

The **2**River **V**iew

10.2 (Winter 2006)



Red Eye © 2006 by Jackie Skrzyński

new poems by

Wendy Taylor Carlisle, Scott Bailey, Peter Berghoef
Regina Coll, Weston Cutter, Jolia Sidona Einstein
Joel Friederich, Meridith Gresher, Clark Holtzman
Mark Jackley, Martha Serpas

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Wendy Taylor Carlisle

The Other Story

Nobody thought it was a dream
And it wasn't.
That year's bumper crops were jilted lovers and Cochins,
Twelve months and nothing but
Tears and feathers. That year George
Paddled into the bayou to drown himself
And didn't.
He kept his fortune and
His cook stove.
That year the waitress took off for Memphis.
That year Margie ate
Alone at Furr's Cafeteria. Nobody
Wrote a will or a testament.
No one sent a letter home.

Scott Bailey

Giving Beauty Back to God

I'm uncertain how to style my hair—
the perfect part, the slick-back look, the bowl cut—

when I find my hamsters
in the hot cab of my dad's Chevrolet S-10:

the windows rolled up.
doors slammed shut.
tongues stuck out.
stench stout as chives.

I ask mom why she killed them:
*For putting pets before God
for too long.*

I don't ask for forgiveness.
I wipe my petroleum-jelly hands on the *Book of Revelation*.

Scott Bailey

**I'm Not Surprised We Were Created in Explosion, Speed,
and Void—All This From a Loving and Merciful God**

To Work

Down three flights of stairs, dodge dog shit for six blocks, curled up with a scarf, down two flights of stairs, wait for the L, squeeze in, rub a few butts, hope my butt's rubbed, make six stops, up four flights of stairs, walk 8 blocks, up one flight of stairs, catch the elevator to the third floor.

To Home

Catch the elevator to the first floor, down one flight of stairs, walk 8 blocks, down four flights of stairs, wait for the L, squeeze in, rub a few butts, hope my butt's rubbed, make six stops, up two flights of stairs, curled up with a scarf, dodge dog shit for six blocks, up three flights of stairs.

Peter Berghoef

Factory Town

The dirty river flows heavy here, she said, so go away, and her fingertips bled onto my cleanest shirt and pants.

While the breath went fast to a wind's pace over some frozen, treeless land she whispered words I couldn't hear: sighing and crying before taking the tax collector in her mouth.

Peter Berghoef

This title will eventually refer to time

Recovering from the thought that this year could be so long,
that a decade could be done
with five more years to go.
And what else is so organized as time already gone?

Vertical miles of forest cover my shoulders;
these wrists are sand dunes spilling under careless feet.

Less than fortunes of unspent minutes
collapsing as time itself is captured,

frozen like meat
fresh-killed and delivered to my door.

No thought encapsulates the mouth—
the moving month ripped stillborn
from an aging womb.

Regina Coll

Commencement

I imagine it was before the ceremony, before
they all started drinking and sharing cigarettes,
 because her dress looked properly stiff and she's pensive.
But more about this dress—
cinched tightly at the waist smoothed over her gathered knees,
 large-collared, crowning sleeves with little wings.
Spotless whiteness.
I can't see her shoes—they're
 not in the photo—but her stockings are no longer black,
they're a brushed ice under her buttoned armor
and about her shoulders whips a heavy blue cape lined in blood red—
 it looks like it would be itchy from the photo, and makes
 me scratch under
my chin where I see hers clasped. But a wind is blowing the
 cape open,
blowing back her curls and cowlicks, strands floating over the top
of her cap

her cap
a cap.

 She's sitting on a rock looking into the wind.

Regina Coll

North by North

for Rockwell Kent

I was looking for shipwrecks
 for broken lives and froth
 at the edge of human-ness
and you stole my north, my compass
 turned, towards your north
 in whites, your north by water.
Women huddled facing, men crawled away
from their provider
attracted or breathless
and almost over, like it never happened
 but betrayed by numbers, so,
 life under a coat, a triangle of yours
drawn from the knees, isosceles leaning
one watches, one wails, one comforts
 on the prominence, done.

