

The 2River View

3_3 (Spring 1999)



POEMS BY Michael Bates, Robert James Berry,
Graham Catt, Robert Creeley (with art by Donald
Sultan), Lenny DellaRocca, Easter Jones, Katja,
Sarah Picklesimer, Lee R. Tracy, and Matt Welter

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Cover: *Mushrooms* by Athena Leavitt



Hands by Athena Leavitt

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Easter Jones

She stoops

Beauty
picked up her skirt
and bent to him

Tilted her harp
and forgot
the way wheat withers

Two feet in front
of her
well worn toes
She found solace in a grounded
moth
on his side

Robert James Berry

Newborn

Still bloody
Purple and crying
With pudgy fingers
Thinning hair
Our son is
A creased old man
A bawling sage
in woolen blankets

It is my savage superstition to pray
and give thanks

Now that they have
mopped shined you
made of you a serene swaddled infant

You are absolutely still
A mystic with no name
With sleep
You shall grow young
 in this house
Strong-lunged
Round as the moon

Graham Catt

Whalewatching

for a second or two, out in the bay
an island appears, shimmers then sinks
like a dark wave, pushing against the surf
a rippling chain of granite boulders

one blink, and it has disappeared
we doubt it was even there
just an apparition, a phantom of the sea
cousin to the Loch Ness monster

our eyes strain for a second glimpse
and then again, beyond the reef
a hint of fin, a sudden burst of spray
a barnacled back rises to the surface

excited, we scale the headland
scan the horizon for our Moby Dick
but are confronted by a shifting sea
the illusory effects of light and water

each shadow becomes a sign
each dark shape a possibility
everywhere we look, we see them
the ocean is overflowing with whales

Sarah Picklesimer

Snow upon Snow

Loraline outside again
Says and does things,
When she thinks no one can hear,
And confides to a lonely wren;
A clear head braided and bowed.
As hope pushes will
And will pushes shovel
She still vows to move
Snow upon snow
Proving she can set the flowers free.
Now, I see through Modigliani's eyes
Knowing the girl with braids,
Is disguising a wistful poetic charm,
And, realizing his style;
Her life remarkably tragic.
Loraline, a dark outline basks
Against blocks brightened by white
Color signs chiseling the pathway wide,
And deep inside she remembers,
Here on ancestral tasks she treads.

Her feet soon frostbitten,
Hands gloved and snow shoved,
So day and night she'll be able
To walk ahead, beyond the future,
And the past that weighs heavy.
Mumbles for peace,
Loraline outside again
Says and does things
When she thinks
No one can hear.
Her primitive tongue
Creating a spirit
Sung in ancient voices,
She remembers versed ways
Just this once reliving choices.

Michael Bates

Museum Pieces

for Nora

1

The art in this room
should share a single statement.
It's supposed to say something
about belonging together,
though every painting
hangs on its own merits.

Now picture the place without them:
Nothing would stand out.
Not even art lovers
with high standards.

Where do we figure?
Your eyes are searching.
Are they clear about us?
Look at it this way—
as a whole, we're already
a work in progress.
The problem's with perspective—
you don't see us
coming any closer
than walls apart
within the same gallery.
You're on the side of still lives
while I'm aligned
with moving portraits.
What's missing is a meeting
space for both genres—
a middle ground
between back and fore.

Still Life

Robert Creeley and Donald Sultan

The poems and images here
were originally published in
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They have since appeared at
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Images © Donald Sultan
Poems © Robert Creeley

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Robert Creeley

Bugs

I see them tracking across
A seeming waste,
Intent on their progress
To an unseen place.

I hear, in mind, their rustling,
The scratchy sounds of their bodies.
I think of their scuttling,
Inexorable determination.

Blackened, drawn in images—
Their transformation
Here is one of scale
Or what's beyond.

Donald Sultan



Robert Creeley

Dried Roses

“Dried roses...” Were these from some walk
All those years ago? Were you the one
Was with me? Did we talk?
Who else had come along?

Memory can stand upright
Like an ordered row of stiff stems,
Dead echo of flowering heads,
Roses once white, pink and red.

