

**2RV**

26.3 (Spring 2022)

**The 2River View**

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California Desert Super Bloom 1

2River  
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new poems by  
Simon Anton Niño Diego Baena  
Devon Brock, T. Clear, Lenny DellaRocca  
Sara Eddy, Michael Estabrook, Tim Gavin  
William A. Greenfield, Gail Lukasik  
Rachel Mallalieu, Amy Speace



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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Sara Eddy is author *Tell the Bees* (A3 Press) and *Full Mouth* (Finishing Line). She has published widely in journals, most recently in *Fine Print*, *The Mantle*, and *Threepenny Review*. She is Assistant Director of the writing center at Smith College.

Michael Estabrook has been publishing his poetry in the small press since the 1980s. He has more than twenty collections, most recently *The Poet's Curse, A Miscellany* (The Poetry Box 2019).

Tim Gavin is an Episcopal priest, serving as a chaplain in Newton Square, Pennsylvania. Prolific Press published his chapbook *Lyrics from the Central Plateau*. His poems have appeared in *The Anglican Theological Review*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *Poetry South*, and others.

William A. Greenfield, a youth advocate worker in upstate New York, is the author of *Momma's Boy Gone Bad* (Finishing Line Press 2017), *I Should have Asked the Blind Girl to Dance* (Flutter Press 2019), and *The Circadian Fallacy* (Kelsay Books 2020).

Gail Lukasik has appeared in *Carolina Quarterly*, *The Daily Beast*, *The Georgia Review*, and elsewhere. In 2017, *The Washington Post* named *White Like Her: My Family's Story of Race and Racial Passing* one of the most inspiring stories of the year.

Rachel Mallalieu is an emergency physician and mother of five.. Her recent work is featured in *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *8Poems*, *Entropy*, *Haunted Waters Press*, *Nelle*, *Tribes*, and *Rattle*.

Amy Speace is recording artist whose songs have been recorded by Judy Collins, Red Molly, and Memphis Blues Hall of Fame singer Sid Selvidge. Her essays have been published by *The American Songwriter*, *The Blue Rock Literary Review*, *No Depression Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and *Working Mother*. She is currently in the MFA Creative Writing program at Spalding University.

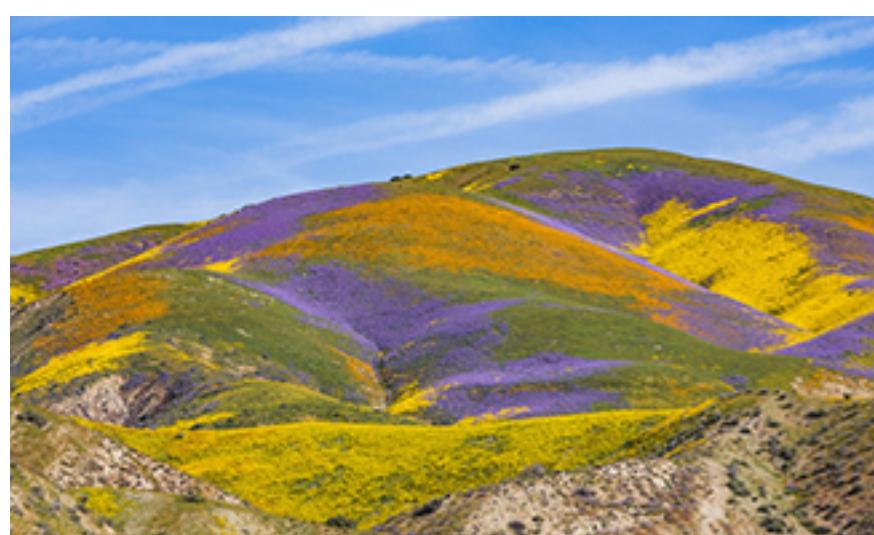
## Bios

Simon Anton Niño Diego Baena currently lives in the *Philippines with his wife Xandy*. He is the author of the chapbook *The Magnum Opus Persists in the Evening* (Jacar Press). His work has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Osiris*, *Poetry Daily*, here at 2River, and elsewhere.

