

The 2River View

7.4 (Summer 2003)



Peace Party in Mournes © 2003 by Oliver Curran

New Poems by
C. L. Bledsoe, Wendy Taylor Carlisle
Susan H. Case, Autumn Collins, Doug Crandell
Tova Gabrielle, Ian Christopher Hooper
Robert Krut, Hallie Moore, Evelyn Posamentier

The **2River** **View**

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ISSN 1536 2086

Authors

C. L. Bledso is a student at the University of Arkansas--Fayetteville, with poems most recently in *Exposure* and *Nimrod*.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle lives in East Texas. In 2003, her poems have appeared in *Midwest Poetry*, *New Texas*, *Pierian Springs*, *Poet's Grimm*, *Salt River*, *Windhover*, and *Znine*. She was a finalist in *The American Literary Review's* 2002 poetry contest.

Susan H. Case teaches at the New York Institute of Technology as Susan Gray. Recent work of hers can be found in *Borderlands*, *Slant*, and *Zeek*. *The Scottish Cafe*, a chapbook of poems about mathematicians in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust, was published this year by Slapering Hol Press.

Autumn Collins is a twenty-something poet who works in academic publishing. Her work can be seen in *Absinthe Literary Review*, *Gin Bender*, and *Sniffy Linings*.

(Continued in back)



Gogh Village © 2003 by Oliver Curan

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Wendy Taylor Carlisle

The Fairest

Below skin-deep in the steadiness of organs,
in the upright bones, where all solid, perfect cells tick on,

the widow's heart, that little zip lock of gore, fills and empties,
regular as a metronome, only a wisp of memory stirs.

Nothing moves her but her chestnut hair, her own pale
cheeks.

She hums; she ignores the darkness somewhere east

of the lace that disappears between her thighs, attends only
to the mirror
that flatters her, watching for signs of that other,

too-fragile face. She remembers her husband complained
of loneliness and fear, as if she could cure him. For him, she
puts on

ugly clothes that suggest loss. For her reflection, she wears
crepe de chine.

She hardly recalls the stepdaughter growing up in a fruit
orchard.

In her husband's memory, she claims to be stricken.
But she cannot rewrite the fairy tale-evil step-ways in the
autumn

woods, a witch disguise, are caught in the glass where she
displays
the apple cheek, the satin skin, the flat black empty eye.

After

Adam

You've heard the story too, I guess, about the serpent and the kiwi—or maybe they told you it was an apple, a Granny Smith, a Red Delicious. Well, no matter, they're wrong. No Python. No Pippin. There was a garden, of sorts, a path through the lush vegetation, the pools and runnels, but none of it had the discipline of a garden. And in case you think I was just sitting there adoring Him, I had my little job to do, to make a name for everything—Maximum Taxonomy, that was what it was. So when I woke after one of my all too infrequent naps, to find one more thing to name, *her* is what I thought. But she was so interested, so hang-on-a-guy's-every-word, I have to admit I found her adorable. Who doesn't love being worshipped?

I touched her just to see what she was like—I have to know the feel of skin, the temperature to name them right—and for the heft of her, I took her in my arms. Right there she twisted into snake! I didn't mean for it to end the way it did, but only just to certify her, don't you see, as woman, never as man's woe—only a simple, backboneed thing.

And then she said my name.

Eve

From the beginning, I was his extra bone.
Before the red tent, the virgin, the whore,
before babies brought forth in anguish, before
accusation, litigation, I was designed to do homage.
After that, all they could say was: responsible party,
seductress, lure and terror. The clergymen—Abelard,
Paul, Aquinas—none of them appreciated how ordinary
the moment was. No sleight of hand, no con, only
my palm held out to the prototype farmer, already
in a rut, mad for my particular crop. Imagine
orchard evenings, breezes, fruit—
how they all annoyed him, how boredom drove his curiosity.
How, in time, it was impossible for him not to pick and eat
and how soon after that he named his new joy—guilt.

