

# Waterways:

Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME  
32



# Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream

VOLUME 32, #4

The camera  
does not lie  
but I must

James Penha

MAZEPPA FRAMED

Waterways, Volume 18, Number 3

# **WATERWAYS: Poetry in the Mainstream**

Volume 32

Number 4

Designed, Edited and Published by Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel

Thomas Perry, Teaching Artist

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## **The Light — Holly Day**

you give me refuge from everything real, wrap  
me in cool water, bright thoughts of tomorrow.  
demons howl outside my door, vampires hide in  
my shadow, persistent salesmen rap loudly  
at my window — my life tries to get back in.

you make the dead buildings and dusty smog and  
bloody road kill disappear, fade to creeping  
ivy and tall, fork-toed waterbirds, present  
me with talismans dedicated to some  
silent, strong god, one that never interrupts.

## Masked — Margo Roby

Its blank simplicity  
its minimalist nothingness  
says: I will not give nor share.  
You must take what you find:  
me as I am.

The mask hides and  
in hiding gives much away —  
the eyes that say:  
my eyes are not windows to a soul.  
Its blank simplicity.

The mask smiles with  
its mouth not its eyes  
greenly tissue,  
themselves masking  
a minimalist nothingness.

A spring of hair,  
mere distraction,  
draws the gaze away from  
the smile not smiling that  
says: I will not give nor share.

No windows to the soul yet  
in their blankness is the soul  
and the eyes become the mouth  
that speaks through the mask to say:  
you must take what you find.

Mask and soul  
hidden and unhidden  
revealed and unrevealed.  
You may look in but may not see,  
me as I am.



## Scenes From Foreign Films — William Corner Clarke

Charged with grief and remorse  
For my crime of indifference to love  
I am heavy with sideshow chains  
Bound tight across my chest  
I wander the desolate beaches of the moon  
The circus idiot strongman clown

Defiant with despair  
Monstrous with vanity, and madness  
I drive the fast car full of ghosts  
Right off the broken bridge  
And then I fly, a coward, from the wreckage  
A cold eye with blue wings

A revolution betrayed, defeated by Fate  
A bitter, hated exile  
I drift on a wave washed raft  
Into a white mist of sea and sky  
My arm of fire  
Embered helpless at my side

I turn to hear  
The wind through the forest  
I watch the smoke from burning cities  
There is rain coming through an open ceiling  
I am eavesdropping  
On a conversation with my own lost soul

And I am possessed by mystery  
Speaking unknown words  
The lost poems of a foreign tongue  
Prophecy, delirium, precious stones  
Forgotten under running water  
Rust, fragments of music, sacred visions

In an abandoned seaside town  
I sit alone in an empty movie house  
Watching for a thousand years  
A film of silence  
While sand drifts and gathers  
In the doorways of the promenade outside

## **Boardwalk Dream — Ruth Moon Kempher**

We were together, last night, me  
and my parents, how young they were, how happy  
together, and yes, I repeat, smiling, together.

She had a hat on, yellow straw with  
flagrant poppies flopping on the wide brim,  
she laughing up at him, coquettish

“O,” I said (I heard myself say it)

“Isn’t this lovely,” until I realized  
they were pushing me in my wheelchair, along  
some boardwalk. Atlantic City? Asbury Park?  
with clowns and sea gulls and cotton candy  
which smelled pink.

On and on they pushed me, into a house made  
entirely of doors, each door continually opening  
onto another, until I woke sweating  
and my mother who above all hated  
liars and lying said  
“Oh, Dolly, don’t worry; one door  
closes and the angels open  
another, and everything  
(it echoed) will be okay.”

## Album — Scott Owens

Norman is always looking away.  
In every photo ever taken  
he seems distracted by what just  
happened behind him, off to one  
side or the other or somewhere beyond  
the photographer's shoulder or hand  
saying Look here. Smile. Cheese.  
And all you get are partial profiles  
and inexplicably puzzled looks  
almost as if he wanted to look  
away, avoid the straight-on shot,  
knowing the picture would never be right,  
knowing none of it could ever be perfect.

## **Residual Hauntings at Bronte's House: a Triptych — Alan Catlin**

Domestic scenes enacted  
in period costumes for  
the camera: making bread  
in the kitchen, hand sewing  
in the parlor, all the girls  
writing at once, shot in  
long exposures, leaving only  
these ghost images behind.

**black branches/ white wall — R. Yurman**

*(riff on an image from David Wojahn's "Wartime Photos of My Father")*

not a digital nexus of points  
but the old-fashioned stuff  
black and white negative

ambivalence caught by inversion  
a small true moment locked in  
light for dark, dark for light

stick shadows slashed  
across "the sun's incendiary  
merciless bright"



## **Say No! to Old El Caminos — Wayne Hogan**

I say No! to  
old El Caminos and  
No! to fresh tomatoes.  
I say Yes! to beckoning  
boats and Yes! to  
roadside relationships.  
O send us back to Science  
Fiction, deliver us from  
threatening factualization and  
the over-wrought necks  
of sophisticated women about  
my age (more or less).

If you're going to eat chicken,  
then eat chicken. (No, eat  
*more* chicken.) Have  
escargot thoughts. Shirk not  
those who deign. Be  
of apparency. Lo, yon Western  
Wind, blow us your best  
al dente fettucini. Give in to  
philosophy; be not unduly done.

