

The 2River View

2_2 (Winter 1997)



POEMS BY Michael Armstrong, Janet Buck, John Cornwall,
Robert Creeley (with art by Francesco Clemente),
Holly Day, Clark Holtzman, Brent Long, and Jan Strever

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Bolton Landing

Michael Armstrong

for David Smith

Your cigarette smouldering down
A burning scroll wedged tight
Between those weathered fingers
Wounded and dark

The anvil warm, its ring
Forever in your ears
A constant reminder of why
You live, it sings

Your love is a reflection of light
Across the face of a hard mistress
Born of the earth, furnace formed
Made divine

Prometheus in work clothes firing a
Baptism at the blacksmith's forge
Illumination of the snow, flatcar dream
The welder's arc, your magnetic north

In the fields of May you stopped to
Rest

The Crust

Janet Buck

Of ivory and pain.
A single leg. A signature.
Across the sand I sifted
like a bag of flour
to fit the pies of all the times
you baked me with your eyes.

Emotion's laces always tied
so no one else would trip and fall.
Meaning well an Easter egg
you painted with a nervous smile.
Tragedy you'd sooner roll
beneath the couch
and never wander near.

Condescension's jungle rot
lining all the days and nights.
Ego's turtle on its back.
And then the ink of candor's pen.
In colors I had never known.
The spatula that scraped my tears
and spread them in the cracks.

The Trinity

Janet Buck

Act One.

The heap of bones they cleave
and joints they cannot save.
The sweating glass of who she is
dripping leprous tears and leaving rings
on beauty's shallow page.

Act Two.

The strings of hollow eyes
like Christmas lights
that die before the holidays.
With monocles that magnify
the bulky cross of wooden strides
and balconies of jaws agape
like rows of empty seats
and arid wells of wanton dreams.

Act Three.

The fear of falling
from the grace of shrouded stares.
Ironged starch of saving face
across the collar of her soul.
But in the hive of darker hours
her agony is quelled
by reaching out
and cherished gifts of loving words
that frame and dot her i's and days.
They grant her space to spill
the soured milk of misery
and curtain calls of validation
tucked between the lines of praise.
That vital breath of confidence
adrift on life's revolving stage.

Grandmother

John Cornwall

When my Grandmother married
she filled her house with mirrors,
everywhere a light that shouted out
the rights and wrongs of what she did.

Now eighty years on, widowed,
she has bared the walls,
the mirrors gathering
dust beneath the bed,

her life written out
in images she chooses
to forget, her mirrors
stern reminders of a youth

that has nothing left
to offer.

A Little Opening

Holly Day

Yesterday,
I woke to find the skin of my hand
had slipped off the bones and pooled
beside my head. My feet
are all bone now as well
one hard, yellow knob of a kneecap exposed.

I have begun painting my skeleton
color-coding the days as each piece
is laid bare. My right foot is blue. My left foot
and kneecap are both red for Tuesday.
My hand and part of my jawbone
are emerald green.

I am saving the discarded flesh
to make into a dress, something for only
special occasions. The individual strips
are stretched out on a wire rack
in my refrigerator, where the milk
and the juice
used to go.

Anamorphosis

Francesco Clemente and Robert Creeley

Inside My Head
The Tools
The Swan
The Rose
The Skull
The Star

All works were painted in 1997
and are pigment on canvas, 46 x 92 inches

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on the occasion of

Francesco Clemente: Anamorphosis

May 1 - June 14, 1997

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Inside My Head

Robert Creeley

Inside my head a common room,
a common place, a common tune,
a common wealth, a common doom

inside my head. I close my eyes.
The horses run. Vast are the skies,
and blue my passing thoughts' surprise

inside my head. What is this space
here found to be, what is this place
if only me? Inside my head, whose face?



Francesco Clemente

The Tools

Robert Creeley

First there, it proves to be still here.
Distant as seen, it comes then to be near.
I found it here and there unclear.

What if my hand had only been
extension of an outside reaching in
to work with common means to change me then?

All things are matter, yet these seem
caught in the impatience of a dream,
locked in the awkwardness they mean.



Francesco Clemente

The Swan

Robert Creeley

Peculiar that swan should mean a sound?
I'd thought of gods and power, and wounds.
But here in the curious quiet this one has settled down.

All day the barking dogs were kept at bay.
Better than dogs, a single swan, they say,
will keep all such malignant force away

and so preserve a calm, make pond a swelling lake—
sound through the silent grove a shattering spate
of resonances, jarring the mind awake.