C. L. Bledsoe

Drunk in the Bathroom

Oh, sweet Delia, she was a Chiquita banana of a woman,
small yellow teeth with a musk like sweet wine that had sat in
the sun
for seven days, then risen like the bile in old Job's throat. If I
could make
Costa Rica forget all the wrong I've done, I would only do
more. Tell me
your name, I said, she said, "Que?" With a slight lisp, so that
it sounded
like 'gay.' I won't say I'd had too much to drink, there is not
enough Delia
for me to ever drink myself full, though after several draughts
I had to go
to the bathroom. I was back in bed wondering where my
sweet Delia
had run off to before I realized Costa Rica had no bathrooms,
no women,
and no sheets to rival my sweet, sweet Delia.

C. L. Bledsoe

He's the Kind of Person

that doesn't put cigarettes out
he just throws them down or drops them in ashtrays

maybe when the smoke of their smoldering carcasses
has filled the room he'll take the ashtray to the sink
and pour water on it then he keeps it like that
he calls it butt-soup

you have to understand how much I hate him
he never does the dishes just leaves
them to sit until I can't stand it anymore
if he runs out of forks he eats sandwiches if he runs out
of bread
he doesn't eat

same with the trash or laundry or cleaning he doesn't
understand
life that living leaves a mess

he sits all day in a bath robe watching TV until his
friends call
and he rises turns it off and is gone
leaving me nothing but the things he's cast off from
himself

Frenzy

Surely they're not as whacked out as they seem
circling madly in their penguin-y finery,
not unlike the swim I've made around you these last few years.
A poor substitute for a thousand-mile
jaunt off the scenic coast of Ecuador for any of us.
Their sudden disinterest in sedentary life, the mundane
groom and burrow of the everyday, has nothing to do
with personality disorder any more than my yearning
for deliverance from quotidian chores.

Some new guys in the pool and it's a sudden marathon around
the shallow. *To swim is to be a penguin* if they could, the birds
might clack.

Surely life is more than molt and breed. The curiosity evoked
by the glimpse of glossy difference would entertain
any of us on the boring back of the mating season. And surely
we cannot deny our essential selves. After all,
what could there be, what else as much distraction as to spin?

Susan H. Case

Pandora Addresses her Viewers at the Dahesh Museum

Don't go yet. I'd hate
to part with you all thinking it was my idea
to end a golden age. Someone even blamed me yesterday
for the reversal of the longest economic expansion in history.
So embarrassing to be held responsible for all that loss.

Look at me: don't you love
my perfectly draped orange dress,
how it enhances my shoulders?
Bet you want
beribboned red hair such as mine.
(I forgot my shoes. Note to self: I need to get organized.)

Listen. It wasn't really a blue and white porcelain box. A rough
little jar, nothing glamorous. My mission, to punish.
I merely did what he told me to do.
Had the capacity to earn an Olympian medal for chaos.
Always did love bad advice and a flaming torch.

Didn't know the raven of hope could be so easily confused.
That so much misery could occupy so small a space.

Okay, wait. You with the shopping bag—
I'm not finished.
I admit I still embellish. It was a large earthenware jar
with ample room for evils but a small silly crow.

All the more reason to be tired of having losses of paradise
always blamed on me.

Kentucky Field

The woman shifts on the crooked stoop
Under the weight of the squirming child.
Dirty and ugly, the pair.
The mother's matted blonde hair hangs in her eyes
And teases the tip of her cigarette
As the child kicks her unlaced shoe
Into the patchy grass.
It's mostly dust out here
And the wind has coated these two,
Making them a part of the desiccated landscape.
Only when the mother swats at the girl
Is this decrepit portrait broken.
The child tries to run away
But only makes it to the edge of the gravel road
Before she realizes there is nowhere else to go.
Isolation has settled amidst the dust
That coats her shoeless toes,
Curled in defeat.

Past the Hour

It's past the hour
As we passed another,
Glistening with hallucinogenic sweat
That is no more real than what I know of this affair.
The bar stools are hot and dark like the evening
While words echo through empty wine glasses
And I almost let that sound
Drown out the thumping of violence
That started in my chest
But has now come to nest
In the lines around my mouth.
Leaving the bar their hands want to touch
But I am too close behind.
Our steps shine
And break the reflections
Of bar lights and flashes on hoop earrings
As the wet pavement,
Glossed by a sudden shower,
Tells me everything I need to know.

