

# The 2River View

13.4 (Summer 2009)



new poems by

Walter Bergen, E. Louise Beach, Jaime Brunton

Alison Cimino, Lori Coale, Renee Emerson

Catharina Evans, Christien Gholson

Peter Joseph Gloviczki, Tawnysha Greene, Carolyn Foster Segal



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**Walter Barga**

## **Days Like This Are Necessary**

Fifteen men, the beginning of a pirate's song,  
and the dead man's chest, a premonition, a prophecy,  
a treasure too dark to be opened alive.  
Disregard that they are called soldiers  
dressed in combat fatigues, crowded  
into the body of a helicopter, their weapons  
on safety — a bad joke. They've been given leave,  
are being ferried to an airport, away from  
skirmishes, frontlines that are every street,  
alley, roof, door, window, and at that moment  
when the *whump, whump, whump* of turning blades  
is the air's homing heartbeat, a harvesting scythe,  
the helicopter missiled, is a flaming meteor,  
scattering fifteen men across a desert,  
others mangled in ways we are never told  
but know, as in the song fifteen men  
on a dead man's chest and a bottle of rum.

An Asian ladybug whirs onto my shoulder.  
I'm surprised to hear the dim dental drill  
of its wings so late in the year, and how it clings  
to my plaid shirt. I carefully remove it,  
send it on its way, an infestation  
I can't battle, can't win, and live with,  
accepting, admiring their tenacity.  
It's unseasonably warm, wind from the south.  
The crows are mewing like cats. Jays crowd  
a dead elm, shrieking in defiance.  
Small birds twitter their way through  
the underbrush finding what's overlooked.  
Leaves are falling casualties.  
Shards of sunlight mark their down turning.  
Days like this are necessary.

**Walter Barga**

## Refigurations

1

Even after the girl who sits politely  
with one leg crossed over the other,  
print dress ending at her knees,  
in her lap rests a pair of flesh-colored  
plastic feet, so tranquil, as if they just  
returned from a stroll through fallen  
leaves, having kicked up a trail,  
feeling the earth turning cool  
and dormant, seeing a turtle back  
its shell into the mud of hibernation,  
a frog slow in its leap from the creek  
bank, as if the water were no longer  
a hidden place. These smooth-molded  
feet like a purse with toes, there resting  
in the folds of her dress, open below  
the ankles, the holes waiting for her  
to drop in the small change of her  
life, long after the blades swept down,  
the audience hears the dull impact:  
*thunk, thunk, thunk,*  
the targets deep in their seats,  
they see her hemline and what touches  
the floor, a space made for feet.

**Walter Barga**

2

Not even the sound of one hand  
after she finishes speaking.  
The audience's stares amputated  
from their faces. Wrenched  
out of their seats, they remain seated.  
The shells of their ears washed up  
On another shore, deaf.  
Deep in the meat of their bodies  
they hear. From the bottom  
of their pockets and purses, the space  
between sock and shoe, something  
that will never shake free of their  
tweeds and blouses. It will be there  
on the drive home, and later  
after cocktails, the tiramisu will  
ooze in a way they've never noticed.  
For now she sits quietly  
on stage, in the glare that details  
the reconstruction of a flamed life.  
She is beyond friendship.  
She remains locked in her room.  
In front of hundreds,  
she remains behind the door  
of her skin, the frozen rippled topography  
of heat, her forged, fused face.

*E. Louise Beach*

**Tout un hiver sans feu**

Film set in a Swiss canton. The camera  
pans charred timbers, a desolate farmer,  
cold on cold. The pretty young wife

no longer eats or talks. Holding hands  
beneath wool coats on our laps, we  
dream bleating cattle, screams, a stable door

jammed. Can any grief equal the grief  
of losing a child? It will sleet tonight  
while we are sleeping. He drove over

hard-packed snow to visit her in the clinic.

*E. Louise Beach*

**Intertidal**

There's nothing in the room  
tonight but you and me  
and our pure silence  
tall as trees  
in a European wood.

Bats fly,  
black angels dispersing,  
coming closer.

In love with the man  
in the moon  
and snow,  
we sleep together  
but cannot speak;  
eat the quiet with meager,  
gnaw-toothed spoons;  
exist between tides,  
waiting for visions.

