

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

10.2 (Winter 2006)



*Red Eye* © 2006 by Jackie Skrzyński

new poems by

Wendy Taylor Carlisle, Scott Bailey, Peter Berghoef  
Regina Coll, Weston Cutter, Jolia Sidona Einstein  
Joel Friederich, Meridith Gresher, Clark Holtzman  
Mark Jackley, Martha Serpas



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*The 2River View, 10.2 (Winter 2006)*

*Wendy Taylor Carlisle*

### **The Other Story**

Nobody thought it was a dream  
And it wasn't.  
That year's bumper crops were jilted lovers and Cochins,  
Twelve months and nothing but  
Tears and feathers. That year George  
Paddled into the bayou to drown himself  
And didn't.  
He kept his fortune and  
His cook stove.  
That year the waitress took off for Memphis.  
That year Margie ate  
Alone at Furr's Cafeteria. Nobody  
Wrote a will or a testament.  
No one sent a letter home.

Scott Bailey

## **Giving Beauty Back to God**

I'm uncertain how to style my hair—  
the perfect part, the slick-back look, the bowl cut—

when I find my hamsters  
in the hot cab of my dad's Chevrolet S-10:

the windows rolled up.  
doors slammed shut.  
tongues stuck out.  
stench stout as chives.

I ask mom why she killed them:  
*For putting pets before God  
for too long.*

I don't ask for forgiveness.  
I wipe my petroleum-jelly hands on the *Book of Revelation*.

*Scott Bailey*

**I'm Not Surprised We Were Created in Explosion, Speed,  
and Void—All This From a Loving and Merciful God**

*To Work*

Down three flights of stairs, dodge dog shit for six blocks, curled up with a scarf, down two flights of stairs, wait for the L, squeeze in, rub a few butts, hope my butt's rubbed, make six stops, up four flights of stairs, walk 8 blocks, up one flight of stairs, catch the elevator to the third floor.

*To Home*

Catch the elevator to the first floor, down one flight of stairs, walk 8 blocks, down four flights of stairs, wait for the L, squeeze in, rub a few butts, hope my butt's rubbed, make six stops, up two flights of stairs, curled up with a scarf, dodge dog shit for six blocks, up three flights of stairs.

*Peter Berghoef*

## **Factory Town**

*The dirty river flows heavy here, she said, so go away, and her fingertips bled onto my cleanest shirt and pants.*

While the breath went fast to a wind's pace over some frozen, treeless land she whispered words I couldn't hear: sighing and crying before taking the tax collector in her mouth.

*Peter Berghoef*

**This title will eventually refer to time**

Recovering from the thought that this year could be so long,  
that a decade could be done  
with five more years to go.  
And what else is so organized as time already gone?

Vertical miles of forest cover my shoulders;  
these wrists are sand dunes spilling under careless feet.

Less than fortunes of unspent minutes  
collapsing as time itself is captured,

frozen like meat  
fresh-killed and delivered to my door.

No thought encapsulates the mouth—  
the moving month ripped stillborn  
from an aging womb.

*Regina Coll*

## **Commencement**

I imagine it was before the ceremony, before  
they all started drinking and sharing cigarettes,  
    because her dress looked properly stiff and she's pensive.  
But more about this dress—  
cinched tightly at the waist smoothed over her gathered knees,  
    large-collared, crowning sleeves with little wings.  
Spotless whiteness.  
I can't see her shoes—they're  
    not in the photo—but her stockings are no longer black,  
they're a brushed ice under her buttoned armor  
and about her shoulders whips a heavy blue cape lined in blood red—  
    it looks like it would be itchy from the photo, and makes  
    me scratch under  
my chin where I see hers clasped. But a wind is blowing the  
    cape open,  
blowing back her curls and cowlicks, strands floating over the top  
of her cap

her cap  
a cap.

    She's sitting on a rock looking into the wind.

*Regina Coll*

## **North by North**

for Rockwell Kent

I was looking for shipwrecks  
    for broken lives and froth  
    at the edge of human-ness  
and you stole my north, my compass  
    turned, towards your north  
    in whites, your north by water.  
Women huddled facing, men crawled away  
from their provider  
attracted or breathless  
and almost over, like it never happened  
    but betrayed by numbers, so,  
    life under a coat, a triangle of yours  
drawn from the knees, isosceles leaning  
one watches, one wails, one comforts  
    on the prominence, done.