Doug Crandell

Drying Dent Corn

Those augers that stole winter's wedding
are corradating in turn like surges of polar air,
the autumn here is an early frost on corn.

We sleep between and on bins of roasting silk,
the flakes scurry their way up and upon oak
as dark blankets the cepes on Indian Mounds.

It is the cereal grass we are responsible for,
the origin of which remains a braky mystery
to the lines of our ancestry's neutral spirits.

Earlier in the day we teetered upon a fence
with brunette clapboard shadows snuggled
in ditches and fully knew the night would
bring cold, dew, and mist in evenhandedness.

We have to dry it all; flint corn, the dent corn
and can only make believe the white tails of
deer in lift
are the swells and crests of crashing
oceanic waves in a place that is nicely wet.

Doug Crandell

Hoofbeats in Dwindle

The hoggery is bubbling with cholera
on a day where the sun whitewashes slate
and the spigots blast concentrate on the
toes of bleached gum boots in early May.

These are our litters of Spot and York and
even a tad bit of Landrace before the Poland
Chinas were bred back against two-breed and
three-breed crossings that bore this hog estate.

Copper-colored crates and gypsum expanding
outside the farrowing house doors, may be all
that survives today, that and us; this tribe of dense
farmhands when in battle with a viral detractress.

Robbing graves is grisly and we won't be going
back to school but instead will enlist here to stay
in a ghettoed pasture where spirea, barberry and
mock orange are the wilted remains of our waters.

Tova Gabrielle

Salvia Devinorum, or, The Only Way to Love an Addict

It was nothing
of this world;
not the smoke
from the water-pipe
embedded millefiori,
not the thousand flowers;
not a choke cigarette,
nor breath held in
anticipation

she's inhaling

The Crushed Sage,
Salvia Devinorum,
in a man's bedroom
in April of the terrible
year: O-Three,
in the wonder high
Hills of North Berkeley

how he hides from her
his scanner gray
marbled eyes,
his Mick Jagger mouth
frozen sculpted face

but it's better for her
than drinking alone,
even in a hot tub
under the stars

He's a post
UC Berkeley
Scientist
Tim Leary Wannabe,

carefully measuring out
his leaves that

will multiply, and then
divide her.

It has no scent,
not like anything.

He'd introduced it first
from his laptop screen,
remarking how beautiful
its molecular structure
sea horse,
with a body and tail,
pentagonal head.

To her it swayed
like a skinny dancer.

He'd described the trip, shocking,
lasting only a minute,
he'd merged with
the paint on the walls,
described how he'd feared
to lose the tether
to what
he'd once called
himself.

It is almost dawn,
after three terrible years
the 2000 Coup,
911 Collisions
(he names Controlled Demolitions)
pretenses for smashing cradles
of Civilization.

Will a New Dawn still arrive
or is this the end?

He holds out still
hope offering
a frail thread to
the late nineteen-sixties
while across the bay
shops on
Haight and Asbury
sleep
with one eye open,
witnessing how
he extends for her,
his light; while his body,
he keeps to himself.

Her heart stopped wandering
in traffic she's tried
to accept that to love him
is to partition off pride

from behind the veil
of a book
he watches her,

his lengthy back-side settled
against the rumped
clean
edge
of his bed
and

suddenly

she's amazed
by her arm

It's not an arm
connected to her:
She is just up to the right
of her body, watching:
in two places
at once
astonished.

It is not a body that knows or observes,
but an animal, like his cat, Alice,

and another strange thing:
her friend suddenly
has a pointed face,
and his body has
become very small.

She has never seen him
this way before.
He Does what He Is,
half-ignoring her,
he's illusory:
for he barely inhales as he
assesses her frame
of mind.

For the first time,
she Sees him:
not through her urgency;
he is not an image
of Herself
any more,
not hers to contain
or control or convince

but he is His Own Idea,
as he should be.

