

# The 2River View

( 4\_1, Fall 1999)



*Manipulating the Candor* © 1999 by Mark Flowers

POEMS BY Larry Brooks, Anne Bryant-Hamon,  
Silke deWinter, Robert Johnston, Lyn Lifshin,  
Ken Pobo, Judith Pordon, Chris Shreenan-Dyck,  
Peter Stuhlmann, Jane Varley, and  
David Weinstock



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Holy Land © 1999 by Mark Flowers

Larry R. Brooks

## **Clapper**

---

Four men with serious mien  
hugged the huge clapper  
that hung from the ceiling on muscled ropes,  
hugged it to their chests as lovers do,  
and at the tweeting of a whistle  
began to sway in unison,  
each swing bringing the wooden clapper,  
tumescend end swabbed in leather,  
closer to the metal,  
until, with one mighty shove,  
it impacted with the side of the bell,  
producing an enormous release of music  
that ejaculated through the city  
like a covey of white doves.

Larry R. Brooks

## **Eat the Seasons**

---

Give me the seasons and I'll eat them:  
I'll eat Spring mangoes and sweet peas  
When the leaves are as tiny as toes;  
I'll gobble Summer squash and carrots  
As the colors are eyes in a crowd;  
I'll ingest Fall pumpkins and turnips  
When the stalks are as white as frost;  
And when Winter crawls from the north  
I'll eat the sky and swallow the wind.

Anne Bryant-Hamon

## **A Klee in Blue**

---

Abe sketches trees in charcoal  
as he rides the train to London,  
makes sure they're true-to-season  
without the luxury of color.

He pauses now and then,  
the same as when the rain  
rests intermittently  
beneath the underpasses.

Abe moves his pencil once again,  
rakes smudges into fruits,  
then curves his thoughts  
to what stays in the main:

a day in March two springs before  
when all was new  
and leaded lines on Oxford's trees  
had not turned lavender  
to shades of mourning blue.

Anne Bryant-Hamon

## To Vincent

---

I wish he could have seen the fields of Spain,  
the massive blocks of sunflowers,  
their pug-nosed faces upturned toward the  
sunset;  
more than enough to paint past thirty-seven's  
gate.

Have you seen yellow ochre past a tender age,  
its vintage kept by shaded, airtight glass  
beyond the pale of early learning years,  
still wet enough to draw the latter rains?

In Holland there are colors known to few  
where pails of silver poured the milk and lime.  
I saw them once and never left behind the taste  
of umber's golden sunburn on my tongue.

I wonder if he listened to his peers,  
which paintings that we'll never chance to view,  
forever buried under yellowed graves,  
and if, perhaps, the best were left undone?

Silkie deWinter

## **Making Lemonade**

---

Perhaps this is the nudge out the door that I've  
been needing,  
a chance to squeeze the lemons dry—  
the juice, collected in the cup, at once so sour  
and so welcome—  
and sweeten, then, to taste:  
MY taste,  
not that of a martyred prima donna whining lies  
while gleefully sporting her custom-fitted crown  
of thorns.  
Outrage is tempered by the vague sweet scent  
of freedom hovering,  
unseen yet palpable, deep in the shadows.  
The fear of the unknown is present, too,  
but, being of sound mind— I think—  
and made of fairly sturdy stuff,  
I will survive this latest sly assault  
from unexpected quarter.  
I'll eat the sky and swallow the wind.

Robert Johnston

**autumn rain**

---

when autumn  
sun  
is followed  
by rain  
falling  
soft  
and straight  
I am  
in danger  
of becoming  
vertical  
and  
trans  
parent  
very thin  
against  
a backdrop  
of gray hills  
and a gray  
sky  
or only gray  
or  
only  
invisible  
except for  
the occasional  
subdued  
call  
of one bird

then  
another

Robert Johnston

**coming home**

---

i'd climbed the hill

and was pulling  
onto the lawn

heavy rain was falling

in a second or two  
in the heart  
of the afternoon

i almost saw it all

Robert Johnston

**dreams**

---

when i was about his age  
—late twenty something—  
i thought i'd become  
a bee keeper,  
and now, after his  
mental intensity,  
filiberto dreams of going home  
to belize, to rear pigs  
and make sausages from folk recipes.  
he says he's too fucked  
in the head to have kids, even.  
plans to work only three days a week.  
i see him always in a clean white shirt,  
elevated above the dirt,  
but play along with him—  
i know what he means.

Lyn Lifshin

## **It Was Shadows in Dreams, She Said, Worse than Claws**

---

like standing before a class naked, unprepared. It was like getting the book for her mother autographed then having her die before this birthday gift. She took care of the apartment after she died. There was a cat, something about that. The claws maybe. Taking care of things. It happened, the way in a dash of funerals or deaths there were boxes to pack. She seemed like a woman who never wanted a cat. It was her friend's apartment after the boyfriend whose cat it was od'd on heroin. A mild cat, easier to dispose of than the dead lover and so trusting she vowed to pick the cat back up from the SPCA in the 72 hours before they gas it. Then in the hot Harlem July, after wine and a flat, she drives away, still wakes up 20 years later drenched in sweat, shaking that there was something she forgot to do.

