

The 2River View

18.2 (Winter 2014)



new poems by

Brittany Barberino Evans, Benny Biesek, Bri Bruce

Christien Gholson, D.B. Goman, Romana Iorga

Elizabeth Majerus, Kelly Nelson, Annmarie O'Connell

Claudia Reinhardt, and Claudia Serea

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Claudia Reinhardt

Superstition Warning

“Cover your mouth when you yawn, or spirits
will fly into your body,”
Gramma said as we weeded and watered, picked
and pruned in the garden.
Evil spirits fly into my eight-year-old body?
Evil like the snake in the garden of Eden?
Maybe there’s a snake in Gramma’s garden:
staccato tongue a breath away from mud-covered toes
waiting for me to pass its shadowy hole.
If evil spirits flew into my body, slithered into my soul,
then I might become a snake
—forever grounded—
eyes never blinking. And when the heavens yawned
and stretched at dawn, my spirit
would soar into the sky and fly into
the sun’s flaming body
and it would swallow me whole.

Benny Biesek

Not Flynt At All

Her face was far too rouge.
There was a fuselage close by. I hear
That they churn up shit close by,

Which leads to the neighborhood
Smelling like it does. What does it
Do for me? Aside from nothing,

Not much. I guess I could repeat
Myself: take a sledge to a Toyota's
Abdomen. I am far too proud

To beg. Shit, bruh: been to Venice
Before it succumbed. Her
Face was far too rouge – diseased,

Frankly. Honestly, though, with
The shit they churn up close by?
I am getting ahead of myself made

Courtesy of someone darling. When
The crows fly over, brothers listen.

Benny Biesek

poet sang, drunk

the ocean is out there.
we are swimming in it.
you have bills to pay.
i have bills to pay.

let us burn the bills.
let them chain us down.
a riot to be heard,
 no doubt.
a train runs, underground.

the ocean has bills, too.
it burns them faster, though.
it has no chained parts.
it's a riot, for sure.

i doubt no train will
 come for me.
if it does, then i
 will run away.
i cannot find the ways to end the day.

Bri Bruce

Fragility

From my mother
I learned how wine swims in the vein,
what happens when the vaquita dies,
how to boil meat from bone
to make chicken soup.
Like her, often I am stirred from sleep
by thought, not dream.
A frenzied rap at the thin door a beckon
to follow her into the summer garden,
we listen to the birds—
nighthawk in the oak,
mockingbird in the underbrush.
We busy ourselves wondering what dark place
becomes the bed of the crow.

In these moments,
we are suddenly aware that our hearts are beating—
there is something larger than ourselves.
And knowing the fragility of it all,
we speak the language of mortality.

Bri Bruce

The Leaving

By the heavy glass doors
you kneel, naked, to gather scattered clothes,
your dark silhouette a shadow
against the violet dawn.
I know this shape your body makes
against the sky.

A leaf falls from the black oak tree.
I see a flash of rust-red—the robin's breast
before the window. You brush the hair
from your forehead.
Somewhere along the avenue a machine
 is breathing,
and I watch the steady rise and fall
of your bare chest.

I hold myself back, only to reason—
were I a dog curled in your lap,
would you have held me then?
Will you remember me
when you are gone, as I
remember spring
as the first snow falls?

At your passing of the bedside:
your dimpled skin, the smell of sea salt.
I turn away from faint rustlings
in the small kitchen,
the quiet unlatch of the door.

Brittany Barberino Evans

Residue of Tragedy

Certain things have happened here
that makes us think there's a man—
an unspecified, slightly tall Caucasian
male, at the window
every night.

Certain things have happened, which
makes us lock our doors, and he has
tools to break in and he saw us at market,
crossing the street and

we did not see him.
He followed us home and
we do not owe anyone
money,
no adultery,
we haven't stolen.

The Maltese lap dog must see him
in the tree's shadow that she barks at and
the children don't know why they are no longer defiant in
clasping their mothers hands.

No one here is fit to juror.

The men try to comfort,
"lightening doesn't strike twice in one spot,"
and the women do not leave
home after dark without
their men.