Devon Brock is a line cook living in South Dakota with his wife and dog. His poems have appeared in journals such as *Atlanta Review*, *La Piccioletta Barca*, *West Trade Journal*, and *SPANK*.

T. Clear is a founder of Floating Bridge Press. Her work has appeared in many magazines, including *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Crannog*, *The Moth*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Sheila-na-Gig*, and *Terrain*. *A House, Undone* is the 2021 winner of the Sally Albiso Award from MoonPath Press. Clear is an Associate Editor at Bracken Magazine.

Lenny DellaRocca is founder and co-publisher of *South Florida Poetry Journal*. His work has appeared in many literary journals, including past issues of 2River.



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### Tornado Warning

In the dark, in a bathtub  
at the center of the house,  
flashlight, pillows, blankets,  
boots, just in case. Sirens  
scream. The phone slams  
warnings over and over.  
We two are alone.  
My son sleeps through  
the horns, the strap  
of his bike helmet  
under his nose. Before  
his eyes flutter shut,  
he asks about the potato  
coming, mispronouncing  
the storm. I do my best  
to make up a song,  
shush him to slumber  
in my arms, ready to throw my back  
against the shards,  
my breakwater body.  
The dog is somewhere  
under a bed. The hail  
shoots buckshot at  
the glass. Take  
shelter in your  
safe space, the phone  
blinks a warning,  
and I think,  
here in this bathtub,  
awaiting the wind,  
I am more  
sheltered and safe  
than I have been  
in a long year  
waiting for  
my marriage to end.

Amy Speace

## Marriage

A cock and a hen stand  
stooped, back

to back, clucking  
at pale pebbles

of grain, each  
like the bobbing

bird at desktops littered  
with legal briefs, piles of

ins, stacks of outs, as the  
yellow plastic beaks pick

at pens, paperclips, sharpener.  
Back to the birds,

at odds with  
the facts. Eating

their fill. Not  
seeing each other.

Simon Anton Nino Diego Baena

## January 1

The harbor came into view. Yachts  
moored where I anointed the water

with a message in a bottle, a poem  
floating toward the mouth of the Pacific.

A few gulls stared at my ancient practice  
of throwing everything—wide awake,

I stood along the passage, downing  
six cans of beer. When I saw the dead,

with their wintry feet, dragging the stillness  
of the grave around us the entire year.

*Devon Brock*

### In the Dig

When I left this place, this place took my ankles,  
my body, wrested the baubles from their joints,  
the trinkets, bricks and cinderblocks and swallowed  
them like the middens of a once great house.  
Thus far, the excavations are incomplete:  
garlands, teacups, a few folding chairs.  
When the roof caved in, the tables were set  
for weddings or funerals, endings all  
the same. Some rites go undisturbed, the squeal  
of a door through which the sea floods out, or  
a thousand pigeons flung from a mouth, or  
panning through silt for the shell of a man,  
who, for want of a love, flew off to a cloud  
or a wintering bush or some such fancy.

*Rachel Mallalieu*

3

Every summer, my husband times  
how long it takes to  
power wash three cement steps.  
When he moves quickly—four minutes.  
At a leisurely pace, it's longer than seven.  
In 2014, my youngest son drowned  
but did not die in the moments it took  
to wash three steps.  
I'm the one who compressed his chest  
and coaxed a thrum of pulse.  
I do not know how long it took.  
But now I wait.

Rachel Mallalieu

## Reckoning

1

On Tuesday night, a man and woman  
were seen holding hands on the Bay Bridge.  
They found her body the next day.  
On Thursday evening, the same man  
climbed the steel trusses at the highest point  
of the bridge and hung on with one arm.  
He swung to the cement barrier, and leaned  
toward the water when anyone came near.  
When we left for the beach on Friday,  
he was still there, swaying with exhaustion.  
It took twenty hours of persuasion  
to coax him down.

