

The 2River View

14.3 (Spring 2010)



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New poems by

Kathleen Balma, Belline Chao, Tova Gardner, Howie Good
Zachary Greenwald, Paul Hostovsky, Mary Moore
Erika Moya, Melissa Mutrux, Michelle Valois
Gabriel Welsch, Ann Zoller

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Kathleen Balma Dead Cardinal

Belline Chao Night cuts these streets into lines

Tova Gardner The Love & Life of Miss Helen Fain

Howie Good Could be Worse
Multilingual

Zachary Greenwald Present Tense
What Psses



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Kathleen Balma

Dead Cardinal

— after Rilke

Scarlet clouds against blue carpet —
a half-circle of feathers on the floor.
As if the last act were a sweeping
of the wing. Nothing was ever this red.

I found him lying in the living room.
the round, pouting profile of the breast
arched up the full lip of the body,
feathers pleated and poking inward.

Across the room the cat
sang a crying through closed mouth,
or an offering through the lung.
(I barely heard her vent her rant.

I was listening for a soaring.)
The bird's eye, stiff in its openness
like a new fruit in a tree blossom —
poised and aimed for falling.

Belline Chao

Night cuts these streets into lines

Night cuts these streets into lines of stunted trees
and orange lights. All I see now are the dark rows

of parked cars, the steady rivers of head-lights,
the cables that string up slanted telephone posts,

and bus routes — those imaginary lines that loop.
When I can no longer count the pitchers I've split

with men and all I want is a way back
in time — before this reckless drinking

seemed like a bright idea--there is a line
that appears, that floats off these gum-speckled

streets as if suspended by the stout blue legs
of mailboxes and dented trashcan covers.

A line tied onto traffic signals, stop signs
and other cautionary signs. A line I've come to

ignore. A sort of path that dogs sniff.
That catches moths who refuse to die.

As I stumble on alone and half asleep,
it rises from these orderly blocks of concrete

to pull me home the way you've pulled me
through years of forgetting and distance.

When I've reached the quiet of unlit rooms,
those fluttering moths, no more substantial

than moonbeams, cast white pulses
onto these walls of dreamless sleep.

Toya Gardner

The Love & Life of Miss Helen Fain

The love and life of Miss Helen Fain
He reads to her, *The Lover*.
He wants to finish the book, read the whole book to her.
She can't bear him reading to her like that.
The idea of Helen Fain,
came on the roads between St. Paul and Santa Fe.

Some small town in Iowa where our car broke down,
in so much flatness, there was no mechanic for miles,
just corn and then the houses of the town, huddled.
And it seemed no one was around. Or they were embarrassed,
for us, as we walked past their curtains.
I had on heels, my first.
They were small and clicked like triggers.
Everything was closed. There were names on the windows.
I thought they must be of the people who lived there.
R.W. Isaacs Dept. Store.

In each story there is a son.
He comes later and then he is also always
there. He is what she isn't, and what she is.
He is thin in a photograph with friends. A drifter.
He is there because she dreamt him, because
he was born.
There is also the ending, how it starts and starts,
the whole thing. How the end is what we've always known,
and what we don't.

My mother sleeps most of the way, or she is in front,
both black dogs on her lap.
We open the windows; open the doors when we stop.
We stop when we can't drive any longer. Stay in motels
with windows that don't shut, till I refuse. We get back
in the car and drive, we keep open the windows.

Santa Fe is low in dusk and colors.
We see paintings by O'Keefe.
Beside the flowers, an early work,
woman in blue, then folded between her legs
and from her mouth, red.

Howie Good

Could be Worse

We could have other people's thoughts in our heads.
Someone could have spoken to the police about us.

There could be an underground missile silo,
and not an empty lot, at the end of our street.

The neighbor's dog could be a man-eating tiger,
and the bluish clouds that blew in last night

could contain remnants of Zyklon B.
We could never have met, or made love

like giants of modernism on a mattress on the floor,
or read in the instructions deep colors bleed.

Howie Good

Multilingual

She speaks seven languages, none of them well enough to teach. At the gym everyone else using the treadmills is fat. I like the way she looks in her tall, red leather boots, with the tightly packed buildings of the old downtown rearing up behind her. Freud described dreams as day residues. The best advice I could offer was, Don't fall asleep. It grew dark while we talked about it. She had a train to catch in the morning. Snow was predicted, but not because of anything we did.

