

The 2River View

11.4 (Summer 2007)



Gathering Strength © 2007 by Megan Karlen

New Poems by Philip Brady, Therese Broderick
Ryan Collins, Lydia Cooper, Michael Flanagan, Nancy Henry
Laura McCullough, Karen Pape, Petre Stoica, Sally Van Doren

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Philip Brady

Carmel

Why do we turn away from the eternal?
Robinson Jeffers asked. The Pacific surf,
crashing against the inscape of his skull,
washed off brine and starfish, and left,
turn from the eternal. Frail vowels
spiral into a cerulean sky
so vast it seems almost believable
there is no other we. No turning away.

I am in thrall to an inhuman voice
chanting the mantra beyond silence:
turn eternal. Drown your secret loss.
Let every moment achieve utterance.
Even the stones of Tor House mark the seconds
between the rasping slant rhymes of the ocean.

Therese L. Broderick

Pandora

“snowflakes . . . cause chaos”
Baedeker's Greece

It's not a box she holds,
but a sloping jar
formed from clay
and baked in the sun.
And as she tips it
toward her, curious,
one mild vice flutters away
like a snowflake
and then harsher ones

and then—blizzard.

On the hills above the bay,
sunflowers, olives,
grapevines on arbors—
all vanish in a white siege.
And a fine frost lays upon
her face—
the first woman's all-adorned face—
so that she can see, then give a name
to every crystal's
stark inscription:

—envy, greed, theft,
pride, apathy, rage—

Shivering, she lets go;
the vast swirling settles,
the suddenly heavier horizon
shudders.

Still inside—
her thin, receding
icicle.

Therese L. Broderick

These Seven Years

In some past self we hardened
Around the deepest stone
Within us which we must now
These seven years
Bring to surface with blade
Or trowel. Raised, felt, it will
Settle atop the ground, guardian
Of our flowers, fending away
The wind and rain. Like mounds
In a rock garden, evident
And intentional, what we raise
Becomes then what we step upon,
Where we balance for another age
Before releasing our next stony thing:
That quick beetle, pebbled,
Hiding beneath.

Ryan Collins

Dear Davenport—

It's a full lemon moon & I'm stuck in your
crawl, an otter caught in your lock & dam. Lock-jawed,
bridging back & forth between your valleyhands. Years
later & I still struggle to be ambidextrous. A good little
drummer boy. My hands aren't as wide as yours & aren't
you a slippery one indeed? I've learned well the where-
withal. I know how your habits make the children heavy
bored. I was one of them, but I'm all grows up & grows up.
I know they'll learn to taste the air around them. Learn their
way between bridges & to firmly shake you w/ both hands.

There but for the grace of god,

Quad Cities

Ryan Collins

Dear Rock Island—

Sadly unwinds the smoke from bbq send-offs. Ending in dis- less than beginning. Friends, as you said, touch land & fly away. So we work, learn to second guess less than before. We accept consequences of living in the old fire hazards. Our blood's still clean & no nostalgia or legal speed takes us anywhere back. But somehow we share a language. We speak Esperanto & bear across—we learn to love the waterways, which bend us as much as they're bent. Some get remissions, others terminal. Others just born delivery boys & sacrifices. It's been too long since we've seen anything but double, seen anyone anywhere but off. Still we make & manage contact.

Don't fear the reaper,

Quad Cities

Lydia R. Cooper

A Bird Fell Out of Its Nest

And we chased the bird,
torn newspaper
flapped across rotted
pine roots. We caught it,
pinned it to crusty dirt
with a sharp stick. *Look—is it—?*
Each quill like plastic
fork prongs, soft gray
skin stretched over
squirming guts,
pulsing
slower,
the rhythm bulging out
and in.
Then the stick pierced skin,
yellow oozing
onto broken pine leaves.
Is it—
We turned
the bird over, changed
into something
(we knew suddenly, became all wise)
—dead?

Lydia R. Cooper

The Flame

We lick ice in summer,
our heels making soft dents
in street tar

like dimpled water thick
with rot, froth-laced. Melting
ice dapples

knees soft with bruises
and pre-pubescent downy hair,
fresh scrapes

and scars still smelling
of raw soil and dandelion
milk curds.