## **I Do Not Ride Roan Horses Bareback — Wayne Hogan**

Let me see  
if I can get this  
straight. I'm going  
to try real hard, yes, *real* hard:

I was not born in Texas any-  
where, nor did I not  
try to set my schoolhouse on fire  
when I was about eight.

I never attended  
Vassar (as best I recall), but  
didn't graduate with Honors.  
I was never a member  
of the French Foreign Legion  
when I didn't sail across  
the Pacific alone on a rubber  
inner-tube yanked from a tire  
(won in a questionable raffle)  
off a gray-and-yellow  
'57 Studebaker my Uncle Henry  
swore he never had.

When I wasn't on Guam in the '50s,  
I didn't play "Taps" for all  
the left-over dead Japanese soldiers  
that kept turning up  
under *very* suspicious circumstances  
while I wasn't there.  
I do not ride roan horses bareback,  
and wouldn't if I did.

Well, I tried, really I didn't.  
This is the best I couldn't do.

## Enough — Edward J. Rielly

She is a young girl in  
the picture, standing in front  
of a small schoolhouse,  
boys in dark coats and knickerbockers,  
girls in plain dresses, all somber,  
seriously facing the camera,  
photographs still uncommon then,  
a rare event, especially for children  
attending a small country school  
in the early years  
of the twentieth century.

I would tell your story,  
my child-mother, thoughtfully,  
factually, if I could,  
but I cannot roll back the years  
to ask what you were thinking,  
hoping, on that day.  
I cannot even see much of you,  
obscured by that boy in front.  
Your face, though, is unmistakable,  
the adult one little changed,  
and on your head some sort  
of hat, seemingly with a bow on top,  
your preparation for that so-formal  
school picture, that rare glimpse of you.

So I will tell of you later, the child grown,  
dreams either living or not-only you  
could tell: but those red geraniums  
you planted every spring, bursting above  
the old tractor tire you painted white,  
placed in the front yard, and filled  
with dirt. A rooster crowing you awake  
on a warm summer day. Green rows  
of corn swaying in the wind, a dance  
you might have liked to make yourself.  
Ice cream cones you forced-never needing  
much force, really-on grandchildren.  
I will focus on such images and call them you.



## From Montreal images, poetic or prosaic in themselves — Sylvia Manning

### 1

the truly old woman bent at waist above long skirt  
as peasants wear in our dreams of long ago,  
kerchief, pushing cart with purchases or debris (and  
one feared the latter) on rue St. Hubert beneath its  
Market Place St. Hubert awnings but this twilight  
in the long nearly night dark emptiness, only

some young glamour near and around for their own  
perhaps commercial reasons

and her slow walk not trying to see but the sidewalk  
beneath her

yesterday the young middle-class woman with 2  
children and husband waiting at newish car, he not  
pleased she was going through thrown-out  
vegetables at Jean Talon Market

(greedily, I might add, like a predator's face to us,  
other takers — a grimace, not a smile)

for especially potatoes;

another woman, older, guessed her mother, wasn't,  
because the family left, the young wife-mother with  
them, her bags heavy with little potatoes

as did the older woman, soon, but alone.

I never figured out what language to use to tell her the parsnips weren't white carrots, not exactly, but no language worked very well, then

a smiling young woman came up. She knew the word for what they were, the parsnips. We took big bunches.

I saw the woman of peasant demeanor again, in  
daylight on Chateaubrian,

Less garbed, still bent, still pulling her cart full of  
not much, looking down, down, moving slowly  
through, one must suppose her past.

## **Like a Dream But Not — Rex Sexton**

When I was a student in Boston, the newscasts featured the tragic story of a young, and very beautiful, African American woman who fell four flights to her death when a fire escape, on which she was hanging clothes collapsed. She was wearing a white summer dress. The dress billowed as she tumbled, toppling head over heels in her freefall, arms outstretched. There were photographs of this. A photographer was passing. He heard her scream as the bolts of the fire escape

cracked and the platform snapped. “I put it on automatic.” He told the tabloid in which the pictures first appeared.” And the camera captured it all.” Not all — nothing about her hard life in the slums, negligent landlord, corrupt city officials orphaned children, indifferent citizens. The page was turned; the commercial messages followed; we shivered and forgot the nightmarish images; life went on.

## **Bureaucrat — Gilbert Honigfeld**

Blinking, he emerges,  
his gaze the daze of someone  
just awakened, a look easily confused  
with a dumb stare, in reality a rare study  
of a man unaccustomed to life beyond his cubicle,  
a fortress of paper in bulwarks and barricades of his own  
design, behind which a shrewd intelligence hides, a man moling  
daily deeper and deeper

## **Gédéonne – Monique Laforce**

The four-years old child knelt on the cement square tiles, observing the ants. That one, transporting the grocery for a crowd on her back.

He blocked her way three or four times. She went on, carrying her load, getting back to her puzzling way with a willingness and a patience that forced his admiration.

“Gédéonne, what a special and wonderful being you are,” he said.

Soon he lost sight of her. But always, popping out from nowhere, he recognized her, going in and out, tireless.



“Gédéonne, here you are!” he greeted out, addressing her as a personal friend.

Since then, almost three decades later, every ant I see is my younger son’s friend, Gédéonne. Never getting old. Never dying. *THE Ant.*

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