

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

12.3 (Spring 2008)



Cold Comfort © 2008 by Jackie Skrzynski

New Poems, Prose Poems, and Flash by
Mark Edmund Doten, Ava C. Cipri, Antonia Clark
Michael Flanagan, Richard Garcia, Angela Hume
Michael Maggiotto, Michael K. Meyers, Evan Nagle
S. Thomas Summers, Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon

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Mark Edmund Doten

Bush at War: The Sea

We listened for news. There would be little news, even in success the battles kept secret. We watched on TV as maps of the world changed colors. We wondered what it meant. Our fathers worked in the factory, everyone was doing their part. We played cowboys and Indians under the sycamore trees, we swam in the river, we posted stickers and opened cans of stew. It couldn't be this way forever, we thought, and yet it could. But we were safe from our enemies, we were safe on our island, while behind abundant walls, on the island's other side, prisoners huddled together for warmth, they slept on the ground under frozen gusts, we imagined, head propped on hand. We wished they'd die. We wished a sickness would sweep their side, a sickness perhaps not caused by the Authority, but a sickness that would carry them away to the last man. The Authority would do their best to save them, they would spare no effort, they would fail. The guards would not succumb, they would have different constitutions, of course. The guards would watch with a piercing sympathy and at the prisoners' last moments comfort them, rolling up sleeves on their pale uniforms, pressing hands to the foreheads of the afflicted, whispering of the painlessness of death, of the gleaming boats that would carry their bodies far out to sea. Wrapped in white sheets the bodies would plunge into water. They would sink past sharks, past seals and rays and creatures unknown to us on land, they would drift miles down into seaweed whose fronds would wrap them, rolling their bodies as they fell, unwinding the sheets, so that naked, limbs flung outward, eyes flashing up at the last decaying point of light, they would sway among the wreckage of ships lost centuries ago, bodies nestling against deck and bulwark, windlass, tiller and mast.

Ava C. Cipri

Flash Back

I can't stand my life
for a moment
which ticks back,
to the transparent agony —
like waiting for the development
of film, standing in the darkroom
of my childhood heart, for the solution
to stir up an image, conjure a family
who sits around a table.

I let this evening settle into stars, throw it
back to God. Wanting to wake up
again, fix my memory to a breakfast;
this time — a mother pouring maple syrup
over three-tier blueberry-pancakes
and a father packing lunch
with the jeweled liquor bottles gagged
in the bottom cabinet.

The waking is hardest,
to remit yourself to a day
you must walk against, emerge
again into what the night couldn't heal,
an angel didn't save you from, so you pull
your weight back into the world.

Ava C. Cipri

Not Fit for Sleep

1

This is the picture of sleep, at least the one I imagine
would have been if my mother took it.

(small smile sucking thumb loose hair) backdrop of blue pillow.

My mother couldn't understand the importance; why, at the age of seven
I wanted to capture my sleep, wanted a pictorial map of my body's
unconsciousness.

She said, *I didn't want to wake you.*

2

Mornings, my hair in tangles . . .

Reoccurring dream: sometimes abominable snowman, sometimes
abominable swampman; either way he is the thing that chases me
down.

3

I record what I remember: an arm, the cold floor boards, & a dish of
sand.

Then turn to my day to help my body forget —
take out the mouth-guard before massaging the jaw's pressure points,
unfurl my brow & stretch toward another some(thing).

Antonia Clark

Afternoon Rain

Clouds hunch and shudder, slope-shouldered
lovers who once crowded like children over
a handful of pebbles, slick from the river.

The kitchen fills with yellow light. Voices
fall away. When it comes, the rain wavers
on the glass, gathers, then gushes all at once.

A woman holds back the truth of her life
as long as she's able, then spills everything,
learns that she's always been insatiable.

Now she will stop at nothing
and there's nothing left to stop her.

Antonia Clark

The Third Night

The lake held fast to its huge and stubborn silence.
Searchers slumped on the edges of beds,
while wives rubbed their backs and sobbed.