One year
down, seven
gone and now

there are marathons and scholarships
with names on them which are now street signs
and Jenny sleeps with a gun in her nightstand—
Such a pretty requiem,

an identity which cannot
be rinsed, refuses to be un-scorched,
that cannot
fall

from the trees in autumn.

Christien Gholson

Three Ash Trees behind the Cathedral

The way the wind curves
around one ash - full yellow—
and the next one explodes.

Fall of light: same light
that trailed the plummet to hell: Love turned
inside out. A rusted iron spike
driven into the middle ring of a stump. Black winged,
chthonic silhouette across still-green grass.

And the ants, the ants, how they
rebuild the world each night.

A man with a black cowboy hat
picks an abandoned white ribbon off an empty bench,
twirls it.

Bells toll the quarter hour.

Christien Gholson

Showing my mother photos on my laptop the day after Christmas

Every time I show them to her
I notice the same thing: so few faces.

Trees, snails in walls, shells, patterns of lichen
on rock, rock
and moss, a snowman
with seaweed hair, Swansea Bay. She lights up
when she sees a face. "Who is that?"

She has seen these photos before, so many times,
has forgotten. This forgetting
is her shelter,
cradles her in the dark.

What was it she wanted when she started out?

*

Bare trees follow me home.

Crossing the Delaware into New Jersey, up 287
to the New York state line. All the way,
the tantalizing pattern of bare branches.

Stories, runes:
I have spent my life
desperately trying to read them, knowing
there is no answer, acting
as if the answer is still there, just out of reach.

D. B. Goman

Noah in the Kitchen

Life being what it is, one dreams of revenge.

Gauguin

He looks at the stove clock, counting off the hours for the big day. Chaos in the kitchen—pots filled with water for who knows how long; sharp utensils to sort the freeze-dried packages—lots of back-up, two of everything, even the hermaphrodites in a pail.

He's pricked each one for blood samples too, keeping a centrifuge by the fridge; his eyes a microscope watching for dangerous mutations; the rain on the roof forty bars of kick-ass blues with him on the hammer; his home a vessel, his heart immortal, a floating parable.

They couldn't be saved; degenerate, indifferent, or just meek, ready to give up and decay—unlike the thrashing ones he admired, extinct before his time; washed away or buried in mud, their covenant smashed on the rocks, he laughs by the popping toaster—*this earth is all mine*.

D. B. Goman

With Perseph

He loved her red hair—the dyes of H.—cut shorter in the heat waves. She was hot in her bath robe dancing for the cursed like him; her mother was sick, hard loaves of salty bread mouldy on the counter ever since she left; her father in the clouds chased swans to ride. This was his descent, strings resonant, guiding to her torch and his tears when he played her his blues on an electric guitar; he had to look back when he got up-stairs, her lizard tongue firing cracked skulls.

Lightning split her down the middle, using pomegranate seeds as birth control in the basement where her furnace branded his hands so he couldn't touch another; her children were spring for a tribe ovulating for nothing, fertility masks funny at a moon, endangered of eating their own blood, exoskeletons breaking in the slash-and-burn rituals threatening his backyard, its plums and cherries ripe for canning. Wild flowers he ate raw so he'd have color in the dark, breathing smoke and ash for a tart return to her barren beauty when the bulbs boiled cold white at her feet; bracketing him—briefly—with her toes he gave up playing to kill placid Morpheus forever so he could wear his face and sleep down there in all the ember seasons.

Romana Iorga

The Lion

Every angel is terrifying.

Rilke

He comes in the dark, breaks doors,
muscles his way through windows.
His wings wrap around my heart like sin.
His words run through my blood
like blood.

The morning after, an absence
has fallen across the bed—
a cavern of fear. Even rumpled,
the missing feathers prove me
insignificant.

Where is the lion who will eat of my heart?
Where is the lion who will dream in my skin,
stretch his paws out of this loose
hide, his limbs already heavy
with slumber?

