

The 2River View

2_3 (Spring 1998)



POEMS BY Charels Albano, Kate Bergen,
C. E. Chaffin, Michael Hoerman,
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David M. Somerfleck, and Marc Swan

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Window on the Navesink

Charles Albano

Can't say which is more appealing,
that open sky
with its herd of white bison,
lumbering over the sunny Highlands,
or the green hills,
and the river they enfold
with their colors.

From here,
my field of vision is split,
and so is my preference.
Both the field of blue
and the field of green
commend themselves to the palette.
Yet I am told those colors
are aesthetic misfits when joined.
What ever
could have possessed
God
to make such
an artistic blunder?

Where Giants Slept

Charles Albano

I remember
the place where giants slept.
A special place
where indolent giants—
rain forest bred,
stretched in profusion
on a wistful beach
of the Olympic Peninsula.
Their stone gray arms,
fine-weathered,
protruded in every direction,
searching blindly
for their final destiny,
as they lay beached
in the morning mist.
I had to climb their carcasses
to reach the ocean.
They fanned out,
north and south,
infinitely
it seemed.
I loved that morning there,
never saw the likes of that—
an entire forest lying prone,
like hapless D-day invaders.
Where did they come from?

Canada? Alaska?
Whatever—
somewhere giants grew.
Jumping from one to another
made for good aerobics—
a petty occupation.
But if I had lived
anywhere nearby,
I would have set up shop
as a craftsman,
creating beautiful
rustic furniture and art
from those
most accommodating remains,
giving them a fit,
and well-deserved
afterlife.

Adaptivity

Kate Bergen

They would have you beg them to explain
the rate for sudden suicide exchange
because, you know, the bloody street corners
don't tell their tales too well.
You've got to show them the scars,
or razor or revolver or skyscraper ledge...
they know you've seen them all.
Leave two or three layers of skin behind
so they remember what it looks like to be bloody.
Not a pretty sight, for those aspiring to be beautiful.
Teach them about the chains that bind them,
how to use them as a rosary and pray to be set free,
how larks never sing, held in captive.
Teach them to be more adaptive.

Solitude

Kate Bergen

The sky was narcissistic pink.
Warm venal blood and salt-water tears
running thickly down the horizon,
consuming the disinterested hills
of winter-wood horizons and the
blue vein of the Hudson.
You were tattooed on my heart,
your name carved in flower-rings
branded in the tear-bath of love.
The water shimmered, refracting light
back at the blind eye of the sun,
and morning pulsed like a slowly defective heart
tired of beating for you.
You didn't think I'd remember
the way your words forced entry into my mind
and your touch into my dreams.
Too much daylight rapes the sky,
and you were the bright light
to burn too soon in vain.
One day, in the flow of snow-white morning,
thick with the syrup of pine-sap and regret
seeping through your window panes,
you'll breathe the vapors of solitude
and feel like this too.

A Natural History of Armed Conflict

Pat Boran

The wood of the yew
made the bow, and the arrow.
 And the grave-side shade.

Literature

Pat Boran

His penis hanging between his legs
like a vandalized telephone, or some
deep-sea creature that cannot bear
solitude, so it hangs on—

this naked man is what I am,
and yet how unlike me he seems,
surprised in the mirror I was dashing by
on my way to the loo at 4 am.

And when a light comes on somewhere,
quick as a flash he turns away
like a man who keeps his truth concealed,
this Rosebud, this Jekyll, this Dorian Gray.

Milkmen

Pat Boran

The doorbell rings. I go.
I'm fourteen. That's how it is,
no need to stop or think.

It's the milkman's eldest son,
putting a brave face on it,
wearing his father's shade.

So, quietly, he pours the milk,
pours its at first almost shrill
then rolled then muddy sound

till the gallon's filled.
I close the door and wait
for the milk to settle down.

Years later, for it is years
already, this is how it feels,
answering calls by opening doors,

opening silences, to accept
things not made on the spot
but handed over: love, inheritance.

The voice on the jukebox sang Maybe

Pat Boran

In a black hat and black coat,
with the kind of movements a crow makes
when it tries to tear itself away,
wing by wing, from hot tar,
he was there in the bar.

What happened next? Well, no one spoke
for a start; no one, I suppose,
had any words they felt might match
the 3-dimensional shock of him,
this tongue of black fire—man,

the only animal with foreknowledge
of his own imminent death.
Nice one, God, but the joke's over,
thought the barmaid in mid forward
bend that might have flashed a breast

to someone close... But Christ, not this,
a man stood there, held there, run through
with the current of his heart, un-hid
in this moment she would deny
that at once denies her and demands she live.

A Time to Weep

C. E. Chaffin

I suppose you could call me heartless
as a dull anvil clanking in a sodden barn,
the damp wood too lazy to echo your pain;
and your limbs twisted like great roots,
your heart's rank melons bursting with fluid,
your tidal headaches, your equatorial fevers
were all grist for my scientific mill,
my hands cold and precise like metallic probes
on your beaded foreheads.

