The 2River View

2_3 (Spring 1998)



POEMS BY Charels Albano, Kate Bergen, C. E. Chaffin, Michael Hoerman, billy little, Peter Munro, Rochelle Randel, David M. Somerfleck, and Marc Swan

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Window on the Navesink

Charles Albano

Can't say which is more appealing, that open sky with its herd of white bison, lumbering over the sunny Highlands, or the green hills, and the river they enfold with their colors.

From here,
my field of vision is split,
and so is my preference.
Both the field of blue
and the field of green
commend themselves to the palette.
Yet I am told those colors
are aesthetic misfits when joined.
What ever
could have possessed
God
to make such
an artistic blunder?

Where Giants Slept

Charles Albano

I remember the place where giants slept. A special place where indolent giants rain forest bred, stretched in profusion on a wistful beach of the Olympic Peninsula. Their stone gray arms, fine-weathered, protruded in every direction, searching blindly for their final destiny, as they lay beached in the morning mist. I had to climb their carcasses to reach the ocean. They fanned out, north and south, infinitely it seemed. I loved that morning there, never saw the likes of thatan entire forest lying prone, like hapless D-day invaders. Where did they come from?

Canada? Alaska? Whateversomewhere giants grew. Jumping from one to another made for good aerobics a petty occupation. But if I had lived anywhere nearby, I would have set up shop as a craftsman, creating beautiful rustic furniture and art from those most accommodating remains, giving them a fit, and well-deserved afterlife.

Adaptivity

Kate Bergen

They would have you beg them to explain the rate for sudden suicide exchange because, you know, the bloody street corners don't tell their tales too well.
You've got to show them the scars, or razor or revolver or skyscraper ledge... they know you've seen them all.
Leave two or three layers of skin behind so they remember what it looks like to be bloody. Not a pretty sight, for those aspiring to be beautiful. Teach them about the chains that bind them, how to use them as a rosary and pray to be set free, how larks never sing, held in captive. Teach them to be more adaptive.

Solitude

Kate Bergen

The sky was narcissistic pink. Warm venal blood and salt-water tears running thickly down the horizon, consuming the disinterested hills of winter-wood horizons and the blue vein of the Hudson. You were tattooed on my heart, your name carved in flower-rings branded in the tear-bath of love. The water shimmered, refracting light back at the blind eye of the sun, and morning pulsed like a slowly defective heart tired of beating for you. You didn't think I'd remember the way your words forced entry into my mind and your touch into my dreams. Too much daylight rapes the sky, and you were the bright light to burn too soon in vain. One day, in the flow of snow-white morning, thick with the syrup of pine-sap and regret seeping through your window panes, vou'll breathe the vapors of solitude and feel like this too.

A Natural History of Armed Conflict

Pat Boran

The wood of the yew made the bow, and the arrow.

And the grave-side shade.

Literature

Pat Boran

His penis hanging between his legs like a vandalized telephone, or some deep-sea creature that cannot bear solitude, so it hangs on—

this naked man is what I am, and yet how unlike me he seems, surprised in the mirror I was dashing by on my way to the loo at 4 am.

And when a light comes on somewhere, quick as a flash he turns away like a man who keeps his truth concealed, this Rosebud, this Jekyll, this Dorian Gray.

Milkmen

Pat Boran

The doorbell rings. I go. I'm fourteen. That's how it is, no need to stop or think.

It's the milkman's eldest son, putting a brave face on it, wearing his father's shade.

So, quietly, he pours the milk, pours its at first almost shrill then rolled then muddy sound

till the gallon's filled.

I close the door and wait for the milk to settle down.

Years later, for it is years already, this is how it feels, answering calls by opening doors,

opening silences, to accept things not made on the spot but handed over: love, inheritance.

The voice on the jukebox sang Maybe

Pat Boran

In a black hat and black coat, with the kind of movements a crow makes when it tries to tear itself away, wing by wing, from hot tar, he was there in the bar.

What happened next? Well, no one spoke for a start; no one, I suppose, had any words they felt might match the 3-dimensional shock of him, this tongue of black fire—man,

the only animal with foreknowledge of his own imminent death. Nice one, God, but the joke's over, thought the barmaid in mid forward bend that might have flashed a breast

to someone close... But Christ, not this, a man stood there, held there, run through with the current of his heart, un-hid in this moment she would deny that at once denies her and demands she live.

A Time to Weep

C. E. Chaffin

I suppose you could call me heartless as a dull anvil clanking in a sodden barn, the damp wood too lazy to echo your pain; and your limbs twisted like great roots, your heart's rank melons bursting with fluid, your tidal headaches, your equatorial fevers were all grist for my scientific mill, my hands cold and precise like metallic probes on your beaded foreheads.