Lyn Lifshin

## **My Neighbor in her Veils**

---

Somewhere when she was a child on long slow afternoons she licked persimmons, crumpled saffron in her mother's kitchen of garlic and plums, her flesh camouflaged even in the heat, dreaming papaya seeds sprout in her belly to grow a skin doll.

I think of George Segal in his father's butcher shop despising the stench, daydreaming gauze and veils, of wrapping the flesh chunks dripping blood in white, still as a nun, quiet as my neighbor mush have been kneeling on stone, swathed like a

nun in yards of cotton the sculptor could have dreamed into marble. Now in a new country far from canaries and blue limes, mocholelos, in a town where she can't find good cayenne or fresh tumeric, where people stare at her, their eyes dark beads she can't see her reflec-

tion in. She brings the car into the garage on weekends to wash it without her veil but some late mornings when everyone's gone from the house she runs barefoot, her hair streaming down to the river with green pasta for the geese whose wings flutter around

her, make her feel she is back in her mother's house beating quilts and pillows, their harsh cries more soothing than English.

Kenneth Pobo

## Rapunzel Under Care

---

Years full of eyes  
looking for the well hidden,  
like Gretel, dead  
of cirrhosis at forty,  
and nobody knowing she drank,

it was said. The doctor  
gives more pills to make  
my bones floating balloons,

lips red coals. The house  
needs cleaning and my lover  
who calls me emotional  
when I curse  
likes it neat: another pill.  
A blocked road suddenly

open. I've tried them all  
and still it's another  
prescription— they know me  
at the pharmacy,  
at least that's something.

Kenneth Pobo

## **Trina and the Light**

---

Married for nineteen years,  
she still sleeps

with the light on, believes  
monsters under the bed

thrive in darkness,  
their pupils growing,

claws thickening. Frank  
holds her but knows his skin

can't stop her trembling.  
When they make

love, she keeps her eyes closed,  
hardly knows how

her husband looks naked.  
He sees all too clearly

her taut face  
in his hands,

her fear that in the midst  
of joy

something will come  
and ruin it.

Judith Pordon

## **Aphrodite at the Coast**

---

Reducing angels to cupids  
she entices her lover to surround her  
so she can make him into art.  
In waves, she hears faint music,  
strains to capture the melodies  
but they are past her reach.  
She dreams of lost loves  
that slipped away one by one,  
beginning in childhood.  
If only she one would chase her,  
take her home,  
start over again, have a normal life,  
without the constant, restless  
lust for excitement.  
After half a century she is tired,  
so she waits, washed ashore,  
for the tide to turn.  
Still not ready to settle down,  
she looks forward to more of her own company  
from now on.

Judith Pordon

## **Blank**

---

The blank page is nothing  
compared to their blank stares,  
blank chairs, wallets, excuses.  
The blank page comforts  
like bottles or chocolates,  
and after years pass  
when I'll not remember  
what I've written,  
my words will talk back to me.  
The best part of being  
a writer, is going to be  
becoming blank.

Chris Shreenan-Dyck

**imperfect**

---

the best heterosexual sex of the year  
was between her bowlegs  
and his small belly  
had black hairs  
her tongue knew well  
on the way to moans  
born behind imperfect  
breasts and crooked teeth  
that bit the odors  
of body weeps  
coating the violence  
of consented insanity  
and later  
her forefinger  
lightly across his balding head

Chris Shreenan-Dyck

**mad summer moon**

---

mad summer moon  
full on the entrails of winter  
rises to discharge  
the battery of the sun  
from the blue basted sky  
closing the lid of night  
tight to the horizon  
turning to shadow  
the nature of all living things  
that yearn  
under the mad summer moon

Chris Shreenan-Dyck

**old lover**

---

they say  
an old lover  
isn't the same  
person anymore  
than those waves  
are the sea  
where the ship  
went down

i lay over her  
like a salvage boat  
wondering  
if this is really where  
we sank  
or if that place  
disappeared long ago

David Weinstock

## **Body Building**

---

My muscles grow aware  
Of their unique existence:

Weary of being mistaken  
For so much useful meat

They agitate to be recognized  
For who they are separately:

Gastrocnemius, iliopsoas,  
Four-headed quadriceps bulging

Like bagpipes in full cry.  
A muscle crosses a joint to move a bone.

We wrestle the Angel of Gravity.  
Pin him down once and you win.

David Weinstock

## **Life List**

---

When my eyes roll away like two marbles  
Into a low corner of the kitchen floor,  
And clatter down the vacuum's throat,  
Then I will buy Birding by Ear.

I will learn to know crow caw from jay bray,  
The woodpecker's jackhammer beakbang,  
Chip of chipping sparrow, buckle of cooped-up hen,  
Pigeon coo and dove moo-moo,  
And the road-rage honk of long-commuting geese.