The bass line from Tutti's thumped
over the water, dragging a wake of revving
engines, an occasional starburst of angry shouts.

We drifted in and out of the drowned girl's
story, damp sand gritty on my back, and even
as I moved under your rough hands,

I claimed her body, submitting to the waves,
cornsilk hair streaming, limbs some man
had once pinned to the ground, rising, falling free.

Michael Flanagan

awake you want to start a dream, but —

you stretch and climb out
of bed, downstairs you stare
out the kitchen window, you
eat 2 strawberries, when the
neighbors come out of their
house you turn away, the
cat rubs against your leg, it
might be love but no, his
bowl is empty, all he wants
is to remind you of his needs,
searching the night and the
morning, you realize you've
slept 9 hours, you're tempted
to go back to bed anyway,
maybe sleep 3 solid days in
a row, would that be such a
crime? instead, you shower
and dress, put on shoes and
a coat, enter the slow turning
of participation, where minutes
fade into routine, and make
the hours disappear

Michael Flanagan

daughter

when i'm dead
she'll weep at
small moments,
remember little
idiosyncrasies i
was never aware
of, none of the
harder truths
will survive,
nostalgia,
newly born,
will change
me into some-
thing worth
clinging to,
shaping an
imperfect
man into
a dream

Richard Garcia

Nightstand

A book is a finer pillow than a stone. A drowned book floats face-down.
A book in a sandstorm constantly changes its mind. Who has not heard
of the book carried over the heart that stopped a bullet?

A watch was in love with a thief but the thief had many watches. He
wore several on each arm. Like most watches, eventually it got sick
of dreaming. Nobody cares that the book eats so little to stay alive.
Nobody cares about the book of bandages. There is a book looming on
the horizon. The book opened to the sky is the horizon.

What to say about the water bottle? It hardly exists, having already
failed as a river. And the rain, tapping its fingers, so impatient, hasn't it
already failed as a cloud?

Richard Garcia

Your Chicken

A chicken makes a great pet.
Because, later, you can eat it.
It is also a great pet because
you can write a poem about it.

Did you know that the ancestor of the chicken
that lives in the Amazon swamps
is called the Hoatzin — that it has
claws on its wings, that it hangs upside down
from branches and drops into water
and comes up with piranha in its beak?

The natives will not eat the hoatzin
because it smells so bad.
Even the branches it hangs on
smell of the hoatzin.

But your chicken will stand on your chest
and peck at your chin to wake you up.
But do not stare into its eyes
since chickens are pathetically easy to hypnotize.

When it is time to eat your chicken
do not give in to the hand-held blender of regret.
The hand-held blender of regret
will only confuse you with its poisonous blur.

And what about that poem about your chicken?
That will come later, in repose, as you recall
the delirious flavor of deception and derring-do
better than poetry or escaping from jail.

Angela Hume

Late September

1

Is it possible —

unwanted light strikes her clear
void eyes

and refracts,
tinks

the glass case, the clean
wood.

Is it?

She is calling out to you. She is
a pool

of white.

2

Who is the man who enters
your house

a yellow sweetness
about him —

skin, or yeast, or cigarettes.

He is not
a young man anymore.

Twelve years old —

A wild bleating
so riven with pneumonia

(he should have —).

Angela Hume

She said a figure
came to the room.

She said, I felt
warm, at peace.

You said:

Since then, we think
he hasn't been

the same.

3

I'll ask:

Does your text fill
like a house

slung open —

*and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and
his great toes*

Do you wait for the text
to speak

to you —

but they let go the man and all his family

What are you looking for, i.e., what are
the signs.

Ridden with belief
you finish out

your life.

The italicized text is from Judges 1:6, 25 (KJV).

Michael Maggiotto

From Where I Sit

the window beside the door
is alive
with the prints of fingers, noses and tongues
that haze all shape and color,
as if the world exists
only through a spider's web.

there is a Doppler of flies,
a pointillist's bed of impatiens,
a beakless hummingbird,
a smoke sky above the corn.

with one wipe of my cloth,
I could change the world.

