

The 2River View

6.4 (Summer 2002)



Sunset Dip © 2002 by Amadeo Cortez

NEW POEMS BY

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In His Lecture on Resonance, the Poet Instructs Us

The poet tells me I will be redeemed, if I embrace
dying. Mortality, fondled like a lover's balls
will give my words the dirt blessing,
fill my mouth with salt and sweet as if my tongue
licked up a man's thigh to the dark earth scent
alive at the edge of language. Knowing
I'm on my way out, he says,
should be the fruit of every day.
But such short days—and what if they include
the drop and rise of my slick belly, breasts
against a lover's skin? He never says,
stroked clean and rolled again in sweat,
how I could crave another kind of death?

A Dog, Maybe

Light falls away from the desk where piled-up pictures crack and stick to one another. Trilby, Brutus, Zeus, the hounds we owned in the collapsed years when over and over the Dane's deep bark announced the Fed Ex truck in my nightmare and I refused the red, white and blue mailer, containing my husband's version of farewell. The dogs were hostages, forfeit to our preference, their heads pushing at my thigh. I paste what I have left of them into soft, black albums: gleaming pelts beside the palm trees, the sun through a venous ear, a halo of wet light around a muzzle, on the porch next to a laughing couple. I tell myself the man in the Kodacolor snap could be any mongrel, a buccaneer for voles, a slick adventurer, his nose disappearing into the next door pasture.

Wendy Carlisle

The Redhead Considers It A Close Call

The Redhead knows all about risk.
Last night, she was with him
flirting, trifling, letting
his hand brush her breast—
just for the rush. This morning, she's
finished with him. And if you
have the guts to ask—which I always do—
she'll tell you, he was just
one more hormonal storm
in a lifetime of lousy weather,
another too-smart stranger
helping her into his car, helping her
out of her clothes, another calamity
with her name tattooed on his butt.

Melissa Ahart

Aloft

The pitcher of water
 stained with lemons,
 thrown across the room—

I have no patience
 with hysterical women,
 but I do admit

I was afraid—
 seemed to meet
 no genteel resistance

with the table, the floor,
 the sharp edges
 of the white stucco wall.

If it could have remained
 thrown forever,
 without landing

or consequences,
 never breaking into a puddle
 of glass shards

commingled with pith
 and rind in a place
 far west of Eden...

Piece

Miracle worker of the jigsaw puzzle,
under his nimble fingers, schools
of variegated tropical fish divided and coalesced,

three thousand scarlet tulips bloomed
to inflame the undersides of windmill blades,
fleets of sailboats, schooners, the Titanic

itself rose from its soggy depths complete
with miniature light bulbs to illuminate
her affluent upper decks. Daunted only

by unbroken stretches of sky, he assembled
worlds with divine haste, only to crumble
them back into the box when barely finished.

Soon though, sections would be lost from one scene
and resurface in a distant relative—
tulips on the Titanic, ineffable fish in a windmill.

Worn out from sitting, he would take naps
with notched pieces still crushed into
his papery elbows, cohering on his skin

into scabrous meadows of pressed cardboard,
the underbelly of creation.

Rain

When it rains, the river plunges
over rocks and the rocks
ring like bells. Prayers
swirl in the slick street.
The sheets clipped to clotheslines
unfurl, their white targets
growing gray. The roof drips
into a crater of mud.

Mrs. Tarlick comes back to her spotless kitchen
to leaf through a *Life Magazine*
and worry over a pot of cabbage soup.
In his bear-spotted pajamas,
Al Miltie walks outside again
and pulls a glass tube from the ground
and records the moisture levels
in his hardbound blue notebook.

As my mother steps from a shiny
red and white taxicab
in her stiletto heels,
I press my nose against the window,
leave breathprints on glass,
and a black umbrella opens its ragged
wings in a bright yellow tub.

The Squatters

The iron ball swung
back and forth. The din was so loud
our children held their ears
and trembled as the force of it
vibrated through their bodies.

The building shook
and swayed more violently
with each blow until it buckled
into a mound of bricks.

