

The 2River View

19.1 (Fall 2014)



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new poems by

S. L. Alderton, Jose Angel Araguz, Philip Belcher
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Pokerface © 2014 by Rebecca Meredith

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S. L. Alderton

Love Lock

It was a strong bridge
built to last a long, long time.
Cars drove over it.
People walked over it
a thousand at a time.
It never cracked.

Then one day,
too full of our promises and our longings,
you and I stood on the bridge.
We held each other tight against the rail.
We swore never to let go.
We kissed—

and the rail broke apart.
The cables snapped.
The bridge fell into the sea.

I had not considered the weight of love—
how one word can hold
a skyscraper in the air.
How one false promise can bend
a steel beam.
How one touch might be enough
to twist my spine and yours
forever.
If I had known,
I would not have carried love
so carelessly.

Jose Araguz

The Hummingbird Between Us

The indecipherable tiny heart
of each moment between a man
and a woman, later father and mother,

later words on the page miles
from the river the mother crossed,
each breath taking flight, returning

to the air the father died in,
prison bars lining the last sky
like the paper the son beats

his hand across in ink and pressure,
from tongue to tongue, accent and stress,
the air keeps breaking, the river runs,

indecipherable, each blurred moment
on the wings of another—

Jose Araguz

La Llorona at the Café

She used to sit down and tell
stories about the river.
Her hands would shake.

Her cup and saucer made up
the background to her words.
She never spilt.

Once, she said: *You can't hold
water in a fist.*
We liked that,

so much, we kept repeating it
to one another,
missed when she left

the room, back to the river.
At night, we hear her shake.
Hear the girls

rattling dishes, the boys
stirring sugar around
in empty cups.

Philip Belcher

Elsewhere

She loathes television's depiction of women
*as gun-toters with breasts hanging out over
their necklines and skirts up to their elsewhere.*

Eighty-seven, as she writes to *The Herald*,
one foot in the grave and the other on ice,
Mrs. Chattie Songer Hart longs for a bureau

of mothers empowered to scour the screen
clean of human skin and other vulgarities.
I can imagine her horrified by Reality TV

or by Anglina Jolie, the bulging lips, the vial
of Billy Bob's blood hung between her breasts.
But let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The unintended consequence of piety is often
the most severe. Had Mrs. Hart's campaign
rained down a generation ago, American boys

would have been deprived of the primary joys
of the Winter Olympics. I have not forgotten
the yearnings conjured in black and white,

Peggy Fleming failing to medal in Innsbruck,
kissing gold in Grenoble in the year
when figure skating trounced baseball

as Barnwell's favorite pastime, when the double
axel consigned the home run to tedium.
As we lay on the rug in '68, chins cupped

Philip Belcher

in our palms and watching Peggy skate
the figure eights, our limits seemed to stretch
as if the town itself exhaled.

Our imaginations leapt as she leapt.
We felt the honed blade of desire
and began to imagine elsewhere.

Eric with Spike the Rooster 2001

After the photograph by Shelby Lee Adams

There is no ease between this boy,
this bird, no languid pose behind
the house peeling its way to soil.
Waiting for the sun to strut
from the coop-gray cloud and feather
the afternoon with heat, for shadows
to arc beneath the nails fastening paint
to the baked oak planks, Eric clasps
the rooster to his waist with the crook
of his arm, holds his antagonist close.
Its wattle and comb bloom dark
on the thick white stem of its neck.
From the feet, talons jut like blades.
Eric clamps the hocks with one hand,
with the other slants the shanks away
from his thigh. He knows Spike's
abiding rage, knows the hostage,
bitter and wild, will rake its spurs
across his groin unless its legs
are bound or unless it is freed.

Grant Clauser

The Magician Dreams

Every cause has its effect.
The moon crawling on all fours
leading a pack of mangy dogs.
A man alone in his house
breeding homunculi in jars.

