

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

4.2 (Winter 2000)



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Ward Kelley, Tony Keogh, Jane Pek, and Janeen Pergrin



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

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Katja

**from *Rules of the Senses***

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I (a reading)

And you may  
call me, for the rest of your life  
call me, read the service,  
say the words, my  
heart's not in it:

go on until your throat  
aches. And at night  
when off your shoulder falls  
your shirt, that first  
flash of brown  
skin against white

call me again, your words  
softer but the same:

I will not answer, I will mumble  
every charm I know, my voice  
rising wildly, my eyes  
darting, darting south, sure you must,  
afraid you will not come—

you may call for me, put your hand  
on my shoulder, make me  
warm when I have only been cold, press  
the book into my palm, your lips  
on mine

but I will not come. And when  
your voice arrives smooth as water over  
my body, when I shudder and say yes, still I will never  
be yours, though the night continue,  
though from my mouth you hear  
the promise, though you make  
the verse a furnace, and make me  
the wine.

Katja

**from *Rules of the Senses***

---

II (1989)

Rose from thick  
dreams, washed off  
humid sleep, steam  
on the wall, clumsy  
midmorning, your voice  
which once said  
*desperate*. I remember.  
Hot water for tea.  
Did I sleep? Your  
figure printed  
on the scarlet sheet,  
stained, I remember rain  
to come this morning could become  
snow. Could come late. Your  
voice which once said *sweet*.

Katja

**from *Rules of the Senses***

---

III (Jim's reasons)

Your expression soft  
in the morning, happy to see me  
(for once)  
at peace with you. Your cool  
hand closing on the grip  
of the cycle you sold  
before we met, knowing  
you could not stop in time.  
And the way you explain  
seasons, the water, things  
I already know. How  
did you admit me,  
how does the change take hold?

Slowly, I think, as my eyes  
adjust to the morning light,  
your face, or is it moving  
blurred as the stop sign,  
easy to miss?

Alan DeNiro

## **Treatise on Atmosphere**

---

Granted, steeples can only be built so high.  
And air is only thick as a ghost.  
Air isn't metal. You can't build buildings  
out of wind. The blistering chill  
nearly makes me want to pray,  
but not quite. I'm listening for prairie  
trains—shrill even a hundred miles away.  
The sound of a train whistle  
can break open the crabgrass along the tracks.  
Briefly, and only during the night,  
ice can weep from the stems,  
as the train hurries to a coast.

Alan DeNiro

**3 A.M.**

---

The subway threads the tunnel. Centipedes  
wake in mass all over the world.  
I write a letter to my dead grandfather,  
a flamethrower Marine.  
The next stop is miles, the silence  
around me shakes  
enough to make my bones veer.

Ron Ellis

## **CANTO 1 Hung-up and dried**

---

Hung-up and dried in the tent, on a misty glum morning,  
full in retreat from academia and domesticia,  
this lonely quest I ply, two-ply, four-ply polyester tread,  
to follow Buddha, see through illusion my brittle self.

Slowly then and with plodding keys, the gas lantern  
frothing off its hiss of light, typing hard lines  
down the halls of my soft thoughts. Not looking back,  
keeping always the thought forward  
and learning to breathe the long meaty breath  
taught by Walt and Charles and Jack,  
and yea Ezra and Allen too. Not that such breathing  
comes easy,  
it's just my stumbling song.

Plump raindrops pat now and then rolling off the drizzle-spangled  
box-elder that crowded out the nettles and the zany ragweed,  
squatters taking over when the great elms died.  
Sing woodpecker holes in the elm-stub, then,  
and pay attention to the inside ticking words blabbing on  
if you can find them as some jet plane hogs breathless the sky.

Cross-legged then and half-assed up to hips  
in paraphernalia not of the smoking kind God forbid  
but of the clatter kind, LC Smith dank old hoss,  
and the creaking saddle of the senses,  
hanged-up pauses between clogged-up phrases!

This much gangly language spun off a grungy Smith  
makes a spongy dungeon of a poem prosy, but let it  
hang where it may, dangle in the crux-fire  
where the words come bubbly-troubley and the instant  
censor says *No, you fool, it won't do!*

But it's on, it's begun, it's got to clear the censors  
in long leaps of limby language.

