

# The 2River View

2\_3 (Spring 1998)



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David M. Somerfleck, and Marc Swan



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### Contents

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#### **Charles Albano**

Window on the Navesink  
Where Giants Slept

#### **Kate Bergen**

Adaptivity  
Solitude

#### **Pat Boran**

A Natural History of Armed Conflict  
Literature  
Milkmen  
The voice on the jukebox sang Maybe

#### **C. E. Chaffin**

A Time to Weep  
Telephone Wires at Dusk

#### **Michael Hoerman**

The Talking Tree

#### **billy little**

Flies  
When the Saints

**Peter Munro**

After Another Interminably Long Night of the Soul...  
The Gospel According to Peter the Fractured

**Rochelle Randel**

Freedom for the Spider

**David M. Somerfleck**

My Brother

**Marc Swan**

Wild Thing  
Maybe



## 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 that—  
an entire forest lying prone,  
like hapless D-day invaders.  
Where did they come from?



Canada? Alaska?  
Whatever—  
somewhere 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,  
you'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-mothers with his offers  
of bread. His radio receiver,

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

must be subtle because believers  
in subtlety achieve their receiver-  
ship 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  
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

## ***The 2River View, 2\_3 (Spring 1998)***

Authors

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**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

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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](mailto:2River@helman.daemen.edu)

All mail is answered within a day or two.

**2RP**



## The 2River View



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