

The 2River View

24.2 (Winter 2020)



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new poems by
Dana Knott, Derek Annis,
A. M. Brandt, Katherine Fallon
Jane Ellen Glasser, Erika Nestor, George Perreault
Travis Stephens, Phillip Sterling
Lauren Swift, Monika Zobel

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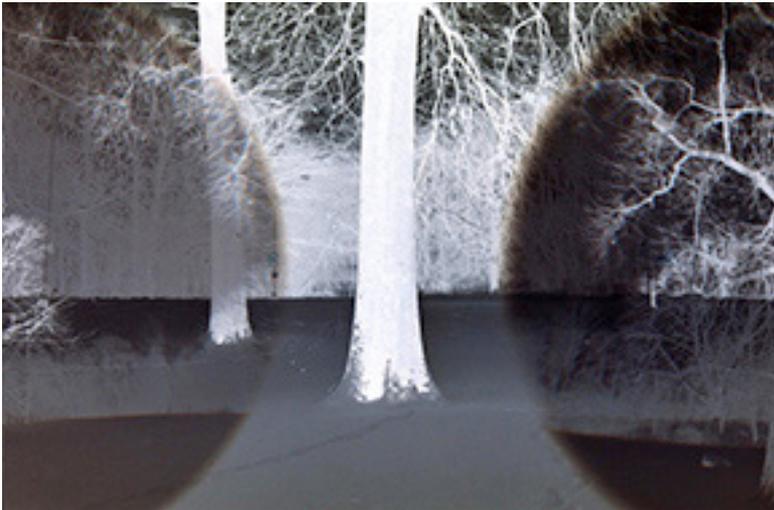
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Dana Knott

Winter Love Poem

Already the snow
has graffitied the car
in white as we walk
together, solitary
walkers in a crystalline
world. Everyone else
may be dead
as we pull our coats tighter
huddle our bodies closer
each breath a shock
an affirmation, a wisp
of warmth and cold
snowflakes fall like ashes
silent and full, each crystal
with a speck of dirt
or pollution at its heart
Let us exist always
only in this moment

but the wind, our skin, the chill

Derek Annis

Man for the New Millennium

I know it's a cliché

but I could tame a snake ride it through the city
smiling gold teeth shining
with sunlight

certainly we have all considered lifting
coins from the pockets
of these children as they chew on our rat
poison tablets

call me the one who does

those who fail at this violence
will grow nothing

but useless I once felt

a warm light on my cheek a faint
memory of it roams
my room at night muttering
something I believe
it is trying to kill me
the thought of losing it drives me
to knife myself repeatedly
and solder the wounds
silver so that in moonlight

I shine

Derek Annis

Sunday Afternoon

I walked beneath the bridge
and removed a loose
brick, but nothing happened.
The river went on
uninterrupted. I wanted
and wanted and lit
a smoke, threw the brick
into the river, uprooted
reeds from the muddy bank
and found a doll's
head with all its hair
burned off. Orange-tipped
hypodermics winked at me
from the dirt. Traffic rattled past
overhead. My smoke swirled off
to wherever smoke goes. The brick
settled among the smooth rocks
at the bottom of the river.
When I asked myself
out loud
 who cares?
the river made no reply.
Over on the other bank, a cloud
of flies sucked shit from a pile
of fish guts. Who cares.

A. M. Brandt

The Way it Was

There were mostly empty barns in our vastly empty country. There were fallow fields clear of trees

where the tractor stopped, an abandon as palpable as bankruptcy. Before a sunset there was a nervous

white sky, arrowheads hidden just under soil. Nowhere had there been a nothing like that.

When the rain fell there was a coming loam that never arrived. So many seeds unbroken

of the wheat-like shaft bitten and spit out, if it had a tongue. But there was surely want

if a woman dipped her hands in soapy water, something boiling in a pot, there was surely

a bed somewhere, a treasure still made new, as if two could always make more. There was

the wide-open ahead of us, there was surely desire when I lay back naked on the floor.

A. M. Brandt

Whosoever Am I

In fields where most of the orchards are gone,
in wayward prairies wherever they are found
and in the split dark recesses

where land falls into itself, where
water seeps restlessly to its gathering.

Whosoever, but a sorrowing bone
turning sweet in the sun as if wind-fallen
from some bejeweled primal word

that tastes of sinew and packed
seed, claw and stone.

