

The 2River View

3_4 (Summer 1999)



Croneybeer's Problem © 1999 by Mark Flowers

POEMS BY Wendy Carlisle, Cindy Duhe,
Barbara Fletcher, Ricky Garni,
Michael Graber, Peggy Meeks-King,
Robert Lietz, Daniel Rubén Mourelle,
Silvia Brandon Pérez, and Patti See

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Contents

Wendy Carlisle

The Words for Hot
Al Loves Lucy

Cindy Duhe

The Opponent

Barbara Fletcher

Climbing
Bright

Ricky Garni

Art Is Never a Surprise
The 100 Great Books

Michael Graber

A Poem about a Stain
What Laughing Chains

Peggy Meeks-King

So Monet
Heaven's Gate

Robert Lietz

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine (2)

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine (7)

I'll Be Home? A Flamingo Valentine (9)

Daniel Rubén Mourelle

Midnight visions

The world depends on the arrow

Silvia Brandon-Pérez

When the birds were singing that last morning

the gentle darkness of the cave

Requiescat in pacem

Patti See

Soup's On



Backyard © 1999 by Mark Flowers

Wendy Carlisle

The Words for Hot

The roosters call morning
from house to house, light takes the hills
until the valley's only mist

hangs back in the landscape's corners.
All night the cold worried my feet.
I dreamed of beaches,

lay awake inventing shapes to trap
my own blood heat,
but found no way to catch

the afternoon sizzle in paving stones,
the hiss from whitewashed walls. A bone-
ache chill replaced them. This morning

I crave all the names for hot
that are not another body—
cauldron, scorch, volcano, August, roast

sirocco. I know there are
not enough various heats in this
one flesh to match the dazzled brick.

Wendy Carlisle

Al Loves Lucy

It says so on his Chevrolet pick-up
with the pass-through window & the dog
in the bed. A special job,
no spray paint, it cost Al some for the Delux.
Those perfect Gothic letters on the truck
make me ache to know it all, why he loves her,
where, how much he does it and when.

Is it night? Does he reach across the seat
to touch her, whisper *Honey*? Like me,
does he wonder if she loves him back?
I imagine his love sharp as he flips the gate
to load a sack of concrete, him
stunned by lust on his way to the Sears or when
he stops by Friendly Liquor for a pint, a case.

But Al loves Lucy most when he's driving fast
down county back roads, kicking gravel,
not quite home, that beer balanced beside him
on the seat, like a girl he could really get next to,
one he hasn't met yet, one he hasn't named.

Cindy Duhe

The Opponent

Like water to a smoky joint
that serves liquor by the barrel
to those who need it least,
or pictures in a frame
of the framed individual
who you loved
to imprison under the
pretense of
the right,
to the left,
he now stands,
leaning as far from the east
to which he once prayed
that the day would be night
as the sky would swallow sea
by allowing this plea
to be heard;
before the bully hunts his prey,
the small boy
from the country
where their customs are unlike most,
his host, less than kind,
as he prepares his mind
to be blank like white . . .
with wounds, black as night . . .
in his gray matter . . .
the place where everything
matters, more or less.

Barbara Fletcher

Climbing

My fingers grip your face like rock; I stick
digits into your open mouth
into nostrils ears eye sockets
to steady myself as I climb upward
to the top. Your hair, eyebrows
twine around my fingers: snarls of brush
and vines that twist around my hands, snag
my ascension, hold me next to stony surface.

You would hold me here forever if you could,
allow birds to peck out my eyes and organs,
permit the sun to bake me into earth.

I rappel down to your bottom lip, a slippery
protrusion of rock,
call into deep caverns;
the resounding echo signals emptiness,
assures me that the caves
are hollow vacuous cold
best left unexplored.

Barbara Fletcher

Bright

Such a colorful memory you had
(before the shock):
bright, when we had expected it to be gray.

Wish that one of us could collect the animated
chunks spattered on the ceiling, walls,
across the floor. Glowing at our feet.
Wish that one of us could make a small incision
and carefully stuff vivid memory back in:
take the auroral thoughts and recollections
shove them back
into the creases where they once lodged,
reattach them to bright, living cells.

We should have been warned that this would happen.
They should have advised us to wear dark glasses.

Ricky Garni

Art Is Never a Surprise

I drank some wine with a blind woman who was describing to me the work of certain feminist minimalist painters from new york in the sixties.

because I was drinking wine, I pointed out to her that she was blind and couldn't see anything.

you would love them, she said. would I? I wondered. her husband just wanted to talk about wine.

uh-oh / pinot gri-gi-oh / he said.

