

The 2River View

14.4 (Summer 2010)



Angry Fish © Gabriela Vainsencher

New poems by

Walter Bergen, Antonia Clark, James Grinwis

Clark Holtzman, Ann Hurst, Robert Hill Long

Martin Ott, Amy Pency, Mitch Roberson

Carolyn Foster Seagal, Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon

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Mitch Roberson

The This of That

Myself mostly, whoever
that is. The future, which waits
forever, or history,
whose untimely death

is survived by a dog.
Teeth, lips. Ghosts
of words, how they haunt
the mouth, how they use

the tongue as a medium
to talk trash. Semblance,
aura. Pigeons roosting
in an O. The gift of pause.

Hands. The color of lemons,
the color of the scent
of lemons. Our collective suicide,
grief's beautiful blowjob.

Walter Bargaen

Saintly

After a week of a fog, it's served for dinner. The cook leans out the window and ladles it into three pots. Cooked down and caramelized, it can obscure the most intense stare, exacerbate cataracts, blind hatred. Fog-heaped steaming platters, and no one knows who's sitting across the table much less whose elbow bumped the fork, catapulting it into the air. All the guests sit mutely, listening for the metallic clatter of a landing but nothing echoes back from oblivion: no squealing like a stuck pig, no howling chains of a rattling coon dog, no caterwauling cats, no speeding tires chewing up gravel, no saw scream of trees being subdivided, no vocalizing living or muttering machinations. Now someone will have to make do with a dessert fork.

Knives dance across the plates challenging the porcelain. There's never been a lighter cuisine except for saints who claim to live on light. That's the next step. No need to buy X-ray glasses advertised in the back of Marvel comics where the hair on the head of the wearer is drawn straight up as a well-endowed woman walks past offering grants and foundation support. Those superhero powers so out of control. Now the diners will be transformed from an accumulation of micro-droplets to photons. Now everyone can see through, stepping out of fog into the light. The road no longer needed, walking on air and water the rage as fog blows here and there. The long or short of it, the host wishes the diners well, hoping they find home one way or another, and embraces each with a farewell Heimlich.

Walter Bargaen

Sigmund Road

. . . you think that you are suspended on air, but then it's rougher than the ungraded gravel that once found your house in the woods and always led away. Or it's a deeper road, the road in the road that holds every destination that's ever been dreamed but now you're stumbling along covered in an asphalt nightmare. Or it's the road under the road, embryonic, not yet fully developed, certainly not ready for the likes of you, and if you drive on it too long all hell breaks loose. And maybe it's all three at once, as you begin to separate, turn into triplets, and watch yourself headed in three different directions, and claiming total control.

The steering wheel wants to set its own course, turning right, turning left, trying to center on three roads or no road at all as you begin to cry for the median. You were sure that you had a destination, and now you're not even sure that you were on a road that led somewhere, but you're committed, no turning back, and hell bent to get there. You know slowing down is a mistake, you'll end up dead in your tracks. There's no starting up again, tires uselessly spinning for years, a crazed potter's wheel. The vessel thrown looks like an unwashed car with gray change in the ashtray, the glove compartment's owner's manual and emergency flares about to ignite into panic. All three directions, all three lives, about to collide, and then it's too late, the car's in mud up to its axles. It's what Midwest farmers call, "When the bottom falls out of the road," and it happens after the grounds frozen for a month and the freeze goes deep, then it rains and doesn't stop for weeks.

Antonia Clark

Rapprochement

I agreed to put aside the ruined vacation
and he agreed to put aside the slips
in bookkeeping. I admitted that some
of my friends were not the best company,
were, now that I thought of it, intolerable.
And he admitted that his sister had never
liked me from day one. I observed
that everyday objects often intrude
on our best intentions and he offered
that no one should be held accountable
for where the dust settles. The henhouse,
we agreed, might well have welcomed
the fox, the window might have shattered,
anyway, without human intervention.
Effects can spring into being like rabbits
out of a hat, their causes nowhere to be seen.
Just as, in darkness, bodies turn naturally
to one another without need for reason.

Antonia Clark

Secret Sharer

Pain pauses in passing to tip its hat, to single
you out with a wink and nod. You're bound
in an alliance you want no part of.

The way the devil reminds you of the pact,
even though you claim to have forgotten it.

The way the dentist tosses off pleasantries,
asks what kind of music you like, before
he sets about drilling and grinding.

Your mother warned you long ago, told you
what would happen when your father got home.
You can't pretend not to know what's coming.