It's the doom of mirrors
that they can't turn away.
Every glance ahead is just
a false goodbye. He covers them
with cloth to keep the eyes outside.

Outside, rain without clouds.
Fish fall from the sky like a wish
shot down for wishing wild.
His shadow moves in circles
on the floor, finally settles down
and sleeps some more.

Grant Clauser

The Magician's Vacation

There's no place he can go
where the universe can't
find him.

So much on his mind,
the comings and goings
of stage smoke,
how to read the facial
ticks of a tiger
and the number
of clicks
in his favorite padlock

that he can't relax
even on a beach.
Instead, he counts
sand grains and sea gulls,
listens for the cries
of sailors in a conch shell

and rearranges the stars
to better explain
the weather.

Heather Derr-Smith

Butcher, Sarajevo

The chilled air smelled of meat.
I wore a yellow belted dress and high heels the color of Bologna.

You pressed your hip against me.
The hot afternoon waved in the windows.

The man behind the counter smiled at us,
two lovers in a foreign land.

Smoked pig trotters hung from the ceiling,
dangling their red-painted toes.

Heather Derr-Smith

Wilson's Promenade, Sarajevo, and Leonard Cohen

June and the lime trees were in bloom again.
The century began in Sarajevo
and it ended in Sarajevo.

A Leonard Cohen poem in Bosnian
was tattooed on your boney hips.
... her lover for a history—full of poems.

I wanted to write about love too,
so I walked along the Miljacka River
like when we were young
and I thought I would die of a heroin overdose
every time you kissed me.

Down in the bracken
I found a rabbit faking its own death, stark still
in a crown of thorns, in the shadow of the blooming limes.
These trees survived the war. Every war.
No one would cut them down.

The rabbit stared hard, unblinking—
eye like a black marble.
until my hand reached out and it sprang

to life, flash and nerve,
a blur of Lazarus-bandages unraveling,

My heart all galloping resurrection hooves.

Howie Good

Academe (A Fable)

When deer invaded the Humanities Building, singly and in pairs, a chaos of white-tailed shadows, the university police (in bulletproof vests!) rushed to the roof to escape the vicious clatter of hooves, and all the deans and all their assistants screamed from the upper windows for the proper forms to be filled out, while down in my suddenly empty classroom, I could feel the shudder in the air of wolves breeding with campus dogs in dirty red bandanas, a nameless longing for something that doesn't exist.

Howie Good

Blues Progression

Ask anyone. Ask Dylan's one-eyed undertaker. Ask him about roses growing out of people's brains, alligators crawling through sewers, lovers turning into graveyard angels, souped-up cars running full blast on a Friday night, the so-called "old, weird America," a haze of shadows drifting in the open window, where I move to the movements of the naked woman slip-sliding under me, our flesh, inside & out, zebra-striped at hundreds of miles per second.

Robert W. King

The Great Great Plains Those Years

Harlan loved the plains when the rest of us
in the cabin in eastern Wyoming
were griping about the nothing around us
as we drank and sunned, somebody coming down
from the hills in Cuba. Still, he wasn't sure
where he was going when he left that day.

If he turned one way at the end of the long
dirt drive he was heading back to Denver.
The other way and he'd be going home.
He'd decide when he hit the paved highway.

None of us realized, until it happened,
that we couldn't see the last curve of the drive
and would not, would never, as it turned out,
know which way he went. Up to that moment
we must have thought the earth was flat, that you
could never see someone disappear like that.

By the time we left, there was even less to see
around us and, of course, when we looked back
we couldn't see the house. Remembering it now,
I can't tell you which way we turned when we came
to the road the state called Secondary.

Robert W. King

Old Mister J.

The four of us spent that winter in Montana
up Mill Creek at one of the old cabins, alone
except on Sundays when Mr. J. arrived,
building a fire in the stove of his one room,

taking the day to read the Sunday papers
and sip at whiskey, a drop at a time
but a long time, until he'd stop by to visit,
late afternoon, face ruddy as a stove.