I suppose my brief visits and cryptic prognoses
do little to comfort your collapsing veins.
You ask for a word, I spout statistics.
Your skeletal hands pray for light—
I check your pupils. Do you understand?
It is not that I care not for healing
if only the power would come;
but science is an impotent matchstick
broken in death's fingers.

I have never collected moths
but you are pinned somehow on my mind's wall
several hallways from heart.
Allow me this distance,
allow me not to weep.
Should those dark waves with their thousand eyes
once spill over the dike, I do not know
what sort of god I should become—
most likely a madman
but never again your doctor.

Telephone Wires at Dusk

C. E. Chaffin

These wires, iced at sunset with duskfire,
have a brightness beside themselves,
their taut tense lengths
humming with unknown conversations
through insulated copper,
transfigured into phosphorescent black,
a glowing welder's rod of invisible tongues—

As if the light could see
and knew the cold particulars
passing between ears at this second dawn,
dying of day and night's birth—
And as if by heliotelepathy
the sun exposed the hidden chatter,
and the words were fire
laced with the salt of reason,
leaving the burnt scent of compassion
in the air like ozone—

If but the words,
the words between men I mean,
were true as these flaming wires—
How beautiful these transient fires
at night's dawn and day's end would be:
fit companions of stars.

The Talking Tree

Michael Hoerman

I went walking in the woods
I heard whispers
I ran until I was out of breath
I fell down at the outflow of a spring
I saw my reflection in the water
I heard whispers again
Now they were closer
Somehow I'd run toward them
In the reflection I changed from a man,
to a boy, to a baby...
The spring water turned bloody and
Warm, like a woman's sex in childbirth
That's when I saw the talking tree
My hands were stained
It would hold me accountable
It would wrap me in barbed-wire
My blood would seep into the ground
I would grow roots, limbs and leaves
I would become another whisper in the forest
That's what I was told
By the talking tree.

Something's Gone Wrong

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Flies

billy little

flies know
angels have
transparent wings
and flee
human contact
prefer
the company of the dead
live for rot
mate on the wing
memorize
the same lyrics
both swallowed by snakes
and songbirds

When the Saints

billy little

when the ducks
got too greasy to digest
the eagles started
putting on the feedbag
in schoolyards and playgrounds
when the berries and the nuts
got too coated in petroleum
and derivatives
the nearly blind robins
began seeing
human eyeballs as fruit
the salmon lept in schools
swarming and devouring
boatloads of vegetarians in seconds

The Gospel According to Peter the Fractured

Peter Munro

He can almost taste the bread offered
gently to another believer.
Antennae rust as rain grinds softer
than iron. Radio receivers
haul in the Word of God drawn tougher
by salt sung out for want of favor.

In his mouth the name of the favored
raises a spittle. His lips offer
name upon name, a little tougher
to choke out, to choke down, believers
choked on praise through rusted receivers.
Bread melts like the rain whispered softer

than flour, milk, and sugar, softer
than begging the crumbs of God's favor
or huddled to warmth a receiver
throws off its wiring among offers
of prayer to buy lost unbelievers.
Every year the market grows tougher.

For quick income, Peter the Tougher
stiffs the Brethren. Peter the Softer
soothes the Sistren, the girl believers,
with sudden wealth. He always favors
the sleekest name-mouthers with his offers
of bread. His radio receiver,

according to laws of receiver-
ship told to the profits by tougher
creditors than the God who offers
discounts to no one, suggests softer
options more cunning than rain. Favor-
itism for selected believers

must be subtle because believers
in subtlety achieve their receiver-
ship quick as God's word, God's quick favor,
quick to anger the Bread heeled tougher
than your crust or mine to kill softer.
For who recalls the final offer

but believers slumped in the tougher
rain, receivers of the Word's softer
touch, favors the broken Bread offers?

After Another Interminable Long Dark Night of the Soul, A Few Weary Saints Debate the Merits of Unionization

Peter Munro

Upright as hackles on a dog's ruff raised
for battle, flags whacked sudden as a gust
of God, we sailed aloft our little praise,
hailing like songbirds who utter dawn's rust,

like an ovum skulked from a cat to dust
feathers up all cloud and flutter. What bright
tiger burns? And who exalts that God thrust
wind through bone-spans and lungs hung limp
with light?

Urine, feces, lactose, and lymph, the slight
reek of God loosed by ducts, sluiced through
sphincters,
sperm in gusts that songbirds and lungs delight
their Seeker, bile and gall the tincture

anointing our wind. We kept the stricture
slandered against us and soared up on God's
tongues, blown wild, our wings flung wide as Scripture.
But would the yearned-for walk where wings
have trod

who yammer halos and hard-hats, hackled
for war and the wages of our heckles?

