

The 2River View

21.1 (Fall 2016)



new poems by Scott Edward Anderson, Walter Bargaen, Lana Bella, Michelle Brooks
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Vincent Poturica, William Rector, and Amanda Wells

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Seasonal Disorder

Trees etch themselves
deftly, carefully,
on a watercolor wash
of blue-grey sky,
their unleaved branches
starkly definite,
black as inkstrokes.

At the horizon,
the edge of sunset fades
gold to pale yellow,
even as I watch.

Somewhere in the grass,
or bushes, a final cricket
sounds its passing notes
for these last warm days,
unexpected in December.

Together, we wait,
leaning toward solstice,
believing that seasons still
take their inevitable course
and even growing darkness,
heavy as it may be,
falls away, hits bottom
and has an end.

Scott Edward Anderson

José Pereira from São Miguel

He was a small man, who dreamed but never slept.
I have a photograph of my grandfather's father
sitting astride a shaggy pony, wearing his one suit,
fedora perched on his head like a crown—the proud paterfamilias.
There's a furtiveness to his eyes, nervous, perhaps,
atop this beast at least a head taller than himself.

He knew a little English, I suppose.
At Narragansett Power they called him "Joe P."
José Pereira, from São Miguel,
sailed into America as a conqueror's minion,
one of Vasco de Gama's henchmen.

He came over on the Fabre Steamship Lines,
on one of many boats that arrived in Providence
each week from the Azores.
At the point of entry, a clerk wrote:

"Joe [*sic*] Pereira Perry; wife Anna Rosa Rogers."
They had four children: Albert, Edward, Raymond, and Alice.
Albert, whose crazy hair rose up from his head like a fountain,
died at eighteen years of hydrocephalus—"water-on-the-brain."

Scott Edward Anderson

The Trophy Room

As a child, all I knew of my Portuguese grandfather was the room full of his accomplishments, framed Frank Lanning Award (with its cartoons and caricature) and *Providence Journal* articles on the walls.

The sight of my grandmother at her nightly ritual: placing half a grapefruit, a glass of tomato juice, and a bowl of dry bran cereal on the kitchen table—my grandfather's morning repast.

While other children kept vigil for St. Nicholas, I never bothered, knew *he* existed—

my Portuguese grandfather was another story.

I'd sneak down to catch him in the act of leaving, concealing myself in the kitchen cupboards until he came down for his breakfast. I rarely caught him, falling asleep among cereal boxes and cases of Narragansett Beer. Tracing the letters

on the cardboard, "*Hi neighbor, have a 'Gansett!*"

His broken fast on the table like Santa's milk and cookies.

Did he smile to himself as he passed

the trophy room on his way out to his *other* life?

Walter Barga

Mowing

Wrenches working against each other, the pieces don't easily disassemble: flat washers, lock washers, machine bolts, self-threading screws, all obstacles. This is a repair forced upon those wandering the desert of poverty. The housing around the rear wheel is a rusted through star chart. Moses glimpses God in the buck brush amid the chiggers and ticks and ignores him as he works in the yard.

Out west, in Arizona and Colorado, fires are consuming hundreds of thousands of acres. Whole mountains of pine are pyramids of flame. Egyptians pharaohs would be envious. Night a transcendent glow. No face in a forest of flames, nor a burned tortilla nailed to the restaurant door, or staring down in a certain slant of light from a water tower. It's Sunday, Moses is busy converting his push mower into a self-propelled believer.

Walter Borgen

Stylish

Eve really hasn't tried anything on yet, and probably won't, but she's shopping around for the right disease. At first she thought the more exotic the better though exotic has its own limitations. Geographically speaking, the common cold could be exotic in Antarctica. Ebola more than exotic where she lives but uncommon is probably not a good candidate either. Malaria with its uncertain outcome, perhaps years of flash fevers and night sweats, not certain enough. Hemorrhagic fever more certain but more random and difficult to find. And there's no control over an aneurism. Who can say when the heart will explode. Perhaps she will have to settle on an industrial grade cancer. But really it's all the same or, at least, it ends the same, and so she takes another bite of the apple.