They were never wrong, the old masters,  
if they could see me now, plump with a great tomato  
down the gullet, rich in juicy smear  
and with a hot cup of herb tea, snug  
in the drippy tent, listening to the clunky things  
rattling in the bulgy word-cupboard, setting the table  
here in pell-mell what-the-hell ring-the-bell fashion  
clattering out tomato-y succulent poems!  
So the ironic dovetails and nosedives  
incestuous spirals and brittle struts of wit  
nosetails and dovedives  
until the bi-plane crashes duality.  
Oh yeah I want to singah  
now comes a little songah—

*Long ago in the Sangha  
Divas danced in the Dhamma.  
They could do such wicked mambas,  
in the hills or on the pampas.  
They danced for all your papas,  
they danced inside your mamas.*

The end of the first canto  
is the end of Canto the First, number one.  
Nothing much has been done.

R. Virgil Ellis

## **CANTO 4 Ponder underpinnings**

---

Ponder underpinnings  
that have brought us all  
to a life-threatened state.  
For instance, language.  
Is it the problem?  
Is it the solution?  
Is the problem in the source of language?  
In the shift from ? to language?  
Let me explore.  
Is the method electronic,  
or any instant transmission  
of the multiple offerings of the verbal font  
(as if all those swarming flounder  
could at once rise to a poems bait,  
airborne school scaling finitude),  
or rather is it of the jelling kind, where  
in the frothing and bubbling soup  
certain combinations agglutinate and then harden  
as if taking on spines and torsos  
that flex with ambidexterity?  
Consider:

THE NEW POETS MUST,

since language is an endangered species of genetic  
engineering, untwist academic umbilicals,  
unbirth squalling linear words,  
re-conceive diaperdom  
kingdom come, under-  
pinnings that have  
brought us to this  
life-threatened  
fossil-fuel  
state  
conceive  
an inverted  
whirlpool encoding  
into oceanic consciousness,  
impelled globally into spiral  
linking, emerging brave new words  
twisting into gluons drafting wildest  
cadences, oral worlds wet and bawling with  
cauldrons of boiling silicon, spilling fusion  
poetry, radiating the solar state, spiritual heat!

Richard Fein

## **Mass Extinction**

---

Her eyes have turned from green to brown  
this Tyrannosaurus-Rex among the dying grasses.

She, she must be a she  
for by now the male of her life  
has passed through her, and has been exuded  
with the egg case.

A last supper, a sharing of food,  
a passing of one's being into the bowels of another.

And now the fall wind  
chills all creatures to stillness,  
so her viselike, claw-legs open and close  
ever more slowly

The time of sacrifices, of preordained altruism  
has ended.

Here her shell will remain through the winter,  
for even the ants have sheltered themselves deep.

But come next spring the rising grass tips  
will spear the fragments of her and resurrect  
the ruins of her body.

A dangling monument until once more  
the society of ants dares emerge  
and haul down this last season's flag  
and pass her final remains among themselves.

Bridget Gage-Dixon

## **Nature Boy**

---

Gloria had crimson hair  
that fell in waves  
around her shoulders  
as we sat atop the dirt hill  
making mudpies.  
She poured water from a sand bucket  
while I kneaded oozing mud  
between my fingers  
felt it creeping down my arms  
dripping off onto the Sunday dress  
I'd snuck away still wearing.  
Thin fingers pulling through the dirt  
she carefully constructed the moat  
while I slapped handfuls of mud  
atop each other,  
carelessly creating my castle.  
Until from the thicket  
we heard his labored breathing  
raised our eyes in his direction  
to find him standing naked, watching us,  
this man who existed to us only  
in the whispers of neighborhood mothers  
huddled beneath street lights.  
This man they threw their shoes at,  
whose presence always brought police  
to sweep through  
underbrush with nightsticks  
as angry mothers with small arms wrapped  
around their legs peered on.  
He stood before us, as if legend,  
until Gloria's laughter broke his spell  
and she grabbed me by the hem  
of my soiled Sunday dress  
dragging me across the dirt  
toward home.

Brdiget Gage-Dixon

## **Prodigal Son**

---

he took his leave of us  
without his divvy of the fortune  
no pocket full of gold coin  
to squander on cheap women  
and expensive wine,  
packed up his duffel bag  
and caught the bus  
to Parris Island  
where they shaved his head  
and ran him senseless  
pressed his face into the muddy ground  
and after eight weeks  
declared he was a soldier.  
My mother waited silently  
for him to call,  
never once complaining to her friends  
how long it had been  
since the phone had rung.  
She'd puff her voice with pride  
when speaking of him  
but the truth lie just beneath  
her bragging  
in the way I'd find her well past midnight  
rocking gently in the heavy wooden chair,  
wrapped in the quilt  
she had sewn for him  
while he swam inside her,  
and sipped hot tea  
with only just the slightest tear  
creeping down her cheek.  
From the balcony,  
I would watch her  
tuck myself behind the banister  
damning him.  
Though she still denies it

