

The 2River View

15.4 (Summer 2011)



Sacred and Profane Tubers by Jackie Skrzynski

New poems by Lisa Bellamy, Thomas Cochran
Chris Crittenden, Lane Falcon, Kip Knott
David Kutz-Marks , Andrew C. McCall , Louis McKee
Michelle Meier, Dariel Suarez, David Sullivan

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Lane Falcon

Dear K.

So much sun in me then,
freshly marooned, my little boat

still whole but for the crack that brought
the ocean in. I made a whetting stone of coral,

a spear from an ore, a lure of my cross.
I once cooked barracuda

over fire fed by hog bones; now, I scavenge
for lumps of sandy cartilage, drinking

from a stem a cutworm fell. No one to see
me crony-up to death ... is a blessing, right? As sun

crimps my skin and limbs become
a broken crib, I don't want a witness. Supine

in the perforated tent of night, light
watches through pinpricks. I don't need

a witness.

Lisa Bellamy

Goliath

Although the lord did anoint
the shepherd boy for kingship
and glory, and far be it from me
to second-guess Him, my heart
goes out to Goliath, Canaanite head banger,
spear-carrier for the duration,
predictable as hummus, as his only girlfriend
once said in frustration—but a guy
who secretly fed crowds of hungry cats
mewling behind his tent,
unsure what he wanted to do
when he mustered out,
till one dawn he stood sleepily,
knee-deep in crab grass in the valley of Elah,
dutifully shouting at his adversary
on orders from his commanding officer,
sure that he—seven feet tall, bronze-armored,
each footstep an explosion in the grass,
a guy who bench-pressed 225 pounds,
recalcitrant cowlick in his mother's favorite picture,
almost a short-timer now—
could easily handle a face-off
with a pipsqueak packing a sling shot.

Lisa Bellamy

Montcalm Point

Sauntering with my husband
through a pine forest
north of Lake George,

one early May morning
birds twittering, etcetera,
wanting nothing more

than a pleasant ramble,
but I trail away mid-sentence,
my mind suddenly a cloudless sky;

aware of its increasing forgetfulness
creating larger and larger
holes in my consciousness,

black holes, I am afraid,
that will devour me—
I remember last week

the doctor called my bones “porous”—
I wonder if I will begin
breaking apart, dissolving;

if it is time for that to happen
to me: the four elements returning,
as they say, to the mother.

Thomas Cochran

Collage Sonnet 3

I have never seen tomorrow
while playing with my friends.
It's my fault because I'm here,
no longer going down to the ships.
I need you tonight, standing
on the far bank waiting.
But in case we've never met,
come sit with me.
It is time to remove built-up heat—
unless you are sure you want this.
May I talk to your high walls?
May I look around your revenge?
May I accept your bones?
I think of nothing else.

Thomas Cochran

Collage Sonnet 5

In so many years of marriage
you have a pretty good idea
of how you're going to be received.
It is the opening night, your debut,
and you have no idea how
to make the necessary connection.
The senior member suffers—
whether in the proper mood
or up for an after hours session.
This is the eternal romance,
a tangle of clients forming new liaisons
in the middle of lunch.
One blame follows another
and the senses become mesmerized.

Chris Crittenden

Crow In A Gale

splotch
of disheveled tufts
on a catapult
about to throw,

the projectile
quilled yet frozen,
cinched by wind,

a talon
from hurtling
through a sky of cement
and oatmeal.

hood ornament
onyx
of a streamlined grove,

pitted against
a sharpened speed
of drooling gray.

a plight nearly fumes.
almost a serif
marauding.

Chris Crittenden

Ghost Trance

fire ants lick
but he won't burn, not after
decaying off day by year.

he's a scaffold
where issues were hung
and the executioner
forgot to take them down.

dew for a weep,
a clutch of nettle for skin.
once a puff adder
became an arm, another time
a heron.

he judges all
from his bench of finished life,
sparing only
an ichneumon's wing.

green and rot
kiss like horny teens
while he ages with the swamp—

decades
of skull-backed moths
and smitten loons.

