

The 2River View

4.4 (Summer 2000)



City © 2000 by Cindy Duhe

new poems by
Dancing Bear, Wendy Carlisle
Claudia Grinnell, Joseph Lisowski
Duane Locke, Kate Lutzner
Anne Pepper, Sarah Picklesimer
C. J. Sage, Lisa Marie Zaran

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Crows

thanks to Robert Pesich

I found two black feathers
where angels should have been
in an unremarkable spot
halfway up a mountain baking
in the tireless sun on a rock
that demanded more than one

Dancing Bear

Blue

there is a shade of blue
that only fits into the eye
for a brief moment
during certain June twilights

there is nothing else like it
and if you are not standing
looking northeast
forgetting to blink

then it does not exist
it will never haunt you
make you stand in June
patiently staring

and how you must appear
while waiting looking up
and to the northeast
as the brightest stars begin

like you are expecting the sky
to erupt in fireworks
something everyone can see
burning the night air

a crash or meteor shower
the disappointment and desire
to ask you *What,*
What is it?

what that dilemma must feel
to know something so beautiful
the world's rarest gem
pure and untouched or written about

how you could name that shade
or use it in a poem
hoping perhaps that people
would stand outside

in a June twilight
waiting for the blue to darken
aware of the background and
not wanting to blink

Wendy Carlisle

Home Fires

At the gates, Thetis' boy, the one with the bad heel,
waits for his war. The Gods know his mother

tried to save him, to make her mixed marriage last.
Six children sacrificed, the ardent goddess

blazed to purge her seventh of mortality
but where she held him, he scalded.

Out of childhood's shadow, he doesn't feel
his own weak foot; he can't recall

the water or the stranger's bone. Eager
for vengeance, not enticed to live forever,

he hefts the great round shield, his principal defense
a mother's love. Underneath his breastplate

what is mortal and almost mortal thrums.
He doesn't notice how the touched place burns.

Wendy Carlisle

In the Grand Hotel

A woman in red lace, in slingbacks, lets
one delicate crimson strap slide
down her humerus to the elbow and beyond,
opens her body, that book of joy,
and forgets for a moment all other hotels.

In this fable, a humane man fits his palm
to the ball of her shoulder.
Later, the woman does not know why,

when she wakes at three, the phrase in her head
is not a sign, does not give up its meaning
easily as names she heard that night

behind the bar. A woman is the sum
of all these parts, and morning when it comes
will rock forward into the day like an arm slipping free,
hold the threat of embrace, and still fit her
like a bone its socket, a hand on skin,
a hotel air conditioner humming impossible words.

Claudia Grinnell

The Myth of Mapmaking

There are, even today, places where you can get utterly lost.
A man and a woman, for example, making love
for the first time,
falling into each other, falling like the first leaves
of autumn.

They are brave, like that, believing in adventure and footsteps

coming to meet them. In the morning, each nerve is strained;
they adjust to swimming in fear. They try out their new voices
to recall a version of certain events: *Speak to me*, he says.
She speaks the language of love with her tongue and
her fingers.

They concentrate fear in a word: *You*. They close their eyes
to know the leaves that brush across their faces.

Claudia Grinnell

Beginning

A chicken, a rooster, or a goat—
my story begins with a sacrifice,
a choice, because god is good,

and my hands are bloody
and in the beginning
is always the deed

and then confusion.
In the beginning then
my hands were bloody again

and feathers stuck in my hands
and thighs and even my throat,
and there I stand, in my kitchen

beginning again. I tear
the flesh from the bones
and break the bones

and suck the marrow.
The heart I swallow
whole, it still beats.

With the beak I scratch
out my eyes. Both wings
I extend in my hands,

catching the updraft
from the fire and then
I remember to begin again.

Joseph Lisowksi

from After Death's Silence

1. Death's Silence

Death's silence is a storm
that cracks trees
breaks leaves
from dawn to dusk.
Until there is nothing
but bare wood.
And night becomes a dark terror
that cannot scream.

It is sudden,
complete.
Like the snapping
of a neck.

2. Desert Wind

I am reckless in this wind.
Heat whistles through my limbs.
Another day empty of promise
envelopes another night.
A film covers my eyes,
dark negative
of the hour, the minute
my daughter died.

I wake that moment
every day. In darkness
there is nothing.
Then roosters and dogs,
sometimes voices cursing,
an occasional gunshot.

Dawn eventually tints my window.
I rise by habit, believing there is no choice.

3. *Empty Vessels*

Words are such empty vessels,
brittle, chipped, cracked,
unable to bear the weight
of loss, agony, regret.
When death strikes, they dissipate
like dust in a sudden gust.