We traveled similar paths, yours in youth, mine
in my mother's life
 (a Newfie fish eater)
framed through her limbs, and her feet then
in father's, a basket of
 ice and secrets—why is it called Greenland
and which do I love more,
line or story? Maybe they walked where you did.
 Can I say I too, can I say ours?

Because I knew when I saw it / you. My eyes
entering you saw my own lack of courage
but felt there / the wind too
and the leathery brush by the cottage,
and a flight over crucifixion,
and the seal's red flesh like a magnet, north.

Weston Cutter

A Defense of Kissing Despite Massive Evidence to the Contrary

Once when you said *I'm hungry* someone
kissed you as if tongues were ever enough food,
lips and intentions of bliss, low gutturals
broken because vowels seem so flimsy and how
many times will you say country instead of

the name you miss so, like the color green or
the number eleven or the gun you were taught so
well to fire, age nine, how when you sighted down
the barrel as you pointed at the sun you knew
you'd never hit it, ever, but you still had to try?

Weston Cutter

Last Prayer of Summer

God of lightning bolts and
butter churns these hands felt
the bread rise then broke the cantaloupe
and split the strawberries,
now teach the final conjugation,
the past tense of love and

God of cooking grease and
red thread share new parables
of wine and risings, you've taken her
from my touch, allow my heart's summer
to finish as I eat this meal that tastes
of yesterday, autumn,

and God of stopped watches, the cup
empty of sugar, I don't believe
it's a shattered world despite these
songless guitar hands, the cold that knows
my name, all your heart-shaped fruit
so blood red and devourable,

dressed in finest thorns, amen.

Jolia Sidona Einstein

From the Hudson

I am the one who crossed Chinatown
in cloth slippers to the edge of the Hudson
to offer his dead wife a bowl of rice and sesame.
I am the rice and sesame that fed the river,
the bowl waving in river water,
the river water mixed with new rain water
rising up eighteen stories and out the bathtub faucet
of apartment E10
on the Lower East Side. I smell like dead fish.

I am the one in apartment E10
who is not hungry and does not sleep,
who knows only hunger and sleep,
who keeps a house of closed books,
who dips her toe into bath water
smelling like dead fish,
who soaks, dreaming
of falling like rain into the Hudson.

Jolia Sidona Einstein

Portrait of Lake Alice

She is a good sitter,
although her boa of wild taro

and egret plumes tickles.
When she squirms,

white light ripples over sapphire.
An egret skims the lake face

blooming with water lettuce.
On an island, a live oak stands,

host to a few black cormorants
shaped like coat hangers,

and a wind-filled plastic bag.
Like the living room I left

across town with lamp, ceiling fan,
and television still on,

she drones all afternoon.

Joel Friederich

The American Boy Dreamt of Journeys

You swam through walls
as if they'd dissolved,
breathed in your pores.
Under fluid fields of stars
midnight was all depth,
the world a sunken bed—
any who needed air
lay paralyzed in the logic
of constellations.

You found hollows,
drowned places between
tamaracks' bleeding roots,
in the acids of a bog's throat.
Names decayed in the knots
of tubers, time's reservoirs
rotted to reptilian stillness.

Once, you slipped through
a door in a dead-water hump
woven of finger bones
stained tannic black—
a dying animal's breath
rustled in root-hair
and heavy fore claws clicked
against the spine of the earth.

All night while his children
gnawed the shins of alders,
plundered sticky muck,
hissed and slapped
at a gibbous moon's fat rising,
you felt your way
into his drowned house,
inching further into his dream,
not afraid of waking
such blind, furious hunger.

Joel Friederich

In the North

In our thin shelter on the shore
we're alert as animals—no, we are
animals, trying to rub off our skin
by making love for ... who knows,
time's stuck, minutes won't
diminish into dark, nor light
relinquish its claim on flesh—
this near the longest day
sun is our blood's obsession.

Nothing here can give
itself wholly to the pleasure
of lying down exhausted.
Though we've come so far
into northern barrens, we cannot
burrow down through each other
deep enough to drown in quiet
waters beyond our lust.