Our lips turn numb,
our words slur into vowel slicks
and stumbles. Giggling,

we act out tragedy.
Some day our old shades
will hiccup through

aneurisms, slur
and melt like waxworks, then harden,
grow cold.

Ice melts on hot
young skin. We burn
like flame

dwindling a matchstick
down to its
stub.

Michael A. Flanagan

late

out the window
the dead horizon,
late silence and
all again what it
most often is, the
world letting time
slip into repetition,
the pain maybe in
that really there's
not much wrong in
your life, small
things but your
head fills, bangs
into nothing until
it becomes difficult
just to walk thru
a room, rise from
a chair, in a year,
you'll find the
same hour, the
same girl you
never talked to,
the same watch
you lost when you
were twelve, now
the eyes begin to
close, you turn
off the lights, you
move toward the
stairs, somewhere
a thousand voices
sigh, the night
hears its rumors,
the days go on

Michael A. Flanagan

the woman outside my window

while her husband talks
to her i start to imagine
she is thinking about
licking the nipples of
a girl she kissed when
she was in the 8th grade,
her best friend, a girl
she hasn't seen in 40
yrs., how much she
would like to grab
that hour again, just
a small bit of time,
a moment in the
past, to see if
maybe it would
have unfolded into
everything, any of
the secret songs that
have run thru her
head all these years,
wanting so much
to take them out,
let them breathe

Nancy A. Henry

Mae

You looked at my mother
when I tried to kiss you,
I could see you were afraid,
when you said no, little miss
when you told me you were very dirty
you who were so clean
that if black could be scrubbed off
I'd have seen clear through you.
Clean enough to make
my school-day lunches with your hands,
to wipe my dirty face
when the neighbor girls spit at me
and dragged me through the blackberry thorns
and fire ants.
Fat girl, got her period,
serves you right.
Mae; clean cool sheets
and singing Lord, lord
till I feel asleep,
taking my trouble from me,
soaking my shame into your own skin,
not telling my mother anything
she didn't need to know.

Nancy A. Henry

Valedictory, 1977

No one would have thought it possible of our old gang,
all these triumphs
Rhonda and Jerome finally doing it
on her parents' bed while the first string watched
I remember her saying it felt good
and doubting her
but then there was Michael,
his brain knocked all over the place
in his skull, six months and three days in rehab
and the limp that won't go away; we dedicated
the tenth grade chorus recital to him
and Tina sang the solo, before she gave him back
his ring. Yes, Jon, who burned down
the equipment shed where we all kept our dope;
he survived our shunning and made it up to us
on senior skip day, six cases of beer
tied to the old innertubes on our river run.
We all made it through alive but one;
Randy, flipped out of that flatbed in the sandpits,
on the wrong side of a rollover,
how his mother cried for that bully, her sweet baby.
Melissa, stabbed fourteen times
by that crazy on angel dust,
you will not believe she survived it
when I tell you
how she crawled across the bedroom
to the phone, how he came back in, saw her still breathing,
and stabbed her again.

Kathryn Kirkpatrick

Artemis

She knows better. She always has.
Icicle at the eye. No tears.

No man will ever cause her to doubt.
Herself. Bristle of fearlessness.
A face full of planes. Tufted pride.

Behind her the bare branches of winter.
A crescent moon.

But the coldness is not, has never been,
brittle. Beneath the sheen of iceflows
she is bear-hearted, lynx-limbed.

What woman would not trust herself
to this? Not safe haven exactly. Rather
a welcome danger.

Kathryn Kirkpatrick

Changing Woman

She's as old as she looks
and younger. Her delicate jawline
has yielded to certain strength.

A river has washed her.
She has lain in the bed of it.
In drought. In flood.
Water and the lack of water
have carved her.

Tell her your income
and she'll know how you've spent
your time as she knows the state
of your heart, what you have done
with your wounds.

And if you have spoken to the eternal.
And how you hold the unloved.

If you're brave enough,
ask her what she sees.
She may answer.

