

The 2River View

11.3 (Spring 2007)



The Cycle of the Female © 2007 by Megan Karlen

New Poems by Caroline Manring, Kimberly L. Becker
Jana Bouma, Lane Falcon, Ruth Foley, Laura Hinreisen
Jennifer Juneau, Deborah Mayhew, J. R. Solonche, Jane Varley

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Caroline Manring

Earth Stood Hard as Iron

In the ancient folds of the gut
That haven't given in to the pedantry
Of compassion and fine cheeses

Chill can quicken us, deer
Just past the arrow.
The way one enters a
Cathedral, exiting the known.

Maybe I could move so,
Unthought,
Take up the shovel.

But I voted willy-nilly
As withdrawing from a burn
For Louis to do it, to end the cat,
The half-eaten
And suffering thing.

Caroline Manning

Four Ounces

Nothing's timorous. The snaps
Of sticks in these woods, how
Everything's losing moisture.

A house sparrow's toe in winter the length
Of a fingernail moon
Can't discern shades of subzero

Among a plastic, a wood, and a metal perch.
How do we know this? What I can't feel often
Follows me into my lungs.

Assume when you're deciding which
Species to study it's smarter
Than you. That's ok: failure is the only way

To survive. If for example they'd
Discovered, after all, the greater secret
Among Auburn's million crows, why they

Congregate night after night, night-on-night,
Where that concurrence was signed and in what
Four-toed ink—maybe a round robin

Kilometers across—well then
The victorious would
Bear the machinery of that decoding which

Has to weigh at least four ounces
—Or as much as ten chickadees—extra, beyond
The weight of the allotted songbirds, the songs

We get to have. And all you have to do
Is ask someone who's carried something
For a weakened comrade, even a tiny something

A long way to find out
Nothing's timorous. The snaps
Of sticks in these woods.

Caroline Manring

**Oh Tercel, Show Me Pigeonterror, How to
Open Buttons with my Mouth**

*—and peregrine stooped to the lure
and was caught in a bramble-bush.
(medieval Spanish lyric)*

Imped and banded
In bells and a feather-plumed hood—
All atop the buses that are always
Gone to bed now, *the lanner*
Is loved best for eased and trimming
Temperament.

There is no suture so large for
A job like repairing London after
A gyrfalcon bated at her keeper's
Doe-leather wrist. In construction,
A theory to navigate mistemper in brindle.

I've purchased a bird launcher.
Hunting weight will vary, I chart down.
An eyass in the eyrie cannot take all the North
American upland birds and waterfowl, you say, passing.
In the sunset you counter *saker* with *shaheen*.

I trod on a needle once. It was no perch. The eye
Was blunter than a man's thread. Flayed
Less, stayed longer. I am most often busy
Imping chairs in corners. I am in a chair now
I have impeded, expecting what I am expecting.

When a bird reels in from Puget lowlands
It enters low. The bird is huge then,
Drops like thought boulder, hiccups

Looping time for its landing. Darning
Offhand any present love to wool footwear
Away in vestibules.

Kimberly L. Becker

The House that Love Built

Because you didn't love me
I went inside myself and died.
Then I got up and built a house
Out of all the things I'd wanted
To do with you.
I inspect the house.
I walk past the bedroom and our sated bodies
Peek into the study where we fought and made up
Get a drink in the kitchen where I entered the yolk
Of the egg I fed you
Wash my hands in the bathroom where we became steam
I sell the house.
Then wish I hadn't.
I buy it back but I don't live in it.
I just look through the windows and watch
Our shadows moving around inside.
I hear strange sounds coming from the attic,
A thud from the basement where the body is.
Then I burn the house down
And eat the ashes.
They taste like sex.
I spit out the remnants but they smolder
And set me on fire.
I cry and put myself out.
I go up in smoke and write your name in the sky.
I become cloud that becomes rain.
I excrete on you all my piss poor desire.
Then the rain becomes flood
That overtakes
Your actual house.
As you are washing away
I reach out and save you.
You cling to me.
I let you go.