Kip Knott

Laborers

Like two buried miners, our bodies
pull heat from one another,
from rivers of flame continents
float upon. We sleep and burn,

sleep and burn until we lie beneath
the cinders of our lives,
out of breath, out of the cold light
the moon poured over our fire.

Kip Knott

The Miner's Dream from Underground

The hill stands on pillars of bone.
Below, coal seams ribbon like fuses
burning the shadow of fire across Ohio.
Children tell stories of poking the ground
with sticks to free genies of steam,
coal glowing from holes
like the eyes of deer in moonlight.
Only the oldest fathers know
what fire lives in the belly of the world.

* * *

In winter, the hill holds no snow.
Deer settle on exposed rock for warmth
at night and drink from the sulfur
creek that refuses to freeze. This morning,
I found the carcass of doe in the yellow water,
her throat bloody and steaming.

* * *

All smoke and coal dust, the miner wanders
fiery caverns as I lie atop his warm grave.
When I was a child, I never knew the heat
against my back was a dream of light.

David Kutz-Marks

Fete

They were scheduled for an intimate appearance
in his red front parlor, but they were not there.

This was typical behavior,
the nonet breathing heavily so many leagues away,

a cloud coming into him, the stench of their dresses,
the hue of their hair.

And he knew that the sudden jag of laughter
meant a set was over, in some other bald man's

red front parlor they were finally undressing themselves
in a manner of saying

quick, come with us, we will show you.
And he loved them and he loved them

and he held out his hand and he held out his hand
and the oldest crone kissed the one hand

and the cloud kissed the other,
it didn't matter which or what their names were,

only the crones were worth caring for.
It was like leaving a body

and feeling that you had not been there,
or not long enough for a real conversation.

David Kutz-Marks

The Cantons

Well I saw the vestige of cicada on cicada as I walked.
Well I heard the rumor of the use of rumor meaning

something smooth, innocuous as shots of ether.
What did you taste? I tasted a wafer-thin metal bit

black as night owing to the oil it was covered with.
It was night and black as night but I was not at all tired

I tapped my good needle back into my vein
and music was hissing its climb at the last little ridge

in the city I walked in and skipping back into the valley
ad vitam. And how did you feel then?

Then I felt the fingers of my flush right hand
called up to the sudden drone of bodies above me.

Andrew C. McCall

Gardener

She didn't mean to pull the flowers up —
The trowel and glove seemed to move
On their own, around the densest patches
Of poke, of burrs, of the garlic mustard
That would choke trillium in ten years.
She thought that it was the right thing
To do, to cut through the tulip stems
And mash the daffodils into their roots
Until the yellow was cut by fine clay.
She felt the gratitude of her body, that
Afternoon when the volunteers
Finally were free of the garden fence,
When they could climb her thighs to cover
Her legs on the spot.

Andrew C. McCall

The Roses

One woman stumbles on a stone,
Her friend steadies her and they rest.
From behind my window, I watch
As they lower their noses

Into the planted rose blooms
And hold their ballooning ribs
With ancient, pained hands.
They nod and smile and nod.

The women laugh and tear as
The scents startle up deep memories
Around dark gardens and wet teeth,
Around heat and sweat and bees.

They could both die tonight,
Clutching each other as they fall,
Groaning only of pollen and petal —
A redness rooted in concrete.

Wrists as smooth stems and nails
As the thorns, they might press
Hard against each other again,
And grow into the opened ground.

Louis McKee

The Butchering

My father worked piggyback freights
out of Cross Brothers and a few times
a year he'd come home with a side
of beef, ugly, raw and bloody,

fell off a truck, he said,
and from all his years in the yard, I guess,
he learned how, and with a hack saw,
a cleaver, and a couple of the biggest

knives I ever saw, went to work
on the heavy carcass in the wash tubs
in the back of the basement.
He carried each heavy cut up to the kitchen

where my mother washed it again
and wrapped it in heavy paper, taped it tight,
then had me run one package at a time
to the neighbors. *Steak tonight*,

I told them, not sure what I was saying,
but they would smile, so I did too,
and I never put it together, the meat
my father was butchering and all

the wonderful cows we saw those times
he took me to the train yard, to Cross Brothers,
where I'd climbed up on the wooden fence
and we'd tried to guess their names.

