

# The 2River View

2\_4, (Summer 1998)



**POEMS BY** Salvatore Amico M. Buttaci, Robert Creeley (with art by Robert Indiana), Larry Griffin, Michael Largo, billy little, Jim Sherry, Holly Pettit, Peter Siedlecki, Neca Stoller, and Glenda Zumwalt



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## **In The Lake of the Moon**

Salvatore Amico M. Buttaci

---

from a porcelain face ripples a mouth  
laden with secrets but nothing is told  
in the lake of the moon

lunar eyes wet, murky, watch treetops  
poke bottoms of dream-sodden skies  
from which birds fly away

this mover of tides, this body of craters,  
rests its reflection on waterbed evenings  
in the lake of the moon

## A Walk Along Sandy Hook Beach: July 1997

Salvatore Amico M. Buttaci

---

You tap the wood in whose crevices  
History imbedded itself  
And you call it *something from the sea*,  
A twisted relic of what grew once

Along the prehistoric trunk line  
Of green parasols, eons before  
This grittiness lay here, golden gems—  
Silicone grains that once formed mountains

Long before humanity came, armed  
With names for seasons, names for all things,  
As if that would insure survival.

You tap this wood from a tree that fell  
Crashing though unheard by witnesses,  
Wood adrift in time like uncoiffed horns  
From a slaughtered bull, or gnarled fingers  
Pointing somewhere before all this.



## The Rains of September

Larry Griffin

---

Now in the dampness of this bottom,  
awaiting the rains of September,  
I list on a small scrap of paper  
the realities of tragedy, the un-  
said word, the misspent dollar,  
the day stolen from vacation  
years ago, the crash of china  
plate to hard wood floor,

and if in this moment I call  
out your name, what I should  
have done then, in doing it now,  
what health does this show of  
the heart as all the cells  
of the skin desire water:  
The damp warmth of dancing  
in the rain before saying goodbye?

## Seeing a Young Woman

Michael Largo

---

A green swath of cloth tied at her breasts  
for a top; it is a wonder to watch her dance:  
the coral blocks of seawall and the stepped  
patio— wooden plank lounge chairs  
balanced on large white wooden wheels, pushed aside  
wet beach towels draped, plastic cocktails glasses,  
napkins fluttering. Seagulls looking  
sideways, alternating pier piling perches,  
their flying shadows on her face.  
How can you fall in love with someone you don't know  
nor will? Just a brief glance; a leaf falling,  
a twig snapping under bare feet enough to make  
a pause, a momentary break, a hesitation  
in the constant churning the movement forward  
the motion away. (My wife goes ahead towing the children  
and I watch this other one dance). It is not knowing anything  
about this woman I see dancing that makes this work;  
We have no history,  
no lines of tears between us, no echoes of low sobbing voices  
gazing through broken screen doors hazed by betrayal.  
No promises unkept,  
no promises to make. It is in this  
her moment of perfection, this moving portrait  
she will never know was taken like a painter  
making an open ended frame of joining thumbs;  
an observation, a celebration for that silica thread  
of life when she was untouched, reigning over death  
a laugh on her smile  
a toss of the hair  
a defiance of innocent energy to that slow  
crackling and crumbling of bones; a broken petal  
of a flower held up, caught, the red flower in her hair  
frozen in a phantom  
breeze.

## **MAMA**

billy little

---

thanks for the swallowtail,  
thanks for the smell of the species iris  
thanks for the lilac's attack  
thanks for the ears  
that hears the heron's hoarse compleynt,  
the raptors' whistles the loons' hilarity,  
thanks for the lips whispering thanks for the tongue  
thanks for the kicks thanks for the kisser  
and thanks for the nose that brings me back  
to the herb and the rose thanks for the womb  
thanks for the fingers thanks for the toes  
thanks for the coming and going  
thanks for teeth chatterin ice cool life

## Mayqueen's Dead Long Live The Mayqueen

billy little

---

a kid's king no kidding  
he stood where no one stood  
where no one should  
he stood the taste of time  
he understood  
he didn't want to understand  
he wanted to overstand  
like his prosecutors overstood  
pissing off the smartypants  
and the too cute by half  
the disingenuous the conniving  
the craven and corrupt

## wedding song

billy little

---

*(for Elke & Clint, their union)*

I dreamt I saw al ginsberg  
he was climbing down that tree you know the tree  
climbing down the tree  
naked as a baby  
beckoning to me

billy babe says he  
please pass these words  
pass these words on for me:

kindness is the poem  
can you finish it

what kind are you  
all one of a kind

kindness provokes  
kindness spills over  
kindness returns plenty  
kind and kinder  
unkindness echoes  
boomboomerangs  
kindness is a few words  
before kiss  
in the dictionary  
read slowly  
if you don't get the kiss  
before you finish

## Sleep: Divinity School

Holly Pettit

---

You remind me of myself, the way  
I was before I grew up, before I danced  
too long in cheap shoes, drank too much  
scotch, worked too hard for too little  
money, used imagination as wallpaper,  
found the devil on the highway  
and followed his car all the way home. I sleep,

holding on fast to you like life, gripping  
hard around the waist of a dream.