Francesco Clemente

The Rose

Robert Creeley

Into one's self come in again,
here as if ever now to once again begin
with beauty's old, old problem never-ending—

Go, lovely rose... So was that story told
in some extraordinary place then, once upon a time so old
it seems an echo now as it again unfolds.

I point to me to look out at the world.
I see the white, white petals of this rose unfold.
I know such beauty in the world grows cold.



Francesco Clemente

The Skull

Robert Creeley

"Come closer. Now there is nothing left
either inside or out to gainsay death,"
the skull that keeps its secrets saith.

The ways one went, the forms that were
empty as wind and yet they stirred
the heart to its passion, all is passed over.

Lighten the load. Close the eyes.
Let the mind loosen, the body die,
the bird fly off to the opening sky.



Francesco Clemente

The Star

Robert Creeley

Such space it comes again to be,
a room of such vast possibility,
a depth so great, a way so free.

Life and its person, thinking to find
a company wherewith to keep the time
a peaceful passage, a constant rhyme,

stumble perforce, must lose their way,
know that they go too far to stay
stars in the sky, children at play.



Francesco Clemente

Tanis the Tank Killer

Clark Holtzman

Not that the guy on crutches
roughed up a little old lady
for the last available seat or anything
but we don't like heavy-handed approaches

To be fair, the "little old ladies"
of the bridge club flood the plazas daily
menacing offenders with fatigued, telltale limps
they're like a phalanx of bright blue hair

Sooner or later though the real tanks
play upon every landscape, even this one
completely oblivious to its primal clock
until they get lost among the alternatives

That's why we're asking you not
to get distracted by this kind of image—
the bruises it inflicts are simply unacceptable
under the present circumstances

It's like there's no tomorrow
and what happens next is anybody's guess
including yours, so keep your mind focused
on what's in front of you, your "eyes on the prize"

Books for Dick, Ency, and the Women of T

Clark Holtzman

Let's see now
here's a pretty image for you...

a million books
for Dick, Ency, and the women of T

and among them, somewhere
the one with all the questions & answers

The thought of all that reading
must make you sad!

And as for Dick & co.
well, that's just a part of their pretty business

Dauntless Fortunes of Summer Wit

Clark Holtzman

Now it is summertime
and you...
well, you're to blame for the cold grass
the cold green triumphant grass
I see everything now
that rather lurid expression
on the new tomatoes
in a bright, more inquisitorial light

Whatever it is you're looking for out there
our rock rolls round
in huge swaths of self-assertion
the garden you make is a form of denial
and world warns: don't just do something
stand there...

Having Said So, I Packed My Bags and Left For Arkansas

Brent Long

At the lost and empty place where
we have all held quarter at one time
or another there is a woman who comes
toward us the first cold mornings and

She knows before we do
nights we wake up with the
bedsheets torn, clumps
of our hair in each fist

She can sense whatever it is we require
She knows how little we will settle for

She presents her advantage as art that
we might hang from our own walls

She can speak nine languages

She states as fact the stars
we sleep beneath are prayers
that have fallen short of heaven and
backs it up by calling forth the sunrise

First light of our sex
the fields are pulsing

Whenever she is planning a visit
we know about it well ahead of time
because the moon blossoms fill with hornets and
a steady breeze comes forth to sweep away the tell-tale
layer of dust that has settled over the bedposts

She always stays the night

When she lies down beside us
locusts in the trees
sing like mourning doves

We close our eyes

We do not sleep

The Process Through Which Motive Is Discovered

Brent Long

Times when the river burns
flags fill with smoke

and the moon shows
snow geese where to fly

The current stirs its black soup
music is no sanctuary
at this hour

While the earth
grinding on its axis
spins and quivers in the throes
of its primordial fuck

Reminding us that it is circumstance
not intention
which determines the outcome of morning

A mayfly snags its wings
on a single strand of web
struggles, breaks free

We could do this if we wanted:

Waking on a beach
from a dream full of pigment

Sometimes it is a night without walls

The Past as a Yellow Room

Jan Strever

Wisdom, the followers of Zen say
is yellow, and my neighbor a retired
WAC, who served in Germany during WWII,
tells me that experience gives wisdom,
so why is it I cannot leave this house?

Everywhere I look the floor is strewn
with bodies: a daughter, two husbands,
a mother, a brother, a pride of pets.
I must lift their limbs when I dust,
and vacuuming we won't discuss.