Kimberly L. Becker

Trespasses

When I think of you crouched in the empty lot
Just after the struck match leapt to life
And was still snug against your thumb,
I don't feel judgment
But rather a boy's fear and dumb
Astonishment as the fire took and bloomed,

Crackling over the high dry grass
With a desolating hiss
That even then you guessed
Was crime or at the very least a trespass.
When it was beyond you, you ran
Pumping your legs, as the engines

Came sirening, drowning
The cries of small animals
As they scurried ahead of the consuming power.
Even now, in the private dousing of a shower,
You can still feel your face burn with shame
At the sudden avarice of flame.

Jane Bouma

The Body Remembers

Again the cry, the bleating, hiccupping, insect buzz.

The world come to this: Covers thrown back, body rising,

feet shuffling their worn path across the hall, past the streetlamp's
bars and shadows. Bending to see the red face, the balled fists,

the arms and knees pulled to the chest, quivering. Lifting
the small heaviness, feeling the rounded firmness of bones,

muscle and flesh, the tender rolls on forearm and thigh,
the hardness of down-covered skull. Brushed by that small, open blossom,

tilting, rooting, resistless, the breast gives the familiar response,
the tingle, the spreading warmth, the rush of the milk, ready, eager.

Once more, the kneading fist, the slow-sweeping, feathered eyelids,
the satisfied, inexorable rhythm, the world a place of milky,
sweetsour darkness.

Jana Bouma

Swimming Dock, Longville, Minnesota

The four of them propel the little boat from the beach
to the wooden platform, where they tie off

and scramble up, adjust their bathing suits, giggle and jostle,
feint and half-step toward the water. They stand here

because they do not want to face the shoreline's gentle slope,
the step and hesitation, the recoil of timid flesh at the water's icy rise.

No. Here above these clear depths, they may pause for one
moment's anticipation, a season of glances. Then,

a thunder of feet, a chorus of shrieks, and their bodies
take flight, arms pointed prayerfully, legs akimbo, soaring toward

that spasm of chill surprise by which they're baptized,
feeling their bodies open, saying, *Yes, yes.*

Lane Falcon

At twenty-six I know

Just a seed
From twenty stories up is
Something dangerous.

If I drag a knife across your chest,
You bleed.
Square your fist, slam
My skull like a birdcage.

You ask me to trust you—
Just let myself go—but I'm not stupid:
I see blood on the kitchen floor,
My front teeth, two pricks
Of frantic nerves.

It's physics:
Like a child holds dandelion stems,
You hold my throat dry;
I uproot
the turnip of your heart.

We could hurt each other;
We could hurl ourselves
Like axes
Into oak.

If I jump
From twenty-six stories up,
I will burst on the sidewalk
Like a pomegranate.
If you try to catch me, no one will know
Whose heart was this;
Whose tooth was that...

Lane Falcon

Tireswing

So you let go
 blunt earth
and the balls of your feet
 chains twisting
behind you

The lame skid
 of Sissy's shoes
her face a kitchen sponge
 mother rose soap
to clean your knees

Dirt stamped
 on the heels of your palms
your spine's curse
 when the ground won't budge

Your heart
 a bird to the windshield.

Ruth Foley

After Raking

The trains seem suddenly close—
through falling leaves, the flash
of metal draws near, rumbling gold
and red in late afternoon sun.

I love the sweet futility of raking,
the sweep and scrape of leaves
against the tines. I love the apples—
too small to eat, they make a satisfying thunk

in the compost bin, lend weight
to paper bags light with leaves.
I love the clean swath where rake first touches ground,
and the way the leaves slide down

to soften the edges of the path, like batter
on a spoon when a finger is drawn through it.
I love standing in the shower after sundown,
raking flecks of leaf out of my hair.

There is no better clean than after raking,
ligaments loosely hitching bone to bone,
steam streaming behind you in puffs
as you slip into comfort and night.