Waking, I remember  
and then lose a wisp of voice  
speaking in the next room  
from beyond the night-drawn  
curtain. The 3 a.m. sounds are abroad  
now; plow-trucks prowl the streets,  
scraping and lumbering,  
bumping. I prop up, watch snow  
fall through the streetlamp light of Mass Ave.,  
filling the tracks of airport taxis. Your body  
lies beside me dark, an empty  
bark pulled up on shore.

A figure in front of Peabody  
Museum throws his leg over a racing  
bike, makes one steadying circle, then  
heads out toward Kirkland, reappearing  
under every streetlight  
for the length of the block until  
passing beyond the courtyard gate,  
beyond the zoology labs,  
between the particle accelerator and the dark  
parking lot of Divinity School.









# American Dream

Robert Creeley and Robert Indiana

---

The poems and images here  
were originally published (1997) in  
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201 Nevada Street  
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Images © Robert Indiana  
Poems © Robert Creeley

*The 2River View, 2\_4* (Summer 1998)

## One

Robert Creeley

---

One thought of integrity  
wants it to be  
an intrinsic, indestructible me, a one and only—

but misses it's one  
into which all has gone  
and from which all has come—

cannot look back,  
see the star's, the square's lack,  
the interminable circle surrounds the fact.



Robert Indiana

---

## Love

Robert Creeley

---

One can't know love like a tree in the ground  
nor can one determine where it will be found.  
One day it's there, the next day gone.

But that seems a bleak before and after.  
Best think of it as another matter,  
which comes simply by changing one letter.

Blue of sky, green of earth's cover,  
blood's red pulse, these go together,  
make place for love now and forever.



Robert Indiana

---

## **Names**

Robert Creeley

---

Marilyn's was Norma Jean.  
Things are not always as they seem.  
Skin she lived back of like some screen

kept her wonder in common view,  
said what she did, you could too,  
loved by many, touched by few.

She married heroes of all kinds  
but no one seemed to know her mind,  
none the secret key could find.

Scared kid, Norma Jean?  
Are things really what they seem?  
What is it that beauty means?



Robert Indiana

---

## Twenty-five

Robert Creeley

---

*Balling the Jack*      *Down the Track*  
*Won't Be Back*      *Too Late, Jack*

See the rush of light—  
Time's flight, out of sight.

Feel the years like tears—  
the days gone away.





Robert Indiana

---

**PP**

Robert Creeley

---

That double P is eyes still look out at me.  
One day years ago in Aix, young son in my arms,  
    [the other in hand, as we walked by the table,  
    [his followed me.  
Only years later I realized who'd looked so intently.

His head was like a rock, a bald ball  
of complex concentration. Did he ever fall,  
fail, feel stupid? Was it all

success? No. He painted pictures  
of a dislocatedness, lived in its fiction,  
had no art apart from that distraction.



Robert Indiana

---

## The American Dream

Robert Creeley

---

Edges and disjuncts, shattered, bitter planes,  
a wedge of disconsolate memories to echo fame,  
fear of the past, a future still to blame—

Multiple heavens, hells, nothing is straight.  
You earn your money, then you wait  
for so-called life to see that you get paid.

*Tilt!* Again it's all gone wrong.  
This is a heartless, hopeless song.  
*This is an empty, useless song.*



Robert Indiana

---

## **fountain: sault locks**

Jim Sherry

---

and the bushes and the benches  
where we lingered tossing pennies  
sweaty pennies, secret wishes  
offered to the fountain

and the couples walk together  
drifting in and out of shadows,  
lovers in the orange and green  
touching in the mist

and in the distance, silent giants  
en route to minnesota.  
i don't know from minnesota;  
i'm happy in the spray.

## Eye to Eye

Peter Siedlecki

---

She sat across  
from me,  
speaking  
of how she wanted to be touched  
by something other than clouds.

I wanted to touch her  
with the one truth I know  
—that one should spend one's life  
learning how to love  
being alive.