Michael Maggiotto

Only Child

How different his children,
for having each other,
so prepared for the committee of life.
Cousins, friends — acquaintances, really — never
breach intimacy's walls,
though they effortlessly cut one's very thin skin.
Trust hides under rules, behind manners,
in a plastic world that melts
at passion's unexpected touch,
where one says "one" without snicker,
and blushes at "you" and "thou."
It complicates marriage.
There is a sociology of birth order —
important, no doubt, to first, middle and last —
but, for the solitary, redundant past two.
To this day, he mourns
his sister,
who died in the womb.

Michael K. Meyers

Grant Me Eggs

Grant me eggs, and flour, and milk. And grant me clean water and avail me of the things necessary to conjure up fire. And grant me an abundance of smooth air, and grant me the ability to continue to spin around fast, and let me die doing so; spinning. Let me die spinning. And grant me shoes, and grant them to my family as well, shoes for them as well, and please, three changes of clothing for all of us. And locate my home next to the home of an honest cobbler, one who has two sons, and let one of the boys be named Allen, and the other, the oldest, let him be called Samuel, named Samuel because Samuel will have been the name of his grandfather, and grant these boys and the cobbler and the rest of the cobbler's family, grant them all productive lives and please, for my family too, please, do the same. These are just some of the things that at this moment in time I consider necessary.

Michael K. Meyers

What We Have Learned So Far

Would it be all right if I just came over, you know, if I just showed up at your place without first calling. Without informing you that I was coming over. And then I thought, what if without you first calling me to tell me you had come by my place to, you know, re-ignite. And, I am inside my thoughts now, and in my thoughts I imagine you knocking at my door, and responding to a knocking, and opening the door I find you standing on my threshold. In this thought you hold a cake and have brought along with you your dog, Mattie. Would I be glad to see you and your dog, Mattie, and would I want the cake? Then I thought some more. And I thought that I that you would have wished you had called first. And so, there it is. And so, here we are. And see what we have learned in such a short time, and think of all the awkwardness that we have avoided.

Evan Nagle

Venice Beach

Rubbed lank, bleak, like a lake,
Black ink lack-plashes blue.

The water, water

The water

Reasonably eats

Away the rock. And if truth, too,

Scoffs again at the gains

I've made, rubbing my lackluster

Grasp down (dumb) to vapor,

I can't complain. I'll let her.

Earth in her

Underthing and I (in hers)

In mine. This is

Where water's water's

End, and air's is air.

The very shed-

Smelling fish-coughing seas

Around me —

They're fully flung, and

Then, they're disciplined.

Evan Nagle

Wind From What Moves

Birds —

They are a law. Like rain is

A law

And legs on a live horse. Or

Pittsburgh, where all possible laws sit around

Feeling sorry for themselves

And where the lakes go springing leaks like gray old ghosts,

Birds —

Some say they're a stupidity up in the sumped-up air

But gray, anyway, there.

S. Thomas Summers

Dialogue Between Rescued Dogs

if your master's boy gets
bullied because he still
rubs his fingers between
his blanket's silk edges when
he sleeps over at billy stillman's
house you could scratch on
billy's house beneath his window
at night while he's sleeping
while moonlight shakes shadows
from sticks and trees outside
billy's window and when billy
peeks through the glass you
can growl from the brush wrapped
in night growl like you once growled
when all you knew was blood and cold
and beer bottles breaking on your skull
tossed by boys like billy bad boys
who hurt and hate and need to bleed
and fear and hide beneath cold stones
and hide and hurt and bleed

S. Thomas Summers

Gas Station Men's Room — RTE 17, Paramus, NJ

Mold's begun to scale white, concrete walls —
sin across a soul. Condoms float in puddles
of toilet water brined with piss — skin of eel
and squid. This is a place to drown.
Sticky heat seeps through cracks, under door.