I suppose my brief visits and cryptic prognoses do little to comfort your collapsing veins. You ask for a word, I spout statistics. Your skeletal hands pray for light— I check your pupils. Do you understand? It is not that I care not for healing if only the power would come; but science is an impotent matchstick broken in death's fingers.

I have never collected moths but you are pinned somehow on my mind's wall several hallways from heart.
Allow me this distance, allow me not to weep.
Should those dark waves with their thousand eyes once spill over the dike, I do not know what sort of god I should become—most likely a madman but never again your doctor.

Telephone Wires at Dusk

C. E. Chaffin

These wires, iced at sunset with duskfire, have a brightness beside themselves, their taut tense lengths humming with unknown conversations through insulated copper, transfigured into phosphorescent black, a glowing welder's rod of invisible tongues—

As if the light could see and knew the cold particulars passing between ears at this second dawn, dying of day and night's birth— And as if by heliotelepathy the sun exposed the hidden chatter, and the words were fire laced with the salt of reason, leaving the burnt scent of compassion in the air like ozone—

If but the words, the words between men I mean, were true as these flaming wires— How beautiful these transient fires at night's dawn and day's end would be: fit companions of stars.

The Talking Tree

Michael Hoerman

I went walking in the woods I heard whispers I ran until I was out of breath I fell down at the outflow of a spring I saw my reflection in the water I heard whispers again Now they were closer Somehow I'd run toward them In the reflection I changed from a man, to a boy, to a baby... The spring water turned bloody and Warm, like a woman's sex in childbirth That's when I saw the talking tree My hands were stained It would hold me accountable It would wrap me in barbed-wire My blood would seep into the ground I would grow roots, limbs and leaves I would become another whisper in the forest That's what I was told By the talking tree.

Something's Gone Wrong

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Flies

billy little

flies know
angels have
transparent wings
and flee
human contact
prefer
the company of the dead
live for rot
mate on the wing
memorize
the same lyrics
both swallowed by snakes
and songbirds

When the Saints

billy little

when the ducks
got too greasy to digest
the eagles started
putting on the feedbag
in schoolyards and playgrounds
when the berries and the nuts
got too coated in petroleum
and derivatives
the nearly blind robins
began seeing
human eyeballs as fruit
the salmon lept in schools
swarming and devouring
boatloads of vegetarians in seconds

The Gospel According to Peter the Fractured

Peter Munro

He can almost taste the bread offered gently to another believer.
Antennae rust as rain grinds softer than iron. Radio receivers haul in the Word of God drawn tougher by salt sung out for want of favor.

In his mouth the name of the favored raises a spittle. His lips offer name upon name, a little tougher to choke out, to choke down, believers choked on praise through rusted receivers. Bread melts like the rain whispered softer

than flour, milk, and sugar, softer than begging the crumbs of God's favor or huddled to warmth a receiver throws off its wiring among offers of prayer to buy lost unbelievers. Every year the market grows tougher.

For quick income, Peter the Tougher stiffs the Brethren. Peter the Softer soothes the Sistren, the girl believers, with sudden wealth. He always favors the sleekest name-mouthers with his offers of bread. His radio receiver,

according to laws of receivership told to the profits by tougher creditors than the God who offers discounts to no one, suggests softer options more cunning than rain. Favoritism for selected believers

must be subtle because believers in subtlety achieve their receivership quick as God's word, God's quick favor, quick to anger the Bread heeled tougher than your crust or mine to kill softer. For who recalls the final offer

but believers slumped in the tougher rain, receivers of the Word's softer touch, favors the broken Bread offers?

After Another Interminable Long Dark Night of the Soul, A Few Weary Saints Debate the Merits of Unionization

Peter Munro

Upright as hackles on a dog's ruff raised for battle, flags whacked sudden as a gust of God, we sailed aloft our little praise, hailing like songbirds who utter dawn's rust,

like an ovum skulked from a cat to dust feathers up all cloud and flutter. What bright tiger burns? And who exalts that God thrust wind through bone-spans and lungs hung limp with light?

Urine, feces, lactose, and lymph, the slight reek of God loosed by ducts, sluiced through sphincters, sperm in gusts that songbirds and lungs delight

sperm in gusts that songbirds and lungs delight their Seeker, bile and gall the tincture anointing our wind. We kept the stricture slandered against us and soared up on God's tongues, blown wild, our wings flung wide as Scripture. But would the yearned-for walk where wings have trod

who yammer halos and hard-hats, hackled for war and the wages of our heckles?