A light in the distance made
a window on the darkness,
where the dying grail
flickered. While trucks rumbled
over the rubble, a long
tongue deciphered the dust
and debris.

At our feet, a pool grew large
and still, inky with oil.
The statue of our city's protectress
held her eyes shut to the stink.
It was time for us to leave,
time for us to find another
boarded-up building.

A silver trail drilled
through the murderous dusk.
We carried away what we could.

Maria Garner

Muse Fishing

Hook perched on my fin.
I snap the line; she starts again
coming in at a different angle, fathoming
dreams too plain for me.

She craves my chomp and shake-
My prized pike and unsnagged self
And I give her a single splash,

leave her cold in the empty wake
of my thundering wails.

Maria Garner

Someone Else's Day

Sip-slipper than cigarettes, crumpled avenues,
thought-fried papers, a license, butts scattered across
the sidewalk smashed. Someone smeared on pavement,
another child down on your pale cement heart.

Bachelor bell weeps, each a tangy gong and bent;
An endangered ring, my naked fingers and your crooked tie.
That California woman looks very in love. Happy wed-
(Straighten your goddamn tie.) Ding! Pigs fly.

Calm resolution settles just in time for solstice, hovers
like a second hand security blanket and I do, I do,
wrap it around the fabric of my jubilant hangover.

Rough Seas, One & Two

Surviving a fitful kind of night with the year's first cold in my chest, throat, ear. Like rough seas. So with all that murky darkness swamping consciousness I'm particularly attuned to the new light. Before sunrise, clouds carry red halfway across the sky. Then sunup throws a cold stick of yellow across the blue cloth of sea. She comes into the bedroom riding an ivory shell from the shower. Better already.

Fine architecture can be man's attempt to equal or surpass nature. Sure, I'm appreciating the usual on the commute to work: cormorants on stone, birch standing out from oak, harbor islands' battle against years of erosion. But when I get into the city each weekday I'm ogling facades, modillions, entablatures. When I turn the corner from Batterymarch, knowing April light this early in the morning hasn't a chance of filtering through the phallic financial district, I'm stunned by feminine light cupped on budding branches of a pear tree on loan from Arnold Arboretum in the northeast corner of Post Office Square Park.

I stand under it in mystified awe as if it were a Giotto saint. No light at all anywhere in the vicinity. All blocked out by One Post Office Square, Bank of Boston, State Street Bank, etc. Where's it coming from then, this gold nimbus? There it is. Mystery solved. Through a minor crack in the wall of buildings, low sunlight is reflecting off the top-floor windows of the old building at the corner of Congress & Milk, then caught by understory branches of the pear. A curative light.

II

Now I'm fascinated by the building's lion-headed cornice, its green & white tiled heraldry I'd never noticed before, what with CVS & Copy Cop red & blue awnings on the ground floor causing anyone to ignore the whole building. Really feeling great! Until, further up Milk St., at Così Deli, a Boise-Cascade office products truck in the driveway blocks the sidewalk, forcing me to circle into the street, & suck down a nose-full of cigarette smoke exhaled by the guy in the passenger seat. When I turn back to see the poison's source, it's the face of a shipwreck rusting at the bottom of the sea. I hightail it out of there so fast, coughing & gasping for air, that I could very well have the bends by the time I descend, again, the steps of the Orange Line trying to make it to the shore of work.

Seaman's Identity Card

While staring wistfully toward the outer harbor, the islands, & beyond (toward Portugal & Spain) on the fast catamaran, sea spray, salt in the nose, local lobster boats dwarfed by distance, the Nora Vittoria suddenly slows to a crawl. I turn away toward port side where three stockbrokers, raving about an earlier 250 point surge in the market, hush up, in awe of Rita the tramp tanker with her Panama registry, her hull like a tight black dress, smoking, the whore, taking on all-comers: Maersk, Hanjin, Evergreen, Hapag-Lloyd. A Boston tug escorting her out like a thug pimp: \$1,000 for change of structure; \$1,000 for change of name; \$1,000 for change in ownership; \$300 for damage, \$50 for extension or renewal. Visceral sadness evident in the brokers as the lady ambles slowly out of the harbor toward ports unknown. Sense a lack of freedom. After all, none owns a Seaman's Identity Card needed to board her, requiring medical certificate valid during the past two years, documentation of previous experience, & three passport photos in color. Wasn't it Freud who equated the desire for travel with desire to explore the body of a woman?