Zachary Greenwald

Present Tense

Tonight he carries
a dozen bulbs of crocus
and a half-moon edger
into the deep
uniformity of his yard.
He prefers to garden
after dark, to undercut
and fork with no sense
of where his knees are.
He works even after
the paper arrives, until
the surface cutout is reset
and leveled, each germ
tucked for a while into
the fuller ground.
He steps back
to throw a last palm
of bone meal over his world and now
he hears the rain.

Zachary Greenwald

What Passes

after Leopardi

The old woman sits
on her disappearing steps
and sweeps her hand
toward a group of schoolboys.

Her gesture passes
like a net through the evening air.
Young and easy souls
who bend flowers into wreathes
and eat fruit unwashed still wave
to an old woman waving.

On this Saturday night she sits
as pleased as the girl returning
from noiseless prone fields
under the whitening moon.

Paul Hostovsky

Cholera

In the dream you said, "I love this time of day — it's called the cholera." I said I thought the cholera was a disease. You said, "It *is* a disease but it's also a time of day." There was no dictionary in the dream. And we were sitting outside at a café or a hospital. You asked if I'd read *Love in the Time of Cholera*, and I said I started it once, but never got past the first 50 pages. And you said, "That explains it." I wondered if you meant the book explains the time of day you love and why it's called the cholera, or if you meant something else, something about me and the way I am, namely, someone who can't get past the first 50 pages of a book you love. Which would mean something else entirely. And then I said, "I think cholera is one of those words that, if divorced from its meaning, would make a beautiful name for a girl. Like Treblinka." You gave me a pained look in the dream, and I wondered if it meant you didn't agree with me, or if it meant what you were eating didn't agree with you — Either way, it was plain to see that you were suffering.

Paul Hostovsky

Splinter

Because he felt nothing,
because he felt he couldn't
feel, he felt he couldn't
love — and he lifted the wooden
door of the garage
which housed the car which
housed the easeful death
which he was half in love with,
when a small, dark, insidious grace
entered his left palm near the thumb
and lodged itself there,
and he winced in pain
and let go of his plan,
holding the injured hand
in the uninjured one,
holding it up to his mouth
as though drinking from it,
or eating from it, or
weeping into it, and in this
attitude walked
back into his life.

Mary Moore

The Blue Glass Bottle

blown by Blenko bulges with light.
 Four-sided, widening from
 the narrow throat,
it forms a stylized
 S, a phase of modernity's
moon, body by Picasso.
Even standing still, it moves.

 This morning soaks it with light
until world can't bestow more.
 That's why the glass
casts off light — swatches, scarves — fictive
 tissues of light — fictive
 because we know
light isn't fabric, yet the fall
 through glass evokes
 whispers like silk in motion.

The bottle darkens to cobalt where
 the narrowing throat
thickens the glass and so
 slows the fall of light;

 but the bottle's torso
 where glass bows out
cutlass-edge-thin quickens
 it to cerulean.

Space's indigo amplitude and drape
would stay in the bottle,
 but only traces
of its blue can halt
in the finally stopped shape.

 There's pause, a musing
of light in the glass, but also
 a pressure — the lit space inside,
wrapped in the spell of shape.

Mary Moore

Van Gogh's "Starry Night"

1

Stars so immanent must jut out, cliffs
in the paint, the edges layered, thickened
with the fear of falling. And they whirl, scary hubs
of fire, broken yolk-yellow domes. Difference
or source, where they come from, is the question.
And when did they begin? If we swallowed them,
would we explode, holders of the unbegun?

Upside-down bowls, bee-hives
of impasto so thick they thumb the eye,
they're not quite fixed in the sky-hen's indigo
place. What they become — not rooster, chick, food —
is origin, exposed. Now and then, a weirder
star appears — sky-mine, spiked orb. If you look
too long it explodes into haystacks, bell-rings, crows.

2

Each star also goes inward, a spear bite, spiral
Charybdis. Sirenesque yellow, centrifugal,
they beckon and funnel eyes in. Though
yellow like yolks, they don't become cock-red
boys nor hen-children but whirlpools
of blond light cilia, sky anemones. The literal
stars bitten into our sky are mild,
lacking the acid, iron, bold stares
of his. Astrologers bearing omens
of god descending as bull or golden rain
can't read these: the impasto's opaque
with wishes and guesses. When the hubs break
their oaths to light's spokes, letting go, whole
stars implode. The wound each leaves is foreboding.

Erika Moya

His Daughter, Again

I am over his shoulders in the picture —
my four year old hands resting on his head

divide what you have lost by what you have

the wind slicing through the trees trying
to remember that it is wind

the cadence of voice, the smell of hair
his arms around my shoulders

Wrap me in Christmas lights, white
and blinking. I am easier to see —

They weren't supposed to
take you away, like daylight

pouring over the back
of a mountain

how we had to walk faster
not to be left in the dark.

