

The 2River View

9.1 (Fall 2004)



Sky © 2004 by Kelly Darke

new poems by
Robyn Art, Janet Buck, Wendy Taylor Carlisle
Lightsey Darst, Charlie Holland, Eve Jones, Clay Matthews
Brent Pallas, Jayne Pupek, David Starkey

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

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ISSN 1536 2086

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The Bell Jar Revisited

You speak as if you're chewing
on a pair of socks
and I'm supposed to nod in sync,
pretend the sentence has another finale
but drivel and a door slammed
on fading glimmers of light.
When you finally do it
with a gun, or a knife or a bottle
or this or that, Mother will tell me
to show up dressed
in a black wool suit and heels,
ask me to write something gilding
the dead lily with invented color,
shining streaks of honor
upon this felonious waste.

For now, we put you to bed
like a book so teeming with truth
it draws on our closing eyes,
slides to the callous floor.
I watch our predictable signs,
ignoring the stench in the air.
Mother says on perfect cue:
"Let's finish a nice dinner
and ignore all this."
When I try to turn the page,
she burns my hands.
Can you hear the bell jar ring
as if a nickel's fallen in?
Raspberry sherbet melts
in a crystal-stemmed dish
into the color of blood.
My spoon stays still
on the pure white cloth.

Eleventh Hour in the Survival Town

In the invisible tundra of dry-heat rooms
Skin sloughs off in sheets,
Dull bulb of the sun a wizened thing

Like the dog gone off his food.
Meat left out on the counter;
His metronomic touch; music like a wild,

Blacked-out hostage of the dead.
Still the body carries on
With its diastolic grunt work
Even as the winter sky grows huge

And pocked with stars.
Each night, the stranger
Woos them in dreams and each night

Leaves no trace,
Just the deaf-mute child's insistent
Recollections of his voice.

Robyn Art

The Salutarian's Ten-Year Reunion

I was one of the few and the many
Fled willy-nilly from their homes,
Veteran of tough love and Holy Rollers,

Friday benders and Yellow Dog Contracts,
2-fer-one's and bituminous hills.
Was I not afraid of falling,

I would haggle 'til the cows came home.
Mine is the place past the razed-out meadow

And the factory's sternutations of grime.
If you came here to witness the god-awful tome
Of my hijinx,

All that is gone, vamoosed,
Save the audiogenic wah-wah

Of my dreams.
Give me something to lay my head on,
And friend, I will

Never 4get you....

After School

Each one partners with another.
When I read your lines,
I think of Blake while
you are pondering Yeats or
thinking of your wife, the soft skin
of her inner thigh and instead
write of the cardinal, blood
red wing and yellow pine,
or how that trail wound
into the forest, past trees as thick
as the teacher's arm, poised
over your desk so long ago. Her hand
moving toward you, then dropped.
Her attention drawn to another boy.

Reading Berryman Again

When we divined it was his time to die, we got the poison
and I read to him again, his big head on my lap
as it had been six years ago when he came, crated,
from the plane, huge and intimidating.
The symmetry at first and last was Berryman.
And death was slow enough for more Dreamsongs
after Fourteen and then to bring the family in
to hear how, at the end, he mourned

the clumsiness of men. We all were dumb. It took too long.
He keened and it was hard to bear. Our heads hung,
we felt like Judas, every one of us ashamed.
Not worth the hound who wouldn't leave without a fight,
who knew our need and filled our human hearts.

The Chimes

Not until the moon

breaks, never until the wars
when they come with a sword for
the bees, when they come with a sieve
to the lake, and throw the fish

smothering high up on shore,
never until

the green field ripples with the
reapers carrying their nightmare
axe to the trunk of this oak

will I let you go.
Then the acorns fall around us, hard
dull bells.

Newgrange

This barrow-tomb serves as sleeping nest
for those who will be martyrs in the morning.
 We must all learn to love

like martyrs, quickly, brightly as they do—

Let rise the night we first touch,
morning we last see,
 bridal bed & the burial.

Salt in our eyes at high tide—take
not this one
desire at a time lapping us, but storm's

surge, that breaks
half way between one
ecstasy and the other.

Earth in the sheets: at the lip
of the grave, love.

Charlie Holland

I Could Have Used the Bed Sheets

Yhri, do you remember the time I made a suit for you out of the table cloth? I made myself a dress out of the curtains. You gave me a sweater to use for thread. It is in this way that we were clothed the day we went for a walk by the still water. There was a dead fish—skin broken—on the sand.

Charlie Holland

The Hill, The Town

Yhri, millionaires are climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. There are so many places we never knew in that lifetime. There was the foothill that took us up to its brush-covered top though. It took us up clockwise, the path wound round the earth like a ribbon around the calf of a dancer.

