

The 2River View

20.1 (Fall 2015)



new poems by

Robert Nazarene, Alison D. Moncrief Bromage

Mario Duarte, Christien Gholson, Mark Jackley, John Leo

Rita Maria Martinez, Erin Pringle-Toungate

Meaghan Quinn, Betsy Fogelman Tighe, Richard Weaver

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Contents

Robert Nazarene

Cruise Control

Alison D. Moncrief Bromage

Five Daughter Poems

Mario Duarte

An Intervention

Escaping from a Straightjacket ...

Christien Gholson

Dolphins during a storm

Plumbing a pipe

Mark Jackley

Twenty Years after She Dies ...

Where Did Our Love Go?

John Leo

Bloomington

Laura



Rita Maria Martinez
Jane Eyre's Denial
When Asked, *Why ...*

Erin Pringle-Toungate
Five Sister Poems

Meaghan Quinn
When Youth Was Still Infinite
Withdrawal

Betsy Fogelman Tighe
Afternoon Light
How Decisions Are Made

Richard Weaver
Apocalyptic Prayer
Journey, a deluge

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Robert Nazarene

Cruise Control

My girlfriend is 15. I'm 58.

What's a little space between friends?

You ask: What?

She drinks. 'Til she's blue-green.

She wants to be a face painter.

Blue-green's a good start.

We met at "The Prey-Ring Home

Companion" Christian

Compound. I watched

her skinny long legs

pump that bicycle and grind

that seat good. She loves to laugh,

pound 'em down and get sticky. Lately,

everytime we go to town

we've noticed a gray

Plymouth Valiant following

everywhere we go. The driver

wears a dark suit and sunglasses.

Looks kind of secret-like.

I've got a couple secrets

up my sleeve and a great

big one jammed in my pants.

He's got a funny looking

license plate, too.

Speaking of which, it's only

one more year 'til she gets

her driver's license. She can't wait.

Alison D. Moncrief Bromage

Daughter, at the edge of the yard

the milkweed pods
in their silent and gauzy way, will open.
Their fan of seeds so like feathers, you will bring them to your lips to know
them.

I am not sure you are not another woman's daughter
by the floss of your white hair coming in,
except that I have a tenderness for the milkweed's cupped shell
whose dried fibrous roots can be woven into a sturdy and primitive rope

Daughter, where we come from

it skips a generation
Like a flat stone across water.
I have seen the way you look to the corners of the ceiling and laugh.
Daughter, the antecedent is that the stone rises off water.

Daughter, of the family line

I can offer you this:
a stock of bargemen, half smiles, a high threshold for pain.
Do not doubt that you will be stubborn. You will bump your head
first against my tail bone and I will reach out for you.

That you may be my twin will make some of our line nervous.
We will move, teathered, as all mass moves-
in correlation and container.
Take hold of my knee. Pull yourself up.

Alison D. Moncrief Bromage

Daughter, the butchers

will slaughter a flock of old laying hens and will collect
from their guts, a bowl of yellow yolks, unshelled and clustered like grapes.

They will show us breastplate and heart and will carve out for you
the wishbone. It acts like a spring in the sternum of the bird

expanding and snapping taught with the span of wings in flight.
We will dry it on the windowsill and you will wrestle it and pitch

the bone to snap in your favor. The globes of yolk will surface
each day from the bowels of our chickens, as apt as fulcrums

in their intention. Daughter, the butchers are nuns.

Daughter, you will sleep

on a sheepskin in the corner of our room.
That the yearling ram gave his life for you should be of no concern,
though I will barter many times again in your presence.

Lambs must present themselves nose atop hooves
to leap from the womb without catching. The ewe in labor circles
her pen into a nest. We come to know another through sound

or patterns of behavior. You will lie down in the evenings,
the passage to sleep hard fought, but for the feel of fleece
like the rustle of hay and the fat of the wool greasing your cheek.

Mario Duarte

An Intervention

I am the twitching man in the blue polo and white shorts at the bus stop. A young woman sashays in on impossibly skinny legs. She shakes her fist at the sky. Then, countless, cackling crows break loose from the treetops, swooping down, lifting her away.