Where is the lion's shadow,
the only one I can look at and not go blind?
Thick-pelted, well-fed, it must rest elsewhere,
its mane gathering darkness, the weight of its wings
achingly mine.

Romana Iorga

Orchids

My nights are now full of dark coats
buttoned up on emptiness.
Black shoes carrying nothing
walk out the door each morning.

I wake up to layers of bricks
around my body, each day
one more layer, the cat
already howling on top of my head—
a mad woman.
The cat might as well be dead,
for all the good its shrieking will do.

I have this watch in my pocket—smooth
as sea-glass, perfect. It doesn't work.
I take it out every so often.
It always shows the right time.

Soon it will be dawn. Hungry aches
will circle around my knees, small vultures,
aiming for the heights of this stern rock.
Each day such an Everest. Still,
they sail quickly through their own storms.
My head in the clouds, I must look invincible.

Down, down to the valleys
of contented housewifery and full bellies,
the mouths of children opening
like orchids, calling, calling.

Elizabeth Majerus

The Woman with a Dress of Sky

It's there in her closet. She doesn't wear it often. On days she does, the day is different. Small children run their fingers along her hem, men stare frankly at her unassuming breasts. She finds a light hand on her shoulder, a woman who has never touched her before. The hand lingers, fingers fanning into cloud.

In it, she's subject to the weather. In the morning, the light skirt glows with waves of May sunshine. Puffy wisps drift across her hips and thighs, gathering in the bodice in cloudy profusion. By afternoon, the whole dress is slate grey, a humid embrace. She lays down for a nap in a bed of mist and light wind, dreams of flying.

At dusk, she takes a walk alone. She drifts familiar side streets, nodding at near strangers who smile in the fading light. Their dogs snuffle for smells, not seeing or scenting her. She and her dress are dark amid the darkness, but she crosses without folly, without caution. She is not afraid.

Elizabeth Majerus

The Woman with a Suit of Earth

It's too much for most of her occasions,
but she wears it more and more. She lays it
on the floor at night, and in the morning
it's easy just to shrug herself back into it.

It keeps her warm in winter and cool
in the heat of summer. But it is heavy,
always dense and loamy or baked thick,
cracking all over with dry rivulets.

She carries it on her back and on her hips,
bears it as she wears it. Where she's been
it leaves smudges of mud, crumbles
of black soil, in drought a dusting of dirt.

She loves that it keeps her grounded.
But in it, she doesn't stride or try to run.
She shambles. She shuffles her feet.
She's given up on keeping her shoes clean.

By afternoon, she feels drug down. In the early
evening, it's all she can do to keep upright.
She doesn't want to sleep in it, but she's tired,
so tired she drops down in dreamless sleep.

Kelly Nelson

Repairing Our Broken Furniture

I am trying to tell him why
I am trying to tell him what I love
about him. I've pulled out

our twelve year old
vows that read now
as IKEA instructions in Swedish

coarsening, gore in you-svang
two dots atop an O sound like shut eyes
pretending to sleep

coarsening, gore in you-svang
the line through an O sounds like my car
skittering an icy lake

I am sounding it out, step by step
screw
turn

tighten
screw
turn

tighten
a small broke-neck wrench in hand
I am trying to tell him

but he is gone. I have gone. Our home
is gone. The O in no scarred by pock marks.
The O in no slashed in half.

Kelly Nelson

Sandstone

When a canyon is slot enough.
When you can put one boot

on one wall, your other foot
up the other, well then that canyon's likely a whistler.

I heard it first when I was twelve
hiking with my dad. I startled, actually jumped.

Dad laughed. "Think there's a train
round the bend?" He wasn't like the teachers

in school who explain things.
He just kept walking, one crunching step

after another. I heard it just last week,
with my girl, overnighting in Antelope

Canyon. Now there's a beauty of a whistler.
A real musician that one.

And when it came up
that lip to glass bottle moan and my girl startled

beside me, I whispered, the canyon's
singing to you, because you are that beautiful.