The wind blew, and we were the small town at the foot of the hill.

Eve Jones

I have heard that the body

I have heard that the body
knows when to draw the line,

that in a single moment it will
save itself, slide quickly in either direction,

thrust the self through the door, bear it
away with a kind of love. Too deep,

the diver gives, soft as an egg,
under the weight of the sea. The falling

die falling, as if in mid-flight the air
rushes right on through the heart,

dead while the ground patiently
waits. The suicide has had enough,

lifts the gun, his finger finally bending
over that threshold. The living know it, too—

when the dream aches you suddenly awake,
begins its slow fade back into the body,

each muscle, each bone shocked
and alive with the blow.

Naming the Roses

Mid-afternoon, and
everything presses down,
sun swelling massively,
a long bloom on the hours. Its tongue
licks our breath. I walk,
carrying my son, gypsy-haired and hipped
and slowly
through the grass of the yard.
The solstice has come, gone—
a tiny triumph of light.
We walk along the fence.
We move through each shadow,
creatures of the earth, naming each thing:
clouds long as the bones of fish,
silver-skinned leaves, berries
in red slips, tubes of squash pushing,
pushing the dirt.
Bees stamp in their soft houses.
The sun slides down its tongue.
I lift my son to the roses, saying *rose*,
pink rose, showing his hand,
the way music is guided into air,
suddenly, a name for what we love
just beyond us.

Crank Capital, USA

Aunt Rita sits on the front porch and her legs look like skinny wooden statues, nicked and white, the blue veins rising for a taste of fresh air.

Wal-Mart's hid all the Sudafed behind the counter, and the parks are covered with wadded-up tin foil and straws. What's left to do, really.

Jimmy needs the extra cash and works piecework, so he hits the foil in the morning and thinks about his ex-wife and kids and getting the hell out

of the Midwest. Crazy Mary's hair falls out and she's blown two judges and the prosecuting attorney for letting her off with probation.

Whose people are these? Where does this taste for acrid smoke come from? Little Mario speeding for three weeks straight with a knife

in the kitchen, trying to cut the black bugs out from underneath his skin. And the blade goes to work, and all the pain of trying to set something free.

Where There's Smoke

Hot days and I think about freon
on ice, with vodka, a twist of lime.

Like the neighbors dog who cleaned
the antifreeze off the driveway,

crawled under the house, howled,
moaned and died. That's one way

to go. Or maybe drowning in the springs
of Western Missouri, the water

I jumped in as a boy and felt my
chest fold together like a car jack.

It felt so nice to be a flat tire. It felt
like rolling to a loud and awkward

stop. Once my brother lay under
a Chrysler on a skateboard, summer,

and I thought that when I pulled
him out he'd be roasted. He always

smelled like a carburetor then,
and I think with some jumper cables

he might have started right up.
The old men are starting to overheat,

and when its this hot we leave
the windows down. And the thickness

grows in the cab of the truck, and
we always start her in second gear.

Being Elvis

Not just any leaf floating downstream
a slave to the current, shining
like a place that's never been
until now. If you were snow we'd barely see
the top of spring. No one could ever be you.
That ever present noun. Just the sound
of your voice makes the unexplained palatable,
the imperishable greener still, a bead
lighting an abyss of dreary days.
Even April's first tantalizing notes
are pale receipts. A song slapping in the mind
like a fish stranded on a beach. And then
there's those guys, the ones
who were always there seeing you
put your pants on one leg at a time, pick
your nose or trip on a sidewalk crack
helplessly tasting flight like a bird
your arms flung out if only
for a moment letting gravity inform you
with some embarrassingly irretrievable grace
as you fall to earth
through the unresisting air.

Corned Beef

It was a little lunch that spring
beneath the trees in the backyard
and at first she pretended not to notice
the sandwiches everyone had ordered
especially his. Hers was little more
than bread, than the oatmeal
she made for the two of them
every morning for years even with
his medicine something simple was best.

But now she knew he was tired.
Yesterday he left a book off its shelf.
He never did that. And last night
she cleared the table after dinner by herself.
And now what was he thinking?
His hands almost too weak to hold
that enormous corned beef sandwich
dripping with mustard as if it was
all he ever wanted.

On the Bridge with Spalding Gray

They pulled Spalding Gray from the East River today,
nearly two months since he went missing. In that time,
water washed his skin away to bone and teeth.
Only X-rays recognized him.

I paused on another bridge this evening,
leaned over the railing to toss pennies into water.
Under a lowering sun, the copper discs
glinted like fish eyes, lonely and spare.