On the grass, I sit with my back against an ancient oak sweating in the shade. Gasoline and diesel fumes from bypassing cars and trucks foul the air. How I curse the monster clinging to the surface of my eye—a tiny, compact grain of sand refusing to budge.

The bus is late. How long can I count the fluff parachuting over the treetops? My skull is a collapsing cave of anxiety. Last night, I dreamt of your hand clasping my lower back, and I awoke to a tear sliding down my cheekbones and intervening into my mouth.

Mario Duarte

Escaping from a Straitjacket While Hanging from a Balancing Rope Suspended 150 feet Above Ground

Our story was written in invisible ink. You have disappeared into nothing I can smell or touch or taste in any way. I am left hanging, a buzzing fly writhing in spider silk.

No longer will I wander among your valleys and mountain or scale the snowy summits of your thighs, or swim among the infinitesimal islands floating in your eyes.

Now I only dream of innumerable ashes drifting, spreading on the sheerest waves. Now I am only an upside down man—whose blood drains down drowning his head.

In the City of Literature, autumn roars. A chilling wind sways the balancing rope. My unavoidable plunge punctuates the contours of every horrible mask I have ever worn.

Christien Gholson

Plumbing a pipe

in a tight crawlspace
beneath this house, beneath this development; blind mole,
dragging my body
through dust.

Scratch flint, torch lit, flame to flux,
solder spreads around the copper seam.

And there's a snake—of course there's a snake—
curled in the corner, shadow
inside mine.

Eye on the snake, the wood beam behind the pipe
catches fire. (Seriously?)

Quick, spray it out...
Dark, dark

The snake, still out there,
takes me in through its tongue: taste
of smoke, shadow, dust

San Jose, California

Mark Jackley

Twenty Years after She Dies, Your Mom Invites my Daughter to Go Sledding with your Kids

Her voice brassy as ever.
The phone is black,
its cord

curled the way they were.
Night falls
in my dream—

a snowy hill, one moment
bright in time
or someplace

else where laughter
sometimes
bursts in little flames.

Mark Jackley

Where Did our Love Go?

Diana Ross, I know.

It slipped out of that house she rented up on Chicken Mountain,
padded in bare feet
to the moonlit gap between
the porch and barn and stopped
to wiggle toes
in clover,
and maybe for the first time,
breathed.

John Leo

Bloomington

We drove all night, the road wrapped around
our knuckles
We circled the block,
settled on a stretch of yard, unlit
and blushing with dark.
You drank julips and I watched
the Pacers lose
in overtime
I knew we were ending.

You eyed the backseat of the car
you imagined clearing grad-school pamphlets
the copy of Slaughterhouse you've kept at the top of the stack
for months
I didn't know what to say.
We drove all night, and when we got bored I pushed
your skirt up and did the thing
you knew I would do.

John Leo

Laura

I wish I had survived you differently. That the things you left behind were jagged cliff faces, mountain tops hewn from God's awful teeth. But I am left with a fracture, thin as hope. Thin as the gangly legs I put my cheek against. The fracture slipped tonight; I felt it grind somewhere deep and mean.

Do you remember when we played house in that northside hotel room? I cried from needing you, really cried, felt my face go hot and wet. You hugged me close, cheek to cheek, and you whispered "you're so human, you're so human." And it burned me up inside.

I used to watch for your car from my window, and you would park and come up the sidewalk, beautiful in your joylessness. I felt it reflecting something in me, something cataclysmic, familial, funereal. I have only just begun to write about you. You haven't even soaked into my dreams yet. But you will, I know you will.

I wish I had survived you differently, the way jungle reclaims a minefield. The way we forgive our fathers, slowly, aware of where the scars point. But I survived you like styrofoam. Like the round bottle-bottom that sliced my foot. Which parent carved it out from my heel, and which left the broken bottle? This was how I survived you, with questions and confessions twisting in the dark.