The orchard's secret is on wing, on scat-
scattered mounds where none intrudes.
And when I say seed, I mean leeway,

that which travels, across waters, wanting
to be thrown shoreward in the wrack, I mean,

that which wrenches itself home.

Katherine Fallon

Flatiron Reservoir

Past the reservoir, an old gelding, back bowed
low like a hammock hung loosely, stoops to eat
from the freckled hand of the earth. I wish to hold

his cupped belly, keep sexless flesh clean
of snow. Naïve, if only briefly, I think to prop him up
with the handle of a shovel.

I remember you then. What hope I've had.
And the mountains admire themselves
in the water's bird-stung, wobbling image.

Katherine Fallon

When I Died

When our dead brindle greyhound returned
from the earth, he came up shaking roots

from his feet. Beneath the barren apple tree,
windfall fruit. The night smelled of sweet rot.

There was the whisper of bristling fur, chatter
of dry, brown crickets, and his toenails clicked

against the linoleum. I am come back to you,
too. As throat sounds. As the tight, familiar

click-slide-pop of my jaw when I locked it
making love, looking up. Your fingers, tapping,

kindly guided the fugitive bone back in place,
and you always held me after. Tonight you go

hunting me, barefoot, floors creaking to let me
know you are coming. I feel your hesitation

in unlit spaces, hear your deep-sleep shuffle,
wait for you as you draw the thrumming curtain

fast, certain you'll catch me, and let it go slack,
realizing you haven't. Wanting never to disappoint,

wanting never to be disappointed, I figured death
a shield. But I can tell: you are relieved not to

have found me and, wanting all, always,
from you, I never wanted this—

Jane Ellen Glasser

Two Truths I Know

Tossed confetti
soon smudges underfoot
and the drooling maws
of hunger die in a feast
because nothing lasts.

When pleasure peaks
I plummet, but
in the clutches of pain
I watch the clock
because the only
constant is change.

Ask a perfect peach
about tomorrow,
ask storm clouds
about permanence,
ask splintered glass
about mending.

Even the beautiful accident
of living gets used up.

Jane Ellen Glasser

What There Is

There is the hunger
of a gaping grave
earth won't satisfy.

There is a thirst
like the Atacama Desert's
torrents cannot slake.

There is the emptiness
of a mammoth cave
eternity would not fill.

There is the longing
of a hummingbird
in a garden of silk flowers.

There is you, there is me
pulling on the reins
of our runaway lives.

Erika Nestor

At Pictured Rocks After Her Death

To sail out on myself and carve my own:
As usual only the want is left, to be solid like a lake.

Bile or tears as we sail by a lighthouse, hot chocolate,
the beautiful water. I feel a hand yank back my hair.

My copper nerves taste of fish and pine. Cameras agape,
interfering and clicking the cold air,

exactly what we expected but also not. Streaks of iron
and limonite burrow into the sand with imprecise hunger

or whatever else I want to impose, for the emotion's mine,
unconformable and easy to erode. Such richness in the
scarlet-grey stone!

I squint to focus on the guide pointing at surficial deposits
crowned by groves of dying beech. *Lovers Leap*.

The high sun stares me straight in the gut, glances
across green water. This wooden cradle rocks me.
Where is she?

Erika Nestor

Moondust

Half asleep, I read you a piece of news about Neil Armstrong on the moon (as he is forever in our minds) where he collected a trace amount of moondust for scientific sampling, moonwalked several small steps back to Apollo and flew home, but left some moondust in a lunar bag in the spaceship.

It was as thin and sweet as burnt sugar, granular as plaster, and it smelled of gunpowder, a thick layer of static cling covering the lunar world.

In 2016 that moondust sold for 1.8 million, but they appraised it at 2 to 4, so that's actually a good deal, I whispered into your ear, and you blinked as though I'd worn you out, so I read on silently about the crushed silicon dioxide glass produced when meteoroids strike the surface, which explains the gunpowder scent, something light and bright born in the impact, but that doesn't account for the value, how the moondust market rises and plunges like all the rest.

That night I had a dream about taking a train to the moon to make our fortune, but you wouldn't go with me, even in my dream, so what's the moon to me?