Ruth Foley

September 22, 1938

Green Hill, Rhode Island

After the hurricane claimed
the left wall of her house,
she climbed the stairs to where
her bedroom used to be.
Her boyfriend had a house there, too.
When the sea came, it took
everything from him—each plank
of wood, each bed, each tiny
piece of him, a larger part
he never brought himself
to name. What it could
not move—the stone foundation,
the beach-rock steps—it buried
under blankets of sand.
He found his thick black
towel in the waves, hung it
on her mother's line to dry,
kept it for the next sixty years.
He took a picture of her
sitting on her stairs, long
legs muscled under her like
she was steeling herself
to leap. Her brothers, her father
stand in the yard and in
the exposed living room, shielding
their eyes as they look up
at her, at the possibilities
opened by catastrophe.

Laura Hirneisen

Stone

Heavy as
this rock harvest,
face half-given to dirt,
papered in leaves and lichens,
mother to an ant's nest.
I feed my fingers
the taste of sandstone,
dried clay flakes,
pits and dents
of lost pebbles,
and wonder if I should,
end over end, heft of hands,
lift the heaviest one.
The steep slope's jut
could take me now
or I could continue,
counted breaths uphill,
but I am rock-still,
lodged and silent in my way.

Laura Hirneisen

To understand genealogy

I pull your architecture
from between my rib bones:
rectangle roof slope,
boxed yellow gray sides,
nine paned kitchen door,
westward attic window ledge.

When morning fractures
your farmyard, I
hear your chickens,
find weasel ambush,
white feathers red:
your favorite hen dead.

I walk barefoot on
peeled oil cloth floor
green tan brown,
where woodstove lit,
five cups kerosene burn
in glass bowl's basin.
Dad told me how Annie
died here inside you.

Jennifer Juneau

Light Of The Mind, Cold And Planetary

Relinquish a vision?
Wanderlust for word, my task Sisyphean?

Wastrel, you said. I flaw and I flaw,
Plummet with the plums.

Fallen fruit from the sage tree of the mind.
Accent, false tense. Dear versicolored friend,

You are mighty in mozzle,
A turncoat in wanion.

Fade and falter, waver and waive
The right to tread hyperopic implosion,

Jam of grass. Fair-weather, seasonable thing.
It was only when I died you were pricked

By my invaluable sting.

Jennifer Juneau

This House

This house, which I built entirely out of glass,
Is lined with many stones.
When you live inside a glass house
No doubt you become it.

Appearances can be deceiving
To those on the outside peering in
Eliciting no end to the public parade of deductions
Knotting the street in one nosy rabble.

All it takes is for one upstart skeleton
To emerge from closet to page
For the hungry to materialize in droves.
What panic out there past midnight

Dares to transcribe the muscle of a shift?
The garden gate groans under a deaf moon.
A target of worms and a swift narrative are what I'm after,
But I survive on the love of constellations.

Night warms me, has kept me lithe.
I feed the fire of my watchers
From the hybrid pot of peevish & honey;
Their appetites smooth-faced in the mirrored air.

Deborah Mayhew

Bookmarks

I have used anything but bookmarks for bookmarks,
gym schedules, store receipts, candy wrappers, junk mail.
Real bookmarks are too fancy,
especially those that look like endangered animals.
Their orphaned eyes stare at me from shelves and counters,
begging me to take them home,
tuck them in a good book and read them a bedtime story.
A humpback whale chants "The Seafarer" in Old English.
A greater bamboo lemur sits on my shoulder while Atlanta burns,
while a lion tamarin falls asleep in *The Jungle Book*.
A sharp shinned hawk chases a flying carpet,
bringing back forty thieves
who steal all the words from my books
so that by morning there is nothing left
but a koala bear in a eucalyptus tree
munching on leaves.