Rita Maria Martinez

Jane Eyre's Denial

. . . [it] is truly humiliating, not to know how to get mastery over one's own thoughts, to be the slave of a regret, a memory

Charlotte Brontë to Constantin Héger
letter dated November 18, 1845

Pain caused by first love never truly subsides.
Cunning and deceptive, it lurks dormant
until you've made peace with the alternate life
you could've led, fully loaded with hubby,
home, the 2.5 children *he* named (Isabel, Iris,
Inés) though you weren't even sure you wanted
kids then. Just when you've mastered
eating with chopsticks, are able to rise from bed,
have rediscovered flossing, are singing and humming
to the Beach Boys on the car radio—heck,
maybe you're wearing an engagement ring,
are buying *His* and *Hers* monogrammed towels,
just then, you run into the old bastard
and the unchristian desire to claw
his eyes returns natural as breathing.

Rita Maria Martinez

When Asked, *Why Edward?*, Jane Eyre Responds

It's spring in the park.
We stroll in silence.

Edward's cigar cocked
to the side. Both hands intact.

The pupil and iris in each eye healthy.
The scar anointing furrowed

forehead, severing an eyebrow
in two, is absent. Ahead,

an older couple stranded
in a red surrey try pedaling up

an incline and beyond the asphalt's
grassy treachery. Who knows how long

they've been huffing and puffing
pitiably like upside-down turtles.

Edward approaches from behind
and gives a gentle push propelling

the surrey into the afternoon light.
A guardian spirit, he remains unseen,

content blowing smoky haloes,
observing dragonfly flight patterns,

the unlikely elegance of hindwings
broader than forewings on a mating pair

of marsh skimmers perched on a twig.

Erin Pringle-Toungate

The Joke

My father took my sister's braid in hand. And raised it. Until her feet lifted off the ground.

That Was Your Sister's Dress

Before I was born, my parents took my sister on a cruise. Years later, I play dress-up in the dress she wore, pretending to be her. When more years pass, she tells me she was 12, the deck was dark, I was alone, and a man . . .

Long Before My Sister Decides to Die

She lives in a pink trailer with a carport and a bicycle, and makes her boyfriend a birthday cake. It's called dirt cake, she says, bending to show me, smiling. It's in a terra cotta planter threaded with oreos and gummy worms, not like a grave at all.

Erin Pringle-Toungate

The Way to My Sister's House

Her second trailer is a right turn at the end of a long empty road, surrounded by cornfields. As she drives, the hoop of keys swings above her bare knee as she sings with the radio. She knows all the words, and there's a whistle on her keys.

Friday Nights

When I sleep over, my sister covers the green shag carpet with blankets and fresh sheets. We play *Clue* and she teaches me how to guess the murderer, the weapon, the room. Then she goes to bed at the back of the trailer, and I lay watching the dark.

Meaghan Quinn

When Youth was Still Infinite

I think of the best of times
when we started each morning
by cooking pancakes on a griddle,
warm globs that popped and jittered.
The butter was sweet, all unbitter.
Recalled to life, we spooned
and silence broke like a dam,
lingered into the back rooms
of Budapest, the salt lakes we swam.
Your hot clammy breath on my neck—
pretzel-legged, barracudas
darted through our knees.
Your crimped hair blew
like burning forsythias.
Choppy waves. High tide.
The sun failed like a searchlight
as we undressed in an August night.
Our shaking hearts fell still.
Steam drummed off the tar,
dried syrup made our lips stick.
You caught the moon running
from the tap with your mouth.

Meaghan Quinn

Withdrawal

I've never heard anything louder
than the prolonged ceremony of hope
scraping out a short snipped straw.
When I was white and waiting
to cop, when I felt arms around
me even after she had walked
into the other room, when I lied
to myself, when we're all lying
to ourselves really, when I pulled
up my skirt and let the whole
world see me, the ceremony of doubt
unshrouding before me, in whose eyes
did I go unseen?

Betsy Fogelman Tighe

Afternoon Light

The far south foothills of the Rockies
flat black against the afternoon light,
silhouette or stage set,
substance and ephemera at once,
like the love we sometimes believe we receive
and sometimes give.

Curtains of rain, graphite filings
leaping to magnetic earth,
unreachable but present
like that other love
the priest says we must have trust in.

An arrowed lightning pierces the blue
streaked sky.
It is a mother calling her children home,
twilight falling
and her voice, as the screen door slams,
penetrating.

Betsy Fogelman Tighe

How Decisions Are Made

Walking through a copse,
we often will not see the birds
until we've flushed them from their perches,

the way decisions are sometimes made,
arriving, a disturbance.