James Grinwis

A Little Smoke

There was a space before the other space, a lurid twenties
German movie hiding in the smog, a mime that was upon one, a
torment, a dog sniffing a home out, a grown man playing with a
power ranger action figure. Let the wood speak. The sorrowful
still dream. About the gravelly dirt, the ascensions once known.
Wondering if, at the top, there's nostalgia for dust. And whether
at the bottom there's anything.

James Grinwis

Roadkill Poem

I walked past a dead fox.
It was smashed in the emergency lane-less road.
C conjured herself out of the shattered
bits of its skull.
The magic of hiking kidney pine forests.
Wives are digesting baby magazines and *New Yorkers*.
A woman with a wedding band
hand in hand with a man without one,
having taken it off or just by inclination
of not having one.
I wonder what C is doing.
The terrain and the lights are sharp.
It was a day of polite nods,
a place in which new things occur
and occur.

Clark Holtzman

On Cox Road, Alabama, 1986

There is the story of the jogger running
along Cox Road as the sun clears some pines,
exposing the day, or possibly settles
in the ragged west, dragging the day under.

It was to be about him, his stride in rhythm
with his breathing, his strong heartbeat, though
now it's about the stone lodged in his shoe
and the disappeared girl it signals, and

this moment nobody can do anything about:
the still, small body astonishing the roadside weeds
where he balances on one foot, shoe in hand,
so that he will see and ask for every step back,

which cannot be given, not by me, not you
who can only tell the story, nor by the form
obscenely displaying itself. He will reach, deeply,
for the child's name, any child's name . . .

Alicia . . . Alexandra . . . Aletris, and fail.
This happens far from anyone, out on Cox Road,
where by now the sun has risen to its own
glorious grief or buried itself in the hills'.

Clark Holtzman

Moving Day

What a sorry sight, our little
household shoved into a corner of the van,
and how the muscle-bound movers look,
their swing through this backwater for what?
Some loose chairs and a bed, a table better
left by the dumpster, hand-
me-down these, fourth-hand those.

What were we thinking, are we doing?
We do it anyway.

We are swallowed whole
in less than a morning and
that's it, our little life-in-a-box
stacked expertly in another:
1987, everybody moving
south but us.

North lay the fourteen
hours through the friendly colors
of our Rand-McNally, ascending
to lake-effect snow and evil,
flowerless Springtimes.

You remember them,
don't you, dear,
knee-deep and heavy,
dear Opelika, dear Alabama?

Anna Hurst

Husband

What pictures were you looking at? Was she clothed? You said she was probably naked. She was probably undressed. I know her legs were spread. She was probably shaved. She's lost her hair, less like an animal. You are acting just like an animal, rubbing rubbing rubbing yourself while her legs are spread, she's naked and she's lost her hair.

Husband, when I was young, my step-dad looked at porn. He watched people stick fingers inside of themselves really fast really fast. Don't try this at home. He tried this at home. Husband, when I was sleeping, he opened my door, stuck his fingers inside of me really fast really fast.

Anna Hurst

When I'm On All Fours

I'm screaming because it hurts. You
are smiling wide mouthed digging

and wanting more. When you go
to sleep, you sleep and do not see

me. She is standing on all fours, digging
and doing back to you, mouth widespread,

tongue ready. I'm undressing down
and waiting, flaunting and bending, I'm spread,

you've lost your eyes, I've found them
in books, in pants, and in her mouth, I'm

laying down in mud, sinking and fucking
the ground to death, it kills me, holding

and touching my body. I took your books,
I've read your words, something about beauty

and true and names. I want my bones to show
so you know my dedication to beauty.

Robert Hill Long

Good Friday

This morning I asked Sarah to draw me. She was bent over a sheet of ruled paper, with the Rand-McNally atlas as her foundation. There they were in sulfur light, the tallest peaks, reduced to a dust jacket

supporting a frail white negative space from which a rickety horse had begun to emerge above a stick-like flower. Sarah studied my face, let her pencil hover, then raised the page

and punched a hole through it. Tonight she's haloed in lamplight with picture-books. Her arm is God's bent stylus: it draws on the air the one language I want to read each day. Somewhere inside her, the image

of a horse gallops away. Inside me, love is the hole no mountain can fill. Look, here's her pencil: my nail.

