

The 2River View

23.3 (Spring 2019)



new poems by

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KD Miller

April

the waxwings singing
through my window
remind me of when i was young.

but i'm letting bygones be bygones,
staring boldly out the doorway at the
morning sun

but who am i anymore
if i cannot be that girl
i don't know, i don't know.

to sleep's to dream
and to love's to keep
April—my life's white and green.

Taylor Altman

Broccoli Moon

after Marosa di Giorgio

The broccoli was outsize that season, the heads dark green and faceted like emeralds. It was about this time that our neighbor's pumpkin plants crept over the fence, the runners imperceptible until huge orange goblin-heads appeared in our yard.

A broccoli moon flowered over the children who played barefoot, using the concrete path by the rose garden as an imaginary badminton net. Every so often one of them would come back to the house crying because she had stepped on a thorn.

Strange reports began to come from the fishermen, of mermaids suctioning themselves to incoming boats so they had to be scraped off like starfish. They didn't sing, as Odysseus would have us believe; rather, they barked like crows. Teenage boys began to sit on the rocks and whistle at them, and they would come, dumb creatures, allowing themselves to be kissed. But their kisses were slimy as the underside of a snail, and the boys pushed them back into the bay.

This all happened one summer, if you can believe it. After my mother picked the broccoli, her hands glittered for days.

Taylor Altman

California 99

Land of flat-bottomed clouds and citrus trees planted in maddeningly straight rows, of tractor-trailers with bumper stickers reading *I'm in Graceland Baby* and *State of Jefferson*, I want to write a love letter to each room honeycombed in the pink motel on the edge of the 99, dim even in the most brilliant afternoon sun, to its stained carpet and God's blessing infomercials and the sound of rust through plumbing; to the women of Chowchilla, pacing in their cells, to whom age comes like a crow on a high power line; and to the coyotes on the far edges of Fresno County, lean and ravening, who are made of orange moonlight and never sleep.

Lauren Davis

Father Fills the Tanks with Bleach

I will be so clean living in our one large room
above the skeleton wood. A gutted excavation
where air tongues naked beams beneath.

And here, the water did not reach.
We stretch into dishonest dreams,
the breeze retaining the cuff of disease.

Behind curtains strung from the ceiling,
brother and I learn a new dark.
Mother tosses in her makeshift marriage bed.

And in the morning, I bath in water unfit for touch.
Baptized in tarnish, washed in Tar River's ruts,
I greet the day with skin reeking of stain.

I climb down stripped stairs
into the gutted womb of our blessed home.

Lauren Davis

Floyd Spreads Famine on His Black Horse

I looked, and behold, a black horse....
Revelation 6:5

He flashes his scale, my village besieged. I prayed
one hundred and twelve prayers, but Floyd breaks
the bed where I first met Christ.

The minister homes my family. I rest beneath
his daughter's sheets. She sings hymns
in the morning, hymns at night.

Floyd, allow me to fatten your stallion
with all my sin. Do not harm my oil and wine.
In her chamber, my shadow I leave behind.

Tina Quinn Durham

The Bird That Loved

What the crow brought, the girl kept.
A broken light bulb,
A piece of glass worn smooth by the sea,
A blue paper clip, a faded bit of black foam,
A heart of pearl.

Did the crow love her for herself alone?
Or did he love the gifts of dog-food,
peanuts tossed willy-nilly in the grass,
broken cookies saved from lunch?
She traded kibble for a crab claw,
poured fresh water from the goodness
of her heart.

Was their relationship ridiculous?
Was it reasonable?

When she moved away with her parents,
when she became a woman and found another mate—
this one of her own kind—

when the crow was a puddle
of feathers in the grass somewhere,
broken wing bones gleaming like the curved ribs
of a scallop shell and that obsidian beak
smooth and still, shockingly dark against a naked skull,

when she opened a plastic bag from her childhood
and discovered the iridescent heart of pearl,
did she remember standing in the dew
one August morning sharing a graham cracker
with her lover, the crow?