She may ask you
what you plan to do
before you finally die.

Laura McCullough

A Dirty Poem About Oral Sex

A poem is a public space, the camera telescopic and dependent upon angle and focus. Here, there is a woman's mouth all O and invitation, anonymous, and non-demanding; there, see a man's hand around his cock, so hot, it's cold and dangerous; take it, baby, and like it. They're aware of being observed by us in this poem, by society; they wear clothes of erotic power play or are imbedded in a feminist neo-capitalist narrative of sexual currency or a Baudrillardian simulacrum of symbolic exchange—there's a mouthful to swallow. I hold that on my tongue and think of Baudrillard on his knees, his head bent over my back, the nails of his hands digging into my palms, the lens of this poem zooming in on our beautiful knuckles and freckles and spots and scars, and one finger, whose is it? With dirt under the short nail, a small arc of accrued black: sweat, skin, particles from the garden one of us knelt in earlier that day, and you, who watch us, who is reading this poem, I see you lift your hand to your face and run your thumb nail across your lower teeth to clean it: we're glad you see us because we can not see ourselves.

Laura McCullough

Statistics and Grace

Once, I stood behind a woman who didn't have enough money and had no cards to back her up. You could feel the heat coming off of her, a subtle stench like a feral cat in a cage. She grew loud, and when that didn't work, quiet. I wanted to give her what cash I had, but the anger in her was a barrier I couldn't pass. According to the US census, less than 10% of the population has a masters degree, less than 1% a PhD. By the look of her, what did she have? I don't know, but she didn't want my charity. At home I get down on all fours—no, that's the wrong phrase, a cliché, meant to provoke notions of power or prayer or dogs—I lay on my side, knees tucked under me—have you ever seen a baby sleep—grateful for the suck and the pleasure of pleasing. I've got money in the bank, though not a lot, and a master's degree. I'm safe; I know who I am; here, let me make you feel good, too.

Karen Pape

Every Day Things

The illicit rooster
Crows down the block—
It is winter, displeasing—
But he is dutiful
If not kind. My cat
Foregoes birds—
The flocks of transients
Too much— prefers
His hunt bird by bird.
I am bathed in light,
Working—the sounds
Of urbanized nature,
The hum of engines,
the bare branches
at my back.

Karen Pape

Midnight Souls

When midnight darkens my soul, all hope
Seems barren, somehow lost, I cry out
To a clockwork's God, railing His scope
So narrow, so unforgiving—my loutish

Heart won't let me let Him in. Instead
He is my enemy, not my dearest friend.
The bleakest hours come when in a crowd
When loneliness can't recognize common

Souls in pain. In the funeral of life
We lose our way, letting the dirges
Play, forgetting ourselves a higher way
To dance the dance of grief, then leave

It all behind, forgiving ourselves, loving
God with open souls and outstretched hands.

Petre Stoica

*translated from the Romanian by
Adam J. Sorkin & Ioana Ieronim*

insomnia

long night endless night
insomnia steals in through the keyhole
steals in through the chimney licked by the moon
steals in through the switch on the bedside lamp steals in
through the weave of the curtain

escaped from the wardrobe a vulture
drinks the last drop of water
under the window a horse keeps neighing
in the attic the scrape and gnaw of rats

you've been betrayed by your lover by poetry by Flemish painters
you've even been betrayed by an orange's scent
nobody throws you a life jacket
in this night this dreamlike fiesta

insomnia endless insomnia

and all at once the bells' tolling at dawn
rattles the window and the bed the walls
crash down on top of you
and you fall asleep amidst the rubble of the hours

Petre Stoica

*translated from the Romanian by
Adam J. Sorkin & Ioana Ieronim*

the dead of this house

eternalized in slightly dusty frames
they wait for contemplation maybe pity
on the part of the guest lodged in the main room

one of them used to be a rich farmer
married to a peasant woman who was rich as well
another worked in offices in the city the tip
of a gold tie pin still gleams
yet another served his country as
a courier in a horse relay his stallion
strains forward ready to jump out of the frame

and yet another
my grandfather's cousin's brother-in-law
wandered Europe his whole life
returning home at a ripe old age
with a bunch of violets

Sally Van Doren

All, Free, Clear

I washed time and while the suds
floated like clouds

in the basement sink, the dirty water fled
through the drain's dark hole.