We traveled similar paths, yours in youth, mine  
in my mother's life  
    (a Newfie fish eater)  
framed through her limbs, and her feet then  
in father's, a basket of  
    ice and secrets—why is it called Greenland  
and which do I love more,  
line or story? Maybe they walked where you did.  
    Can I say I too, can I say ours?

Because I knew when I saw it / you. My eyes  
entering you saw my own lack of courage  
but felt there / the wind too  
and the leathery brush by the cottage,  
and a flight over crucifixion,  
and the seal's red flesh like a magnet, north.

*Weston Cutter*

## **A Defense of Kissing Despite Massive Evidence to the Contrary**

Once when you said *I'm hungry* someone  
kissed you as if tongues were ever enough food,  
lips and intentions of bliss, low gutturals  
broken because vowels seem so flimsy and how  
many times will you say country instead of

the name you miss so, like the color green or  
the number eleven or the gun you were taught so  
well to fire, age nine, how when you sighted down  
the barrel as you pointed at the sun you knew  
you'd never hit it, ever, but you still had to try?

*Weston Cutter*

### **Last Prayer of Summer**

God of lightning bolts and  
butter churns these hands felt  
the bread rise then broke the cantaloupe  
and split the strawberries,  
now teach the final conjugation,  
the past tense of love and

God of cooking grease and  
red thread share new parables  
of wine and risings, you've taken her  
from my touch, allow my heart's summer  
to finish as I eat this meal that tastes  
of yesterday, autumn,

and God of stopped watches, the cup  
empty of sugar, I don't believe  
it's a shattered world despite these  
songless guitar hands, the cold that knows  
my name, all your heart-shaped fruit  
so blood red and devourable,

dressed in finest thorns, amen.

*Jolia Sidona Einstein*

**From the Hudson**

I am the one who crossed Chinatown  
in cloth slippers to the edge of the Hudson  
to offer his dead wife a bowl of rice and sesame.  
I am the rice and sesame that fed the river,  
the bowl waving in river water,  
the river water mixed with new rain water  
rising up eighteen stories and out the bathtub faucet  
of apartment E10  
on the Lower East Side. I smell like dead fish.

I am the one in apartment E10  
who is not hungry and does not sleep,  
who knows only hunger and sleep,  
who keeps a house of closed books,  
who dips her toe into bath water  
smelling like dead fish,  
who soaks, dreaming  
of falling like rain into the Hudson.

*Jolia Sidona Einstein*

**Portrait of Lake Alice**

She is a good sitter,  
although her boa of wild taro

and egret plumes tickles.  
When she squirms,

white light ripples over sapphire.  
An egret skims the lake face

blooming with water lettuce.  
On an island, a live oak stands,

host to a few black cormorants  
shaped like coat hangers,

and a wind-filled plastic bag.  
Like the living room I left

across town with lamp, ceiling fan,  
and television still on,

she drones all afternoon.

*Joel Friederich*

## **The American Boy Dreamt of Journeys**

You swam through walls  
as if they'd dissolved,  
breathed in your pores.  
Under fluid fields of stars  
midnight was all depth,  
the world a sunken bed—  
any who needed air  
lay paralyzed in the logic  
of constellations.

You found hollows,  
drowned places between  
tamaracks' bleeding roots,  
in the acids of a bog's throat.  
Names decayed in the knots  
of tubers, time's reservoirs  
rotted to reptilian stillness.

Once, you slipped through  
a door in a dead-water hump  
woven of finger bones  
stained tannic black—  
a dying animal's breath  
rustled in root-hair  
and heavy fore claws clicked  
against the spine of the earth.

All night while his children  
gnawed the shins of alders,  
plundered sticky muck,  
hissed and slapped  
at a gibbous moon's fat rising,  
you felt your way  
into his drowned house,  
inching further into his dream,  
not afraid of waking  
such blind, furious hunger.

*Joel Friederich*

## **In the North**

In our thin shelter on the shore  
we're alert as animals—no, we are  
animals, trying to rub off our skin  
by making love for ... who knows,  
time's stuck, minutes won't  
diminish into dark, nor light  
relinquish its claim on flesh—  
this near the longest day  
sun is our blood's obsession.