Tina Quinn Durham

Lost Happiness and Lasting Pain

there is a world of childhood that is lost to everyone
and maybe it should be lost because that is the world
of nightmares seeming real, of waking in a hot
wet puddle, knowing your mother will be angry
and knowing that you can hide nothing
even if you pull the blanket over damp sheets until morning

there is a world of childhood where objects matter
because they have names, because you have given them
lives and stories that no grown-up understands
you were told to give them all away, your mother
threw them away, your father laughed
and you learned to reserve
your love for clothing, for cars, for boys
there is a world of lost teddy-bears and rag dolls
there is nothing in this world to replace them

there is a world of childhood where there is time
to read your favorite books over and over
next to a window that looks out into the branches
of a very old tree, into that world where things began
before you and you cannot imagine them
continuing without you

there is a world you can never regain
the world you miss
and never want to go back to

Cecil Morris

Persephone, Wasting

Persephone, out of darkness risen,
cries despondent, misses the world below,
the taste of poppy and pomegranate,
the soothing numbness, the unending night,
the lassitude that erased her fears.
Back in world of light, she squints her eyes,
complains about rehab and the losers'
dozen steps and their daily confessions,
like flocks of swooping seagulls that hector
her with screeching caws relentless, that peck
and molt and crap, dirty feathers scattered
among white splatter. She shrinks here where sun
scalds her flesh and it falls away as she
refuses food. A pale pound at a time
retreats to the dark realm, and her bones float
to the surface: clavicle, coracoid
process, acromion, scapular spine,
knobs of vertebrae, clutch of ribs: fossils
after rain pushing at skin, our daughter
Persephone's skeleton preparing
to flee, to launch itself from her starving
body, from her half life of hard candy,
cigarettes, energy drinks, and phone bank
work hissing through her like unspooling rope.

Cecil Morris

What's a Mother to Do

Her two small girls grow magic fast and straight,
shooting up before her eyes, changing day
to day, two sprites from fairy tales or won-
derland, two spells that conjure mom from her
and make her old and hag and even witch
who makes vegetable poisons for dinner
and fruit potions to thwart wishes and dreams.
She wants to hold them back and shoo them off,
to catch them in their sweet sleep, angel-faced,
and freeze them, perfect in their becalmed still-
ness, peace like sugar sprinkled over slack
faces, or to banish their siren's shrieks,
their tears at brush strokes through Medusa hair,
tiny tangled furies, complicated
knots whose faces close in bouts of anger,
red and roaring, and pouts of defeated
desire as dark as portents of disaster.
She tries every charm she knows, all witching
words and blessing calls, every bath and balm
to soothe their choler and guide their growth,
to steer her girls from twilit shadowlands,
to lead them into light-washed meadows, bright
with hope. Some days she resigns: exhausted
hissing sigh of air brakes easing a bus
down, settling it into park, full stop.
What can one single mother hope to do
in a world awash with temptations ripe?

Bern Mulvey

Next to the Pohnpei Post Office a WWII Tank

I don't think I could fit,
let alone three, the whole
less than six-feet high, gun
turret a narrow dome,
the body a squat box.
Ha-Gō, the Japanese
tour guide tells it, a tank
so small only kids could
crew it, the youngest and

shortest. We take photos,
from the shrapnel holes grows
now a climbing vine, in
and out again, a green
thread through the rusted frame—
caught out by Allied planes,
by the end of the war
obsolete, shell too thin,
a slow-moving coffin.

Boys climbed in that morning,
sky astonishingly
blue as they rode to death.

Bern Mulvey

Rain Squall at the Nan Madol Ruins

I swear it was her idea, the both of us
naked behind a palace of giant stone
one thousand years old. *Just a skinny dip,*
as she pushed off into infinity,
and with a stumble and nervous splash,
I followed, the water warm enough, out
into the man-made cove, a looming arch,
the wall now to nowhere, a curve made because.
Why here, an island castle built off an island,
huge stones dragged somehow along jungle paths,
then laid lovingly one against the next?
The dead when they dream must dream in stone,
the towers and tombstones, obelisks and plaques
that we raise up against all that which would
forget. I followed until she kissed me there,
until the sky turned and I saw wave after wave
from a great distance, gone the routine of life,
her arms about me, the single slab above
the only shelter, beyond the forces
always close, waiting—how they rattle the bars
of our cages, how they shriek and stamp.