You burn like a saint.  
I burn, too.

On cobbles, anemones  
and sea stars between seas.

*Jaime Brunton*

## **Returning**

One's whole life can be taken up in this way —  
a near constant state of longing,

or of disappointment, which we called the same.  
And so we left them sitting there, under oak trees,

left them sitting with their want, they who went on  
about verbena bushes and falling leaves

so that bushes and leaves were never important,  
or indeed never were. This great fascination with things,

this dizzying elevation of stuff to extensions  
of our overstrained voices — such were our sweet miseries —

who would long for that precious stupidity,  
whose insides now turn aquiver to see it,

mute and inscrutable as a cow, in the faces of the young?  
But this, too, was a surprise, wasn't it, how the mind settles

only as water settles — on its surface — and how even now,  
hearing this, there is a real body of water we have in mind?

*Jaime Brunton*

## **Speaking**

There was nowhere we did not exist.  
There was a river whose fish no longer matter

mattered only a few times in the past.  
There was and is the moon over various dark locations

some of which we never knew. There were  
and are long slow sounds about the moon

and those do not matter  
except in as far as they existed

will exist. Being long sounds  
and slow they take a great while to say

and we are in them a long time moving  
slowly toward each other and back to ourselves.

Being in ourselves we are pulled slowly along  
and side to side as if by the moon we say. We issue forth

long slow sounds occasionally as though speaking  
for the moon when we are speaking about it.

There were and are ourselves making brief appearances  
near rivers under moons. Speaking of rivers

we come to ourselves. Speaking  
of ourselves we come to rivers and stop.

*Alison Cimino*

## **Lemon-Lime**

Why this way with women? It seems force  
broke the pencil tip, yellow pencil,  
writing out our sallow lie.

Oh you in your mane of light,  
yellow hair and a doe-eyed look —  
How I, in my animal, wanted to strike  
and smelling my own fierceness, retreated.

Oh yellow heart that is she and me —  
How jealousy is a yellow dart, how like loneliness  
It glows phosphorescent        bright and tart —

*Alison Cimino*

## **Residue**

So this is what I'm given —  
orange zest and oil  
trapped under my fingertips.  
After the pulp and tincture of fruit  
juice on the tongue  
always the pith —  
The inside rind, white  
flesh — scraping it out  
with my front teeth;  
chewing it, tasteless as it is  
or bitter.

*Lori Coale*

## **All Things End**

the existence of fossils  
in distant time  
vestiges, nothing more than

dust of bones pressed  
against the form of memory  
what was it to have lived?

aching, rapt  
our bodies deny us  
immortality, life deepens

finally understand  
there is no meaning  
only the pressures of fuck

pull us through our biology  
shape us for love  
shape us for conclusion

an indention upon a bed  
smile, glance, whisper  
follicle, pore, membrane

we are made of even smaller things

**Lori Coale**

## **July Fourth**

We are aflame;  
candles, fireworks  
at intermittent times  
our fingers in bandages,  
bits and blisters  
pressed to lips  
as the sparks fall,  
curtains blaze against the pane  
of our bedroom window

combustible our blood  
our bones boil  
our essence, a wisp, a puff  
of nothing there  
flash of flesh dream of death  
cold stars strung against  
the mortality of our kiss

when I hear the explosion in the background

you know I come bearing gifts  
Blackcats and sparklers  
the hot, hot heat of your name  
burned into my groin  
how you stand at attention  
you patriotic son of a bitch  
how I love your display

*Renee Emerson*

## **Storm Front**

I listen to rain falling down the chimney,  
rattling like bracelets on a bony arm.  
The wind sucks out air  
from the house, making the sound of fire  
where there is no fire.  
I am on our red couch writing,  
you are in the bedroom sleeping.  
If the storm comes, it will come  
for us both, writing or sleeping,  
so I let you sleep, the better way  
to meet fate: with your eyes closed  
thinking of something else.

*Renee Emerson*

### **Visiting at St. Francis**

When the nurse gets out,  
Mawmaw tells me she read  
in a magazine there's healing  
power in the noise we make.  
Then she draws back her tongue,  
funnels a moan  
from the holding tank of her body.