Friends too I find there, frayed and splayed
by lack of care. I have been here before.
Why must I continue waking each day
afraid to see your face here instead
of on the other side of the door?

Messengers

Jan Strever

Tomorrow we will begin again.
Silent as a motive,
we will slip into their house
through the doors they forget to lock.

After all, they will think, as they drive
to the mart, we will be gone just a
moment, what can happen
during daylight? We'll rummage

through their belongings. The damask
table cloth, silver flatware, the crystal
vase will all know our breeze. We'll
go through the medicine cabinets

scan the dosage and expiration dates,
the medicines prescribed
nitro...Entex...Tedrol.
Sample a bit of each if we must.

At the door to the master bedroom,
we'll stop, let our presence
travel from left to right. The full
scope of the room will be ours.

His bureau holds pictures of times
forgotten, picnics, ceremonies
of status in the bottom drawer,
underneath black slacks.

Her lost emerald earring we'll find wedged
behind the vanity's middle drawer
where the secret compartment holds
nothing more startling than

the noise she made the first time
she straddled him in the backseat
of his two-tone Chevy.
A whiff of wisteria escapes before

we notice the scarf she wore
to last night's bizarre,
Isn't it too much for a grandmother,
were the exact words she used when

he gifted her with the paisley
slink of fabric. Dust motes will swell
on illusions we create to leave the room
exactly as intruded upon.

We place bets: tonight as they gather
together their night shirts, will she
pause when she notices the awkward angle
of her brush? will he straighten

the tie rack? will he not?
No matter. We will be watching.
We will be ready,
as they nuzzle belly to back.

Until they need us, first him,
(a bit later, her,) we will wait.
After all, the door was open.
After all, none of us can escape.

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Authors

Michael Armstrong is a metal sculptor and poet living in eastern Kentucky.

Janet Buck teaches writing and literature at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Oregon, and has published in journals, magazines, and anthologies across the United States.

Francesco Clemente's paintings, drawings, prints, and illustrated books have been the subject of numerous important traveling retrospective exhibitions, including *Pastelle 1973-1983* (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1983); *Departure of the Argonaut* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1986); *Three Worlds* (Philadelphia Museum of Art/ Royal Academy, London, 1990); *Early Morning Exercises* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1994); *Two Horizons* (Tokyo: Sezon Museum of Art, 1994); *Francesco Clemente: Portraits* (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 1997); a permanent installation of paintings at the Guggenheim Museum/Bilbao (1997), and a forthcoming retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1999). His many published collaborative works with poets have included John Wieners, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Creeley, and Rene Ricard.

John Cornwall lives and works in a rural area in the North of England. He has contributed to many webzines, most noticeably *Snakeskin*.

Robert Creeley, in *Selected Poems: 1945-1990*, writes, "Why poetry? Its materials are so constant, simple, elusive, specific. It costs so little and so much. It preoccupies a life, yet can only find one living. It is a music, a playful construct of feeling, a last word and communion." Mr. Creeley's life-long engagement with poetry is too extensive

for this small space but is documented on the Robert Creeley Home Page.

Poetry and fiction by **Holly Day** have most recently appeared in *Liquid Ohio*, *Gallery Pianissimo*, and *Tomorrow Magazine*.

Clark Holtzman lives mostly in hotels. On weekends, he lives with his family in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. It is a nice suburb, but taxes are high. Growing up, he neglected to imagine such an outcome.

Brent Long is a writer currently living in Providence, RI. His work has appeared in several magazines and journals, including Faquier Poetry Journal, Cold Mountain Review, and The Portable Plateau. He is currently working with poet C.D. Wright on *A Reader's Map of Rhode Island*, a Lost Roads project.

Jan Strever teaches traditional classes of creative writing, literature, and composition, as well as Online English 101 and Online Introduction to Literature; publishes *Kimera: A Journal of Fine Writing*; edits *Research and Reflections*, Gonzaga University's educational electronic journal; advises *Legends*, the literary and art magazine of Spokane Community College; and manages *Pause a moment: Poetry*, a weekly-updated, comprehensive list of poetry links and prose.

2River Poetry

2River Poetry, a literary site on the Daemen College World Wide Web Server, publishes *The 2River View*.

2River Poetry also publishes individual authors.

These collections, as well as all issues of
The 2River View, can be accessed at

<http://www.daemen.edu/~2River>

For information about submissions, please visit the
2River website, or send email to

2River@helman.daemen.edu

All mail is answered within a day or two.

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The **2River View**

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