

# The **2**River **V**iew

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



# The **2**River **V**iew

3\_3 (Spring 1999)

Cover: *Mushrooms* by Athena Leavitt



*Hands* by Athena Leavitt

*2River View, 3\_2* (Spring 1999)

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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  
*Visual Poetics: The Arts of Donald Sultan*  
with text by Michael McKenzie

Marcos Fine Arts Contemporary Atelier  
201 Nevada Street  
El Segundo, CA 90245

They have since appeared at  
2River  
<http://www.daemen.edu/~2River>

Images © Donald Sultan  
Poems © Robert Creeley

*The 2River View, 3\_3* (Spring 1999)

## **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.

The 2River View, 3\_3 (Spring 1999)

## Authors

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**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.

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## **About**

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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

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

All mail is answered within a day or two.



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