Back of them the blackness,
Backdrop for all our lives,
The wonders we thought to remember
Still life, still life.

Donald Sultan



Robert Creeley

Matisse Flowers and Vase

Artful, in age he could tie his hand to a stick
And paint with it,
Make an image like this one.
Nothing seemed missed.

Here—look in to look out,
See what all that was about,
Find color's counterpoint,
Line holding the whole inside.

Let your eye wander,
Your thought meander.
Feeling saunter.
Mind maunder.

Donald Sultan



Robert Creeley

(Lemons) Pear Appears

If it's there, it's something—
And when you see it,
not just your eyes know it.
It's yourself, like they say, you bring.

These words, these seemingly rounded
Forms—looks like a pear? Is yellow?
Where's that to be found—
In some abounding meadow?

Like likes itself, sees similarities
Everywhere it goes.
But what that means,
Nobody knows.

Donald Sultan



Robert Creeley

(Battery) There

Wherever it was, I took this place
To be in mind as well as there
Where persons walked with muffled forms,
Marked by the high sky's yellow glare.

The measured look placed all in squares,
Boxed by a distance fixed in space.
Lampposts blackened against the day.
The shuffled passage of persons faded.

The building, it seemed, they would never get to.
Its vertical strips of window reflected
Light from a world they might have heard of,
But, try as they would, they would never reach.

Donald Sultan



Robert Creeley

Tulips and Vase

Seen by being nothing
Or space by absence—
White, the echo of dimension—
Or where it's gone?

Now the habit of holding
The image, of unfolding
Flowers, memory of something
Where it once was.

Then back to place
It all in an elegant glass—
Apparent in its place,
In its own white emptiness.

Donald Sultan



Lenny DellaRocca

Far Amusement of Statues

Someone in a fear dress comes
with her ruler
to measure the far amusement
of statues
Nickels gleam from rose garden
birdbaths
as the trillium begin their viola lesson
My mother
wipes the beaks of blackbirds with vinegar
attempting
to order the ambiguous names of their trill
The woman
in the fear dress strikes the ground
with a cherry rod
inflicting the deaf with the sound of rare fruit
and science
The statues rape summer with their long
white gowns
Even the humidity is a grateful thing,
my mother says
The viola urges mythology to sing while
a man in a
sackcloth tapestry orders Aegean Sea
jam
from a waitress with a lawsuit in her hands
The elephants
dance the way they did in Egypt when
Cleopatra
shaved her cunt and let the serpent slide
between her legs

All this for Reason, the sophist sighs,
tomorrow is blind
No matter how independent the police act
they never see
the rows of people writing down the story
Ruined by music
and crime, the woman steals the tongue of Jesus

The line of hypnotists in Buicks honk
their horns
driving past the cafe in bright sunlight
like a huge
glass painting in the streets of Prague
Someone
demands altruism and dogma for Christmas
Taxidermy
is another lost art in Europe, my mother says
The woman
in the fear dress blames her father for her sins

Lee R. Tracy

Phone

The phone lines stretch out,
scraggly telephone pole arms
that hold hands across the night,
and they shake gently as the words
travel from pole to pole,
and the telephone poles,
rooted in desert breccia and swamp mire,
listen, forlorn, to the voices
passing through that talk of love
and list and sunsets over horizons
thousands of telephone poles away,
they stand, arms outstretched,
fingers groping straining fingers,
Unable to let go
with all the electricity surging through.

I hold the phone close to my ear
as I huddle in a ball
in the corner,
the fullest of full moons
shining in the open window—
it speaks, silent, of fertility
of millions of lovers entwined
under its light on beaches,
of cars parked on clifftops
with glittering city views,
in sweaty still-aired rooms
like this one,
and it speaks of loneliness.

I took out my tarot cards today,
and stared at the moon, dogs howling,
crabs crawling in stagnant water,
beads of energy rising to the cold orb
floating above.