Lindsey Siferd

elegy for all the goddamn feathers

someone once told me,
when you leave a good man,
you must make sure to leave a ghost town
so that if you ever try to come back
there will be nothing left for you to return to

but sometimes i still wonder:
what was the last time you got a nosebleed?
what was the last time you faked an orgasm?
what was the last time you smelled new dirt?

i wrote you a letter yesterday:
*i haven't seen one earthworm
since i moved to the city
but it still rains.*

i wrote you a poem the first day i met you:
erase me erase me erase me erase me

i'm haunted by the ghosts of the children we never had

they follow me home from work
they beg for money at the street corners
they cry for milk

our children look like kittens
they look like plastic bags

and i didn't think about you for seventeen days then i
cried on an airplane

and my therapist said
he will never forgive you
so you need to move on now

but your death rattle voice, your broken glass smile, your
stone teeth, your teeth stones, your teeth!

but when it felt like opening a switchblade into my palm
but when it felt like carving a bowie knife into my palm
but when it felt like sticking a kitchen knife into my palm

loving you was opening my mouth in the morning to
speak and having my jaw crack instead

Lindsey Siferd

bojack horseman is the only kind of art i want to consume

did you know that 30% of the adult population injures themselves while trying to remove their pubic hair?

did you know that if you sing into a plate of glass it will sound better?

(blackbird by nina simone is the only song i know how to sing)

my therapist said not to give up on dating
but maybe just do it differently
did you know what i said to that?
ahahahahahahHAHAHAhaha

my best friend said
she's pretty sure 90% of the men on bumble are bots
did you know what i said to that?
i messaged ten guys EAT ME and not one responded

i have a tattoo on the inside of my heart
it reads:
YOU CAN START OVER AGAIN ANYTIME YOU WANT

but there is still sand in my sheets from the summer
there are still condom wrappers in the trash can
and the voice in my head still talks all day long:

*here is a boy in a lion hat
here is a bruise
here is the head that you asked for on a plate
here is the plate
here is the head*

one thing i am good at is grieving for people that are not
dead

one thing i am good at is constantly wishing i was skinnier

wait, no, i am constantly wishing i was smaller
if i could be an ant i would
if i could crawl into my mother's lap and sleep i would

god bless my mother
who does not know what a haiku is
god bless the people who call TGI fridays "fridays"
god bless the woman who left a period stain on her seat
on the c train
god bless penn station

*the man on the train next to me has a hole in his earlobe
and i want to put my finger through it*

Mary Sun

Trauma/vision I

I am calling collect for the orphan army.
Taping the Milky Way spiral to a sea of searchlights,
flooding the sky with a healing that has never known straight lines.
Everything is division. Everything is hoping that they know when they don't.

I have laid out bait for the ouroboros,
bottles of waves shredding themselves on the rocks,
dying again and again for a moon that will never stay.
There is a basket in the corner, for when it comes and you shatter in place.
It will take and take and you will give and give and I will collect you back together then.

After, let out the string behind you.
Leave me a map to your permanent battlefields. Take my umbrella
to Neverland and don't give it back. The storms there cannot help leaking through the sky.

It is so hard to unclench my fists and let you home,
where the war began. Not knowing if family alive meansa family alive.

All I saw were the laws they wrote without you. Baked onto your trembling bones.

On bad days, I cannot forgive the sepsis
for reaching your eyes. For turning your world into a lie of mirrors
and your nervous system into a child with too-small hands that cannot turn off the faucet.
I never know if I am feeding the soldier or the child. The water never stops being sacrificed.

Beloved, if I lose you here,
if the dust clogs your lungs and the gangrene creeps heavy,
remember this. Worms only feed on what was once most alive.
When they have you, slit their stomachs with your broken-edged heart and rejoin the sun.

Jeremy Voigt

The Barred Owl's Hiss

I've never heard Wilbur's calm hooting
a mild inquisition into the next meal

that soothes the woken child, nor the frantic,
frenzied ruckus riled up mates make, but I've heard

the click of break and the harsh agitated exhale
from a lump of bird leaning over a stub-branch

and when my chest calmed knowing the source
I stood and regarded it as it regarded me

then a squirrel, then back to me, and as words
calm fears or increase them according to the source,

I felt I could be the next meal despite my size,
lifted in an indifferent claw. Come down,

come down, for me or the squirrel, you choose;
I'm supplicated; I'll offer you my youngest child

who I held late into the night because she could
not sleep for the worries that worry her young mind,

and you may carry me as I carried her back to her bed,
her head lolling, feet supernaturally long and bent

over my elbow, oh owl, come down, come down,
the forest green, the forest brown, dew and no dew

all aspen and ash and evergreen and gravel and click
and shake of atavistic branches and the primal hiss.