Lana Bella

The Blossom Drops

the excess on blossom drops
will sigh, then heave against
the boy's figure perching low
by the seat of a Mexican lime—
somewhere beyond, a flight of
cormorants caught in sunlight,
held the jet-twitch of dirigible
earth with the conveyor of the
boy's wonder coiling in orbits,
innocence nested from stone
steps to leaves—he was all at
once the shadows of his youth
and the weight of vertebrae
piercing the sky, for here, lean
and fast like a buck that could
leap in a child's jungle gym, he
throbbed with the dawn's first
light, part bark, part root, part
spindle stem, where the babel
of arachnid traffic peered warily
over echelons of prickly pear,
feigning the motion of the boy's
mother shouldering out from
the kitchen window, dark-swept
eyes tossed wide and through
the mango grove, throaty peals
calling him home at repast time—

Lana Bella

Dear Suki: Number 40

Dear Suki: Monterey Bay, May 20th,
I'll go by train to the sea of my grief;
body veins in brine, butters through
the coastline rattling from the weight
of interlocked metal chains on asphalt.
Percocet toss me back to black cloud,
ignoble at evening sea's knife-edges,
obscure, anomalous, a dozing stroke
on Van Gogh's canvas. Nowhere near,
you have become pliable, sky-decree,
a softness entombed inside the lesser
weight of this impetuous weather and
tinny dew's tap on glass. Now if only I
could keep my eyes from traveling out
to the dotted dark, where cypress trees
entrenched in arterial spray, each note
bent the tufted-yellow grass, rectangle
with the march of abandon and detour
signs, barometric and fizzled, scudding
long your garment's tail—marking your
leaving like smokes sped into graphite

Michelle Brooks

The City of God

Do not look behind you.
You cannot sing the songs
of Zion in a foreign land.
Do not tell anyone of what
you used to be. I once heard
a rumor of a girl who kept
her used sanitary napkins
in a dresser drawer, preservation
instinct gone awry. Cast into
the future, I wonder about her,
what happened to all that dried blood.

Michelle Brooks

Vision

My mother always made burning
bushes for parties, thin deli
meat with cream cheese frozen
and then cut into circles. If God
spoke from these appetizers what would
he say to the gathered faithful, the guests
attempting to find solace in Wild Turkey
and Blue Nun? As a child I passed around
the offerings until the plate was empty,
like a desert before the promised land.

Ja'net Danielo

Blood

I am blood—fennel and mint-spiced,
a tired line of arthritic fingers, strained
eyes. I am cold Brooklyn nights,
apartment houses, frosted front windows
facing the El. I am curses, spells,
bowlfuls of oil and salt, a language gasping
near-dead, soft *Cs* and *Ps*, clipped vowels
lodged deep in the back of my throat.
I am broken baptisms, dark spirits
who fed like leeches on a priest's missing
words, slithered their way into bedrooms.
I am rosaries, rosemary, saint statuettes.
I am needle and thread.
I stitch coats for ghosts out of poems.

Ja'net Danielo

Unnamed

Once, there was no word
for *blue*. To aborigines,
the sea was green
like cypress, like so many
species of locust.
And the moon
was the face of a clock
set in a forest night.

So what is the word
for *us*? For the sky
when it opens itself up
to the gold flash
of a bird, to the black
silhouette of a palm
frond? For that moment,
after so many moons,
when two people are culled
from their far, dark
corners of woods
to a pinpoint
on this grid of earth?

What do I call it—
this place we inhabit?
After roaming that terrain
of root and smoke,
to arrive, our feet
caked in dirt, eyes
full of green—
to the flash of the gold bird,
that piece of flame
in a blue sky?

Daniel Fitzpatrick

Black Rock Life

Three weeks now I've watched
that raccoon rotting on the shoulder,
first on her belly, chin down
on the asphalt, as if she liked
to watch the wheels whip by
so fast they seemed like spinning backward,

then on her side, stiff
so the symmetry of nipples,
hard and dark in the light,
stood out to taunt the cubs
who may have watched at night
from grass grown long along the graveyard.

Now she's brown, a matted mass,
little different, save to those distracted,
from the bits of old blowouts
or mud clumps caked in recent rain.
Soon she'll drip and dry away,
likely as this to be remembered.

It's hot now. The highway's hotter,
and the wheels suck slowly at the asphalt,
nothing touched or naked more than moments
while the air conditioned cabs float past
in the endless requiem
of black rock blazing life.

Daniel Fitzpatrick

Roach Poetry

It's often in some ill-lit hide,
the space beneath the sink
or just between the bookshelves,
a copper wing clanging at my eyes
from shadow a shoe can't reach
without some gross contortion or timidity
that lets the thing escape
to leave me staring at the sole.

Then at last it comes into the clear,
the stove's glow amber on the ground,
stilted as if disdainingly dirty floors.
The shod hand swings
just hard enough to kill,
more forceful here than fission,
leaving me to pluck and flush
the jelly of hard joints
and sanitize the spot,
leaving me feeling all week,
when my sneaker slightly sticks,
as if I've missed something.