He's like Cat,
curled
at the foot of his Firm
bed with only a thin,
tattered blanket
in his room with only
a tiny covered window
way up
she can't reach
him.

He is not a trick,
an excuse, an evasion,
not her lover, not expressive,
not like her.

Married to Free Will
and Science,
not someone
she'd hoped for,
not a long awaited
answer that, yes, she is
the best drug, after all.

What, then, to give him,
if not the animal,
separated now
like an untwined piece of rope,
from her watchful self,
above

the animal below with its arm
poised hypnotically there in mid-air?

Sometimes the highest form of love
is the willingness
to do without
it.

Perhaps
he'd wanted her
to accept anathema
to her animal self:
that she would
never
ride him,
and he would not
loom over
her yowling body,
nor look down into her
deer eyes smiling,
No.

She would have to join him
in a bowl
of magic
on his Hard
bed in the house
where another hungry woman
brooded over him
instead.

Summer No. 4

Buying a condo is like watching the locusts settle on your crops, except that it's only your time that gets eaten, mornings and afternoon stripped bare with contracts and counters, remodels and installs.

We told our broker we were looking for a place with a balcony, somewhere to set out our chairs and watch the last few days of August from. Now the fields of my notebooks are thin and novel-less, while my friend Andrew down in Mexico has a rented rancho fat with word, ripe chapters hanging off every vine.

Treehouses

Sunday open houses,
riding elevators up into impossibly expensive views,
the broker asks when we're looking to buy.
Maybe next lifetime, my wife says, or the one after that.
It depends on karma, of course, and the cosmic probability of
two souls finding each other again on a planet of six billion.

The boss's youngest daughter is sick, really sick,
and I ask my wife again about birth defects, autism, food
allergies, downs syndrome, special ed, ADHD, and do we
really want to stop buying those little round pills? I'm waiting
for another reassuring answer, and waiting.

Driving by herself to Billings, my wife nods off at the wheel, a
split second, nothing more, and she calls me from a hotel
room that night, laughing, she doesn't understand why I can't
sleep, why I'm repeating fuck! fuck! you've got to be more
careful! to her picture in the living room.

The broker unlocks the door, let's us wander in, shows us the
kitchen and the den. The balcony, though, is a platform over
the city, over the world, with a sweep of roofs and trees and
parks all ordered like colored dominoes beneath us, reassuringly
patterned, reassuringly insignificant, reassuringly safe.
And just imagine what it'd be like if we were even higher up,
says my wife. Do you want to see some more? asks the
broker.

Yes, yes, we say, take us all the way to the top.

Robert Krut

Homecoming's Light

I don't know why I came back.
In the daylight, everything here has thin, translucent skin—
the words beneath reversed.

I can peel the mountain's flesh, touch the text underneath.
Everything speaks of regret in daylight.
There are letters forming inside my fingernails.

I know I've tricked myself before.
I know the way eyes glass over
looking back, realizing you've done something wrong.
I know how to forget.

I wanted to be good—
here, the light reminds me I'm not.
It won't let me forget anything.

I reach up, take the sun in my palm.
I want that darkness, and it is dark
except for my glowing hand.

Moon over the mountains, I pull my arm back,
throw the sun through that green hole.

I am home,
forgotten and new.

Then, Two Stones Inside

1

When I looked in the mirror, there was a hole
between my chest and stomach.
Its edges were smooth, its center, black.
I ran my fingers along its circle, reached in.
First, just my index finger, then my whole hand.
I felt bone, the silk faces of organs.
Without notice, my whole arm was inside.
Then the other. Before thought,
my head was inside, looking at the clearing
just past the spine. Wrapping my hand
around the backbone, I pulled myself through.

I was at a rise in land, looking over
the naked bottom of a drained ocean.
A head-size rock in my hands.
It was silent.
There was a plate of frozen black lava at my feet.
I raised that rock above my body, swung it down.
The plate was unmarked, the rock
smaller, shaking free.

I must have done this all night,
until my hands were empty
but for a spoonful of dust.
Holding my palms open, a gust
blew it out onto the ocean's floor.

