

The 2River View

14.1 (Fall 2009)

new poems by

Arlene Ang
Scott Brennan
Autumn Carter
Kevin Conder
Matthew Cox
David M. deLeon
Paul Dickey
Regina McMorris
Ariana Nash
Nikoletta Nousiopoulos
Jay Rubin

art by

Sarah Walko



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David M. deLeon

This is the Way the Light Struck That Year

One
October
Evening not late, where the

Weeds
Cry out
In the field
For you

I would gather pumpkins
In my arms
If I could carry
More than two.

*

My childhood love is waiting there
Past a bridge of brambles.

*

The path is sweet and set with vines
Poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac.
The stream is not contained.
Step here.

Step here, I hate the mud
I want to build a house of stone
And clean the river-worms from it in the morning
With a rake.

Arlene Ang

In This the Brother Is Hurting

After twenty-six houses, I still recognize
the hung clothes in the dining room. If there is one thing
he regrets, it is the distance. He means he can't
pick up the phone and say sorry. Now.
There are borders. He shuffles a card deck
with no hearts. I watch his hands until he disappears.
In this, I see myself in the background of yet
another funeral. The bed is not
necessarily numb to the movements
of the sleeper. Last year two thousand people
in Venice saw the same film again and again with different
partners. Today the electric chair
is virtuously painless. As the brother should be —
perched on the sideboard as he observes
the live mouse running tangents
across the floor. There is no escape.

Arlene Ang

Wherein She Turns the Key in a Motel Room

This is a documentary.
The soundtrack is a woman as she leaves
the television on all night.

Is news of death
a birth itself to the listener?
Every day the orphan
grows lonelier inside its shadow.

Here the clothes are left
in the luggage for fear of hanging.
The clothes, while bruised
by travel, remain undivided.

The way she was
before the first man struck her
with the hanger — breaking first the skin
on her head, then the hanger.

The painting observes
her now: a girl reduced to one brushstroke.
The blood. The faith. The dying light.

Scott Brennan

Citrus: a Novel

The woman will be affectionate, but considered rather homely. Her great sense of humor will send most men dancing toward her, then away. The idea will be that sooner or later she will have to learn how to feel satisfied with a life without romantic love. A couple of days after she relinquishes Desire, she will meet — and the reader will see this coming long before she does — the Shark. He'll roar into town on a massive Harley-Davidson. He'll set up shop. O, he might as well be Apollo blazing through the heavens upon a gilded chariot!

- Finally, her courageous move to Citrus
- Life in the rose-colored trailer
- Henry's Diner
- Her crazy neighbors, Vernon and Terri
- Her new best friend, Sally
- The honky-tonk where she out shoots the Shark
- How she trembles all over; how she can't stop Church picnic
- His jeans streaked with grease, dark with sweat
- The wrench in his hand, the tattoos on his knuckles
- The 4th of July barbecue
- The accident

Go to each place, describe each scene.
Attend, even, the funeral of the Shark.

Scott Brennan

Now

Now I feel like saying it. Now I feel like sleeping.
Now I feel like drawing. Now I feel like boiling
an egg. Now I feel like washing the car. Now I feel
like making love. Now I feel like waking up. Now
I feel like eating an orange. Now I feel like writing
a letter. Now I feel like chopping wood. Now I feel
like shoveling snow. Now I feel like calling my mom.
Now I feel like riding a bike. Now I feel like reading
The Tempest. Now I feel like breaking your heart.

Autumn Carter

Prayer for the Smallest

Can I describe how pain blossoms to a flower?
How it wilts and we bury it in a backyard funeral?

Yesterday God confessed to me through the window —
while the baby slept, buried in my arms.

God knows the heavy inner hearts of atoms,
how they sink into flesh, a mass burial of broken bodies.

Yesterday, I missed the train. Stood in a black raincoat,
like a puddle gathering. My feet in boots, buried in black.

When the rain hits a puddle, the atoms say,
Does it hurt, darling? as they are buried, each drop.

But what do flowers know of rain as they are buried
in bees? As the sun sucks them in, and they are buried in light?