Freedom for the Spider

Rochelle Randel

I think I will return for the black spider,
Trapped in the storefront window,
Pinned to slick cardboard,
It is much too big, very gaudy,
Made with cheap black
Cut glass,
Wide stalking legs,
And a big body,
But I like it—
And think it would
Make a fine god,
For the other spiders.

My Brother

David M. Somerfleck

Used to beat the familiarity and youth out of me
as a child;
his bony hands twitching like tree branches in Fall,
walking with his dark spectre-cloud trailing behind or
over his mumbling head; a hovering jellyfish of despair.
In some ways he walks like everyone else.
Like everyone else,
I am my brother's keeper.
I keep him away.

Wild Thing

Marc Swan

In the small room above the bird of paradise,
over the lawn sprinkler, birdbath, the dog
barking at the postman who never arrives,

she stays when she comes to the city.
It is in this tiny room we meet
when the good doctor is away,

when the good doctor has given me the key
we meet on the rose dust-colored throw
atop an old-fashioned oaken door-shaped bed

where I rediscover the mystery that lies
inside her slender thighs, between her legs,
in the soft milky skin of her breasts, taste

the sweetness of her breath, find sustenance
in this warm place. Through the open
window of this unassuming room, noises

of this teeming city arrive in full force
with the thick California heat of a fat sun,
with the cool wind of a new moon, never alone

these purveyors of harsh sound.
She must cross over roadways, travel city
streets, take a bus, a train, a motorcar along

a highway I've never seen to visit me
in our special room. I worry her safely
down these winding, nefarious roads, imagine

wild things she encounters on this long,
arduous trip, unsavory characters who imagine
the secret places only I, and the cameraman, know.

Maybe

Marc Swan

A simple phone call
to her office
hell o you were on my mind
happy new year
seems easy enough
but what if later
after she's had a few drinks
with that older
man she travels with
the one with the town car
the one old enough
to be her grandfather
she says is just a friend
who owns a trendy
seafood joint by the sea
leased a metallic teal
green firebird
with her name on it
gives her money
to help out
the mom with three kids
she's so fond of
what if after those drinks
probably a half bottle
of clos du bois merlot
her favorite
he prefers martinis
with olives no vermouth

what if she gets frisky
calls me at home
a simple hell o
you were on my mind
happy new year
what if i've gone to the store
for ice chips for my kid
sanitary pads
for the woman i live with
maybe i'll wait till next week
when we plan to meet
at my office for an update
on her life those kids
she thinks so much of
the old guy with the fat car
martini eyes money to burn

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Authors

Charles Albano teaches as an adjunct professor of management at Fairleigh Dickinson University and also provides management training for industry and government. Some of his poems have been published in *The Central California Poetry Review*, *Planet Magazine*, and *The Poetic Express*.

Kate Bergen lives in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, where she's a junior in high school. She hopes to attend the State University of New York at Albany and later the Naropa Institute.

Pat Boran is presently living in Dublin, Ireland, where he's the city's Writer-in-Residence. In addition to a collection of stories and three non-fiction books, he's published four collections of poems, the most recent being *The Shape of Water* (1996).

C. E. Chaffin lives in a high rise on the Pacific with his wife and three daughters. His first book of poems, *Elementary*, was recently published by Mellen Poetry Press.

Michael Hoerman is editor of *The Portable Plateau: Journal of the Ozark Writer*. His own writing has been published by *The Heartlands Today*, *Prison Life*, *Illya's Honey*, and *Northwest Arkansas Times*.

nobody knows **billy little**, they say he lives in Nowhere, B.C. Combat Plagiarism is a current project wherein he writes the best poem he could possibly write that day and signs your name or Gerry Gilbert's name or Pierre Joris or Lily Brik or Duncan McNaughton or David McFadden.

Peter Munro is a fisheries scientist who works in Seattle as well as the Gulf Of Alaska and the Bering Sea. He has had poems published here and there.

Rochelle Randel makes her living as a marketing assistant for a computer security company. This past year she has had poetry in *Snakeskin*, *Gravity*, and *Sauce Box*.

David M. Somerfleck attributes his status as a staggeringly-humble icon for the new millenium to the almost mystical meddlings of his grandfather. His work has appeared in *Lies Magazine*, *The Dominion Review*, *Visions*, *A Thousand Words*, and *Artisan Magazine*.

Marc Swan is a rehabilitation counselor on Cape Cod. His poems have been published in print and electronic magazines, including *Rattle*, *Sanskrit*, *Free Cuisenart*, *Gallery Zandstraat*, *Chiron Review*, *Slant*, and *Zero City*.

2River Poetry

About

2River Poetry, a literary site on the Daemen College World Wide Web Server, publishes *The 2River View*.

2River Poetry also publishes individual authors. These collections, as well as all issues of *The 2River View*, can be accessed at

<http://www.daemen.edu/~2River>

For information about submissions, please visit the 2River website, or send email to

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All mail is answered within a day or two.

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