My daughter is dead, I repeat.
(I held her broken body.
A fingertip touch told me
it was not she—my eyes
blanched by her lifeless form.)

I feel her presence unexpectedly
in familiar places—a walk along the beach,
a glimpse in my rear view mirror,
in the croaking voice of her brother's grief.

Her mother keens again, rocking in failed light.
I sit near her darkness and sway.
What we had is gone. What we have is

4. Grief

Is there hope?
I swat at mosquitoes,
the relentless heat.

Their droning continues.
I get stung again
and again.

Duane Locke

On the Wild Side of the Hillsborough River

Through the openings
Of the palmetto blades
I see
A tree with red hair.

The tree
Is on the other bank of the river
Inside a barbed fence.

Duane Locke

After the Drizzle

The shore reeds have thousands of eyes
After the slight sprinkle.
All eyes look towards the kingfisher
Perched on a segment
Of the bamboo leaning
Over the lily-spotted water.

Duane Locke

Insight

The evening sun
Getting ready to leave our part of the earth
Reddens the white egret
Standing under an autumn maple.
I decide to sit on the grass.
Why keep walking
When there is no place to go.

Kate Lutzner

wondering

i wonder what you say when you speak of me
do you say i was in bed all night loosening desire
do you say i make you tie me to the tree outside

i saw a play last night where a woman floats out of her body
i wonder, am i ever really in mine

is there a place where awareness exists
where this body i inhabit stops asking its inherent questions
when the doubt lodged somewhere in me comes free

you sleep so beautifully
do you know i lie awake watching

the newness creates space

when all that has been allowed to evaporate,
when we know more than we know now, what then
will live in that cavity

what replaces fear if not more fear

Kate Lutzner

woman

i am becoming the woman in the next bed
the one who dissects her hands while pulling apart
her lover. yes, the lover is a woman. yes, they have the same
components. it's like two cars colliding. rather than a
cat and a car.

the components of the body are said to loosen
with age. i wonder, does an instrument have any place
in this. perhaps i will dig around inside
until all that is useless becomes necessary.
i am becoming the one who disassociates

having seen a play about a floating woman, i know
i am capable of more. there are, of course, times i am present.
i have been seen at various events waiting in line
i have been seen passing out on the floor of a famous theater

do you know i keep my body pure
do you know two women are as clean as anything
movies play again and again in my head
various sex scenes

a man in a wheelchair frequents the adult section of the local
video store. i feel bad feeling bad for him. most of all, i
want to go in there
and tell him there is no need for that, i will love his still body
as much as any moving one.

something stops me from joining him behind that
curtain of despair
behind the drapery worn with men's hands running over
and over
it. i want to be the slipcover on a sofa for once, want to
see what goes on
in people's living rooms. i have heard the couple
upstairs yelling.
i have felt the weight of her on his lap.

if i were witness to that scene every night,
i would not have to try so hard to live.

Sarah Picklesimer

Taking Rein of my Thoughts

The hour arrives when evening raises its azure wand
and the light smolders, after half-light,
leaving these lonely eyes to watch the distant sunlight
step down a western staircase; well endowed,
sashaying with rounded hips so ardent
and crimson-gold ruffled crinoline that turns
the world of men upside down.

This place struts over memories that blow belching
and opens the solid past into boiling winds.
Long climbs past bitter vetch and shady strata
arrive only to look back across this hilly gorge;
all-knowing data that reveals with a red shadow
and folds into pleats of conjured blood.
Where one might invoke the honed hues
of one's former lovers. I've no such past.

I've never been a beautiful woman and now
drawn-out, whiskered silences shuffle
only to force me out across the hilly gorge
standing with timber, grapevine and hollow,
equally old as the rustled tail-feathers
of the first chicken I killed for dinner
that pranced its bold, puppet dance for life.

While others vaulted into a grave of love,
I carried on my drawn-out and whining way
with Horus walking in forms that only I could see.
Daydreaming led me to follow him,
and yet he only watched me, a step away.
I'd be a pupil if he would be my teacher,
I'd kiss the ground to turn time around,
while murdering and castrating all the evil
I would eat black dirt like Ezekiel ate dung.

Then snowflakes would fall to earth and everything
would turn from crimson to white.
Pure consciousness would shovel all our paths,
and my head would no longer be upside down.

C. J. Sage

how an eagle meditates

nested at mountain-top
among the few tangled branches
wrapped to hold her; arms of Zeus
spun in circles, she works
the wooded element into her
wheel of something like a prayer,
hymns recite when beak
scrapes bark, rests
practice as tongue
guides secrets through a
narrow throat, like sap
along its master's ringing body
expanding. her wings hold
arrows, body aims itself;
books of incarnation spring from her
bow, fan overhead and spread her
stark pages where snipers lay
down their arms to worship.