The hieroglyphics of pornography festoon
the room. Drizzles of blood scale the garbage can —
an open grave of newborn puppies. One still
hungers for mother's milk. Its struggle toils
against the weight of brothers. This is a drowning place.

Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon

Heron

The argument goes
something like this: the mid-
afternoon purrs like a ripened pear falling to pieces
and a heron enters the air like Jessie Norman
taking (the) stage. We the audience hush, and this
is the appropriate response. The wings escort
the body and the texture of carbon
against sea grey blue whispers coyly, *this*
is not all.

Hérons

The argument continues:
As the heron moves from view absence spreads like cinquefoil, and air,
knowledge and the loosening of hearts
vacate. This
is revelation, which is nothing
but the contraction of the world, or more precisely, loss
drawing down our once wide eyes
the features of the earth, your skin's tautlessness and grace, the vestige
of the passage of things
that cannot return.

Where then does the wondrous go in its movement like the flowering of
a hand?

Only the scar we call horizon remains
of the presence past, a brush
of wind, of wings
unfolding.

Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon

Hérons'

The argument goes on:

Men wait patient beneath the elms
while others hurl themselves at the pond's blunt edge
tearing at the weeds with their teeth. Still others
back away and return to their industry, their chorus
of wood and metal.

This we have learned: We are a song unrecognizable;
We are defined by what we lack.
But there are days, recalling a word, we raise our heads
and remember in part some great thing,
that in forgetting, we are not always lessened, and that
it is the fallen earth
that reveals the sun.

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Contributors

Mark Edmund Doten has flash fiction in *Mudlark*, *New York Magazine*, *The Potomac*, *Userlands: New Fiction Writers from the Blogging Underground*, and *Word Riot*; and forthcoming in *Exquisite Corpse*.

Ava C. Cipri has work published or forthcoming in *New Zoo Poetry Review*, *Whiskey Island Magazine*, and *Wild Violet*, among others.

Antonia Clark is a medical writer in Winooski, Vermont, with recent poems in *The Orange Room Review*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Rattle*, and *Stirring*.

Michael Flanagan has poems in small press periodicals across the country.



Beamish Boy © 2008 by Jackie Skrzynski

Richard Garcia is the author of *The Persistence of Objects* (BOA Editions, 2006). His poems have recently appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *The Georgia Review*, and *Ploughshares*. A chapbook of prose poems entitled *Chickenhead* is forthcoming from Foothills Press.

Angela Hume will soon hold an MFA in creative writing from Saint Mary's College of California. Her work has appeared in *The Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Flyway Literary Review*, and *The Portland Review*.

Michael Maggiotto lives with his wife in Muncie, Indiana, where he works at Ball State University. His poetry has appeared previously in *Big Bridge* and *Red River Review*.

Michael K. Meyers teaches at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. His fiction and audio have appeared in *Chelsea*, *Chicago Noir*, *Fiction*, *Mad Hatter*, *The New Yorker*, and *Word Riot*. His A CD flash fiction, *Once Again Doctor Freud's Horse Has Gone Missing*, is available on Amazon.

Evan Nagle lives and works in Seattle, Washington. His poems are published or forthcoming in *Cranky*, *DMQ*, *Fence*, *Seneca Review*, *Verse Daily*, and elsewhere.

Jackie Skrzyński in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York. Her work intends to complicate notions of childhood. Skrzyński has exhibited nationally, most recently at Columbia College, Missouri. Her art previously appeared in the 10.2 issue of *2RV*.

S. Thomas Summers teaches at Wayne Hills High School in Wayne, New Jersey. He is the author of *Death Settled Well* (Shadows Ink, 2006) and *Rather, It Should Shine* (Pudding House Press, 2007).

Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon holds a Master of Divinity from the Harvard Divinity School, has worked in Bosnia, Turkey, and Kenya, and now lives in central Massachusetts.

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About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View*, occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series, and podcasting from Muddy Bank, the 2River Blog. Please visit www.2River.org to read the submission guidelines.

Richard Long
Editor

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7474 Drexel DR • University City • MO • 63130 • USA