But her disillusionments  
came fluttering out of her  
like pigeons against a dark sky  
and landing on me:

a crumbling monument  
to roses  
with eyes full of yesterdays  
that suddenly looked up  
and took in  
all of that incredible  
youth and beauty

sitting across  
from me,  
speaking  
to me

And I knew once  
again  
that my truth was true

## Reverberations

Peter Siedlecki

---

The story will be whispered  
by the gray-bearded father,  
and it will be true.

The listener  
will weave a cloth of it  
and fashion  
an embroidered garment  
meant to suggest a direction

and when he arrives  
at wherever  
there is,  
there  
will be a black lake  
whose water is nothing,  
expecting him  
to provide form.

—a vast lacuna  
luring into itself  
the raveling threads  
of what he had been wearing.



Finally naked,  
he will pronounce a curse  
upon his father's tongue  
and upon everything  
that was true  
and his words will startle  
even him.

And he will feel  
the bristles on his chin  
begin to gray.

Or else,  
he will ignore what he sees  
and seek a small pool  
in which to gaze and  
admire his father's beauty

and he will feel his own voice  
constrict into a whisper.

## The Buffalo

Neca Stoller

---

It was before each Thanksgiving  
our class collected buffalo nickels,  
their massive bodies pressed flat  
in coins edged with grime,

banking them in mayonnaise jars  
built higher with each greasy touch  
massing slowly to a total  
like a catacomb of bones.

Until one year our school bought  
a real buffalo with huge eyes  
empty as the rolling plains.  
And when we'd visit his pen

each time there was less of him—  
His woolly mane sloughed off in sheets.  
Confinement rubbed his hide raw.  
By summer he was gone,

leaving in the pen's only shade,  
round and smooth as a bullet,  
a slight indentation—like a pauper's grave  
dug, filled and almost forgotten.

## Coyote

Neca Stoller

---

Their cage empty, ribs drop on the field.  
Seared winter grass watches quietly.  
Among sharp hawthorns  
the stooped shadow of an old one  
folds down  
and enters the earth,  
quilted into hard dirt completely.  
From my path I stare, not braving a move.  
Vast day—  
soon there's nothing else,  
only a pale sun.  
The grass turns toward its light,  
and I turn  
back to my own.

## Texas Women

Glenda Zumwalt

---

*(for Jane Rose, JoyceNell, and Modena Ruth)*

Texas always has been  
hell on women and horses  
but it's our natural home  
not a choice we would have made  
but there it is—the sky blazing  
blue in July and the speckled beans  
flying from gnarled fingers  
into dishpans on screen porches,  
the little cousins in cotton underwear  
drenching each other under the sycamore  
while the women talked of revivals,  
a start of the Old Blush Rose,  
and tumors the size of grapefruit,  
while we fumbled with the pods  
and dreamed of town,  
that world of our girlhood,  
those rites of passage.

Our guides, our oracles, our mothers, our aunts  
telling the stories of crops and failures,  
of births and deaths and graveyard days,  
of winter hail and August drought.  
And all the time the petunias  
wilting in the heat and us  
dreaming Corvettes and swimming pools,  
our breasts budding, those first blood stains,  
bored with the tales of the women  
we would not become. What did we  
know of work and world and time  
and death and men?

We are long since women and yes in town...  
Here on still summer evenings  
I hear them in the murmur of the cotton wood trees,  
singing *don't fence me in*  
singing *bringing in the sheaves*  
singing *i'll fly away*  
singing  
*how sweet the sound*  
whispering  
*Glenda Ann Glenda Ann*  
*don't truck so much with doubt.*

## Women Aging

Glenda Zumwalt

---

It happens too slowly to notice:  
Pounds come on by ounces,  
Color fades gradually  
the way sheets, once crisp and royal blue,  
become a flimsy, gauzy grey.  
The pain in the joints is something  
you get used to, like the scraggly stray  
that hangs around the house, coming and going,  
until you realize it's sleeping by the door  
twenty hours a day. It's yours.

It happens over night.  
One summer you are walking on the beach  
in a two-piece, turning heads at nearly forty,  
savoring whatever power that is.  
The same summer your children are at home,  
slamming screen doors, turning up the volume,  
dripping watermelon and ice cream on the floors.  
And then fall, a sudden silence. You are wrapped  
in a caftan, the waves of cloth rolling with you  
through the cool shadows of the quiet house  
you are queen of. Whatever power that is,  
it's yours.

It doesn't mean what you think it will  
no more than first grade did or first date,  
no more than marriage or divorce. It is what it is,  
not what they tell you—except by then the permanent  
record, the one you didn't believe existed,  
appears, scripted on skin, to be read in your face,  
your hands, your neck by any literate stranger.  
An archetypal story, no doubt, but with a twist.  
Because, honey, it's yours.