she spent those nights  
reliving moments  
inspecting judgment errors  
wondering if she'd yelled too much,  
or not enough.  
Months later  
the old black phone did ring  
for her  
he'd called to tell her  
that he'd married  
and sitting on the threshold of her bedroom  
I watched as she drew herself up taut  
squeezing back the tears  
and didn't ask why she hadn't been invited  
just congratulated him  
and asked the name of his new wife.  
She has waited now  
two decades  
fattening the calf in vain,  
offered countless polished explanations  
of his absence  
at family gatherings,  
and though we've pushed him from our minds  
abandoned hope for reunion  
she can still be found from time to time,  
as if standing at the fence line waiting,  
wrapped in his quilt,  
sipping tea  
and rocking gently.

Clark Holtzman

## **Getting Puerto Rican Ghosts High**

---

Up they go like hats tossed into the air!  
Now nothing in San Juan will ever be the same  
There will be no thanking your lucky stars  
And nobody will get to wish you were here

But thank God you made it through the night  
This afternoon. You looked Latin, positive  
Even Frisbee-like before the band marched on  
To walk the streets until it was time to go

Now you're floating on vectors of happy light  
And our island nation is gratefully in your debt  
This hadn't happened in so many years  
We'd begun to think everything is *ex officio*

In San Juan the dear departed have a saying  
And by god they keep saying it, over & over

Clark Holtzman

## **Women of the 999 Dreams**

---

Meanwhile, you and I, forswearing  
everything but our right to realize a small profit  
have traveled here to rekindle our faith in  
human nature and old-fashioned common sense

And the child in blue points at enigmas  
the guessing of which is half the fun, and which  
the others in pink and yellow evidently are bewitched  
by. The existence that gesture makes inevitable

leaves us astonished, struck dumb, holy  
like a pair of tyrants on their way to an accounting  
Something new & unspeakable is coming to us

and soon. It's bound to measure everything we know-  
like a metric of the ineffable. The trick is recognizing  
yourself before someone wakes you and you vanish

Tony Keogh

## **Of Ripples Reflecting**

---

In the lank limbs of an afternoon  
deluge,  
the shadows of a lost cadence  
oozing from the low cloud.  
Vast distances of circumstance  
unbridgeable,  
a tumbling thistle seed in the wind.  
The reflection of a mad red dawn,  
ripples uncontrollably,  
competing with the dark shadows  
of stolen nights.

Tony Keogh

## **Innocence Be Damned**

---

When the innocent last vestige  
is lost in the ancient flames  
and delaying too long  
is dragged farther in  
and with honesty is bared.

Falling in,  
surrendering,  
will the tender rose be soured,  
and with the innocent last vestige  
it's embers scattered on the wind.

Can the monstrous white horses  
once unbridled be contained,  
and the innocence once lost  
leave a vacant vacuous void.

Will guilt and slinking shadows  
eclipse the joy and pain,  
of brittle innocence.

Jane Pek

## **At MacDonalds on a Monday**

---

This is what it is to grow old, then:

To sit, wheelchair-bound, a straw hat hung from your neck with string so you will not lose it, dressed in red and yellow floral print.

Green veins twisting from your face and arms; faded skin folded into contours with the nudge of bone rising at knee, wrist, elbow, knuckle.

To be fed salty fries and Chicken McCrispy greased in oil and fat, shredded anchors of taste offered by the sandpapered pinchers of the two Filipino maids flanking you (whose names you still can't remember). They eat your leftovers in silence, hunched in shiny shame and contrition.

You are here only because you can no longer stand to splutter oil into a pan and cook; because anyplace else is too expensive for the dirty canary purse with its slippery clasp; because you have nowhere else to go. It is not the milk of pity that rises, watching you, but the last pulls of dignity.

Jane Pek

## **Inconsolable**

---

Hearing the news third-hand,

the intimacy of words turned vulgar  
in my mouth when I tried to repeat  
them. We were crafted of stone  
as we pulled sounds from the air in  
acknowledgment, magician-like,  
secure in the fact that the loss was not ours.

He sounded so solemn before he  
told me. Were the questions of fate,  
of cause and effect, of how and why  
and where, of sundry existences—  
were they all rioting in his head too,  
distilling appropriate concern  
into the cold vapor of curiosity?