The Romance of Immediate Response

I.

Of course I write differently in springtime: snow white letters have melted. Ice has turned into tasteful rolls. Every eye a small god watching over green and blue and buzzing telephone wires. All over the world's ears demand songs, drummed, hummed solo or in groups. We are dancing, dancing for the first leaves, dancing for the resurrection of old trees—we are here. Here We are. We dance. Here.

II.

It lies crucified on the street, this frog, flattened in the dirt. Open jawed, curling toward heaven, sun dried. At a distance resembling a sole, a relic from earth's past, it was stopped mid-jump. Fat flies gorge themselves, then lift off, blood on their wings, heavy, heavy. Their larvae that will hatch tomorrow still sleep. One would like to imagine they dream. The blackbirds circle. Here, too.

The Word From Below

It rests, this suburb, restlessly, cleansed
with hands and rags. Like the world
up-spindled in one afternoon,
like the garden before courage
became bent and limited.

A son-in-law reads the Sears catalog
to an old woman. Eight carats and seven stones
fly by. A count can afford such things.
Read on, young man, the page with the wristwatches!
Curiosity branches past the window

or the wall and listens: the station clock jumps
as if this means something. A young woman
washes her rust-red hair, rust-red water flows
into the basin, the pipeline sings. The woman twists
her hair. She, too, listens, this woman.

Apples fall into carriages, a head
is cleaved on the bridge railing, never grows
together again. Where was this station,
where did the son-in-law work, why
did the pilgrims come? None of the town's pain

is my doing, but I am becoming used to it
like a hand learning its letters.

1301

Step outside your body sucking a hole in the air and make it get divorced, debased, or sick; lunatic, it does not feel, permitting you—the authentic self—to turn away, a stranger; the shill love-conflagrates lighting the dark with flame, acheless, providing combustions of air, he's a sick fucker anyway, it's not you burning but some depthless maniac; you possess rectitude, do not deserve to curl, let it lie beside her pathology while you, racing, orchestrate, accomplish, deposit, virtually innocent; split, it doppelgangs admirably, *certainly*, *sweet*, it purrs *indubitably*, familialy pecks and accepts pecks consecutively; pride to God, thanks. She's stiff-necked but it nuzzles her edges seethingly, a prince of numbness, a pain-absorbing fake suffering nobly the disillusionment of love like a made-for-TV stud, flickering, on peripheries, bracketed by Campbell's soup, while at the world's center you coolly by the fingers of your eyes peel words off the page and paste them to your brain, a flapless scholar and devotee; let us praise detachment, compartmentalization, inaccessibility, indifference of the heartless warrior to the side of his slaughtering—and the splintered man in the corner watching himself being slaughtered. Will not *break into blossom*, the stepped out of body, but will absorb over-plus till blood. The Lord is a shepherd that maketh, no hand shall smite, he shall protecteth as of a wing over sorrow, shall be no heartquake in love's pressured jaw, nor green trepidation, and man shall walk away from his corpse.