We were hot with music and our new wives.
He was bemused and dry and drifty.
He could have been a famous Chinese poet,
hermit monk. We could have been barbarians.

Afterward, we made a little fun of him
and then forgot. And then forgot. But now
I know that whiskey sip, that watching
a small fire blazing up and dwindling

while outside dark water moves quickly away
under its ice, almost innocent of its time.
We want to leave the empire collapsing.
We want to leave the empire being built.

John McKernan

Forget About the Will Take Long Naps

Plant more wildflowers
All around your coffin

Paste some more photos
On the lid of your coffin
Use that invisible twenty year glue

Stuff more crepe paper and street maps
And hymns and chants and harmonicas
Inside your coffin
Don't forget Ray Charles "Yesterday"

The universe is large
Lonelier than the Black Hills
Most people try to avoid a diet
Of pulverized sundials
And dehydrated Omaha water

John McKernan

In the Museum I Know I Know I Know

I should be learning something
Looking at brilliant feathers

Of an eagle
Rearranged into a war bonnet
As art

But I keep thinking
Of the little kids down the block
Who found the electrocuted eagle
With a mouse in its claws

How they spent an hour
Plucking every feather
From the bird
Pushing a few into their hair
Stuffing the rest into their pockets

Marlene Muller

Bridge

The river didn't offer
flocks of birds, or wood ducks
nesting near shore. I never startled
from a flick of light on water,
the flash of fin and silver tail.
The current didn't care I was growing up.

It sent a boy who slowed his car
by the old ice house, who drove
beside me as I rode across
the wooden bridge. He asked
from his open window if I liked
my bike seat, he smiled and asked
if I liked how the bike seat
felt. I want to have known

the river clear, the park
unforbidden, its gravel beach
unlit by headlights, awash
instead with early dusk, the sun
after supper lowering itself
between cedar and fir.

Marlene Muller

White Ocean Motel

In the white Ocean Motel
at night our parents drink beer and boil
a tall pot of clams. "I hate clams,"

I hiss. I hate the clam gun, the bucket,
the beach at 5 a.m. I hate the gray
surf breaking beneath a burden

of rain. They laugh in the kitchen,
fog the window with steam. Three
teenagers sprawl across sandy beds,

the oldest preaching again what God
wants. God wants to save us. Save me
from go-karts, from fourteen,

from nothing good to eat or ever
happening. "The night is far spent,
the day is at hand." When they all

fall asleep, I test God—"Lift this coat
to that bed." The coat stays.
I cannot see I am moving.

Lynne Potts

All Wells Are About

All wells are about love and if you invent one, it will be just as deep.

So we invent, for how else to get through morning's empty hours—

morning, full of the same air you draw up in the bucket of your well.

If air could hold your empty hand, it would take you to a roadside

where a wind artist makes weather vanes and sun dials with dry grasses,

sand, and deer bones, day after day for the love of the making.

And who loved snow storms so much he invented a glass ball to snow incessantly with a tiny music box underneath reminding the snowman of his love for beautiful Greensleeves?

Those who gaze through telescopes can place one at an open window and see Andromeda, freed by Perseus from lashing seas and a monster who also loved her, in his own empty way.

Three Mexican children with fuzzy brown eyes watch their mother

pull the edges of mud into a voluptuous bowl for strawberries floated

in cream bringing their husbands from fields they've made to grow.

So many ways of loving and always changing like steam over the well

on cold days, and if you're lucky, when it starts to slip from your fingers

you pull up the bucket and fill it and then you understand about making.

Lynne Potts

Just a Couple of Squid

Two squid met on an ocean highway while
I reflected how quickly *squid* and *squish*
come together, though I was a long way from
understanding quotidian and mid America
way way back—meridian of the same watery
highway that, in a way, says: Stay on your side
of the ocean, and don't come over to mine;
we can go for a drink but don't put your squid
hand through my arm as when we met
with oysters, clams, quahogs looking on, me
speaking to you in a figure of speech as I find
squid is best for you to understand me, soft
spoken, drifted, delivered on a plate though
when push comes to shove which it always does
I don't know if I'm grounded or still underwater.