I remember sitting hushed with her  
on the porch of the house  
she can't have anymore. Listen,  
and in the droning of the cicadas,  
we are still and close enough  
to hear the rattler nest beneath.

Slither-hissing in the coils,  
a little noise to mark the evening.

*Catharina Evans*

## **Coming From the Doctor**

A girl I hadn't seen in months catches me by my coat sleeve —  
catches me  
picking at the full orange pill bottle in my pocket —  
while walking between the early trees of spring.

She tells me about the day she bought the drugstore shears  
that cut her hair to an inch within the skin —  
something shudders in the downy air  
and the planes of her face blaze yellow —

If I were someone braver, or more abundant —  
I'd lift her up with the wings of this chiming light —  
by the rumpled layers of her linen skirt — listen to this —  
we are sisters of the same sorrow.

*Catharina Evans*

## **The Nun**

She is clear light and bald,  
and like my mother, and not.

I did everything wrong,  
kept my shoes on too long — looked at her  
hand over the soft dove of her mouth —

and she, she is like a thin column of milk  
in the throughway, or like a bent petal  
at the golden foot of Buddha.

*Christien Gholson*

## **St. Graveyard Shift**

Undressing in candlelight, I see the quick shadow-movements of a rock-cleft Madonna in the corner of the room. Some proto-Mary, flickering through a series of caves.

*At this hour, blue-glint off a black dog's back.*

My last boss told me he and his wife sometimes scattered cash across their bed, then fucked. He needed to confess this to me.

*At this hour, the charred woman stirs inside her mother.*

Every dollar bill I have ever stolen I've pasted onto my bathroom wall. When I move, I will slip out in the middle of the night, leave the bills behind. The landlord will spend hours — days — slopping the wall with water, gently peeling one dollar from another.

*Christien Gholson*

**Witness**

They speak to me: The half-eaten chicken wing in its bright red Colonel Sanders box; the orange polyester shirt discarded on railroad gravel; the Polaroid nude tossed from a car window into dry grass; the twisted neck of the coyote on the road's shoulder.

I hear them scrape across the sand outside the bedroom window at night, mumble words to songs hundreds of years old. In the morning I sometimes find them hanging in leftover spider strands stretched between the bleached branches of the dead juniper in the back yard. They look like empty flies; nothing left but transparent skin.

I bury them. They keep returning. Scattered rust-nails, a wad of used toilet paper, cigarette butts in tin foil, a black glove. I can feel them out there, hovering near the ceiling in every bedroom in town where young couples are trying for a kid, impatient for some seed to take, give them a new body to enter, begin again.

When I walk past the elementary school in town I scan the children's faces on the playground, look for the ones that made it back in human form. Some point, laugh. Some run. Either way, I want them to know I know who they are.

*Peter Joseph Gloviczki*

## **Breakfast**

I pull the check out from under the coffee cup. This is not my mother's diner. We had bread in the mornings, bread by 5:30, we had bread that customers cut with their teeth. Tell me, she says, why you chose to let him die. I tell her after a while there's nothing you can do, that after a while the organs go rogue. She pulls out a pocketknife. She sets it on the table and lets it spin. I watch the knife make its little red circles, how the Swiss cross becomes a blur and then stops.

*Peter Joseph Gliviczki*

## **Witness**

They speak to me: The half-eaten chicken wing in its bright red Colonel Sanders box; the orange polyester shirt discarded on rail-road gravel; the Polaroid nude tossed from a car window into dry grass; the twisted neck of the coyote on the road's shoulder.

I hear them scrape across the sand outside the bedroom window at night, mumble words to songs hundreds of years old. In the morning I sometimes find them hanging in leftover spider strands stretched between the bleached branches of the dead juniper in the back yard. They look like empty flies; nothing left but transparent skin.

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When I walk past the elementary school in town I scan the children's faces on the playground, look for the ones that made it back in human form. Some point, laugh. Some run. Either way, I want them to know I know who they are.