Autumn Carter

Things We Find on the Ground

Bones of an old cow
buried in a cocoon of snow
unearthing only in the spring melts.

The surprise snort and spook
of the horse who lays his nose
too near the skull.

White petals on the Autumn Olive,
the impenetrable cloud of their scent,
like gnats hovering in shady places,
mixing with the diesel fumes of the tractor
where it lurches in the field.

An orchard of plum trees
where the black snakes nap in high branches.
We say the snakes rot the fruit —
it falls to the ground unripened.

The gray curves of plum branches
releasing their white carpet of petals,
a veil of children's teeth, or bones.

Kevin Conder

globalization

there are spiders inside the walls
I can hear their thread legs
tick, tick , tick

the neighborhood houses sag
held up by only the fabric
of webs and we are grateful
for the spider's webs
they keep the summer thunder rains off our heads

as autumn rumbles more spiders fall from the sky like slow rain

sawdust flies
glass button rain slides along web strands and falls,
falls one by one,
falls in clumps,
waterfalls and torrents

by winter our houses are filled with so much web there
is no room for our bodies
even standing in the corners of the rooms
or stacked together like cords of wood

we stand outside looking in and freeze
with the winter freeze
freezing rain that coats us in
thick layers of translucent ice

when the sun returns we will melt into pools of cool grey mud
and great fat horseflies will feed off us

at least the horseflies will feed the spiders
at least the spiders will become men

Kevin Conder

Hands

the rubbery jaw of father in the mirror
the same busted nose I looked up at

his atoms have found me
flying across the distance and the years
even as he is erased
his hands

my daughter looks like me from the upper lip up
more so every day
angles, fractures of light
scattered in late afternoon

the colors the dust motes of suspended skin

his heart is coming for me next
great old wretched lion heart
that I cannot take

but with a stare
of her cobalt blue eyes
she will

without fury or hesitation
she will hold it inside and let it beat within her
and protect me from it

even as I struggle not to become him
she reaches out
small chubby hands
quartz fingers

Matthew Cox

Church of Post-Letter Day Saints

Saint Francis stands in the corner.
His eyes track the even click
of the second-hand
around the face of his wristwatch,

his foot impatiently tapping
as if there is some place he'd rather be.
The law of diminished expectations
was coined for an occasion like this.

Nothing finally really means nothing.
Francis seems to know it too,
swatting with his Bible
at a mosquito, which carves itself into the scene

like a demand or a question,
a tiny black angel
now crushed like a bug
against the silvery white of the walls.

Matthew Cox

Poor Chopin

After a meal of beer and pills
my eyes are Vermeer's
the edges of things
hazy and emanating light.

The killer just called
to ask me directions. I lied.
I had been tipped off
by his dentist.

Down the hall, a pianist
performs Chopin poorly,
but maybe it's a poor recording
or only a music box
playing weakly on the dresser.

Outside, children
not yet aliens in their own bodies
play like toy soldiers
in the street as their gears
slowly wind down.

Paul Dickey

Failed Portrait of the Artist's Daughter

Her face does not haunt us, like his other work. In his famous Mosaic period, eyes and mouths blur together in color beyond and within surface — as if irises reflect the tales of tongues. This seems an unfinished canvas — nose, lips stamped. You think that cannot be true. Whether she is beautiful is not the issue, or if her father left her mother to paint nudes in a warmer studio. He has somewhere to go this afternoon. He is in a hurry, has forgotten something. His own life he has kept from the canvas. Critics will add the master craftsman, short of finances, needed to produce a hundred daughters in an afternoon.

Paul Dickey

A Reno County Church Cemetery

Archaic, or at least historic, farmers nod off
in assigned pews with head rests,
their location based on annual donations.
Stoic board members with iron, brown hands

governed potluck suppers, rummage sales,
Wednesday night prayer meetings,
budgeted and unbudgeted maintenance
projects. Not for a minute do they care now

to pinch their wives of sixty odd years,
who lying next to them still dream
of pot roasts and time with grandbabies.
It took a century to build this church

on nothing but faith and hard work,
time no one had enough of. The sign
“First Lutheran Church Cemetery” groans
from its own rust like it has for twenty years.