Annmarie O'Connell

You can take any body

and get it to stop moving. But
what seems still and soundless
waits. Like that man in the driver's seat
tasting all the secret bits of his own
aliveness. Watch out for that girl digging
through her pockets—
your past flies off her like sparks.

Between all the bodies,
one must be brimming
with courage. Someone must survive
us all. A woman is way up there
in the very last window with nothing
on but a dim light. She's about to remake
herself then sleep.

Annmarie O'Connell

A single bird waits on the empty clothesline

feverishly shaking the rain off his wings.
You sit in the park and wait
for the sound of the baby
girl's laughter in between the wind
after the man pretends to kick her
as she comes swinging down from
the sky.

After you hear it,
a man from across the street tosses
his bag of garbage out the car window
and it lands in someone's front yard. He waits for his father
to hug him, or at least touch him, like that dog
waits there by the young boy as he waves
a stick in front of his mouth. The drool runs down
his furry throat. His teeth clench
and miss. He's only a whimper
or two away.

Claudia Serea

The flower of blood

After Imran Qureshi's installation at the Met

New York, 2013

1.

A flower of blood opens
on the rooftop overlooking Central Park

and another one on the asphalt below,
next to the black tire marks
and the little girl's slipper.

Sirens wail
every time a flower of blood
opens in the city,
in a hospital room,

or at home,
in my father's heart.

Other times,
it opens in silence,
in the face of the dying child
and the face of the mother holding him,

and in the mouth of the gun
that his brother holds.

2.

100,000 flowers open in Syria,
a field of bleeding poppies,

and in every square of every city,
on every street,
and tv screen,

with every scream and explosion.

And the world watches the petals unfurl,
the breathtaking spectacle,
again and again.

No one can stop it,

and the world blooms
with pain.

A flower of blood opens on earth
and you can see it from space.

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Contributors

Benny Biesek has contributed to *Dead Snakes*, *Kernel Critic*, *Mirrors Magazine*, and *Sick Of The Radio*. He perseveres with the Six Nines Haiku Project while assisting with curating readings at the Poetry Church in San Luis Obispo, California.

Bri Bruce holds a BA in literature from University of California at Santa Cruz. Her work has appeared most recently in *The Wayfarer Journal*.

Brittany Barberino Evans has been published in *Metaphor* and *Quest*. She resides in Connecticut, where she is a playwright for a local theater company.

Christien Gholson is the author *A Fish Trapped Inside the Wind* and *On the Side of the Crow*. He blogs at *noise and silence*.

D.B. Goman has an MA in history. His work has appeared in *Ditch*, *Eye Magazine*, *Poetry Montreal*, *Quarry*, and *Storyacious*.



Romana Iorga is a Romanian-American living in Virginia. A graduate of the University of Minnesota creative writing program, she currently teaches English at the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.

Elizabeth Majerus lives in Urbana, Illinois, with her husband, son, and daughter. She is one-third of the band Motes.

Kelly Nelson teaches Interdisciplinary Studies at Arizona State University. Her poems have appeared recently in *Eclectica*, *Found Poetry Review*, *Mixed Fruit*, and *Tar River Poetry*.

Annamarie O'Connell resides on the South Side of Chicago. Her work has appeared in *Slipstream*, *SOFTBLOW*, *Verse Daily*, and *Whiskey Island Magazine*. Her chapbook, *Her Last Cup of Light*, was recently published by Aldrich Press.

Claudia Reinhardt is a freelance writer, editor, and tutor. Her work has appeared in *Fox Cry Review*, *Nebraska Life*, *Plains Song Review*, *The Wisconsin Review*, and *The Untidy Season: An Anthology of Nebraska Women Poets*.

Claudia Serea immigrated from Romania to the United States in 1995. Her poems and translations have appeared in *5 a.m.*, *Apple Valley Review*, *Meridian*, *New Letters*, and *Word Riot*. Her books include *Angels & Beasts*, *The System*, and *A Dirt Road Hangs From the Sky*.

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About 2River

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View* and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. 2River is also the home of Muddy Bank, the 2River blog.

Richard Long

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ISSN 1536-2086

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