Nothing here can give  
itself wholly to the pleasure  
of lying down exhausted.  
Though we've come so far  
into northern barrens, we cannot  
burrow down through each other  
deep enough to drown in quiet  
waters beyond our lust.

The pull back to shorelines  
is relentless—we are painted  
turtles, egg-heavy, heaving  
up onto cool evening sands.  
We are cracked open  
by the burden of our need  
and ooze richly red through  
our backs' broken mandalas,  
but still we are always rising  
to dig, to bury, to lay.

*Meridith Gresher*

## **Everlasting**

Grief glows in the dark like the face  
of a loved one with jaundice,  
yellowing gift-wrap to be undone  
crinkled up and discarded. Skin  
like sun, grief clammy with fever,  
both carried out with the brittle Christmas  
tree. Needles drop; they cut  
through woolen sweaters and  
heavy mittens piercing the living  
with the symbol of everlasting before  
the tree travels to The Home Depot,  
to the chipper, to be made mulch  
for flowers, bedded for Winter,  
that will their faces to see Spring.

*Meridith Gresher*

### **One Full Moon Cycle**

He does not love a muscle in her  
coltish stride.  
He does not notice that she spreads  
Jergens extra dry lotion  
(with the scent of cherries)  
over her arms and elbows  
to parse the winter air.  
But he feeds off her when he needs  
blood more than clean sheets.

She spreads  
jam and peanut butter. She,  
the one who drives carpools  
and spends nights quilting  
for newlyweds at church;  
the double ring design  
like the one she made for them  
their first year married.  
It covered their bodies till  
he stained it with another  
while she visited  
her mother in Charlotte.

She does not love him  
drinking  
Pabst Blue Ribbon  
while driving  
home and then  
belching it  
in his sleep.

She does not love  
the way he pats her  
on the ass  
in front of his friends  
at barbeques and church pot lucks.

She does not remember  
how long since he wore  
his ring: five  
maybe six years?  
He, the one who  
begged her to marry  
through one full moon cycle.  
He, the one who said  
he wanted five  
ignores the three conceived.  
He, who promised May  
has squandered autumn.

*Clark Holtzman*

### **About the House All Day**

Houses have their habits & ways of talking,  
to us, to one another, to their distant cousin, the woods  
and to the world, however they know it.  
They make room for us, try to, or leave us out of doors—  
try that, too—stand empty sometimes, their windows  
blanked, sometimes for long times.

Such are their habits when one inhabits them  
that houses after awhile become about us  
and we about them, about the house all day  
like gods and their people, all day,  
and such that when we disinhabit, they're silent,  
have nothing to say about us all day.

*Clark Holtzman*

## **House Holding**

Houses are not real,  
they are dreams, our own,  
they are dream homes  
and we call them so.

When a house burns,  
the next morning  
we stumble through the ashes  
and are reminded of it, our dream.

*Mark Jackley*

## **Middle Age**

This line on my face is a river.  
A villager stoops, hauls water.  
His shoulders burn. If he's lucky,  
he will carry it a long way.

*Mark Jackley*

**When a Truck Smashed into my Car like the Fist of God**

God knows why,  
I wasn't hurt,  
but I was blown out  
of my shoes, so  
I hobbled home  
in my stocking feet  
like a holy fool who  
wanders the Moroccan sands  
or Tibetan slopes,  
feeling every pebble,  
each step on the earth.

Martha Serpas

## Formica

My uncle offers a can of “coffee”  
at seven in the morning, as he

disappears into his mint green truck—  
the lakes he fished gather

tupelos and moss thick as his heart—  
disguising its will as his, crickets

and the pop of the float reminding him  
of the world’s insistent presence, though

by seven he’s done fishing, long done,  
just driving into clouds of oyster dust—

leaving us to Green Stamp coffee cups,  
*cuccidata*, iced pink and white,

from fat figs in her side yard, whites  
on a clothesline, cats eating from pie pans

on the car hood, on the boat trailer,  
the final metal snap like a crystal

dinner bell, or what she imagines a dinner  
bell would sound like, or a baby’s voice.

In the photograph she slings an arm  
like a sailor across her sister’s shoulder.