The only thing odd is the town drunk
from the nineteen thirties settling in the clay
and loam in the back row, who got his plot
and burial when an unknown woman

landed into town, flashed nothing but makeup
and a smile (his only daughter it turned out)
and on the side slipped the temporary
reverend a brand new one hundred dollar bill.

Regina McMorris

Déjà Vu

My psychic visions come
in flashes. Not really a skill
I can hone, perfect, or market.

As a child I'd see an image
in my head — silver spokes
of a blue bicycle, for example — and later

while standing in my driveway: a boy
new to the neighborhood, riding
his blue bike, spokes shining. Today,

in my psychic eye, or maybe just
the one that makes metaphors, I see myself
falling to the floor. On my way down, I reach

for the neck of a man. If I miss, I grab
his collar. Either way, we are
both going down. If my grip loosens,

I kick his feet
out from under him. Either way,
we're both hitting the floor. Not

a flashing vision, no silver spoke. More like
the smallest mole on my face,
what I never noticed until now.

Regina McMorris

Without Deodorant or Sweat

there's a clean mustiness, natural
odor of the armpit. It reminds me
of a time when loving included
a wonder at the body's strangest
scents: earwax when whispering
to my ex, *You smell like
peanut oil*. Skin is
so close to earth, one attracts and clings
to the other. This scares me —

I'm a natural mess,
dirty clothes on my desk,
scattered papers. Meanwhile,
a guy I know, happy to finally
live alone, gave me

a tour of his new home:
from the front door
to the bedrooms not a single stray
T-shirt or cracker crumb, not even
a CD case open on the coffee table.
No risk of bodily memory,
no lingering scent,
or accidental inhale:
skin, hair, breath.

Ariana Nash

The Orange

I.

He handed me an orange, wanted me to taste: the sweet acid, the hundred ripe juice capsules, the acrid paste of the rind still clinging in patches to its surface.

As I savored, he sermoned: you must taste everything once, feed your gaping raw-red tunnel, each spongy coral-bud of your palate wants a different shock to awe it.

II.

He was horrified then when I bought one every day. He watched me eat my orange — followed the knife-slice and then my fingers, rivulets down my hands that my reef-tongue

lapped up — stared as the peel pile grew. Each day he stood further away at my first bite — my pleasure in devouring, tearing into flesh — scared of my grip on fruit.

Ariana Nash

Over Breakfast

My hand is poised above the mug about
to pour a sugar packet into tea

and I remember the woman
from the desert between Jaipur and Jaisalmer
where the tanks poured over the highway
to the Pakistani-Indian border.
She is squatting outside her hut
pounding her rough dough
with a pestle, her grey hair drawn
tightly back from her brown face, her faded
blue-purple sari taut at her protruding knees.
Or she has just returned — a bundle of sticks
on her covered head, a ring pinching her nose —
from the mile path to the nearest
source of wood for her fire. She is smiling proudly
with her eyes and her few stained teeth
and maybe she will start a fire
and put the water on to boil.

I tip my hand and pour the white sugar
into the tea which has steeped dark.

Nikoletta Nousiopoulos

photograph of a wedding, 1948

was the moon over Korifi
when it rained that morning

did the land sweat when it released
my grandparents to one another

there are many things I remember
they loved

roars of spring water
clouds shaped as donkey eyes

do i collect lost voices
from black & white photographs

beg the faces to say something
real about love

our house splits and flexes
a stray dog

do i pray to images
language under a flame

dare the artifacts
to speak out of my hands

Nikoletta Nousiopoulos

procession in cycles

i.

a cricket clings to a curtain
i want the glue of its legs: impale me there

or the village of open windows
almond trees ripe below fire & flower boxes

perhaps rotted figs fall for sound of tin when it rains
when the sun is out of chemical

ii.

we hammer & nail our lives
together loose wood
hangs from the roof nearly
sunset when the only music stops

iii.

