings of scientists who have finally started to look into the expressions of emotions of insects, birds, reptiles, fish, and other mammals, including their shocking sexual habits, which often go far beyond our repertoire and fantasy, is that so many of them, who admittedly may not have reached our high level of consciousness

and sense of self, are nonetheless so driven to express themselves sexually in a multitude of ways often in total disregard of gender, age, and even species, as are we, despite all our churchgoing, lofty morals and fancy learning.

## Darwin and Marriage — Mary K. Lindberg

Victorian passions hard to see  
outside of their pornography.

Why marry? I love to gather facts  
in silence and solitude.

Don't want to be boxed in  
like my Galapagos plants.

And who needs the expense,  
anxiety of a quarreling brood?

On the other hand, who wants to spend  
life like a neuter bee, working, working,  
with nothing at the end but honey  
in someone else's hive? My studies  
suggest solitary life can be bad  
for one's health. After all,

only the fittest survive. I picture  
a nice soft wife — that most interesting  
specimen — smiling at me, all the charms  
of female chit-chat, books, a good fire.  
My own cousin Emma Wedgwood could  
teach me greater happiness than mulling  
over origins on long, lonely walks.  
I can read, have a companion who  
will play music to my worms. And,  
I can breed pitcher plants on the porch.  
So, isn't it natural that I  
select her for a wife? Of course.

Inspired by Darwin's notes "To Wed or Not to Wed"  
exhibited at American Museum of Natural History (2006)

## Meanwhile — Ida Fasel

*In the beginning there was light  
And in the end there will be only light*  
Freeman Dyson

Experts foresee a calamitous future:  
The ocean won't stop at seawalls and sandpiles.  
Skyscrapers will flatten like shattered greenhouses.  
The rhino, the gorilla, the elephant will vanish.  
The human species will mutate shaggy as dust devils  
or grow leaves from living in trees. Winter signs.

Meanwhile, the rain comes, the rain cools and calms,  
the rain does my watering for me. A crack in gaunt  
tough ground means a bulb cut down to eye-root  
is breaking through, equipped with everything  
it needs to bear itself into bloom. Thunder  
that worked so hard to scare me (and did)  
with its imitation of a train at full throttle  
reduces to a gradually muffled growl. Spring signs.

The planet will collapse, overpopulated or under.  
Industrial chemicals will waste the land.  
Meanwhile, my peonies flourish great and gorgeous  
as seraphim, God's passionate red in praise.  
My roses are divas in crimson silks,  
singing arias as they climb. Summer signs.

I take to heart brightness wherever I find it —  
marigolds, the white of piano keys, the glimmer  
far out to sea, whose inwardness I could never  
get enough of, though put there with my own eyes.

Experts lie scattered over the ground  
in apocalyptic pieces. Meanwhile, stained glass  
windows radiate the light they are, the light  
they are in, like starfire glass and agates  
in a kaleidoscope, turn and turn into true  
where the soul rests satisfied.

Spring signs, summer signs, favorable signs.  
Let nature self-destruct. I am adamant,  
rock of canyon wall, and more slowly wear away.

## The Back of My Mind — Fran Farrell Kraft

There are cobwebs and dark caverns  
in the back of my mind  
and subterranean streams

There are hooded shadows and fiends  
in the back of my mind  
and shadowed hoods

There are plundering pirates and carjackers  
in the back of my mind  
and marauding terrorists

There are gargoyles and carbuncles  
in the back of my mind  
and hideous hags

There is sunshine too and green grass  
and azure skies and vistas  
There is singing and dancing  
in the back of my mind

## This Is Not a Confession — Fredrick Zydek

It is a definition,  
a recognition,  
a blue ribbon moment  
in a first place day.

It is a conclusion  
pleased to find itself  
perched on a good idea,  
a presumption preening

its discovery for all  
the world to admire.  
This is not a confession;  
it is an acknowledgment,

a bright shiny pebble  
on a grey sandy beach.  
Don't expect regret  
Or repentance — look for  
repetition and accolades  
that rejoice each time  
I take delight in being  
an odd and original blessing.

## LeeAnne's Surprise Party — Paul Kareem Tayyar

"Are you sure she doesn't know?"

"Trust me, this goes against everything I stand for. She has no idea."

It was a wonderful party.

When she arrived and saw everyone there,

She just kept looking at me and saying,

"You? You planned this? You?"

"But you hate parties."

"Not for you," I should have told her.

"Never when they're for you."

## Memorial Day — Rex Sexton

The whirl of white dresses  
in the theater of dream,  
morph into a wreath of white ashes  
in Soldier's memories,  
and the same steady fingers  
that helped the wounded in war,  
prayed for the fallen,  
shot the enemy down,  
begin to tremble in the darkness  
as the ballerinas go round.

## In Her Eighties — John Grey

Jennie wears blue.  
Goes with her eyes she says  
though they're as green as Ireland.  
She doesn't get around much anymore  
but her head sure can jig.  
And that same head can go into  
some very dark places and emerge  
having kissed a man  
with liquor on his breath.  
But she still loves her flowers  
and her candles.  
There never was a bedside table  
so contained by all her love affairs.  
And what about that pillow.

Soft as her skin once was.  
And the coverlet,  
more flowers, roses of course.  
She grew them once.  
In honor of how she looked in the mirror.  
And would you look at that crystal clock.  
Stopped a good forty years ago,  
around about when she stopped.  
Kids make fun of course.  
Why keep a clock that can't tell time.  
They don't realize that that's the very reason.  
And who's that child in the picture,  
they ask for the thousandth time.  
Thousand and one  
if you count Jennie's question.

## La Paix/Peace — Hugh Fox

La paix est les sculptures dans le parc,  
les amantes que mangent et boivent,  
mere, grandmere, bebe sur l'herbe,  
le soleil que vient et part, les mouettes  
que crient pour un morceau de ma glace  
au chocolate, une femme seul, deux femmes  
ensemble, l'extension de les nuages et  
les brises que nous aussi sommes

Peace is the sculptures in the park  
the lovers who eat and drink,  
mother, grandmother, baby on the grass,  
the sun that comes and goes, the seagulls  
that scream for a piece of my chocolate  
icecream, a woman alone, two women  
together, the prolongation of the clouds and  
the breezes and we also  
are.

## Poem on the Film, *Once* — Donald Lev

Boy with guitar on his back meets girl pulling vacuum cleaner.  
They fall in love, then split, but not before they make their music.  
(She, it turns out, plays the piano).

A musical — a bit more subdued than the ones with  
Dan Daily & Betty Grable & Carmen Miranda &  
Cuddles Seckle cleaning breadcrumbs off a checkered  
tablecloth — nothing like that.

The music's a bit contemporary for my taste,  
though it begins to grow on me (one number in particular,  
that I don't know the name of) . . . but the theme is there . . .  
expressed purely: Love & Music & Youth. Hooray!

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