Louis McKee

Picturing It

Peaches was lying in bed
and too tired to fight it
when Jim used his red magic
marker to draw a fetus
on her distended belly,
and since they knew
what they wanted,
he gave it a remarkably
large penis, because,
he told her, there was no
doubt that the kid would
take after his old man.
She wouldn't shower after,
afraid it would wash off,
and in the bath, as awkward
and uncomfortable as it was,
she liked it because
she could see him floating
above the bubbles, could
touch him, his fingers,
his funny hair, even his
tattoo, the word Mom,
big, in a fat red heart.

Michelle Meier

Flying

Someone I don't know said to ease her fear of flying
it helps to remember how many planes are currently in the sky.

It has to do with probability, her father once assured her.
It seems the next logical thing to be afraid of is mid-air collisions.

It's fine if of 6,000 flights in the sky over North America
she's the blue line sneaking off towards Bermuda.

But let's be serious for a minute. These are games we play
with our fathers who like to talk about aviation.

If we could all fly planes we would all feel more fulfilled.
But then mid-air collisions might really become a problem

so that is out of the question.
It has nothing to do with our eye sight.

So we talk a lot about flying, because it is the most polite way
to talk about wishes and death with someone we just met.

Michelle Meier

Pi Day

Who knows why the stationary bicyclist
rides in the space between parked cars.

Today a thirteen year old told me it was
Pi Day, you know, like the number 3.14?

So what do we do now? I wanted to know.
Well, we can eat pie, she suggested.

It seems like a good idea to me, pie every
March fourteenth, just when we're all very
confused about the clocks, we can celebrate
the circle and infinity,

and irrational decisions.

I entered the bar last week in the dark.
Today, I pass at the same time and it is light.
It is the scene where I am a stranger kissing a
stranger and we pay the tab in a rush.

People always say, Oh, how fast things change!

Today nothing changes fast enough.

Dariel Suarez

Healing

In the abandoned house behind the bodega—
where plaster coated the floors and brown bricks
peeked on the walls like fresh scabs on old flesh—
men dressed in loose garb furtively entrenched themselves.
We children peered through slits on a boarded-up window
and saw the animal, a goat, hanging from its hind legs.
Blood dribbled from its neck into a bucket,
its bulging eyes and peeking tongue
swaying slightly among shadows and dust.
Some of us wept and chewed our knuckles,
others gazed in dumb fascination.
Our parents later told us the goat had been sacrificed
by santeros, wise men offering the animal
to saints whose powers could heal the girl
who lived up the street and suffered from bronchitis.
We nodded and prayed, hoped the girl could soon recover,
and dared each other to sneak into the abandoned house
when all the lights were gone, when adults tossed
in their sweat-drenched beds
and the saints—content with their gift—
were drunk with goat's blood.

Daniel Suarez

Out of the Earth

My grandmother wrenched the heads of cradled chickens
as if she were a performer: a juggler's dexterity in her wrists,
a nonchalant saunter as she retreated to the kitchen.
We children laughed and cringed and begged her for more.

She planted her entire yard, fingers buried in soil
like a sculptor's in clay, and sang when it rained,
her voice a drizzle soft as glass music
that never quite broke into downpour.

Sometimes she'd dance in the sodden weather,
feet splashing, arms swinging, head swaying,
until sunrays tore open the clouds and fell on her skin,
absorbed the dampness from her body
so the breeze could plant seeds in her pores
for multi-shaped leaves to grow unfettered.
She invited more sunlight and wind, her feet clutching
the ground for sustenance, a lone and sturdy tree in the grazing.

We children picked nameless fruits off her branches,
savored their syrupy taste in the crevices
of her trunk, shaded and soothed by the nectarous scent
of stepped-on flowers, quietly wishing, in our own childish ways,
one day we too would be reborn out of the earth.

David Sullivan

Ahmed Hamid Jelu, Exchange Rates

I carry hot tea
in glasses that clank against
the wire mesh frame. Rain

beats me as I run.
At the barber shop I'm cursed
for letting them fill

with what Allah wills
and the man refuses to pay,
leans in with a slap

that whips my head back.
I've been praying for this rain,
now I don't want it.