The birds do not scatter far,
but settle quickly on nearby branches
and peer down at us,

as one choice trembles on another
and the nest gets laid.

Richard Weaver

Apocalyptic prayer

War annexes the landscape
rearranging like rented furniture
the awakened ground that welcomes
your fallen shadow to its own.

A familiar tree bends over you,
its black roots slipping
in the upturned, unsettled earth.
Each frond leans in prayer
in muscled consolation
confessing nothing of the world to come
and less of the world that was.
And too much of the world as it is.

No light in the forest reveals or hints
but everything says Be quiet. Be still.
Hold the smoke-gray of your breath.
And the let that miracle
wrap itself around your mystery.
Let miracle wrap dawn
in the fiery ice of forgiveness and ashes.
Forgiveness issued too little and too late.
Your brave skeleton anchors my heart.

Richard Weaver

Journey, a deluge

My horse disappears
and I do as well
in the confusion
that is this battle
for life. The new old world.
The hills are hollowed.
The valleys veiled.
The trees, the few left,
have surrendered.
What lives does so
deep underground
beyond light. Outside
these gypsy thoughts
darkness smiles.

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Authors

Robert Nazarene founded *MARGIE/The American Journal of Poetry* and Intuit House Poetry Series, for which he received a publishers' National Book Critics Circle award in poetry. His first volume *Church* (2006) is succeeded by *Bird in the Street* forthcoming in 2016.

Alison D. Moncrief Bromage has poems in *Barrow Street*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Paris Review*, and elsewhere. She is a writing tutor at Yale University and lives in Stony Creek, Connecticut, with her husband and children.

Mario Duarte lives in Iowa City, Iowa, and is an alumnus of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He has poems in the *Acentos Review*, *Palabra*, *Passages North*, *Slab*, *Steel Toe Review*, and *Yellow Medicine Review*, among others; and a short story in *Oddville Press*, with another forthcoming in *Huizache*.

Christien Gholson is the author of the novel, *A Fish Trapped Inside the Wind* (Parthian 2011) and *On the Side of the Crow* (Hanging Loose Press 2006; Parthian 2011). He can be found (infrequently) at his blog: noise & silence.

Mark Jackley has poems in *Fifth Wednesday*, *Sugar House Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Talking River*, and other journals. His new chapbook *Appalachian Night* is available free by contacting chineseplums@gmail.com. He lives in Sterling, Virginia.



John Leo has published poetry, essays, and fiction with Bareknuckle Poet and Untitled Publications. In 2014, he was featured as one of Untitled Publications' "Ten Emerging Artists You Need to Know." He currently lives in Indianapolis, where he is hard at work on his drinking problem.

Rita Maria Martinez has poems in journals such as *MiPOesias*, *The Notre Dame Review*, and *Ploughshares*. In her forthcoming first book of poems, *The Jane and Bertha in Me* (Kelsay Books, 2016), Martinez revamps Charlotte Brontë's Gothic heroine with tattoos, fishnets, and modern feminism.

Erin Pringle-Toungate, originally from Illinois, now lives in the Northwest. Her first book of stories is *The Floating Order* (Two Ravens Press 2009). Her poems here in *2RV* are from a memoir-in-progress. www.erinpringle.com.

Meaghan Quinn lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she teaches creative writing. She is working on her first manuscript and currently serves as the Associate Poetry Editor of *The Tishman Review*. Her poems have been published in *Adrienne*, *The Free State Review*, and *Triggerfish Critical Review*.

Betsy Fogelman Tighe has published widely in small literary magazines such as *TriQuarterly* and *Verseweavers*. Tighe works as a teacher—librarian in Portland, Oregon, where she lives happily with her two young adult children.

Richard Weaver lives in Baltimore, Maryland. His publications include *New England Review*, *North American Review*, and *Poetry*. His most recent publication is *The Stars Undone* (Duende Press). Four poems from that collection became the libretto for a symphony, *Of Sea and Stars*, composed by Eric Ewazen of Juilliard.

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About the Images

Franz Marc, a German print maker and artist, was considered to be one of the key figures of the Expressionist movement in Germany. Throughout 1913 and 1914, Marc painted a number of postcards for his close friends. Many of these postcards were often first versions of later paintings.

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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