The pull back to shorelines
is relentless—we are painted
turtles, egg-heavy, heaving
up onto cool evening sands.
We are cracked open
by the burden of our need
and ooze richly red through
our backs' broken mandalas,
but still we are always rising
to dig, to bury, to lay.

Meridith Gresher

Everlasting

Grief glows in the dark like the face
of a loved one with jaundice,
yellowing gift-wrap to be undone
crinkled up and discarded. Skin
like sun, grief clammy with fever,
both carried out with the brittle Christmas
tree. Needles drop; they cut
through woolen sweaters and
heavy mittens piercing the living
with the symbol of everlasting before
the tree travels to The Home Depot,
to the chipper, to be made mulch
for flowers, bedded for Winter,
that will their faces to see Spring.

Meridith Gresher

One Full Moon Cycle

He does not love a muscle in her
coltish stride.
He does not notice that she spreads
Jergens extra dry lotion
(with the scent of cherries)
over her arms and elbows
to parse the winter air.
But he feeds off her when he needs
blood more than clean sheets.

She spreads
jam and peanut butter. She,
the one who drives carpools
and spends nights quilting
for newlyweds at church;
the double ring design
like the one she made for them
their first year married.
It covered their bodies till
he stained it with another
while she visited
her mother in Charlotte.

She does not love him
drinking
Pabst Blue Ribbon
while driving
home and then
belching it
in his sleep.

She does not love
the way he pats her
on the ass
in front of his friends
at barbeques and church pot lucks.

She does not remember
how long since he wore
his ring: five
maybe six years?
He, the one who
begged her to marry
through one full moon cycle.
He, the one who said
he wanted five
ignores the three conceived.
He, who promised May
has squandered autumn.

Clark Holtzman

About the House All Day

Houses have their habits & ways of talking,
to us, to one another, to their distant cousin, the woods
and to the world, however they know it.
They make room for us, try to, or leave us out of doors—
try that, too—stand empty sometimes, their windows
blanked, sometimes for long times.

Such are their habits when one inhabits them
that houses after awhile become about us
and we about them, about the house all day
like gods and their people, all day,
and such that when we disinhabit, they're silent,
have nothing to say about us all day.

Clark Holtzman

House Holding

Houses are not real,
they are dreams, our own,
they are dream homes
and we call them so.

When a house burns,
the next morning
we stumble through the ashes
and are reminded of it, our dream.

Mark Jackley

Middle Age

This line on my face is a river.
A villager stoops, hauls water.
His shoulders burn. If he's lucky,
he will carry it a long way.

Mark Jackley

When a Truck Smashed into my Car like the Fist of God

God knows why,
I wasn't hurt,
but I was blown out
of my shoes, so
I hobbled home
in my stocking feet
like a holy fool who
wanders the Moroccan sands
or Tibetan slopes,
feeling every pebble,
each step on the earth.

Martha Serpas

Formica

My uncle offers a can of “coffee”
at seven in the morning, as he

disappears into his mint green truck—
the lakes he fished gather

tupelos and moss thick as his heart—
disguising its will as his, crickets

and the pop of the float reminding him
of the world’s insistent presence, though

by seven he’s done fishing, long done,
just driving into clouds of oyster dust—

leaving us to Green Stamp coffee cups,
cuccidata, iced pink and white,

from fat figs in her side yard, whites
on a clothesline, cats eating from pie pans

on the car hood, on the boat trailer,
the final metal snap like a crystal

dinner bell, or what she imagines a dinner
bell would sound like, or a baby’s voice.

In the photograph she slings an arm
like a sailor across her sister’s shoulder.

They have the Pop-Rouge-and-Moon-pie
grins of being-in-love. The itinerant photographer

maybe missing that, as they did maybe,
the multiplicities of romance. *How can*

*those young girls pull down their step-ins
for a man? It's bad enough ...* she said, and

Get down and have some coffee, cher.
Here inside the checkered floor,

glass-paned cabinets, you can see what
you need right inside, no lost time

on the green-spackled Formica,
chrome-wrapped table, dollies,

everything in easy reach—lighten,
sweeten, stir, smell, savor, and

drink, *cher, you can tell me*, wiped by a clean
towel with a crocheted and consecrated lip.