Christien Gholson

All the Beautiful Dead (Along the Side of the Road)

This happened ten years ago, back when I was living in Des Moines. My marriage had ended and my ex-husband had taken off to the west coast with his new love. After he left, I quit my job at Olive Garden, put everything in storage, rode my bicycle to Dubuque. My sister lived in Dubuque with her two girls, Liz and Dar. I needed to see them. But I needed to get there slow, wrap my head around what had happened.

Being so close to the surface of the road, I began to notice all the dead animals along the shoulder. It was shocking how many there were. You never notice the bodies when you blow down the road at fifty or sixty miles an hour. Sometimes I would stop, crouch next to them – hummingbirds, possums, cats, turtles. I still don't know why – to let them know that someone saw them, acknowledged that they were part of the world, that they would be missed?

On Highway 151, just outside Marshalltown, on an empty stretch of road sandwiched by cornfields, I came on a live great blue heron, standing on the road's shoulder, right next to a blue bird's stiff body. The heron didn't move for a good fifteen minutes, just stared and stared into the corn. It came to me, out of the blue, that this heron was some sort of god, a protector, of all the dead along the side of the road. I imagined that she flew from body to body—all day, all night—guiding each one into the afterlife.

That night, I saw the roadside god in a dream: foptail headdress, pheasant necklace, raccoon tail ring, a gown of bone. She knelt over the crushed shell of a snapping turtle, touched her claw to the bloody head. A stream of flies flew from the dead mouth, up, up, into the mouth of the burning sun. I was left standing in the middle of a long, straight road, alone. Heat rippled past my face from the sunbaked concrete. Something rustled in the tall weeds to my right...

Christien Gholson

The Impossible

I don't always remember the names of the dead, but I recognize faces. I see them sometimes, at Price Chopper, Toys R Us. I'm not talking about ghosts. There's no such thing, not in my world. I simply catch a glimpse out of the corner of my eye and it looks just enough like a former patient to make me turn, look again.

I administer the drugs, keep them comfortable. Feed tubes, morphine drips. Sometimes they talk. I listen ... most of the time. My best friend Ellie once asked me "What is death?" as if I would know the answer. Why should I know? I deal with cachexia, the body wasting away.

This afternoon, I visited the mother of a man I nursed for the past two months. She watched as his body slowly decayed from esophageal cancer and chemo. When he could no longer swallow, he was hooked to a feed tube. That's when I arrived. In the final two weeks the cancer broke through the skin, opening holes in his neck. He died last weekend. He was thirty-eight.

We drank coffee. She talked about the possibility of snow, about the music for the funeral. Did I want to hear his favorite song? As I was leaving I touched her arm and looked into her eyes—the boy's death was all I could see—and, for the first time in my life, I understood the urge to ask that impossible question: "What is death?"

When I got home I stood in the middle of my kitchen in the dark, keys in hand, unable to move; so still. I swear I could feel the earth spinning beneath me; the stars turning above, following the sun to their graves ...

Vincent Poturica

Bare Necessities

The world is on fire, as always,
and I sit in the apartment
with God and all the spiders,

missing Amy and the little one
who is burrowing inside her.
Tonight the neighbors fight

in the backyard with shovels
before they fuck above me.
I am happy for them, hiding

inside each other's skin.
I don't know why, but I am
thinking of a girl who is now

dead. We are sitting on the pier
again, lighting palm fronds with
matches. She tells me secrets.

Why can't I remember her name?
This question hollows out
my heart to make space for her

and all the other strangers
who wear red masks. I hear them
taking turns sipping from the

spout of my aorta while they
gossip about my petty fears:
The little one needs shoes and socks.

The little one needs milk and diapers.
The little one needs to know what?

Vincent Poturica

Day of Rest

For lunch, my wife
roasts Brussels sprouts.

Afterwards, I brush my
teeth with my thumb

to make her laugh.
Emma sends an email

about Travis. I google
him and learn he has

a daughter. I read
his interview with

Lance from J Church.
I google Lance and

learn he's also dead.
A ladybug lands

in the shade
between my knuckles.

Bill Rector

the encounter

Czeslaw Milosz read his poem, "Encounter," in Polish. Next, he climbed into the wooden wagon of English and read it again. Then he recited the words in sign language, pulling on the reins of the lines and tightening the iron bits in our mouths. At the end, he pointed at the sky and then at the ground. After that, he tapped on the podium in Morse code. The horse's hooves clotted; the hare dashed. Milosz read the poem once more in complete silence to an empty auditorium. As an encore, he took off his hat, an old cloth one, and pulled a rabbit from it. The rabbit ran a little way on the stage, then stopped and looked back.