*Tawnysha Greene*

## **Crack in the Doorway**

Grandma is seated in a pink  
Nightgown, a thin tube running  
Under her nose. Her two daughters brush  
Her hair and feed spoonfuls  
Of tapioca pudding into her mouth.  
She looks at me, but does not  
See me. They are speaking  
To her, but neither of us hear.  
I hear only

The clatter of jelly beans hitting the bottom  
Of a glass bowl and her voice  
Reading my letters as I sit in her lap  
In her rocking chair  
Next to the white trunk holding  
Old telephones and plastic pearls.

*Carolyn Foster Segal*

### **Fitcher's Bird: A Love Story**

I knew what my task would be. All those hours when my sisters and I stayed up late, telling stories, debating free will, my costume was there, in the back of the closet. I knew it would be up to me: it's always the third one. (The first one has the benefit of shock, the first turn of the plot; the second one, poor girl, gets at best a sentence, something along the lines of "and then the same thing happened to her.") And that's my cue; it's my turn to step out from where I've been waiting. I have only minutes to woo and undo the king, to find the pieces of my sisters and put them back together again. Then it's time to dress, in honey—absurd, yes, but wonderful for the skin—and feathers—and time to lure the unsuspecting ones (who never read, who never learn their lesson) to their fiery death. And the egg, you say, what about the egg? I'm certain this story has one. In fact—what did we just learn?—it has three, and I've one up my sleeve—here, take it, it's barely bloodied, and you must be hungry after all this.

## *The 2River View, 13.4 (Summer 2009)*

### Contributors

**Walter Barga**n has published twelve books of poetry and two chapbooks, including *The Feast* (BkMk Press-UMKC, 2004), winner of the 2005 William Rockhill Nelson Award; *Remedies for Vertigo* (WordTech Communications, 2006); *West of West* (Timberline Press, 2007); and *Theban Traffic* (WordTech Communications, 2008). In 2009, BkMk Press-UMKC will publish *Days Like This Are Necessary: New & Selected Poems*. His poems have recently appeared in *New Letters*, *Poetry East*, and *The Seattle Review*. Barga is the first poet laureate (2008-2009) of Missouri. ([www.walterbarga.com](http://www.walterbarga.com))

**E. Louise Beach**, in collaboration with the composer Bryan Page, is the author of *The White Princess*. Based on Rilke's play of the same name, the 22 poem song-cycle will be performed in Los Angeles in 2010. Beach is also a translator and literary critic.

**Jaime Brunton** was a Walt Whitman Award finalist in 2009 and a Ruth Lilly Fellowship finalist in 2008. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *CutBank*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere.



**Alison Cimino** is an adjunct professor of poetry and composition in the Boston area. Her poems have appeared in *Borderlands Texas Poetry Review*, *Ibbetson Street Press*, and *The Cambridge Codex Project*, a visual art installation to promote literacy.

**Lori Coale** lives in Tucson, Arizona. She has previously been published in *Drexel Online Journal* and *Spinning S Literary Magazine*. She divides her time between her family and *Vicious Circle Poetry Workshop*.

**Renee Emerson** recently completed her MFA from Boston University. Her work has appeared in *The Blue Earth Review*, *Reed Magazine*, *The Santa Clara Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and various others. She lives in Louisville with her husband.

**Catharina Evans** lives on a New Jersey sheep farm and is a graduate student of English literature and creative writing. She teaches writing in Queens, New York, but is feeling the pull to leave for the west. She plans to begin her PhD in 2010.

**Christien Gholson** is the author of *On the Side of the Crow* (Hanging Loose Press 2006) and the chapbook *The Sixth Sense* (Modest Proposal Chapbook Series of Lilliput Review 2006). His work has appeared in *AQR*, *Big Bridge*, *Cimarron Review*, *Ecotone*, *Mudlark*, *Santa Fe Poetry Broadside*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, and *Sentence*, among others.

**Peter Joseph Glociczki** lives in Minnesota. His poems have appeared in *The 2River View*, *32 Poems*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Margie*, *The New Orleans Review*, and elsewhere.

**Tawnysha Greene** is a PhD student at the University of Tennessee — Knoxville.

**Carolyn Foster Segal** teaches at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. She writes humorous essays for education publications; her most recent scholarly work focuses on trauma narratives. This is her second appearance in *2River*.

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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, podcasting from Muddy Bank, the 2River blog.



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