We marched through the car wreck  
this time, heads held high while  
eyes sifted for signs of disaster.  
No longer crammed in the backseat,  
noses pressed to the smell of dirty glass;  
eager to catch the frailty of it all  
as we crawled past on the expressway.

We know her, you see. That left us  
sitting, too aware of our breathing  
that packed in the strangeness; struggling  
for another phrase of grief to string,  
a form of sympathy to proffer unpolished  
by the insincerity of the masses.

I wish I knew how you felt  
that I might console you.

Ward Kelley

## **Deep Sea Diver**

---

You cannot see all the way to the top,  
through all the cloudy green water;  
the lengthy hose, connected behind  
your sight, is your only recourse . . .

what if death came down the hose?  
Cool and slow, a snake of a joke,  
to you who stands planted in sand  
all the way at the bottom, alone.

Someday it will, but now help  
only comes down: air, without  
the punchline snake, and you feel  
as though the fellow mariners up

there have your best interests in  
mind; and they do, they do, even  
on the day they send the snake down  
and pull you back, all the way up.

Janeen Pergrin

**After the thaw**

---

The river, a frostbite victim,  
is frozen in its extremities:  
its edges and shallows covered by canopies of ice;  
its sun-warmed center flowing  
in figure eight and half-moon pools.  
The debris of late fallen leaves and limbs  
and all of autumn's remains drift to the center.

This is the season when winters skeletons are  
exposed.  
Bare tree branches clutch husks of hornets nests up  
to an overcast sky.  
Split stalks murmur restlessly in the fields  
and only crows reply.

Janeen Pergrin

**Muted**

---

*There are a thousand cries a woman makes in her lifetime.*  
*CK Tower*

some are so muted  
they only come out as a sigh  
barely heard above the water rushing to the drain,  
the cat's claws across the kitchen floor,  
and a car's tires pressing loose stones  
into place  
as it backs away from the house.

Janeen Pergrin

## **Leaving Our Mother of Good Counsel**

---

Each flight was treacherous.  
Smooth soled saddles slipping on every well-worn step.  
We were wrestling with our coats  
wedged by each others elbows and knees  
while the sisters waited on the bottom step  
reciting *Quickly, children quickly.*  
The mammoth wood doors were flung open  
and out in the lot with their engines grumbling  
the bus doors screeched *Escape.*

*The 2River View*, 4.2 (Winter 2000)

## About

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**Katja** is an avid neurologist, reader, runner and wife. She lives online at [www.geocities.com/m\\_katja](http://www.geocities.com/m_katja).

**Alan DeNiro** has written a poetry chapbook, *The Black Hare* (A Small Garlic Press). He edits *Taverner's Koans*, an online poet's resource and poetry journal, and his poems have appeared in *Willow Springs*, *Blue Moon Review*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere.

**R. Virgil Ellis** lives near Cambridge, Wisconsin. He has most recently placed poems with *WordWrights*, *New Works Review*, *new digressions*, *The Wolf Head Quarterly*, and *Mississippi Review Web*. His site is [woodhenge.com](http://woodhenge.com) and he can be contacted at [rvellis@woodhenge.com](mailto:rvellis@woodhenge.com).



**Richard Fein** has been published in numerous print and electronic journals.

**Bridget Gage-Dixon** divides her time between her children, college, and poetry. Her work has recently appeared in *Avalon*, *Poetry Tonight*, and *Poetry Superhighway*.

**Clark Holtzman** lives in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and Washington, DC. He has published in a variety of little magazines and through small publishers. For the past five years he has collaborated with Los Angeles artist Barbara

Nathanson, transforming book microfiche cards into installation art, installation art into a series of poems, then the poems into interpretive paintings.

**Ward Kelley** is a business executive and poet . Fairly new to publishing, he has enjoyed many initial successes, including poems in *Ariga*, *Oblique*, *Pif*, and *Skylark*.

**Tony Keogh** was born, lives, and writes in Dublin Ireland. He works as a University Technical Administrator, but words, music and archaeology are his passions.

**Jane Pek** is essentially a slacker, a romantic, a cynic, a writer, and a student at a junior college in Singapore. Her home in cyberspace is [www.geocities.com/SoHo/5456](http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/5456).

**Janeen Pergrin** spent 20 years writing COBOL and is now returning to her favorite language: Poetry. She lives in Williamston, Michigan, with her two sons. Her work has appeared in *Conspire: A Quarterly Journal of Literature and Poetry*.

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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.

# **2RV**

4.2 (Winter 2000)

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