Erikca Moya

In the Forest

This is where I will tell you
what happened

so that you can see inside
like a house at night

all the lights turned on
and you thinking of the family

living there

—

In the shower
I pretend you are dead

so that I don't have to love you

anymore —
not hiding

my fear of planes
my need to sleep near windows

all these things

all the grief pooling around my ankles
the heavy and wet of doing this alone

the white of the porcelain tub shining
through my toes

how I see you in everything
In this dark we can make our own place

replete with the silences of
forests, the love letters

of trees

Melissa Mutrux

Bright Star

Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky —

Imagine him,
 falling,
feeling wind beneath arms
that are
just arms, feeling
the receding heat above,
receding too fast now
for apologies, for second chances,
too late to mourn
for things gone wrong,
to ask
for understanding — some stories
will always tell the same tale —
the land burning too,
golden and scorched and
unimpressed —

 him, falling,
like lightning,
like a sacrifice for the fields,
cradled in the
now melting illusion
of the angelic, wings
as tattered as the sunlight
in the orchards below
where the fruit — pale and tired —
gazes heavenward,
waiting
for something to fall
 from the sky.

Melissa Mutrux

The Rumor

Then, there came a day when you could no longer
watch the city, look at the eaten hills with
scoliotic streets, at the wooden, leprous
buildings that teemed and

multiplied until you saw sunlight slicing,
thin as lancet blades, at the smug white beards of
political men who would never care how
citizens lived, and

so, one night, in middle July, gave orders —
someone quiet no one would miss, who'd start the
cautery. No one could blame you. (These things, though
always get out.) You

dressed yourself in costume and left the bedroom,
walking out in Antium, off to sing the
Sack of Troy, of Ilium, and the burning
of the great city.

Michelle Valois

Blue Collar in the Academy

After "Le singe peintre" (The monkey as painter) 1740, by
Jean-Baptiste Simeon Chardin, Oil on canvas, 73 x 59.5cm.

Goat at easel. Brush poised in hairy hand. A look not sheepish, looking at me. A canvas streaked with red lines, childish, broad-stroked stick figures. Crooked like a lover's lipstick smeared, or a trickle of menstrual blood, or some kind of sacrifice.

Goat. Sheep. Lamb.

Painted in 1740 by a self-taught artist and son of a cabinet maker, who broke with his contemporaries and gave the world small domestic scenes, not for him the heroic gestures of 18th century Rococo. Interior landscapes in muted colors, and then, the occasional singerie, monkeys in fashionable attire doing distinctly human things.

Goat. Sheep. Lamb. Monkey.

The word tragedy comes from the Greek word tragoidia or, literally, goat song. Some scholars believe that the prize for the winning tragedy in the ancient annual drama competitions held during the spring festival of Dionysus was a goat. I imagine Sophocles carrying a squirming tragos in his arms as he leaves the stage amid an audience moved to silent tears. Still other scholars claim that the word is linked to the practice of young boys playing female roles, boys with cracking adolescent voices summoning the spirit of Medea or Antigone, punctuating every line with an unmistakable bleat.

Michelle Valois

This solitary goat at his solitary easel with his sheepish look looking at me; round, brown eyes, sad eyes; the well-placed chapeaux atop his head covers his horns. A rich, red velvet jacket hangs from his upright torso as he sits in front of his easel, one outstretched arm frozen in the act of creation. The jacket, however, does not cover the tail.

The long, snaking tail.

The figure is not a goat at all, but a monkey, a monkey with a black and white goat mask that covers his face and a hat meant to deceive.

I think, I am not so different.

Gabriel Welsch

His One and Only

I.

Here children spin
the grandstand's neon exhaust —

grey girls wrap their hopes
around the sharp hips of boys

all limp hair and yellow teeth
sheened in midway grease,

mothers missing teeth,
arms lost in a low tide of blue tattoo.

Pixelated barkers call electric jungle
in concrete pavilions incandescent

with virtual glare and the gut-flayed
brackish water drains

near Fairgrounds Road where the spot
has never known light other than the sun.

II.

High on his shoulder stares
a cross tattoo

mouth open, as if
stoned, operating

the kiddie train ride
at the county fair.

Vietnam Veteran hat,
Dickies chained to a wallet,

pockets crammed
with pens and folded

Gabriel Welsch

paper, Good Book bound
with a rubber band.