No dogs howl tonight,
and there is no water,
but I feel my body being
sucked dry as I talk to you
on the phone tonight
Your voice is distant
and I strain to hear you
as you speak of love, and loneliness
and the reasons you've made up
for your shattered life,
and all the reasons for your
world of jagged glass, your
dreams and humanity broken by
brutal boot-clad feet—
if it would have made them stay,
you would have taken their
boot-clad kicks anywhere they
wanted to kick,
and kissed them afterwards,
anywhere they wanted.

Playing therapist on the phone
as I'm rolled into a fetal ball,
trying to relive your life
and not be scarred myself—
it drains me,
and if I take my glasses off
and squint just right,
I can see my soul
sucked up through my pores,
in myriad little drops,
Rising silently to the
cold, impassive globe floating
unnaturally above my window.

Matt Welter

Barnstorming Utah

She says she can remember
when they first passed
the Utah Clean Air Act.
How the pilot would come on the P.A.
and announce that no one
could smoke while over
Utah's airspace, like
the Mormon Tabernacle Choir
might sing you out of the sky.
Though on the ground
alcohol was completely
illegal at the time,
she liked thinking
that the vapors of
the Old Fashioneds
Manhattans
and Tequila Sunrises
were seeding the rain clouds
dusting the Mormon's halos.

That's why they'd get drunk
off playing charades
and eating lime Jell-o salads.
Said that on a rainy day
taking off from Salt Lake City
she'd smell the corn nuts
and peach taffy
that the tourists had bought
look out the window and dream
that the salt flat
was just one big bowl
of fruit fluff on a salty lake
of Mountain Dew.

Katja

poems

for my father

2. (What is)

What is important is your face, struck
with thought, distracted, as the letters
rubbed from the newspaper onto my hand.

How carelessly
I printed during breakfast
hand to face, face to hand, blurred
like my intentions, and eager
after all, to remember. How
I could gaze on you.

3. untitled

As he carried me
down the stairs I opened
my eyes and saw fire.
All the bridges of these years burning.

He did not look at me,
took each step sweating,
his hair touched, then full of light
like when running
at night the headlights
crept up his back and held.

4. Jim, the light

Jim, the light never appeared in your hair
as in the radical angels of my memory.
Yet you could uncode the poem of the burning stairs.

*It was easy; all your poems
are about your father, you said,*
laughing, but still touched
my face sadly as you did.

He has lived, a stranger, in our house,
the reflection of his fire in my eyes
wavering, unreasoning, as I demanded
so many things from you. How are you certain now
you know what you're doing? That you are on course?

The wheel shifts under us like a ship
that moves under unmoving stars. The wheel
is all we could take as we leave homeless
burned and built again.

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Authors

Michael Bates currently works in South America as a free lance marketing representative for a group of American and European publishing houses.

Robert James Berry lectures in English Literature & Language at the University of Science in West Malaysia.

Graham Catt reads regularly at the Friendly Street venue in Adelaide, Australia. He is currently working on a first collection of poems, as well as a series of short stories.

Robert Creeley is Samuel P. Capen Professor of Poetry and Humanities at the State University of New York, Buffalo. He is this year's recipient of the Bollingen Prize.

Lenny DellaRocca founded South Florida's premiere poetry reading, The Electric Chair and Random Acts. He is President of the Hannah Kahn Poetry Foundation.

Easter Jones was born and raised in the wilderness of Montana. She now lives in Missoula, at the base of three rivers and five valleys.

Katja is a neurologist, a researcher, and an amateur runner. She has a patient, adventurous husband, a dog, and some close friends.

Athena Leavitt, age 6, reads and speaks Spanish and would like to be a ballerina. The image by her on the facing page is The Ghost of John.

Sarah Picklesimer loves reading anything from Bohemian beats to Procrustean law, and singing, at which time her husband usually retires to the dog house.

Donald Sultan has work in the public collections of numerous museums, ranging from the Ackland Art Museum in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.



Lee R. Tracy is the father of a young daughter. He resides in Southern California, where he is a case manager for an insurance company.

Matt Welter reads over 200 small press books a year, the best 13 of which he recognizes with the Pippistrelle Best of the Small Press Awards.

2River

About

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

2River 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

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