Jeremy Voigt

The Size of Your Funeral will be Determined by the Weather

If you save blind orphans fleeing Syria.
If you carry the iconic two-year old
refugee from the sea. If you stuff the rag
in the bottle, hold it out to the flame.
If you quit your position of power,
because of mistakes made by the mases.
If you take a bullet in the brain
so girls can learn. If you read or live
the headlines. If you hold the door
for a stranger with a flourish. If you vote
your conscience. If you do not vote.
If you nurse a rejected cat who later
tries to eat your leg in a paranoid frenzy.
If you find a way to make free what once
cost. If you paint. Are chief executive,
vice president, or the President yourself,
if you save the jumper, or are the one who jumps.

John Whalen

Hot Springs

Tonight he tells me his dream
of an apple tree flowering into a woman
and I get crazy in the thousand-leafed wind.
I invite him to coffee.

Invite his girlfriend and her three daughters
to coffee and bagels and cantaloupe.
Invite everyone to motorcycle
up to the hot springs and the blue eye

of the lake, hotel full of food, swimming
pool cut in rock. Room service happy
to hear from us and some kind of paddle boat
for mom and the kids.

Back in our room he pushes against me
and pushes against me.

John Whalen

News of My Virtuous Doings

The garage on the corner of Sherman and Scott
Was filled with ham radio gear and stale, metallic air.
Rimbaud asked, *how's the roof?* He said, *I'll take it.*
He spray-painted a bunch of the equipment black
and hung it from the rafters.

For the week he gave up absinthe, he swept the floor
In a cold-turkey daze.
And then swept it again.

He ordered in knickknacks from the endless war
And opening day stacked the counter
With piles of gun magazines, his own scuffed boots
And African postcards he'd mailed himself
To see if he was still alive.

To advertise to the cars on Sprague
Two short blocks north, he stitched semaphore flags
From extra antenna and fifty-cent Value Village shirts.
Squinting in the light, flailing his arms herky-jerky,
He danced.

The 2River View, 23.3 (Spring 2019)

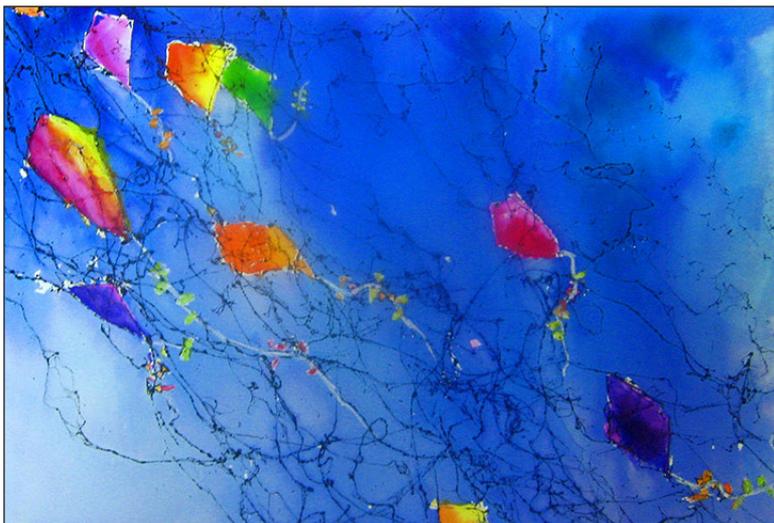
Contributors

KD Miller lives in New York City. The poem here in *2RV* is her first publication.

Taylor Altman lives in San Francisco, where she practices law. Her poems have appeared in *Blackbird*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Salamander*, and other journals. Her first poetry collection, *Swimming Back*, was published in 2008.

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Lindsey Siferd is a college admissions counselor, with poems in *Atlanta Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *pif*, *Vagabond City*, and elsewhere. She lives in New York City.

Mary Sun is a neurodivergent medical student whose work explores abuse, identity, and connection. She has work forthcoming in publications such as *Wide Eyes Press* and *The Write Launch*. Previously, she built software and worked in finance.

Jeremy Voigt lives in western Washington. His poems have appeared in *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, *Gulf Coast*, *Willow Springs*, and other magazines. His manuscript, *Estuary*, has been a semi-finalist for the Dorset Prize, The Crab Orchard first book prize, and the Miller Williams prize.

John Whalen is the author of *Caliban* (Northwest Emerging Poets Series, Lost Horse Press) and *Above the Pear Trees*, which won the 2014 Floating Bridge Press chapbook contest. His work has appeared in *CutBank*, *EPOCH*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Verse Daily*, and *VQR*.

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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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