1316

Against my will, I rip down zipper, shove porno before face, grow tumescent, and rape myself. Rapist fist-squeezes, tears undercircumcision tissue, violences orgasm into toilet, and bangs away like a striking hawk leaving me on carpet weeping. Crisis response team, rape squad, description (shot sharded glances in mirror), unpredictable, unexpected, brutal, Caucasian, fled into the night of self, vast, anonymous like a whiptail; rage, not sex; revenge against distant abusers; howl in heart; injustice gnawing cerebral wires; I've not confessed—shame—he's hit before, cracked open hard core and beat incessantly ripping out my stuffing and fled like a murderer into my soul, slaked on subjugation and spermatozoa. I can take victimization by his hunger no more, the horror, the shock, the degradation amidst a beautiful world, his closet appearance irrepressibly, he's always within dead bold perimeters, his shoetoes replicating mine and the gutturals wrenched out his throat iterate details he could not know; Karen's tampax, Sheila's lubrication, the exquisite blood orange and yellow pipefish, the unexpurgated yank through caverns of emptiness, cravings of Joyce, weird tectonic schisms in the earthplates of stability; my superinformed assailant confusing me with identification; smashing my dick between fist with jackhammer-aching arm, he hallucinatorily grunted, *fucker, you are me*, then incomprehensibly vaporized the instant my come threw me off its string; pride terrorizes—I've slaved, I confess, for years, homosexually, painfully, grievingly, plumbing swallowing my esteem; the tidal sucks off a devastation-home. No more: hazel; six feet; gray wreath-tonsure; straight teeth; cupcake mole, left shoulder; moustache; olive; one-ninety; deceptively soft spoken; black bush; left lobe crease; fiftyish; big fingers. Grab handful of flesh, wrap fist, rip him through sewer grate to light, to justice, imposter, fake socialite, slime-liar, hit/run impresario, abominator of stainlessness and gorgeous stacks, chickadee household blackguard bastard.

Michael Meyerhofer

The Mennonite Girl

at whom you stuck your tongue out
near the clothing aisle,
shopping late one night—

her face when she saw you, in jeans,
walking strong and alone,
your long hair flowing
almost to your waist, in plain view

and then your tongue, suddenly
that rude glint of metal in the fluorescence,
the first tongue ring she'd ever seen

then the smile you hoped I'd miss,
your kind, winking eyes
and that little girl's face

breaking slowly, slowly
into a wonderful grin.

Michael Meyerhofer

Poem for a Stranger

Furiously scribbling in the late afternoon,
this young woman
who should be dancing,

who should be sitting somewhere
posing for a portrait

or learning to play the violin
off the Aegean Sea
a thousand years ago.

This young woman, who sits
in a coffee shop, furiously studying
and scribbling—

who pauses sometimes
and, raising her slender wrist,

brushes the hair from her eyes.

Anna Reisman

Estate Sale

In Lirong, Tibet, Buddhist monks keep an ancient burial rite:
they chop up the newly dead and leave for vultures on a
sacred mountain.

—*New York Times*, 07/03/99

Oriental rugs, armoires, old prints,
And more! we read in Sunday's tiny ad.
We hoped to find some decent furniture
For not too much, just other people's junk.

A clot of traffic filled the one-lane street
As people tried to park close to the house.
We walked up past the tent with three cashiers,
Pushed through the creaking screen and found within

A tidy place. An oak veneer gleamed under
Lacy cloth, a short fur coat hung from
The shower rack, an ancient breadbox bore
No rust or dents. A woman laughed as she

Tried on a netted feathered hat and saw
Her borrowed glamour in a tarnished glass.
My husband, in the basement, found some shears,
A stainless steel commode, some telephones

With buttons like half-dollars. It must have been
A widow, old and ill, who died, whose things
Remained, laid out, all groomed and scrubbed and cleaned
To ease the feasting by the circling birds.

Anna Reisman

At the Korean War Memorial Park, Baltimore

The summer air hangs thickly in the day.
Young boys bait strings to crab, their hands stained red,
The garbage barge roars faintly in the bay,
The spangled banner hotly wilts, outspread,
'Til fevered sun itself begins to flag
And orange runlets seep across the clouds
And streaks of gray bleed in; the dark lines drag
The steady hearse of evening that enshrouds
The muted city. Listen: the shudder of
A fish upsets the twinkling shipyard lights
While docks creak in the wind and far above
Clang masts of empty boats, and from the night's
Dark vessel muddy figures disembark
To heave an unknown's body in the park.

Book of Hours

Yourself
and light, being both mortal, have much
in common.