A ghost-thin man wearing a flannel shirt and glasses
stepped out of the air and stood beside me.
“No, No!” he protested in his soft New England.

I tried to explain they were only pennies,
no consequence to me. He wrapped
weightless arms around my shoulders
and insisted he'd walk me home. “It's not the pennies,
my dear, but the wistful look in your eyes,
and the way your body leans towards water.”

What If

What if stars aren't real,
but another of God's parlor tricks,
a handful of jacks pulled from black pockets
and tossed into random skies?

What if your hand on her thigh
means you never loved me
and this soup boiling over
fails to scorch my numb hands?

I fold napkins and scour crusted pans.
The clock tick-tocks on my wall.
I don't know how to take the news
of your packed suitcase on my bed.

A daffodil could open on my tongue
and I'd step around the corner
stunned, spitting yellow petals
with nothing to say.

D

—for Babelle

Whether it is root
chord in a folksy
D-G-A,

subdominant
in some rockabilly
A-D-E,

or merely the major
to B minor's
aching promise,

D seems always
there in the songs
we figure out,

bent over our boom
boxes, listening
hard to the radio.

And when we lift
our pointer finger
from the G string,

then hammer it
back down, D sounds
even better,

as though music
really was a language
and D was a word

people used often
but took entirely
for granted,

like air or water,
salt or love,
breath or bread.

David Starkey

The Devil Beats His Wife: New York City, 1952

—for Ruth Orkin

In the city that year it rained
every day. The time was always
late afternoon, cloud-flecked sun
shining at the end of the avenue.
Beneath the three-story brownstones
that scrutinized every street,
Packards and Chryslers
and mammoth Hudson's lined the curbs,
waxed hoods slick as wet skins.

On the desolate glistening sidewalk
a hatted man in silhouette
was forever passing a woman
without umbrella or pocketbook,
exchanging one eloquent
eternal glance that implied
some impossibly romantic scene
they knew from movies—as black
and white as the world to come.

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About the Artist

Kelly Darke's work is shown regularly at Ornamentum Gallery in Hudson, New York; and Orchard Lake Framing and Gallery in Keego Harbor, Michigan. Her current art consists of abstract and floral painting; and wearable crocheted metalwork in silver, gold, copper, and mixed media.

Contributors

Robyn Art has poems published or forthcoming in *Conduit*, *Cream City Review*, *New Delta Review*, and *Slope*. She's the author of *Degrees of Being There* (Boneworld Press 2003) and the recipient of grants from the Academy of American Poets and the Vermont Studio Center. Currently she lives in Brooklyn.

Janet Buck has recently appeared in *Facets Magazine*, *Octavo*, *Offcourse*, and *Poetry Magazine*. *Beckoned by the Reckoning*, her third collection of poetry, was recently release by PoetWorks Press.

Wendy Carlisle Taylor lives quietly in East Texas, land of Budweiser and boviculture. Her books include *Reading Berryman to the Dog* (Jacaranda Press 2000) and *After Happily Ever After* (2River 2003).

Lightsey Darst was recently awarded grants and residencies from the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Anderson Center, and the Associated Writers Program. Her work is published or forthcoming in *The Antioch Review*, *Blue Moon Review*, *Cutbank*, *Kennesaw Review*, and *Quarterly West*.

Charlie Holland lives in a building that could use a paint job. It's a good three storey building that might make it through a major earthquake though. Her work has appeared in *42Opus* and *Skein*.

Eve Jones teaches composition and literature in St. Louis, Missouri. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in journals such as *Agni*, *Hotel Amerika*, and *Poet Lore*.

Clay Matthews is working on a Ph. D. at Oklahoma State University, where he is associate editor of the *Cimarron Review*. His work appears in *Cape Rock*, *Diagram*, *Good Foot*, *Mudlark*, *storySouth*, and *The Sow's Ear*.

Brent Pallas lives and works in New York City as a craft designer and illustrator.

His most recent work has been in *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Gettysburg Review*, and *Poetry*.

Jayne Pupek lives near Richmond, Virginia. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in several online and print publications, including *Literary Mama* and *SmokeLong Quarterly*. Her chapbook *Primitive* is forthcoming from Pudding House Press.

David Starkey lives in Santa Barbara, California. Over the years, he has published in numerous journals, including *American Scholar*, *Caffeine Destiny*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Sycamore Review*, and *Texas Review*.



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. Publications appear on-line and in print. Writers interested in submitting to 2River should first read the guidelines at www.2River.org

Richard Long, Editor
2River
September 2004

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9.1 (Fall 2004)

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