## Women who live with cats

Glenda Zumwalt

---

We cannot escape the cats who want us,  
the cats that call us. We think we hear silence,  
cannot say why one day we get another,  
why we detour by a shelter or to the home  
of a woman who breeds llamas and Siamese.  
Six of my cats have come to me,  
called me to the porch, strolled in the open door.

Long ago they used to burn us,  
those of us whom cats prefer,  
but what can do? When the cat calls  
we come to that which knows something  
about us, each one knowing a different thing,  
a thing we will need to learn.

Cats prepare you for their truths.  
They wash your hair. They check your breath,  
knowing where the soul lives.  
A cat meows until you learn to speak,  
purrs foreshadowings, waits with patience  
beyond the reach of zen. A cat loves you  
the way a dog cannot  
with the fierceness of saints,  
with the indifference of a child.  
A cat knows you for who you are.

Those whom cats do not choose  
mumble *right man say dirty houses*  
rant *foolishcrazyloon*.  
Sisters, do not listen. The cats do not.  
Remember the grandmother they burned.  
Let her speak. Listen to the cat and know  
yourself a witch, a woman  
in the company of strange familiars

## The 2River View, 2\_4 (Summer 1998)

Authors

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**Salvatore Amico M. Buttaci** has work currently in magazines such as *Poetry Magazine*, *Aphelion*, and the *North River Review*. His poetry collection, *Promising The Moon*, is currently selling in bookstores in Lodi, New Jersey.

**Robert Creeley**, in *Selected Poems: 1945-1990*, writes, "Why poetry? Its materials are so constant, simple, elusive, specific. It costs so little and so much. It preoccupies a life, yet can only find one living. It is a music, a playful construct of feeling, a last word and communion."

**Larry Griffin** is Professor of English and Dean of Arts and Sciences at Dyersburg State Community College, Dyersburg, Tennessee. He has published *New Fires* (1982), *The Blue Water Tower* (1984), and *Airspace* (1989).

**Robert Indiana** is known for using public signs and symbols with altered lettering to make stark and challenging visual statements. In 1973, an 8¢ stamp was published with perhaps his most famous poster, LOVE. On the envelope of a letter to Robert Creeley, Indiana numbered the stamp 1/4,000,000.

**Michael Largo** has published a chapbook of poetry, *Nails In Soft Wood* (Pikadilly Press); and a novel, *Southern Comfort* (New Earth Books). He currently lives in South Florida, where he is a board member of the Miami International Book Fair.

nobody knows **billy little**, they say he lives in Nowhere, B.C. Combat Plagiarism is a project he's currently working on, wherein he writes the best poem he could possibly write that day and signs your name.



**Holly Pettit** served as a Russian Linguist for the U.S. Army, graduated Harvard Divinity School, and now lives in small-town Massachusetts. Her short stories and poems have appeared in various periodicals such as *Eye on Women*, *Eratica*, and *Salt River Review*. Her poem, "Irkutsk," won first prize in the 1st Annual Poetry competition of the e-zine *Tapestry*.

**Jim Sherry** is a high school senior in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, where he has been learning along the banks of the St. Mary's River for all his seventeen years.

**Peter Siedlecki** is a Professor of English at Daemen College. Unless being so far away from baseball proves too devastating, he will probably retire to Italy someday. Meanwhile, when he is not working on his book, writing poetry, or composing radio essays, he does everything in his power to spread lies about Buffalo--about its awful weather, its depressed economy, its uninteresting architecture, its dearth of culture, its bad landscape—only to keep the upwardly-mobile riffraff out.

**Neca Stoller** is the owner-manager of a cattle farm in south Georgia. She and her writing partner, Laura Young, this year won the Haiku Society of America Renku Award. She has poems online in *Recursive Angel*, *Conspire*, and *Snakeskin*; and in paper magazines such as *Frogpond*, *Still*, *Visions International*, *El Dorado Review*, and *Poetry*.

**Glenda Zumwalt** is Professor of English at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. She is a gardener, a grandmother, an animal lover, a sometimes poet, and a Texan at heart.

## 2River Poetry

### About

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2River Poetry, a literary site on the Daemen College World Wide Web Server, publishes *The 2River View*.

2River Poetry also publishes individual authors. These collections, as well as all issues of *The 2River View*, can be accessed at

<http://www.daemen.edu/~2River>

For information about submissions, please visit the 2River website, or send email to

[2River@daemen.edu](mailto:2River@daemen.edu)

All mail is answered within a day or two.

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# The 2River View



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