*

In the sky tumbling overhead
threaded on stars
you encounter another emptiness,
that is not yours.

*

Evening
leant too far from the top-floor window
and fell.

*

Now the sky puts on its hat
and at last it is dark.
The same darkness grows
in drawers and cabinets,
at the back of your throat.

*

Open your eyes
to the morning.

Departures

First there was the bird. Then the sound
of your voice beside me: I'm leaving.

You left, and I felt loneliness scraping out
the inside of my bones. My brown shoes in the rug
were abandoned tanks.

A new tenant, age will have moved into his
eyes. Mother will have laid out blue cups and saucers
in the front room. They will sit with heavy arms and
smile. Where once we lay on new sheets in my old room
without speaking or touching.

Light dies around the door and he turns away.
He quarrels with sullen men who govern taxis down
boulevards of water.

First there was the bird. And now another,
calling to it through forests of pine.

Authors

Melissa Ahart is a web associate at The Academy of American Poets and webmaster for Poets Out Loud at Fordham University. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Blue Moon Review*, *Conspire*, *Eleven Bulls*, *The Gallatin Review*, and *The Minetta Review*.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle currently has poems in *Three Candles*, *Conspire*, and *The Hpertexts*; and will be found in *The Poets Grimm*, due later this year from Storyline Press. Her book, *Reading Berryman to the Dog*, (Jacaranda Press, 2000) is available on-line from Amazon.Com or from Spring Church Books, 1-800-496-1262. She lives in East Texas with her husband and the dog.

Jeff Friedman is the author of three collections of poetry: *Taking Down the Angel* (Carnegie Mellon, Fall 2002), *Scattering the Ashes* (Carnegie Mellon, 1998), and *The Record-Breaking Heat Wave* (BkMk Press-University of Missouri—Kansas City, 1986). His poems have appeared in many literary magazines, including *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry*, *Antioch Review*, *Missouri Review*, *Manoa*, *New England Review*, *Pleiades*, and *5 AM*.



Drink with Drink © 2002 by Amadeo Cortez

Maria Garner is a student and writer in Michigan. Along with twisting words, she enjoys devouring books, and escaping to Portland, Oregon. The poems here in *2RV* are her first internet publications.

Robert Gibbons has prose poems in *The American Journal of Print*; *Conspire*, *The Drunken Boat*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Evergreen Review*, *Frank*, *In Posse Review*, *Linnaean Street*, *Slow Trains*, *Stirring*, and *Tatlin's Tower*. *Cauldron & Net* will feature his work in next year's issue.

Claudia Grinnell is a native of Germany now living in Louisiana, where she teaches at the University of Louisiana—Monroe. Her poems have appeared most recently in *Blue Moon Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*,

Hayden's Ferry Review, *Janus Head*, *Mudlark*, and *New Orleans Review*. *Conditions Horizontal* was published in 2001 by Missing Consonant Press.

Gordon Massman has work in journals such as *The Antioch Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, and *The Literary Review*. His latest book, *The Numbers*, was published by Pavement Saw Press in 2000. The poems here in *2RV* are representatives of a life-long psychobiographic autobiography.

Michael Meyerhofer holds a BA in English from the University of Iowa and plans to return for an MFA. He has been previously published in *Chiron Review*, *Tundra*, *snapshots*, *still*, and *bottle rockets*.

Anna Reisman practices and teaches internal medicine at Yale and the Connecticut VA Hospital. Her poems have appeared in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, and *Scope*. "At the Korean War Memorial Park, Baltimore" won an honorable mention in the 1998 National Urban Poetry Contest.

James Sallis' most recent collection of poems, *Sorrow's Kitchen*, came out from Michigan State UP in 2000. *Black Night's Gonna Catch Me Here: Selected Poems* is due out later this year from Salmon Publishing, County Clare. *The New York Times* named *Chester Himes: A Life* a notable book of the year, 2001.

About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry, art, and theory, quarterly publishing *The 2River View* and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. All publications appear first on-line and afterwards in print. Submission guidelines are available at www.2River.org.

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