Deborah Mayhew

Crying Wolf

She has disappeared again,
and nobody will believe it.
Somebody just saw her an hour ago
on a bus, a train, a subway.
A man claimed that she was at the coffee shop
sipping herbal tea and eating a pastry.
Others saw her at a concert, a book signing, a play.
People see her in the faces of strangers,
in the blurriness of early morning daydreams,
in mid-afternoon, running after a lost dog,
one hand on the leash, another reaching out,
beckoning to no one in particular.

The first time she disappeared
the F.B.I. found her face on a security tape,
and her handwriting on the ransom note.
She confessed, paid a fine,
and then vanished into the crowd.
Now nobody is ever quite sure
if the woman they see is her,
or if she has disappeared again,
and this time she is really gone.

J. R. Solonche

A Bird, Very Plain, and Black

A bird, very plain and black,
but not as black as a crow,

nor as lustrous, as though
his sheen has been rubbed off,

for the third time I have seen
this week singing on the same

spot on the wire. Hey, brother,
haven't found a mate yet?

He keeps singing the same song
he sang last time and the time before.

Just as strong. Just as clear.
Shinier now than the first time.

J. R. Solonche

All Night Last Night the Wind

All night last night the wind
was neither too gentle nor too strong.
The wind was just right.

It was just right to make the branches
of the big ash tree outside my window
strike each other in just the right way

to keep me up all night.
It was wooden water dripping from
a leaky wooden faucet into a wooden sink.

Jane Varley

Home

Where she comes from ninety-eight percent of the land
is dug and turned over by John Deere plows.
Men run the machines, men she has known.
They know who they are and their wives do too.

Who would not trust them? These pillars of earth,
homemaking, harvesting, living and dying, all in Iowa.
She left her chance with a young man who lives
just north of Dyersville, waiting to buy the farm.
From his blue bedroom she gazed out and fixed
a vision of that life, concerning the grain bin,
the red barn, and the yard, impeccably kept.

What a beautiful home it would make. She left,
thinking of years the place had been nurtured
with hope for the coming generation
that is expected to knock at the side door,
smiling, holding forth orange casserole dishes
filled with the warm weight of the future

Jane Varley

What You Read in the Paper

An article about a man, 75, and woman, 68,
who took a backroad up the Sierra Nevadas.
They died in their car for two weeks.
Writing poems. Talking. Praying.
Sitting frozen until somebody found them.
They scrawled on a matchbook,
Wouldn't have given up the experience
for anything, no matter what the outcome.

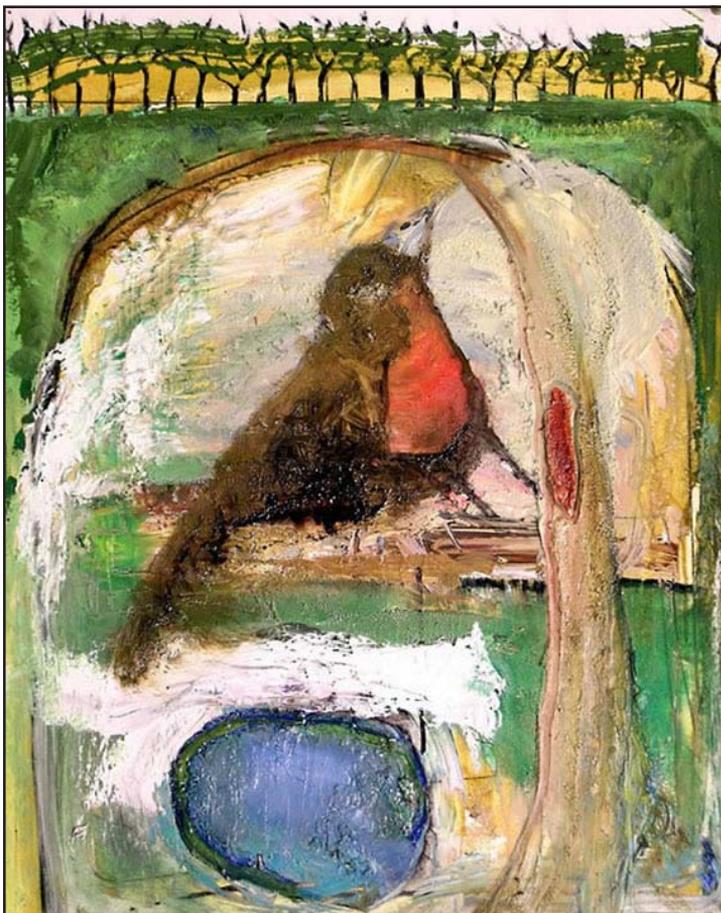
There, in the journalistic matter-of-fact
like it's anybody's news. What about *before*
the outcome? The place they saw the sign
Not Maintained in Winter and their heartbeats
as they passed and took the dare.
Her note to their children said,
Your father has passed. She must have written
with a half-frozen hand, front seat, underneath snow,
breathless husband only inches and hours from her
as she waited-like that, both of them,
in and out of life.