Allah forgive me.
I'm unable to accept
what I am given.

I'm told my father
was taken because of me.
Am I worth so much

that my punishment
afflicts everyone? Each time
my cheek is struck numb

I earn back what's lost,
but when I think that I push
Baba Jee away.

I do not matter.
I must not care. There's a break
in the wire handle

that cuts into me
when I hold it right. The scar
hardens, breaks open.

David Sullivan

Tareq watches Kids Swim in the Tigris

We used to launch off
the rocks to smack the water,
angling ourselves

on impact so legs
wouldn't buckle slamming sand,
but I remember

the rough silted bed
I'd lie in before rising,
slow-motion burbles

pushing past my lips,
my alien hands streaming sun,
and above, the legs

of compatriots
scissoring through the green world.
My senses were all on,

attuned to pleasures
beyond my understanding.
That I had to rise

was what disturbed me,
how I wanted to stay there . . .
I'd push it so far

pinpoints would attack
my eyes and blackness swim up
with me towards my life.

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Contributors

Lisa Bellamy studies poetry with Philip Schultz at The Writers Studio, where she also teaches. Her poems have appeared in *Cimarron Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Sun*, and *TriQuarterly*, among other publications. In 2008, she won the Fugue Poetry Prize.

Thomas Cochran was raised in Haynesville, Louisiana. His work includes the novels *Roughnecks* (Harcourt) and *Running the Dogs* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). His non-fiction and poetry have appeared in *Oxford American* and *Rattle*. A schoolteacher by trade, he lives in rural northwest Arkansas.



Woman Growing Beets by Jackie Skrzynski

Chris Crittenden writes in a Maine spruce forest, fifty miles from the nearest traffic light. Million year old silences mingle with the cyborg hungers of his laptop. Widely published, he blogs as Owl Who Laughs.

Kip Knott is the author of three poetry chapbooks: *The Weight of Smoke* (Bottom Dog Press), *Everyday Elegies* (Pudding House), and *Whisper Gallery* (Mudlark).

Lane Falcon recently received her MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College. Her work has been published in *2River View*, *42opus*, *Holly Rose Review*, *Pebble Lake Review*, and elsewhere.

David Kutz-Marks holds an MFA from Columbia University. Recent work appears or is forthcoming in *Kenyon Review Online*, *Ozone Park Journal*, *Tryst*, and elsewhere. Kutz-Marks lives in Dunmore, Pennsylvania, and teaches at King's College and Marywood University.

Andrew C. McCall was born in Missouri and is currently an assistant professor of biology at Denison University (Ohio), where he takes a special interest in plants and insects. He writes poetry when he is able, and also enjoys arm wrestling, running, fiddling, and taking apart watches.

Louis McKee has had poems recently in *American Poetry Review*, *5 A.M.*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and elsewhere. His books include *Near Occasions of Sin* (Cynic), *Still Life* (FootHills), and *Marginalia* (Adastra), a translations of monastic poems from the Old Irish. He lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Michelle Meier is a writer, teacher and artist from New York City. She holds a BA in Art History and an MFA in Photography and Related Media. She is currently at work completing her first collection of poems. contact

Dariel Suarez is an MFA candidate at Boston University. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Acentos Review*, *The Coachella Review*, *JMWW*, *Midway Journal*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, and *Versal*. He is currently completing a collection of stories set in his native country as well as a poetry chapbook.

David Allen Sullivan teaches literature and film at Cabrillo College, in Santa Cruz, California. His first book, *Strong-Armed Angels*, was published by Hummingbird Press, and two of its poems were read on The Writer's Almanac. *Devils Messengers*—multiple voices dealing with the Iraq war—is forthcoming from Main Street Rag.

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About the Artist

Jackie Skrzyński teaches drawing and painting at Ramapo College of New Jersey. Her art has been exhibited at Ramapo College, The University of Arkansas, Georgia State College and University, and Columbia College.

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.

Richard Long, Editor
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