2

Because when I close my eyes,
I see two stones. They float in darkness,
gray and smooth, always there.

But last night, I watched their drift,
felt them between eye and lid.
I nearly cried. I thought I was going blind.
They were pushing through.
When I opened to sight,
they were nestled in my palms,
and I could see.

Hallie Moore

Drama Queen

*Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shallot.*

—Tennyson

I might sit back, let flake settle
over flake like white hens nesting
on eggs, covering my feet, then knees,
on higher, to my alabaster cheeks
and jet lashes, 'til the white parting
of my hair grows indistinguishable
from the falling snow.

Or flutter, fall back, a floating angel
eager to show her wings,
as my mortal heels and ivory thighs
sink and I pull the pond's ice quilt
up over my dark eyes.

Or ignore the path for frozen bluffs,
refuse to shout or snatch the cliff-face
root. Instead, fly off the icy edge,
airborne, truly afloat, 'til
all this dismal weaving ends.

But these scripts are flat!
No one would see the Lady of Shalott
or hear her last chill song.
My death deserves some recompense:
a death that stops their carols too.
Oh, and that knight with the coal-black
curls to offer grace and kiss my poor dead face.

What's One Garden

I

They shared
the apple's red pulse
its juice
wiped lovingly
from the other's chin
sucked from the other's
fingertips
mutually beating
pristine.

II

Hands flatten
against a cold glass
wall
the two peer through
imprisoned
outside
rolling
the bitterness
in their mouths.

III

She spits it out,
learns discernment
begins
with separation,
and slides
her warm hand
into his.

Foreigners

i walked into the courtyard
of your childhood in the leopoldstadt district
of vienna & called mommy but nothing
came out & the turkish children
looked up from their play & this
is how it looks in this year's ghetto.
i didn't wonder for too long
why guards with semiautomatic weapons
stand outside the turkish embassy
in this town with barely a memory
of its dead jews. recent archeological
studies in the center of the city
reveal medieval evidence of jews
some sort of monument, the signs
say, will show how these settlers lived before
they were burned, with the remainder shipped
down the danube, half dead, for leaking
their ritual bathwater into the water supply
& spreading plague. the turkish children of vienna
continue to stare.

Zelinkagasse

zelinkagasse, i'm feeling lucky.
i google you out & find cafes.
or i can have an agency
run a credit check this century
in the very bedroom daddy
slept in before europe gasped
& jewish blood clogged the drains.
i'm embarrassed by the fine vienna weather.
the receptionist at the credit agency
is young & cannot spell the word *war*.
she allows me to send your grandson
an email from these sleek offices.
zelinkagasse, vienna of the lucky cafes.
vienna online, how history shivers.

Authors (Continued from front)

Doug Crandell grew up on a hog farm in Indiana and has worked with ceiling tiles and mops. His prose been published in *Glimmer Train*, *Indiana Review*, and *Smithsonian Magazine*. His first novel is due out in 2004 from Ludlow Press.

Tova Gabrielle is a retired psychotherapist and substance abuse counselor now living in Oakland, California. The poem here in *The 2River View* is her first published poem.

Ian Christopher Hooper works as a librarian in Denver. His work has appeared most recently in *Big City Lit*, *Mississippi Review Online*, and *Red Booth Review*.

Robert Krut has poems appearing, or forthcoming, in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Salt Hill*.

Hallie Moore lives along the Gulf Coast just north of Houston. Her work has appeared most recently in *Adirondack Review*, *Branches Quarterly*, *Moon Dance*, and *Texas Review*.

Evelyn Posamentier lives and writes in California.



Last Wave at Bloody Head © 2003 by Oliver Curran

About the Artist

Oliver Curran is a self-taught folk artist working in Newry, County Down, Ireland. His art, particularly his Blue series of Irish famine, is sought after by private collectors in Holland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry, art, and theory, quarterly publishing *The 2River View* and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. All publications appear initially on line and afterwards in print. Submission guidelines can be found at www.2River.org.

Richard Long, Editor
June 2003

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7.4 (Summer 2003)

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