I watched her blanch her broccoli. are you familiar with the installations of maureen connor or the monoliths of ulrich rückriem? she asked.

at home, quite late at night, I would eat cherry cobbler and sing EVERYTIME YOU SAY GOODBYE with my mouth opened.

DON'T! she screamed. her husband didn't like feminist minimalists painters from the sixties. and he shot her again with the water gun. she was in the kitchen, and so was he. I live far away from their house in a town that is filled with flowers, gazelles, angels, and unicorns that are colored purple like easter eggs.

HA HA she laughed, and shot him right back.

Ricky Garni

The 100 Great Books

we laughed when the author spoke of "the divan"

and we squealed with delight when the author mentioned "the louvre"

and when the author had a character take out a handkerchief to "mop his brow"

we could hardly contain ourselves. nor could we contain ourselves when that same character, soon after had mopped his brow, exclaimed the following:

"what the deuce!"

in fact, it wasn't until we looked up from the book
and saw that we were surrounded by tiny
green soldiers
carrying very real-looking tommie guns
filled with bullets
that looked just like history books that
we stopped
laughing and began instead to
sense and understand

a certain quality of danger in the air

Michael Graber

A Poem about a Stain

for my Grandmother Jewell

Still it knocks
and calls, getting higher
pitch until you respond.
And you've scrubbed
and scrubbed wearing the carpet
down to its knuckles. Still it knocks—
the stain caused by your husband's stroke,
made from shaving cream that frothed
from his armpits like lard
the day the crooked stilts that hold the house
threatened to give out as he hammered the walls
and floor
against his brittle bones age had made moot.
You didn't know he was dying,
though he'd crooned for weeks.
Each morning you shampoo and blow dry
what dissolved immediately
five years ago.
You say if caressed
the fist won't knock at night.

Michael Graber

What Laughing Chains

One sailor said: "He couldn't have tossed himself in that wasted state, must have been drinking nitroglycerin in his beer, melted on deck, and washed into the ocean."

No one was near when the sea spasmed
or the ruffled wave formed an almost
fleshy torso. No one else tasted
the brine-tinged hair of the casual goddess,
the bitch wrapped him in slaps
as the Gulf blossomed in hunger.
Before noon, the tide calmed outside
Havana. Giant coral razored
his bloated body. Effervescent
cells released in death ferment
in foam and collect like hairs
in the back of the throat.
Hart Crane, Hart Crane—
a scuffle of birdwings, the throat
of ship's engine, songs homesick
sailors wail, a slight gurgle
—all melt together and mimic
the sound of the sea.

Peggy Meeks-King

So Monet

The dark clouds of summer,
the hot, humid air, and shade
blanket the old apple tree.
Forest green, ripe with fruit,
it glows with red ornaments.
And beside it, at the mouth
of a white sunflower, a hummingbird
hovers, and there's a garden of water
lilies inside a half whiskey barrel.
They are the Arc en Ciel,
pale pink, the scent almost sinful,
so tropical, so Monet.
The season gives us fruit
and the taste is sweet.

Peggy Meeks-King

Heaven's Gate

In your dreams you find only
calm weather with clear night skies.

You see visions of a love among loves,
almost as if you have comet fever.

You thirst for one cool drink
from an ocean on Jupiter's moon.

But here on earth the dew runs off
the red rose, the silky petals

of the fire of desire at early dawn.
Your blood becomes the water of the Nile.

Robert Lietz

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine

On 11/28/99, The Flamingos, at Soldiers and Sailors Hall, Pittsburgh. And after both our birthdays, the anniversaries of our first writing and first phone calls, The Flamingos again, on January 24th, the anniversary of our meeting face-to-face. 1/12— 2/14/99

The rains this afternoon, three days of rain, leaving these muddy clumps and shivering waters in low places, do in the New Year's ice, leaving these lakes where once there had been parking lots and fields, and— looking like winter yet— these farms with the snows gone, with weathers the way they were almost two years ago tonight, working toward weekend cold, with you as close to me in coming snow and listening, with love from the first as close as commonsense and wishes!

I think of the birthdays, calls, and e-mails shared to start, of poetry forever changed, the book I began without a chance or wish to finish, ourselves in that moment shared, and so many ways ahead of trying on experience, evolving in place names, specs, the names of the wines and restaurants, this blur of expressway rains I think of you to see through, Liz/Elizabeth!

There's Pittsburgh ahead for us, Flamingos ahead, and meeting face-to-face in a plain language, fitting the pieces— piece by piece— just as we've shared two years— below the surface

and pieced levels— shared centuries and more,
working the miles to less, the weekdays between
and measured distances to less.

And when was it eloquence intended only
to convince?