Martha Serpas

Millennial Birthday

My twenty-first my dad took me to Vegas
To play blackjack into dawn, swearing
we'd quit, then someone brings free seven-

And-sevens and a pack of Marlboro
Lights on a cork tray of swizzle sticks
And gold embossed napkins and how,

You think, could you have doubted
The abundance of the world, as
You tap the table for another card.

And that's a *good* day—
After you stop going to therapy,
Which is, after all, strategy sessions

For winning the game you're
Trying to quit. A good day
Is walking the dog beside the river,

When, among palmettos and
Ibises, I look squarely at the stiff
Red-tail knotted in the Kash-n-Karry bag.

There's the osprey all alone
At the top of the spindly bald cypress,
And somehow I at once

Feel at home and at some other
Point, not faraway, but where,
In my memory, everything

Was bigger, the legs of the dining room
Table thick as these oak trees,
Shaggy, hard and magisterial.

I have lived where green things live
All year long and where snow becomes
The only color beside dull and gray and hard.

Now I live where buzzards winter.
In the mornings they flare their opera capes
And until night I must perform.

The 2River View, 10.2 (Winter 2006)

Contributors

Wendy Taylor Carlisle lives quietly in East Texas. Her books include *Reading Berryman to the Dog* (Jacaranda Press 2000) and *After Happily Ever After* (2River 2003).

Scott Bailey lives in New York City where he's pursuing his MFA in Creative Writing at New York University and working at Curtis Brown Literary Agency. His poetry has been published in *The Cortland Review*, *Southeast Review*, and *Verse Daily*. Other work is forthcoming in *The New York Quarterly*.

Peter Berghoef lives in Holland, Michigan. He holds a BA in English and enjoys poetry, darts, and beer.

Regina Coll is a nurse educator living in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her prose has appeared in *Mothering Magazine*. She is also the author and webmaster for the Bathroom Poetry Project in Washington, DC.

Weston Cutter recently moved from the Midwest to New York City. His poems appear in *Beloit Poetry Journal* and *Verse Daily*. He writes, "Dear Jamison: I win."

Jolia Sidona Einstein holds an MFA from the University of Florida. She lives with her finance and their cat in Santa Monica California, where she teaches English at Santa Monica College.

Joel Friederich teaches writing and literature at the University of Southern Illinois in Edwardsville. His poems have appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Paris Review*, *River Styx*, *Witness*, and elsewhere. His manuscript of poems, *In the Valley of the Tongue*, has been a finalist and semi-finalist for numerous national book competitions.

Meridith Gresher writes frequently in her blog *Talking to*

Grief. Her poetry appears in *FRiGG Magazine*, *The Journal of Modern Post*, and in the forthcoming debut edition of *Blast*.

Clark Holtzman lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He has two chapbooks, as well as poems in *Antigonish Review*, *Eleven Bulls*, *Negative Capability*, and *Redchina Magazine*. His poems in this issue of *2RV* are from the manuscript *Just Looking, Thank You*.

Mark Jackley is a business writer whose poetry has appeared in *Alba*, *California Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Paumanok Review*, and *Poesy*. He lives in Annandale, Virginia, with his daughter and their two cats.

Martha Serpas is a native of Galliano, Louisiana, and author of *Cote Blanche* (New Issues, 2002). Serpas's recent poems appear in *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion*, *The New Yorker*, and *Passages North*. Her poems in this issue of *2RV* are from *The Dirty Side of the Storm* (forthcoming, W. W. Norton, Fall 2006). Serpas teaches writing and religion and literature at the the University of Tampa.



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End Matter

About the Artist

Jackie Skrzynski lives with her husband and their two children in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York. In her studio, she meditates on the capriciousness of violence; outside of the studio, she teaches art at Ramapo College. Skrzynski has exhibited nationally, most recently in Beacon, New York.

About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View* and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. All publications first appear online, then in print.

Richard Long, Editor
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