Robert Hill Long

The Swimmer

The sparrow's flight is two unequal parts:
a beating up, a sinking. Many wingstrokes,
a bellying glide. There is an art
to lifelong depression: the going for broke

and the break. The slump, the liquid slide
from a straightback chair. On the cool of the floor
lay an ear to the crack between worlds
that whispers *Get up you baby* then *Weep no more*.

You can spread your arms then, featherless wings
of a creature made to fly underwater,
a thing that, once it surfaces, can breathe

and breathe, can see the small people on the shore
with their books and children, the fragmented songs
of pleasure you fly underneath.

Martin Ott

Angel Blue

Blue is the color of Los Angeles
because it happens so rarely.

Dusty culverts puddle beneath sky
winks. Gucci bags swish like bluebirds

hunting for mates. Tears tattooed
on my barista remind me of movie

credits, the dramatic hue of asphyxiation
and unslapped babies. My fingers burn

blue from whiteboard markers and brains
stormed. Night-blue lingerie drapes falling

veins. My daughter's guitar teacher killed
herself not long after assigning blues

scales. Sad notes and an azure gaze
linger like foreign currency, lake days.

So much here to misunderstand,
our blue angel, this sleeping city.

Martin Ott

Children of Interrogation

Why are you running from my hugs?
The question marks I wield are barbed tonight.
The moon's face beams on a wanted poster.
Why is a single humped camel not a camel?

The questions marks I wield are barbed tonight.
Water torture will not work on a mermaid.
Why is a single humped camel not a camel?
Why does cancer need us to survive?

Water torture will not work on a mermaid.
My last cigarette is in the future, I'm afraid.
Why does cancer need us to survive?
,ÄüDeadlines,Äù originate from the Civil War.

My last cigarette is in the future, I,Äôm afraid.
Why won,Äôt dental floss decapitate my enemies?
"Deadlines" originate from the Civil War.
Civilization hides in my son's finger painting.

Why won't dental floss decapitate my enemies?
Why are you running from my hugs?
Civilization hides in my son's finger painting.
The moon's face beams on a wanted poster

Amy Pence

The Court of Two Sisters, 1968

Whole as it is — experience — I cannot halve it
from that place laced by stench's powerful darling:
The French Market wafting the rotting vegetal, the sidewalk
secreting, the courtyard secretive. At seven, I floated just
below the waterline, heard our grown neighbor crying
through the walls. Stung by his lover's rejection, drunk —
just sad — is what my mother said. Anguish
echoed into the far high ceiling —
held me in that clawfooted tub —
a dragonfly blurred
at the screened window,
wore its ancient brutal guise.

Just below, Bourbon Street, Confederate jasmine.
Pearly raindrops clung to the scrolled gates locking out the ghosts
of Jackson Square. Why not these guttural sobs, the lick
of the angry no good past? On Sundays, the courtyard
filled with tourists, and we hid, my sister
and I: slid our legs between the railings, spying.
Englobed as it is, dripping humid
we hid, secreted
whole in the erogenous south,
left wanting.

Amy Pence

My Friend Emile as Heron

Thought moves through no-thought, girds
the body's spine, fills grief's deep tissue.
Thought entrenches no-thought: tightens
the rocks, fills between stone: a moss,
a vine, a creeping shadow. Sound unscrolls
from no-sound: multiplying, unstill. Life
enfolds life: luscious, tender plums. Death
unthreads from life: takes my friend
too sudden. Thought burns through no-thought: turns
iconic, ironic, then sighs. Thought
lands its magnificent heron, then stands at the pond
when I run by. Emile turns his neck —
opens his beak as I cry. I turn left to rung no-thought,
darken the path with my forest,
mirror the bird's silent lift-off — regal, beyond time.

Carolyn Foster Segal

The Island Postmaster's Daughter

believed, when she was small,
that all the mail
in her father's bag
belonged to her;
each night as she grew
she dreamed
of the next day's letter,
the one that would ferry
her away from the world she knew,
the little truck that ran in its circle,
the little room for sorting,
those tiny windowed boxes.
Oh, even the stamp would be
lovely, if only she
had the right key to
claim what was
surely hers.

Carolyn Foster Segal

Vanishing Point

5 miles south
on Rt. 3, a wooden bridge by
Peter's Pond, and then
you're on Paradise Road,
the sun going in and out. There's
a yard sale today — old
teacups and linens and framed
photographs — one with a girl
who might be your grandmother,
posed with a globe, her left hand
spanning the distance from Cork to
here. How many hours of
kitchen work went into the white
dress, the sitting fee, the packages
sent back home? Now she gazes
into the middle distance of
paradise. If she were to
speak, you know what she
would say (this is what
you've saved). She'd tell you
about the hawthorns outside
her cousins' house, the hawthorns
in their beautiful rows.