Freedom for the Spider

Rochelle Randel

I think I will return for the black spider, Trapped in the storefront window, Pinned to slick cardboard, It is much too big, very gaudy, Made with cheap black Cut glass, Wide stalking legs, And a big body, But I like it— And think it would Make a fine god, For the other spiders.

My Brother

David M. Somerfleck

Used to beat the familiarity and youth out of me as a child;

his bony hands twitching like tree branches in Fall, walking with his dark spectre-cloud trailing behind or over his mumbling head; a hovering jellyfish of despair. In some ways he walks like everyone else.

Like everyone else,

I am my brother's keeper.

I keep him away.

Wild Thing

Marc Swan

In the small room above the bird of paradise, over the lawn sprinkler, birdbath, the dog barking at the postman who never arrives,

she stays when she comes to the city. It is in this tiny room we meet when the good doctor is away,

when the good doctor has given me the key we meet on the rose dust-colored throw atop an old-fashioned oaken door-shaped bed

where I rediscover the mystery that lies inside her slender thighs, between her legs, in the soft milky skin of her breasts, taste

the sweetness of her breath, find sustenance in this warm place. Through the open window of this unassuming room, noises of this teeming city arrive in full force with the thick California heat of a fat sun, with the cool wind of a new moon, never alone

these purveyors of harsh sound. She must cross over roadways, travel city streets, take a bus, a train, a motorcar along

a highway I've never seen to visit me in our special room. I worry her safely down these winding, nefarious roads, imagine

wild things she encounters on this long, arduous trip, unsavory characters who imagine the secret places only I, and the cameraman, know.

Maybe

Marc Swan

A simple phone call to her office hell o you were on my mind happy new year seems easy enough but what if later after she's had a few drinks with that older man she travels with the one with the town car the one old enough to be her grandfather she says is just a friend who owns a trendy seafood joint by the sea leased a metallic teal green firebird with her name on it gives her money to help out the mom with three kids she's so fond of what if after those drinks probably a half bottle of clos du bois merlot her favorite he prefers martinis with olives no vermouth

what if she gets frisky calls me at home a simple hell o you were on my mind happy new year what if i've gone to the store for ice chips for my kid sanitary pads for the woman i live with maybe i'll wait till next week when we plan to meet at my office for an update on her life those kids she thinks so much of the old guy with the fat car martini eyes money to burn

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Authors

Charles Albano teaches as an adjunct professor of management at Fairleigh Dickinson University and also provides management training for industry and government. Some of his poems have been published in *The Central California Poetry Review, Planet Magazine*, and *The Poetic Express*.

Kate Bergen lives in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, where she's a junior in high school. She hopes to attend the State University of New York at Albany and later the Naropa Institute.

Pat Boran is presently living in Dublin, Ireland, where he's the city's Writer-in-Residence. In addition to a collection of stories and three non-fiction books, he's published four collections of poems, the most recent being *The Shape of Water* (1996).

C. E. Chaffin lives in a high rise on the Pacific with his wife and three daughters. His first book of poems, *Elementary*, was recently published by Mellen Poetry Press.

Michael Hoerman is editor of *The Portable Plateau: Journal of the Ozark Writer.* His own writing has been published by *The Heartlands Today, Prison Life, Illya's Honey,* and *Northwest Arkansas Times.*

nobody knows **billy little**, they say he lives in Nowhere, B.C. Combat Plagiarism is a current project wherein he writes the best poem he could possibly write that day and signs your name or Gerry Gilbert's name or Pierre Joris or Lily Brik or Duncan McNaughton or David McFadden.

Peter Munro is a fisheries scientist who works in Seattle as well as the Gulf Of Alaska and the Bering Sea. He has had poems published here and there.

Rochelle Randel makes her living as a marketing assistant for a computer security company. This past year she has had poetry in *Snakeskin*, *Gravity*, and *Sauce Box*.

David M. Somerfleck attributes his status as a staggeringly-humble icon for the new millenium to the almost mystical meddlings of his grandfather. His work has appeared in *Lies Magazine, The Dominion Review, Visions, A Thousand Words,* and *Artisan Magazine.*

Marc Swan is a rehabilitation counselor on Cape Cod. His poems have been published in print and electronic magazines, including *Rattle, Sanskrit, Free Cuisenart, Gallery Zandstraat, Chiron Review, Slant,* and *Zero City.*

2River Poetry

About

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

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2River@helman.daemen.edu

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