Somebody had to find them and you
could be that person. Rub an opening
in the windshield ice with the side of your fist,
and see, like a store window display
of something beautiful, the two people there.
Stay completely still. Be silent. Don't move.

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Contributors

Kimberly L. Becker lives in metropolitan Washington, D. C. Her poems appear in journals such as *Borderlands*, *Georgetown Review*, *Ghoti Magazine*, *Muscadine Lines*, *Snowy Egret*, *storySouth*, and *Words-Myth*. She has held a New Jersey state fellowship in fiction, with work appearing in *Parting Gifts*.



Too Big Now © 2007 by Megan Karlén

Jana Bouma received her Ph. D. in English from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. She lives in Madison Lake, Minnesota, where she leads workshops in writing and literature. Her work is forthcoming in *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*.

Lane Falcon lives in New York City. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *42 Opus*, *Milk Literary Magazine*, and *Pebble Lake Review*, and *Quay*.

Ruth Foley lives in Massachusetts, where she teaches English for a nonprofit adult literacy organization. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Hanging Loose*, *Mystic River Review*, *Poetry Midwest*, and *Salt River*. Her work has been translated into Japanese for the web anthology *Happa-no Kofu*.

Laura Hirneisen lives and writes on a farm in southeastern Pennsylvania. Her work is forthcoming in *Blueline*.

Jennifer Juneau was a finalist in the 2006 National Poetry Series Open Competition. Poems from that collection, *More than Moon*, have appeared or are forthcoming in *Cimarron Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, and *DMQ*. The recipient of a poetry prize from the California State Poetry Society, she now lives in Zurich, Switzerland.

Caroline Manring is a student in the Iowa Writer's Workshop. She grew up in the countryside of New York state, watching birds, making music, and admiring cars with her father. She attended Cornell University, where she studied English and ornithology.

Deborah Mayhew is a composer and writer. Her work has been published in journals such as *Ascent*, *Exponent II*, *Flashquake*, *William Patterson Literary Review*, and *Without Halos*.

J .R. Solonche is co-author (with wife Joan Siegel) of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books). His poems have appeared in numerous publications, including *a · pos · tro · phe*, *Lily*, and *Red River Review*. He teaches at Orange County Community College in Middletown, New York.

Jane Varley, coordinator of creative writing at Muskingum College in Ohio, is author of *Flood Stage and Rising*, a chronicle of the catastrophic Red River Valley floor in 1997; and *The Horse That Fell From the Sky*, a memoir about growing up in Iowa.

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About the Artist

Megan Karlen has made New York City her home since 1989. Although she came to the city to work in publishing, she soon turned to art and studied independently with a number of the city's professional artists. She has been in numerous group shows along the east coast in addition to solo shows in New York and New Jersey.

About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry, art, and theory, quarterly publishing *The 2River View*, occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series, and, more recently, podcasting from Muddy Bank. Publications first appear online and afterwards in print. Interested contributors can read the guidelines at www.2River.org/office/submit.html.

Richard Long
www.2River.org

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