They have the Pop-Rouge-and-Moon-pie  
grins of being-in-love. The itinerant photographer

maybe missing that, as they did maybe,  
the multiplicities of romance. *How can*

*those young girls pull down their step-ins  
for a man? It's bad enough ...* she said, and

*Get down and have some coffee, cher.*  
Here inside the checkered floor,

glass-paned cabinets, you can see what  
you need right inside, no lost time

on the green-spackled Formica,  
chrome-wrapped table, dollies,

everything in easy reach—lighten,  
sweeten, stir, smell, savor, and

drink, *cher, you can tell me*, wiped by a clean  
towel with a crocheted and consecrated lip.

Martha Serpas

### **Millennial Birthday**

My twenty-first my dad took me to Vegas  
To play blackjack into dawn, swearing  
we'd quit, then someone brings free seven-

And-sevens and a pack of Marlboro  
Lights on a cork tray of swizzle sticks  
And gold embossed napkins and how,

You think, could you have doubted  
The abundance of the world, as  
You tap the table for another card.

And that's a *good* day—  
After you stop going to therapy,  
Which is, after all, strategy sessions

For winning the game you're  
Trying to quit. A good day  
Is walking the dog beside the river,

When, among palmettos and  
Ibises, I look squarely at the stiff  
Red-tail knotted in the Kash-n-Karry bag.

There's the osprey all alone  
At the top of the spindly bald cypress,  
And somehow I at once

Feel at home and at some other  
Point, not faraway, but where,  
In my memory, everything

Was bigger, the legs of the dining room  
Table thick as these oak trees,  
Shaggy, hard and magisterial.

I have lived where green things live  
All year long and where snow becomes  
The only color beside dull and gray and hard.

Now I live where buzzards winter.  
In the mornings they flare their opera capes  
And until night I must perform.

*The 2River View*, 10.2 (Winter 2006)

## **Contributors**

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

Scott Bailey lives in New York City where he's pursuing his MFA in Creative Writing at New York University and working at Curtis Brown Literary Agency. His poetry has been published in *The Cortland Review*, *Southeast Review*, and *Verse Daily*. Other work is forthcoming in *The New York Quarterly*.

Peter Berghoef lives in Holland, Michigan. He holds a BA in English and enjoys poetry, darts, and beer.

Regina Coll is a nurse educator living in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her prose has appeared in *Mothering Magazine*. She is also the author and webmaster for the Bathroom Poetry Project in Washington, DC.

Weston Cutter recently moved from the Midwest to New York City. His poems appear in *Beloit Poetry Journal* and *Verse Daily*. He writes, "Dear Jamison: I win."

Jolia Sidona Einstein holds an MFA from the University of Florida. She lives with her finance and their cat in Santa Monica California, where she teaches English at Santa Monica College.

Joel Friederich teaches writing and literature at the University of Southern Illinois in Edwardsville. His poems have appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Paris Review*, *River Styx*, *Witness*, and elsewhere. His manuscript of poems, *In the Valley of the Tongue*, has been a finalist and semi-finalist for numerous national book competitions.

Meridith Gresher writes frequently in her blog *Talking to*

Grief. Her poetry appears in *FRiGG Magazine*, *The Journal of Modern Post*, and in the forthcoming debut edition of *Blast*.

Clark Holtzman lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He has two chapbooks, as well as poems in *Antigonish Review*, *Eleven Bulls*, *Negative Capability*, and *Redchina Magazine*. His poems in this issue of *2RV* are from the manuscript *Just Looking, Thank You*.

Mark Jackley is a business writer whose poetry has appeared in *Alba*, *California Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Paumanok Review*, and *Poesy*. He lives in Annandale, Virginia, with his daughter and their two cats.

Martha Serpas is a native of Galliano, Louisiana, and author of *Cote Blanche* (New Issues, 2002). Serpas's recent poems appear in *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion*, *The New Yorker*, and *Passages North*. Her poems in this issue of *2RV* are from *The Dirty Side of the Storm* (forthcoming, W. W. Norton, Fall 2006). Serpas teaches writing and religion and literature at the the University of Tampa.



*The 2River View*, 10.2 (Winter 2006)

## **End Matter**

### *About the Artist*

Jackie Skrzynski lives with her husband and their two children in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York. In her studio, she meditates on the capriciousness of violence; outside of the studio, she teaches art at Ramapo College. Skrzynski has exhibited nationally, most recently in Beacon, New York.

### *About 2River*

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View* and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. All publications first appear online, then in print.

Richard Long, Editor  
2River  
[www.2River.org](http://www.2River.org)



# 2RV

10.2 (Winter 2006)

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