Forty-year buzz cut,
horse-kick under bite,

smile for every kid,
make sure they all sit,

hands on columns,
parents back, pull the lever,

watch the ride, wait for two
cycles of song.

III.

This land of John 3:16
along the two-lane highway

where farmers build
Golgothas in miniature —

how they forget Christ's story
hanged him with the same thieves

running the midway silver-
tongued in the shadow

of the funnel cake haus,
frothed in fryer steam,

before they smokebreak between
trailers, gravel pocked,

to press their bones against the next
girl with a nose stud,

cross flashing above the
shadowed cleft of her chest.

Ann Zoller

During That Time Near Water

Rain slides peacock green
all day. Your pod boat floats

inside veins of the land,
filling the jar. You sit

in a rose nightgown
on the porch swing,

aching for a smile
from the sun.

The river trembles,
swelling to the music.

The boat travels so close,
you know it's time.

Ann Zoller

Walking into the Light

She hid the bones in a Birkenstock shoe box
high on a shelf in the spare bedroom closet,
bones broken in the sledding accident,
bones broken when the cow kicked her leg,
all those bones she kept secret.

She hears again the death rattle of the soul
as it hit her mother's chest trying to break free,
a harsh noise that broke the room
and crawled into her skin.

She feels the edge of pain and joy
rolled together like the hum of an organ
playing Brahms. We hobble through days

crippled, balancing the glint of a grandchild
against the suicide of a son.
Thorns fade to allow the blossom.

She gathers lilacs in the garden,
places them in a vase
on the dining room table.

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Contributors

Kathleen Balma is a Fulbright Fellow. Her poems have appeared in various literary journals, including *Crab Orchard Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *storySouth*, and *Puerto del Sol*.

Belline Chao will soon be featured in an anthology celebrating the work of Weldon Kees. Her poems now appear in *Askew*, *Connotation Press*, *Mosaic*, *The Packinghouse Review*. She is currently pursuing an MFA at the University of North Carolina – Wilmington.

Tova Gardner has twice received Artist Grants from Vermont Studio Center. Poems of hers are published or forthcoming in *The Adirondack Review*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *New Vilna Review*, and *Word Riot*.



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Howie Good is the author of numerous chapbooks and two full-length collections: *Lovesick* (2009) and *Heart With a Dirty Windshield* (forthcoming from BeWrite Books).

Zachary Greenwald lives in New York City. "Present Tense" is a sort-of sequel to "The Sleepwalker's Wife," which first appeared in the Summer 2006 issue of *The 2River View*.

Paul Hostovsky is the author of *Bending the Notes* (2008) and *Dear Truth* (2009), both from Main Street Rag. His poems have been featured on Best of the Net, Poetry Daily, *The Pushcart Prize XXXIII*, The Writer's Almanac, and Verse Daily.

Mary Moore is the author of *The Book of Snow* (Cleveland State University, 1998), and her poems have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Field*, *Literary Mama*, *Negative Capability*, *New Letters*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Sow's Ear Review*, and more.

Erika Moya is a Los Angeles Native, currently attending the MFA program at the University of North Carolina – Wilmington. Her poetry and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *Holly Rose Review*, *Le-Pink Elephant Press*, *Qaartsiluni*, and *UNSAID Magazine*.

Melissa Mutrux lives in San Diego, California, where she writes poetry and fiction. Her most recent work appears in *Bear Flag Republic: Prose Poems and Poetics from California* and *San Diego Poetry Review*.

Michelle Valois lives in Western Massachusetts with her partner and three kids. She teaches at a community college. Her work has appeared in *the Florida Review*, *Brevity*, *Fourth Genre*, and others.

Gabriel Welsch is author of *Dirt and All Its Dense Labor* and the forthcoming *An Eye Fluent in Gray*. Recent work appears in *Chautauqua*, *PANK*, *Southern Review*, and *West Branch*.

Ann Zoller has poems in *Bryant Literary Review*, *Coe Review*, *Croton Review*, *Georgetown Review*, *Negative Capability*, *Nimrod*, *Poets On*, *Webster Review*, and *Xanadu*. She is also the author of *Answers from the Bowing Moon* and *New Pony on a Carousel*.

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About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View*, occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series, and, more recently, blogging and podcasting from Muddy Bank.

About the Artist

Charles Chace works out of a large studio in Lake City, Florida, where he has developed a unique neo-pop graffiti style. His large-scale metal panels include strong iconic symbols and strange, surreal landscapes.

Richard Long, Editor

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