at the hospital
my mother feeds you ice cream
with a baby's spoon
your tongue dry
& hardened

we're beginning to howl at the edges
of the bed: you drool
eyes close & stick to themselves
i peel the lids & let them loose
still they are not free

iv.

down the aisle my brother lifts the casket on his shoulder
men carry your body past me & out
down the aisle down the aisle

Jay Rubin

Approaching Paris

Beneath the rain
 The blue-gray glum
No river *Seine*
 No *Arc de Triomphe*
Only empty countryside
 A fallow field
A horse-hitched cart
 A narrow red-dirt road

How am I to recognize
 This terrain
As France? On the tarmac
 Diesel fuel
A bus of darting eyes
 Slimy fish pressed into tin
Later, bags and boxes
 Belched from metal mouths

On the street, Moroccans
 Whistle from their cabs
Another bus, a Metro train
 Every ad in French
How am I to recognize
 The evil from the good?
That blind man begging
 That woman in a hood

Jay Rubin

Metro Musicians

for Chino & Abel

One slung guitar, one funky velvet hat
They ride the Metro underground
Nothing back home but a cold-water flat

The shy one grins, a timid cat
Fingertips plucking, sucking sound
From his guitar; his friend's funky hat

Hangs in the air, a pesky gnat
Buzzing a song, bouncing around
Reaping the rent for a cold-water flat

The singer kneels down by a young girl's lap
Her eyes resist, but her smile unfrowns
One slung guitar, one funky velvet hat

Once their song ends, the passengers clap
Coins feed the hat like rain from a cloud
Not drips in a drain of a cold-water flat

I, too, contribute a clink to their sack
I riding trains all day through town
No slung guitar, no old funky hat
And nothing — no home, not even a flat

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Authors

Arlene Ang lives in Spinea, Italy, where she serves as staff editor for *The Pedestal Magazine* and *Press 1*.

Scott Brennan, from Miami, Florida, has appeared recently in *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Chicago Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, and *Sewanee Review*.

Autumn Carter is an Appalachian writer currently working on her MFA in creative writing at Antioch University in Los Angeles.

Kevin Conder lives in Portland, Oregon. His poetry has appeared in *42Opus*, *North American Review*, *The Pacific Review*, *Quiddity*,



*Confused Wings Which Thought
Themselves Teeth* © Sarah Walko

and *Snow Monkey*. In the past, he has taught English to students from China, Yugoslavia, and Russia.

Matthew Cox, from Bremerton, Washington, is a union electrician. His poems have been published in *In Posse Review* and *No Tell Motel*.

David M. deLeon has worked in New Jersey as a music journalist, editor, and proofreader. His credits include *The Adirondack Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Fence Magazine*, and *Only The Sea Keeps: Poetry of the Tsunami*.

Paul Dickey lives in Omaha, Nebraska. His poems are found in *Crab Orchard Review*, *failbetter*, *Mid-American Review*, *Rattle*, and *Swink Online*. *They Say This Is How Death Came Into the World* was a semi-finalist for the 2008 Sentence Book Award.

Regina McMorris, from Houston, Texas, holds an MFA in poetry from Purdue University. Her work has previously appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Mid-American Review*, and *REAL*. She teaches developmental writing at Prairie View A&M University.

Ariana Nash is a working writer and teacher of creative writing living in Wilmington, North Carolina. She was recently published in *Xenith*.

Nikoletta Nousiopoulos holds an MFA from New England College, and now resides in Cape Cod. Her work has appeared in *elimae* and *South Jersey Underground*.

Jay Rubin teaches writing at The College of Alameda in the San Francisco Bay Area, where he publishes *Alehouse*. He holds an MFA in Poetry from New England College.

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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

Sarah Walko holds an MFA from the Savannah College of Art and Design. She is currently the Executive Director of Triangle Arts Association, a non profit arts organization in Brooklyn, New York. She is a multimedia/installation artist; and is Art Director, co- writer, and co-editor with the independent film collective Santasombra, which shows at International Film Festivals around the world.

Richard Long, Editor

2River

www.2River.org

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University City • MO • 63130 • USA