George Perreault

the burial grounds

when last i walked among the dead,
your mom and dad, a favored nephew

it felt like archeology, a semi-feral cat
slinking through the stones

the catholics lay across the road,
then a narrow bet shalom,

all the caulked and sturdy boats
waiting on the shore

but today the markers rise like hives
the preacher swells with buzz

to dole out salvation's honey
with specifics of the throne

then man's held up as glory
the pinnacle of god's dear work

all those stations you might've dialed
driving through the dark

George Perreault

the phrase that was used

summing my nephew, his doctor
avoids the anodyne, the passive voice

which organs now are compromised,
merely says he's actively dying

my brother and i've watched wives
slide this way, my daughter too

it's taken years in the scrub lands
to learn nothing is a weed

mullein thrives in broken soil
its leaves laying down a richness

where others flourish in its stead
before sparseness takes a turn

a fistful of blossoms each for a day
a hundred thousand seeds

sealing themselves for decades
until fire sweeps the fields

our nights fill with flowers,
our days so busy dying

Travis Stephens

Taos

to the west a
glow on the horizon,
deep indigo
and royal at the edges of sky
except that sudden lightening of hue.
It isn't a late sunset;
it can't be.
Chalk it up to a brush of snow
a moon
full of woodsmoke.
The dog is delighted at snow
but she also
delights in mud sloughs,
rain-soaked
haybales &
blackberry cane breaks.
This pickup is our earthship,
sage strewn in the bed,
pinon and gasoline,
Seattle three days past.
Later a cup of coffee,
studios closed until ten
but Kit Carson's shiny spurs
on display &
on sale.

Travis Stephens

This Conspiracy of Ravens

My brother the Trickster
washes his sleek, black feathers
in the pool, splashing and ducking
while we watch. We follow him
to the pool and find delicious guts
of salmon, egg sacs, eyes.

There are still a few fish
stranded, the tide has retreated back
to its lair. Last night the bears came.
Fish parts everywhere plus a heaping
steaming grassy pile of bear shit and
packed circles of grass.

This morning we left our home fir,
the five of us, circling like leaves.
In the morning we own the sky.

My brother the Trickster has seen the moon
and where she hides. He has taken the
taste of salt from the rain, has left it
stinking of clouds.

My Brother watches from a branch.
He is making a new song. It has the
growl of an engine, the sobbing of the
drowned, the crackle of a fire. We
laugh and sing along.

Phillip Sterling

The B Side of Promise

A chance of rain, they say,
and the loosestrife take
to the woods like harried geese
pouting and nudging the air
as if meaning to speak
from one side of *because*
or the other, as if the wild
grapes above them were
aerialists of proper renown,
worthy of our admission,
and threat no more than this
sudden and too brief shower.

Phillip Sterling

Little or No Accumulation

Some weather bears gifts
the way those who shun gifts
bear charity. "A mere dusting,"
one says, and the words take
to air like woodstove ash
above moss, neither *dust*
nor *mere*, if truth be told.
And still the moon—who cares
nothing for our dispensations
(having known the world
before we called it *world*)—
will find in snow's pale flattery
reason enough to shine.

Lauren Swift

mark

a mushroom cloud
waxing like leathered boots—
like their snap on the stairs
 home from work
 hungry

whose room waits above
and who within it—
perhaps a bare tree huddled against winter gusts
a saint's finger propped in a reliquary for onlookers
an entire town grown deep astride high mesas
 nature's walls, to hide the forging of weaponry

within and without refrain
a terrible home both in and out
 the clomp of a heavy trod
 home from the mill
 the place that grinds the nuclear elements
 to dust, which snows upon
 the family inside, and freezes into icicles
 on the eaves

from the belltower
peals an old chorus:
 remember you are dust
 in the high room
the trill of this song
snaps the glass ice from the overhangs

Lauren Swift

no material nips
like leather does, climbing
to the room, where the bell swings

boots will try to mill a child into dust
and she will fuse into an explosive
 they will place her
 in a beautiful case
 for the penitent to look upon

have you ever considered the silence
that expands upon detonation

so holy so bright

Monika Zobel

Dear,

It has been a few weeks since I wanted
the night to burn the day. I no longer fling
matches at the sidewalk. I'm no longer the resident
arsonist on our block. The houses crumble on their own.
Dear, did I ever tell you that I preferred the sinister
fairytales? Remember Trakl's spin on the Bremen
Town Musicians? Oh wait, you never read
my poems. Let me tell you, all animals are drowned
at the mill. Their songs are made into the stars.
How's that for a Disney story? Dear,
I remember a lifetime of stairs, your stairs, stairway
to your silences. Dear, I remember the parties
like a carousel. Your love yous made me throw up
down the balcony. I remember it had to end, setting fire
to all the words in the dark. I no longer want the night
to torch the day. I'm quitting the benches, your waiting
room, where nobody's ever seen. Dear, I was tired
of stairs, your stairs, silent stairs. I remember how you glowed
in the dark, your sorry like a spark. Dear, I no longer strike
matches on your walls. Dear, it had to end. I remember
the sickness like a concrete block, anchored and dull,
could blow it up. Dear, I love the sound the heart makes
when it's flung into the ashtray. Like a bullet in the woods.