Bill Rector

influence

I was late reaching the dais.

The ballroom quickly emptied
down to rows of straight-backed chairs
and the chandeliers in the carpet's pattern.

I could have followed your voice,
joined the throng of your admirers,
and threaded the gray in their beards.
I might have sent your famous name
tumbling backward down the curving
stairwell of the final hotel.

Caught you
in the revolving door.

Pretended
to ask for directions
to the corner of Laurel and Main.

Walked
into your house and
slumped in your favorite chair.

Held your head with my hand
in the room where you are no one.

Written this poem at the same time as you.

Amanda Wells

Dusk, Near Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery

Lying alone in this unfeeling place,
he searches. The pit of his war-ravaged
soul expands, fills empty infinite space
among the darkened sterile air. Savage

suggestions of artillery glory
echo as gunfire in his synapses,
swap reality for horror stories,
close in the gaps while contentment lapses

and terror creeps in. A pill, then a haze
slowly sedates his post-war dissension.
With tired eyes to Dionysius, glazed
amid a Thorazine intervention,

his overwrought psyche whispers in vain,
Make me a Seraph of six wings and flame.

Amanda Wells

Remodeling

I grew tired of picking your daisy petals,
chunks of steel and the avarice of
bitters with whiskey.
You asked for tenderness,
maybe mercy,
face down on the tile.
The next weekend
I took a sledgehammer
to the bathroom wall,
fixed the leaks
swept up porcelain
gained space in my bed.
I don't regret the mirror shards
that cut up my knees.
The monogrammed towels,
soaked in blood and abandonment,
say only "hers" now.

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Contributors

Scott Edward Anderson is the author of *Fallow Field* (Aldrich Press, 2013) and *Walks in Nature's Empire* (The Countryman Press, 1995). He has been a Concordia Fellow at the Millay Colony for the Arts and is a past recipient of the Nebraska Review Award.

*Walter Barga*n has most recently published *Days Like This Are Necessary: New & Selected Poems* (2009), *Endearing Ruins* (2012), *Trouble Behind Glass Doors* (2013), *Gone West* (2014), and *Three-corner Catch* (2015). From 2008 to 2009, Barga served as the first poet laureate of Missouri (2008-2009).

Lana Bella is the author of *Under My Dark* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2016) and *Adagio* (Finishing Line Press, forthcoming), with work in journals such as *California Quarterly* and *Tipton Poetry Journal*. Bella resides in the US and Nha Trang, Vietnam.

Michelle Brooks is the author of *Make Yourself Small* (Backwaters Press) and a novella, *Dead Girl, Live Boy* (Storylandia Press). Her



photography has been published in Arabesques, Straightforward Poetry Review, and elsewhere.

Vincent Casaregola teaches American Literature, Film/Media Studies, Rhetorical Studies, and Creative Writing at Saint Louis University. He has published poetry in a number of journals, including *The Examined Life*, *Natural Bridge*, *VIA*, and *WLA*.

Ja'net Danielo is an Assistant Professor of English at Cerritos College, where she teaches creative writing and composition. Her poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Red Rock Review*, *SOFTBLOW*, and elsewhere. Danielo lives in Long Beach, California, with her husband and her dog.

Daniel Fitzpatrick lives in Hot Springs, Arkansas, with his wife and daughter. He has recently assembled a poetry manuscript, *All the Race of Beauty*, and is finishing his first novel, *Only the Lover Sings*.

Christien Gholson is the author of *All the Beautiful Dead* (Bitter Oleander Press, 2016); *On the Side of the Crow* (Hanging Loose Press, 2006); and a novel, *A Fish Trapped Inside the Wind* (Parthian, 2011).

Vincent Poturica lives with his wife in Long Beach, California, where he teaches at local community colleges. His writing appears or is forthcoming in *DIAGRAM*; *Forklift, Ohio*; *New England Review*; and *Western Humanities Review*.

Bill Rector is a gastroenterologist. His poetry has been published in journals such as *Hotel Amerika* and *Prairie Schooner*. His first book, *bill*, is available through Proem Press. He has also written *Lost Moth*, a chapbook about the loss of his daughter.

Amanda Wells teaches English at the University of Missouri—St. Louis while maintaining a gig in web communications. You can follow her rants and research via Twitter at @STLGrad.

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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
2River

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