David Weinstock

## To His Dying Skin

---

*Every 30 seconds, your skin loses half-a-million cells.* TV commercial

My skin grows thin. My boundaries erode.  
Like autumn leaves my cells drop free,  
Flutter to the lawn, skid across the street,  
And pile in the ditch behind the mailbox.

Inside, carpet mites cheer as I pass.  
A shower of skin-scurf rains down.  
It is manna in their desert. They hosanna  
My disintegration. They imagine me a god.

Cumulonimbus, my epidermis snows us in.  
A million flakes a minute fill the sky.  
I stick, accumulate, drift into dunes.  
County plows rumble and blink their orange lights.

Peter Stuhlmann

## **A Deft Hand**

---

The clouds drag their black,  
swollen bellies over mountains,  
rooftops, the blunt  
foreheads of bank towers,  
across the steeple's  
anachronistic point. When  
younger, and beautifully angry,  
I would imagine the steeple  
as a warning to whatever god  
stood watching—come too close  
and we'll stab you as we would  
our own. Was it the mountain,  
or our buildings that opened  
the clouds then, to a thin slash  
of light, like the glint of a scalpel  
waiting for a deft hand,  
like a freshly opened wound.

Peter Stuhlmann

## **Jennifer**

---

an afterthought, arrives  
in January, 1973,  
and begins her journey  
in the rented duplex  
on Marcil Avenue.

Our mother beams  
like a split plum, Jennifer  
is more Canadian  
than any of us.

In her eighth summer  
she won't be cornered  
by little neighborhood  
thugs: Are you a Nazi?

At school no one will  
persuade her to write fuck  
in a notebook: It means  
I am happy.

She won't have to surrender  
to our father's blitzkrieg  
of hands; urine flooding  
like guilt through her  
pajama bottoms.

She will learn to love  
easily enough,  
her heart as big  
as the Laurentians

Jane Varley

## **Prayer at 20 Degrees below Zero**

---

Oh dear God, it is cold  
today. I am glad they leave the doors unlocked.

This church smells of the dark holiday  
when I made a mark in my palm  
with the crucifixion nail.

Remember what a good girl I was?  
When you read my mind  
my words must have been visible  
inside the smooth chambers.

I prayed with a vengeance.  
I love the light in the church.  
It feels holy in here, dim,  
with color diffused in air.  
Outside, it is so bright and cold.

I could not keep my eyes open.  
That made me think of you.

I'd like to come here  
everyday.  
I'd like to mean the words,  
when I say them.

Jane Varley

## **The Women of Iowa**

---

I am the descendent  
of unhappy women.  
Grandmother, in my dreams,  
urges me to leave.

I think they hated men,  
some of them,  
who did not love the fields  
or the men of the fields.  
In the clutches of the farm,  
my grandmother lived  
a solitary life, her brothers  
getting drunk and whipping  
horses in the yard.  
My grandfather left  
to trade goods up north.  
She looked at me and saw  
the future, fingering the picture books  
and pointing out the maps.

I am leaving, Grandmother,  
pray for me. I have arranged  
to have my own truck  
and a dog as my protector.  
I can pay my own way.  
Watch me drive the open spaces.

*The 2River View, 4\_1* (Fall 1999)

## About

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**Larry Brooks** is a computer manager with the United States State Department. He is currently assigned to the US Embassy in Tokyo, Japan.

**Anne Bryant-Hamon** lives along the Florida Gulf Coast with her husband and their four children. Some of her poems have appeared in magazines such as *The Thinker/La*, *The Bridge*, and *AfterImages*.

**Silke deWinter** has worked professionally as a writer, researcher, singer, and storyteller. She is currently daylighting at Wesleyan Univeristy in Middletown, Connecticut.

**Mark Flowers** teaches art at Mercersburg Academy in Mercersburg, PA.

**Robert Johnston** is a middle-aged New Zealander who has been writing poetry for many years.

**Lyn Lifshin** has published numerous books of poetry, as well as anthologies of writing by women. Her latest collection, *Before It's Light*, is now being published by Black Sparrow Press.

**Kenneth Pobo** teaches English at Widener University. In 1998, Palanquin Press published his chapbook entitled *Cicadas in the Apple Tree*.

**Judith Pordon** has a penchant for chili rellenos with mole and the poems of Tennessee Williams. She is planning to start a writers colony in Mexico.

**Chris Shreenan-Dyck** has been published in several web-based publications, including *Poetic Express*, *A Little Poetry*, and *Canadian Dream*.

**Peter Stuhlmann** has had pieces appear in *Eclectica*, *Pif*, *Gravity*, and *Poetry Magazine*.

**Jane Varley** lives in a log cabin in North Dakota's Turtle Mountains. She teaches writing and speech classes at a satellite campus of Minot State University in Bottineau, North Dakota.

**David Weinstock** lives, writes, and teaches in Middlebury, Vermont. He has been a freelance writer for 20 years, including three years as a staff writer for the L.L. Bean catalog.

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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.



Drawing Lesson (c) by Mark Flowers

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