Joe Wiinikka-Lydon

Empire of Time

An age has ended like the boxing of one's ears.
A new age has yet
to begin, and so what?

Why not wait a while longer?

The cattle cars sit in a cypress stand
and cool their heels. A few breaths
are taken. Out in the islands
a breeze lingers in someone's hair.
A catamaran

lists.

While we wait, I pull out a chair for you
in a bar we frequent. I pull out a chair
and we wait for the next age to speak its name.
Will it be cruel? Will it slide into our hands
like an ancient urn or slip on through,
smooth and slick as tupperware?
Will the next age roll in our mouths
until, choking, we spit it out
for someone else to swallow? Oh,

you call it traitor and kick back your chair as you rise,
but there is still time to call
a spade a spade. So I ask you,

it all began with the word,
didn't it?

In the end, you reply,
it all began.

Joe Wiinikka-Lydon

My Speaking to You is a Song I Sing Softly

to the ash that yearns to take our names, to the rock
that watches, to the dust
that squanders our stories like mornings overslept.

Where is the myth that will make this new?

The time of the word is nearly at an end. Its age was like a doll
closing
its eyes,

a bearded lady, a jack in the box.

Even today, we can still catch its scent, a rawness like old leaves
crumbling, the smell

of something undercooked.

But it all started not with words
but music. Or so we
were almost told.

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Contributors

Walter Bargan has published thirteen books of poetry of poetry. His latest is *Days Like This Are Necessary: New & Selected Poems*. He is the winner of the Chester H. Jones Foundation prize in 1997, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1991, and the William Rockhill Nelson Award. From 2008 to 2009, he served as the first poet laureate of Missouri.

Antonia Clark is a medical writer in Burlington, Vermont. A former writing instructor, she co-administers an online poetry forum, *The Waters*. Recent poems have appeared in *Apparatus*, *The Cortland Review*, *Eclectica*, and *Soundzine*.

James Grinwis lives in Florence, Massachusetts. His poems have appeared in a variety of journals, and he is founding editor of *Bateau Press*.



Stadium Lights © Gabriela Vainsencher

Clark Holtzman lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. His poems have appeared in *The Antigonish Review*, *The Lyric*, *Negative Capability*, and *River Styx*, among others.

Anna Hurst will graduate in May 2011 with a degree in Creative Writing. Hurst is the former editor-in-chief of *Delta Journal*, and founder of the Highland Coffees reading series in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Robert Hill Long is author of *The Power to Die* and *The Work of the Bow* (Cleveland State, 1987, 1997), *The Effigies* (Plinth Books, 1998), and *The Kilim Dreaming* (Bear Star Press, 2010). He is now a faculty research administrator at the University of Oregon.

Martin Ott is a former U.S. Army interrogator. He has been nominated for two Pushcart prizes, and his poetry manuscript *Children of Interrogation* has been a semi finalist or finalist in more than a dozen poetry competition.

Amy Pence has recent poems in *The Oxford American* and *Quarterly West*. *The Decadent Lovely* is forthcoming from Main Street Rag. Recent fiction is online at *All Things Girl*.

Mitch Roberson holds an MFA from Vermont College. His poems have appeared in *The Nation*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. In 2004 he won the Discovery/The Nation award in poetry.

Carolyn Foster Segal teaches American literature, creative writing, and film at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. She has work forthcoming in the anthology *Visting Dr. Williams: Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of William Carlos Williams* (University of Iowa Press).

Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon is currently a doctoral candidate at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. He has published poetry in *2River View* and *Cimarron Review*, among others, and has lived and worked in several countries, including Turkey, Bosnia, and Kenya.

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About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View*, occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series, and, more recently, blogging and podcasting from Muddy Bank.

About the Artist

Gabriela Vainsencher was born in 1982 in Buenos Aires, Argentina and was raised in Tel Aviv. In 2005 she moved to Brooklyn, where she currently lives. She's had solo exhibitions at Work gallery in Brooklyn and La Chambre Blanche gallery in Quebec City. Her work has been also shown at Pierogi gallery in Brooklyn, The Freies Museum in Berlin and D21 Kunstraum in Leipzig, among others. In 2008 she attended the Yaddo artist colony and in 2009 she was Williams College's Levitt artist-in-residence.

Richard Long, Editor

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