Monika Zobel

The Trouble with What the Wind Does

What the wind wants darkens the street
between us. Hooligans kick the night's teeth,
then each other's, the soiled bellies
of trash cans. Rats now only scavenge in sunlight
and the bakery, the bakery no longer slices
their bread. You and I, we darken the street
with our hunched bodies. If I were an engineer
I'd make all roads end in recovery, backwards
whisper in your room until my words stepped
out. The staircase smells of various deliveries.
Salt and brass. I can guess all your thoughts by shape
and texture. The rough ones I clench
until the wind takes what it wants. Cripples
the wasps, breaks the flowers' necks. Memories
of how we broke our bodies, memories like meth
can make you jump from one branch
to another, a lost bird. This the beginning,
an introduction to our book of losses.

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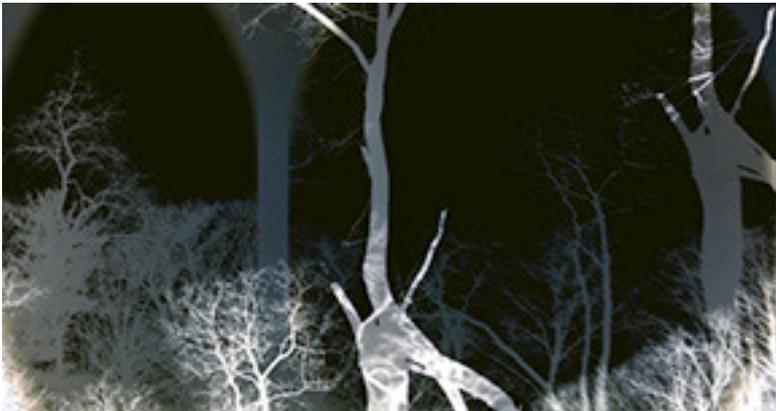
Contributors

Dana Knott is the Library Director and a member of the Core Faculty at Antioch University Midwest. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Bitter Oleander*, and *Parhelion Literary Magazine*.

Derek Annis is the author of *Neighborhood of Gray Houses* (forthcoming from Lost Horse Press). Their poems have appeared in *Colorado Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Missouri Review Online*, and elsewhere.

A. M. Brandt holds an MFA from the University of Minnesota. Her work has appeared in journals such as *The National Poetry Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, and *The Southern Review*. She teaches at Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia.

Katherine Fallon, with poems in *Colorado Review*, *Foundry*, *Juked*, *Meridian*, and elsewhere, will be included in *Best New Poets 2019*. Her chapbook, *The Toothmakers' Daughters*, is available through Finishing Line Press.



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Jane Ellen Glasser has appeared in journals such as *Georgia Review*, *Hudson Review*, and *Southern Review*. Her eighth collection is *Jane Ellen Glasser: Selected Works* (2019).

Erika Nestor received her MFA from the Helen Zell Writers' Program, where she is now a Zell Fellow in poetry. Her work has appeared in *LEVELER*.

George Perreault is the author most recently of *Bodark County*, a collection of poems in the voices of characters living on the Llano Estacado in West Texas.

Travis Stephens is a tugboat captain in California. His recent credits include *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Gravitas*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Raw Art Review*.

Phillip Sterling is the author of *And Then Snow* (Main Street Rag, 2017) and *Amateur Husbandry* (Mayapple 2019). His chapbook of February poems, *Short on Days*, is forthcoming in early 2020 from Main Street Rag.

Lauren Swift is pursuing an MFA at the University of California, Irvine. Her poetry and nonfiction have appeared in or are forthcoming in *Cimarron Review*, *North American Review*, *The Rumpus*, and *Utterance Journal*.

Monika Zobel is the author of *An Instrument for Leaving* (Slope Editions 2014), and *Das Innenfutter der Wörter* (edition keiper, Graz, Austria, 2015). Zobel works as a translator in Bremen, Germany.

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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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