I thought I knew you once; things between us
were clean. Look at these stains.

I bleach, I soak, I agitate.
Twenty-two years spin by.

We're wrung dry, still soiled, half our lives
caught in the lint trap.

Sally Van Doren

Fight

You ask me
to say yes
but not
one million
yesses will
fill your
well of nos.
I won't die
hauling you
out. Stay
down there
and see if
anyone
else can
draw up
that empty
bucket.
The rope
is taut
with its
weight.
Will we
cut it soon?

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Contributors

Philip Brady—the author of three books of poetry and a memoir, *To Prove My Blood: A Tale of Emigrations and the Afterlife*—teaches at Youngstown State University, where he directs the Poetry Center and Etruscan Press, and plays in the New-Celtic band, Brady's Leap.

Therese L. Broderick—resident of upstate New York and recipient of the 2006 Intro Journals Project Award given by the AWP—has had poems recently in *Barnwood* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.



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Ryan Collins is a former editor of *Columbia Poetry Review*. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Black Clock*, *Keep Going*, *Word Riot* and *Verse Daily*. He works as the Literary Arts Administrator for regional arts non-profit Quad City Arts, and plays drums in the rock band Sharks.

Lydia R. Cooper will receive her Ph.D. in English Literature from Baylor University in 2008. She has written and published on Cormac McCarthy, the subject of her dissertation.

Michael A. Flanagan—born in the Bronx—recently returned to the states after living for six years on a small Island in Northeastern Canada. Poems of his have appeared in small press periodicals across the country.

Nancy A. Henry, a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, lives near Portland, Maine. Sheltering Pines Press published her book *Our Lady of Let's All Sing* in March 2007.

Ioana Ieronim is the author of ten collections of poetry. *The Triumph of the Water Witch* (Bloodaxe Books, 2006), translated with Adam J. Sorkin, was shortlisted for Oxford University's Weidenfeld Prize. Other books include *41*, *Dragon Kites over the Mountains*, and *Escalator*.

Kathryn Kirkpatrick lives in North Carolina and is a Professor of English at Appalachian State University. She is the author of three collections of poetry: *The Body's Horizon* (1996), *Beyond Reason* (2004), and *Out of the Garden* (forthcoming 2007). She is also the author of two chapbooks *Looking for Ceilidh* (2004) and *The Master's Wife* (2004).

Laura McCullough is the author of *The Dancing Bear* (Open Book Press, 2006) and *What Men Want* (XOXOX Press, forthcoming 2008). Mudlark recently published a collection of her prose poems, *Elephant Anger*.

Karen Pape teaches and writes fiction and poetry. Her poems have appeared in publications such *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* and *Perigee*.

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About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry, art, and theory, quarterly publishing *The 2River View*, and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series.

About the Artist

Megan Karlen has been in numerous group shows along the east coast, as well as solo shows in New York and New Jersey.

Contributors (continued from preceding page)

Adam J. Sorkin's recent translations include Magda Cârnelci's *Chaosmos*, translated with Cârnelci (White Pine Press), Mihai Ursachi's *The March to the Stars* (Vinea Press), and Mariana Marin's *Paper Children* (Ugly Duckling Presse). Sorkin has received funding and grants from the NEA, Rockefeller Foundation, and Witter Bynner Foundation.

Petre Stoica has been publishing in Romanian since 1957. The translations here in *2RV* derive from *The Master of the Hunt Visits* (*[Vizita maestrului de vânatoare]*, 2002). Stoica has won numerous literary prizes including the Writers' Union Grand Prize and the National Mihai Eminescu Poetry Prize.

Sally Van Doren is the recipient of the 2007 Walt Whitman Award given by the Academy of American Poets. Louisiana State University Press will publish her winning manuscript, *Sex at Noon Taxes*, in March 2008. Van Doren lives in St. Louis, Missouri, and Cornwall, Connecticut.

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