Teresa Sutton

Burial of the Dead

Brother, brother, grandmother,
mother, she yanks from Dante's vestibule,
plants in a garden of silence on her lawn.
She looks up from a book,
from her fireplace, to the snow outside
that now covers the corpses.

The voices of the dead
gather beneath the white blanket, then
poke through like tender shoots of beans
or corn. Larkspur springs from blood.
A blue scarf rises from the bottom
of her closet. She wraps it around her neck
in requiem, sits back by the fire.
Her dead, they never seem to stay buried.

Teresa Sutton

Policeman Calls Mom: The Job

Something broke in both of us the day
my son arrived on the scene, first to witness
the hole in a boy's head and fragments
of skull bone swimming in a red sea.

One word slipped through our phone connection,
like a sharp bone or a hunk of meat lodged
in the line. Drugs, he said, to explain

this other mother's nightmare. The seventh
seal cracked and Heaven for a space of time,
short but infinite, stayed silent. Then the mother
of the boy with brain chunks strewn across

a Bronx sidewalk grabbed the cop's arm,
my boy's arm, shook it and screamed
at him to do something - CPR, whatever
it took. Bent over the fourteen-year-old's body,

boots in blood, he felt for the pulse he knew

he'd never find, then radioed for a bus to the morgue.
He was right in front of his own apartment,
my son said. Then he trailed off, the mother...

I pictured skeletons, death and his minions,
in a long chain dance circle the mother and my son.

But before the sea beast rises to rule the earth,
before the seventh trumpet sounds,

I want him to knock on every door and ask, not
for an answer, but for a bowl of milk with honey.

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Contributors

S. L. Alderton lives in Colorado. Her poetry appeared in the Fall 2012 issue of *2River View*, and *Enchanted Conversation*.

Jose Angel Araguz is the author of the chapbook *Corpus Christi Octaves* (Flutter Press). He is presently pursuing a PhD at the University of Cincinnati, where he is a CantoMundo Fellow.

Philip Belcher has had poems in journals such as *Fugue*, *Shenandoah*, and *The Southeast Review*. He is an Advisory and Contributing Editor for *Shenandoah*.



Grant Clauser is the author of two books: *The Trouble with Rivers* and *Necessary Myths*. His poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Cortland Review*, and elsewhere.

Heather Derr-Smith is the author of *Each End of the World* (Main Street Rag Press) and *The Bride Minaret* (University of Akron Press). She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Howie Good is the author of *The Complete Absence of Twilight* (MadHat Press, 2014). Other forthcoming books include *Fugitive Pieces* (Right Hand Press) and *Buddha & Co* (Plain Wrap Press).

Robert W. King recently won the Grayson Books Chapbook Competition. *Old Man Laughing* (Ghost Road Press) was a finalist for the 2008 Colorado Book Award in Poetry. *Some of These Days* appeared in 2013 from Conundrum Press.

John McKernan has published poems in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. He lives mostly in West Virginia, where he edits ABZ Press.

Marlene Muller lives and teaches in Seattle, Washington. Her work has appeared in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, *Commonweal*, *Whether Magazine*, and *Pontoon: An Anthology of Washington State Poets*.

Lynnes Potts won the 2012 National Poetry Review Press MS award. Her poems have appeared in *Paris Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. Potts is Poetry Editor at *AGNI*.

Teresa Sutton is a poet and a teacher. In addition to her chapbook, *They're Gone*, her work appears in numerous literary journals including *Fourteen Hills*, *Solstice*, and *Stone Canoe*.

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About the Artist

Rebecca Meredith currently resides in the California Bay Area. Her work can be found in children's books, magazine content, surface pattern designs, licensed content, and in private gallery and corporate fine art collections.

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.

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