C. J. Sage

Valediction of Birds

Without seams, the take-off, then the sleep,
dreams of birds come and go; huge small birds,
huge birds holding small birds in the belly
arrow themselves - deep gray lines. A target
catches all the beaks, there's a choir
of low-slung moans, a jab rustles the body,
enters the gut, and the stiff wings begin
their fray through the fast fall, breaking
limbs away. It all floats southward,
the claws open, empty; speed passes through
like bullets, and leaves this hum behind.

Anne Pepper

Our Florida Driveway

You never blew
snow out of our
Florida driveway. Never
demonstrated a birthday

unless reminded. This
did not just become, was
evidently always,
purposeful. Dusting—
women's work, as
babies, scrubbing toilets,
malingering in strip malls
buying Hallmark drippage.

That silver car was cleaner
than your shirts, rolled to
sleeve, ironed into early
deaths. You were strong

in them, their stricture
pleased you. You never
kissed our gay black mannequin,
his headless fiberglass covered

over in bright scarves, Chinese
stork umbrellas. Add-on balloon
head. His name became Richard, although
he was dickless. But you were out. You

were partying. You never blew
snow out of our Florida driveway.

Lisa Marie Zaran

Reflections on a First Date

She stammers
a lot, and it's
kind of endearing,
but you can already see
(or hear actually) how
eventually it would get on your nerves.

How some day
you might take
a fist to her face
or a firm hold
while she's bathing
and name her lung
with bath water
adjust her body
to a bloated corpse.

Suddenly, you realize
you could spend
the rest of your life
behind bars, selling
pieces of yourself
for cigarettes and yard
privileges.

So, instead of asking
her out on another date, you say,
We'll have to do this again sometime
and she nods, her head bobbing
upanddown upanddown upanddown
like a plastic jack-in-the-box and the music
starts pounding and your palms get itchy,
but you hold it in while she makes her escape,
while she closes the car door and it's like closing
a lid on an otherwise, what could have been,
a relatively pleasant evening.

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Authors

Dancing Bear has had his writing and photographs appear in places such as *New York Quarterly*, *Zuzu's Petals*, *Rio Grande Review*, and *Nerve Cowboy*. He is Editor-In-Chief of the on-line magazine *Disquieting Muses*, the 1999 winner of the *Mindfire* Chapbook Contest, and the host of a weekly poetry show on KKUP 91.5 FM in Cupertino, California.

Wendy Carlisle lives in East Texas with a large dog, three cats, and an obliging husband.

Claudia K. Grinnell is a native of Germany now living in Monroe, Louisiana, where she teaches English at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Her poetry has appeared in publications, including *Exquisite Corpse* and *New Orleans Review*. Recently, she was selected as an Emerging Poet by the Southern Women Writer's Conference.

Joseph Lisowski teaches English at Mercyhurst College North East along the shores of Lake Erie. His published books include *The Brushwood Gate*, *Looking for Lauren*, and *Near the Narcotic Sea*.



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Duane Locke lives in Tampa, Florida. He currently has poems in the May-June 2000 issue of *American Poetry Review* and *Bitter Oleander*. His latest book of poems is *Watching Wisteria*.

Kate Lutzner received the Robert Frost Poetry Prize while

a senior at Kenyon College. Her poetry has appeared in *The Antioch Review* and *The Squaw Review*. She received her JD from the University of North Carolina and is now working at the Discovery Channel in Washington, DC.

Anne Pepper recently completed her Master's in Creative Writing from Iowa State University. She is most recently published in *The Melic Review* and *Eclectica*.

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

C. J. Sage is a native of Northern California and a graduate student of philosophy and creative writing. She is an editor and webmaster of *Disquieting Muses*, as well as Managing Editor of *Mind Fire*.

Lisa Marie Zaran lives in Tempe, Arizona. Her recent credits include poems in *Black Dirt*, *King Log*, *A Writer's Choice Literary Journal*, *Poetry Tonight*, and *Indie Journal*. Her first chapbook, *The Sometimes Girl* has recently been accepted for publication.

2River is a literary site on the Daemen College webserver in Amherst, New York. The address is

<http://www.daemen.edu/~2River>

2River publishes individual volumes by authors, as well as *The 2River View*, a quarterly journal of art, theory, and poetry, which first appears online and afterwards in print. Interested contributors should read the submission guidelines on the 2River site.

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