Time was, maybe, and timelessness, and
more,
refined in these oldest routes, these lessons in
songs begun
when young men stood among themselves,
in places where snow-melt, roadsigns speak of
hazards
and creek-waters, until I am with you now, and
even at midweek comforted, hearing this phone-
mail's
scratchy joy, your pleasure in winter hues, pleased
by this note, by the least affections in its stillness,
with more in the song than style alone
would bring to purpose, more in the listening
than style alone delivers on.

Robert Lietz

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine (2)

Picture-perfect say, the wait-staff's
 hovering,
and sure in this upstairs hall,
this round in a first month's rounds and
 anniversaries,
given the voice and veiling,
this almost priestly exploration we've agreed to,
exploring the heathers, the sharpening verge,
the mystery a black Jew shares, connecting these
 lines
to all the music's ever asked of him,
remembering the venues once, at the heart
of this old century, and seasons
reduced to elements, tonight to this thin full moon,
respecting the forms of love
and forms of audience.

 There's memorabilia, sure, CDs, and
 Flamingo Ts.
And here, at this table next to ours, at home
in these Pittsburgh hills, relaxing with local
 relatives,
Larry and Zeke, J.C.
are finding themselves this long way back, and
 Zeke's
transpiring, with his own dead cousin's son,
and four, and six, these voices that came to play
and lead an audience to pleasure, bringing to be
and calling back their place in history.

 The pictures, let's say, I failed at, the
 batteries
finished with one flash, the second and third sets
sitting in our kitchen in Ohio.

And you, and we, Elizabeth, depend on the
music
after all, remembering the clefs
a heart or broken heart had seized on— depend
on these dates
we're sharing once again for a third winter,
inscrutably keen and veteran,
transfiguring the brag, the innocence,
the motion where chilled hands
signed in public scenes and public endings,
and under the same thin moon
no crying aloud undoes or measures. And you,
and we, we come to ourselves
considering this something in their style,
ourselves in their midst and crowdings-in,
in the smoke and veil of silky runs
we seek to see through, the nostalgia
and sitting prophecies
a table of strangers draws around,
and the music shading
a table of strangers
confidantes.

Robert Lietz

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine (7)

*After the nights, the years of pin-small
dramas and desire, here's*

*love for marveling, love to depend on
finally, in these refrains re-set,*

*in all of these lines I've tried two years
to learn to tell you,*

*even as you, Elizabeth, are waking refreshed
and listening, pleased*

*by this rock-gray morning lifting over us,
by this rock-grey totem*

*a wooden sea-bird sits beside, musing
the carved tusk-fish*

*your grandpa brought home from Alaska,
and this grey light—*

*brightening over us— this softness
returned to crests,*

*and crescents of light I trace, discovered
behind a knee*

*and running along to the first softening,
to all of this firmness tensing,*

*that seems to like
the touch.*

Robert Lietz

I'll Be Home: A Flamingo Valentine (9)

The flowers I sent, shivering on the deckboards,
bring the dogs around, and you with them
 discovering,
giving the hues your mind, the scents a place
at table's end there in your kitchen, where they
 will sit
to fill their picture and my absence, until I have come
and shared your many names for them. I think
 of chicken cuts,
the gingered asparagus or last night's saddest
 tortelini,
the monstrous folds the wave's made ugly,
 edible. And—
thinking of you, Elizabeth, of flowers doubling
 the hues
and shadings of becoming— closing the time and
 space
between— I'm counting on your eyes now, your
 speaking
for description, until I can see myself, until there
 is music
ahead, and love, grown long on interest, there's
 music ahead
and heard, with Zeke himself, exploring the moods
and audience, and you, in that upstairs hall,
 adding your pleasure
to that singing, where I am more pleased and amateur,
enjoying the platform lights, the hues, and
 anniversary surprises,
this old-fashioned timeless stuff, in seasons as worn
and wise as Solomon might ask for, and where I
 am with you
now, remembering with you the beverages, the tables
around made hazy with expensive thick cigars.
 Maybe a mind

outgrows the old sportscores and heresies,
the physics set in some unlabeled distances.
Maybe a mind
accepts the commoner hues and likelihoods,
remembering that stage-bright and well-sealed
atmosphere—
all in a weekend's excellence—inviting the
amateur to tell,
if not to tell so much as to be lifted by the music,
even
as windy warm, unwinterly, the whole outdoors
shrinks down
to space we're building in, to moments like these
midweek,
more clear because you've troubled the
instructing, and filled
by these voices now, rounding themselves in space
imprinted by their styles. Let the lyrics speak for
other ways
and listening. Let the dark speak hues, and
every other
natural tincture, speak for these hues and all the
weekend's
made for us to promise. Saturday's veal and pinot.
And Sunday's this cubed cheese, chili, these
football recipes,
a few hours more to share with one roof's weathers
overhead, one morning's drive ahead, with all of
its sorry
influence, all of its darkness still, and joys, more fully
ours to carry, remembering the chips and
orchestras,
the ways hearts feel, as if loving for the first time,
even as the dark withdraws, as Nothing itself
withdraws at this convincing genesis.

Daniel Rubén Mourelle

Midnight visions

Reason fell
she had found
too much
except for the book's cries
reason fell
towards the poem and the poem
was a bad sign

She drank the sherry
rested the words
assembling her dominoes

the kids were away
the door opened
to anarchy
wood sparkled under marble

Daniel Rubén Mourelle

The world is depending on the arrow

The world
a noise
in pursuit of the exact wound
searching the name and finding
the capital letter
what's proper
wound and pain

The worlds
the passions that turn them into
a proper capital word
a hymn

triangles
straight lines
falseness pensive
towards moralizing
above and below
what?
who?
which world in ruins?

Patti See

Soup's On

Each supper time my father yells Soup's on from the porch railing, comb over growing in the night breeze, the rolled newspaper passed to his half mooned arm pit. Nothing's worth reading since Tricky Dick, but he'll laugh alone at the comics. The neighborhood loved

his call. Other kids scrambled to hand over toys and even parents thought we only ate soup. Hungry, we'd say, darting home, hiding that he only called once. He was the man of our world, grown up and stern, who didn't know what play was worth or couldn't afford to. Each of us passed

him on the porch with a nod as his eyes passed over the sea of seven children he loved.

A man for whom words were worthless found his way of saying I'm here. *Soup's on.* We didn't know what could make a grown man hate his life, believing that only

kids lost the power to please. He sat as if alone, his spoon in one hand, back and forth, passing bowl to lips, his free hand scribbling with a grown up finger on the table top. If it was a meal he loved — pig's feet with sauerkraut, tongue soup with egg dumplings— it was a dish worthy

of *Wonder what the poor people are eating*, worth
a table laugh each time, the way that only
kids have to laugh at a father. He ate his soup
as he did everything, looking at the door past
us, his rhythmic dull at the machine motion, loving,
it seemed, only what he saw there, as we grew

up telling each other stories. Now we use grown
up words, though I can't tell him what's worthwhile
we often stumble upon, how I know silence is love
and words can't make it better, how lonely
fathers who yelled from porches too often slip past
us, how I still want to call back to him, *I'm on*

my way, how I've grown to know what to leave
alone and know what's worth passing on,
how I hold my son and say *Soup's on*.

Silvia Brandon-Pérez

**When the birds were singing that last
morning**

I lost bits of my heart
in a corner of your garden
where small yellow flowers are blooming
and behind a photograph of your boy
in your study

a small bit jumped on the coat rack
as you enter the house
fluttering in the evening breeze
and on the kitchen window sill
near the cinnamon, looking up at your colored
lights

the blinds in your bedroom
contain assorted pieces
flown there when the birds were singing that last
morning
yearning so to stay with birdsong and with sun

if your own heart is heavier than usual
some of my own heart is attached
and would not come with me.

Silvia Brandon-Pérez

**the gentle darkness
of the cave**

and I must speak to people
and listen to kind words
but my heart craves sleep
and solitude
and warm blankets
and your arms wrapped around me
in furry cocoon
and your lips in kiss upon my brow
and I do not want to seem unfriendly
or ungrateful
but I crave the quiet of the cave
and its gentle darkness

Silvia Brandon-Pérez

Requiescat in pacem

sitting in my car
on my way to buy groceries
a picture came unbidden
as he was before he went away
so thin, so peaceful and so quiet
my burly father become small and bony
my loud boisterous father become silent
able to communicate only by tears
unable to tell jokes or to sing songs
to play guitar
to laugh or make me laugh
and all must leave
in time
but why so soon
why so irrevocable the goodbye
why this grief that tears
with sharpened teeth
engulfing all

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Authors

Wendy Carlisle lives in East Texas with a large dog, three cats, and an obliging husband.

Cindy Duhe lives in Houston, Texas, writing during the day and bodybuilding at night.

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2River is a literary site on the Daemen College webserver in Amherst, New York. The address is

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

2River publishes individual volumes by authors, as well as *The 2River View*, a quarterly journal of art, theory, and poetry, which first appears online and afterwards in print. Interested contributors should read the submission guidelines on the 2River site.

The **2River** **View**

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2River
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