2

In a forgotten corner of Shenandoah County,  
Ethel and Marvin occasionally visit  
their joint headstone, which is tucked away  
in a small graveyard that borders  
the shooting range.  
Of course we'd like to go together,  
but if we can't, at least I know we'll rest together,  
Ethel is fond of saying.  
One morning, Ethel awoke from a dream  
in which she saw the death date chiseled on  
Marvin's side of the stone.  
She gasped, rubbed her eyes and  
held a hand near Marvin's mouth until  
she felt a reassuring gust of air.

Devon Brock

## These Winter Nights

One gets used to it, the cold,  
how brittle things are; how the nights  
unfold, blacker than black, the fumes  
of us carried off to some softer clime  
—and the stars, so close.

One gets used to it, the stars so close  
and how paltry it is to wrest  
from them some future Spring  
when all that huddles on the ridgeline  
glistens: small, frail and far.

And on these savage nights  
with the stars so close, with a breath  
that burns in an air that breaks, I think,  
how far I've come, how far indeed  
to be humbled—how desperately far.

T. Clear

### Every Marriage Needs a Trail of Crumbs

Every wife needs her own TV, my mother says  
when I don't tell her my marriage is failing.  
She knows anyway, dead certain  
a television is the quick fix.

On the other hand, sudden death  
can cure everything that ails a marriage,  
though death isn't necessarily good  
for what ails you, no matter your station

in life. My station's stuck on Wheel of Fortune,  
like a Tarot reading gone wrong.  
Spotlit, dumbstruck, my winning loot  
zeroed out by the buzzer.

Every TV needs a good heave  
off the front porch, says my neighbor, divorced,  
as his boob tube shatters  
into a billion electronic crumbs.

Gail Lukasik

### On the First Anniversary of Your Death

Weeds' thin reach or your hands waiting—  
beneath fields wrenched open with loss.  
Where seeds once were stones—  
What will not wither quickly.

Now the cool change  
of direction as only birds  
know the way back  
and shadows wear the road down,  
where you're not seen  
only heard whispering.

What rises as blue  
from the ground opens  
my hand like sun you come  
looking for me.  
This year who can I be  
and save myself.

Gutters gleam yellow harvest,  
scattering of geese squawk  
overhead trees turning from the  
tips inward.  
On my fingers your green taste  
slowing fading  
as I wait for your skin  
to fall away  
and then your clothes.

Gail Lukasik

### The End of Romance

Your armor rattles when you kiss me goodbye.  
I am at the window, at the loom, my heart in my hands.  
You're eating oranges on the Cote d'Azur.  
I'm writing romances to buy you silk suits.

I let you put words in my mouth—  
the way the moon loses its voice  
to sun and even a million stars can't  
compensate for the shadow in the yard.

Toward the end you avoid active verbs,  
knowing their consequences.  
I pretend not to notice when you leave me  
without a glass of water to swallow the pills.

T. Clear

### Four-Wheel Drive

for my brother, at 72

On a cliff-edge, snow deepening  
at every turn, and night beginning  
to damp down into the firs —  
we had nowhere to go but home  
after switch-backing mountainsides  
hours in search of nothing, you  
with a new truck, an urge to roam.

Your splitrock laugh when I suggested  
there, we can turn around there  
where the narrow track widened, barely,  
the wheels of your International Harvester Scout  
digging steadily forward and up.  
I was ten and knew everything depended  
on how nimbly I could leap free  
before a skid-driven careen  
into the end of my life

that didn't happen, of course.  
And at that moment of not-happening  
I couldn't foresee us 50 years later,  
at my kitchen table, as if no time had elapsed  
and we were just now, finally, *finally* back home  
and sitting down to Sunday supper.

Lenny DellaRocca

### Boy at Play with Dolls

Why did you play with my dolls? I don't know.  
Loneliness maybe. You never  
took them out  
of your room. They sat  
on your bed  
like flowers  
from another world.  
I could almost smell them.  
The little green army  
men I played with  
didn't have the glitz  
or scent Barbie had.  
She demanded attention  
without so much  
as having a bayonet  
in her hands.  
Once, I barged into the bathroom while you were  
washing your hair,  
your breasts  
dangled in the sink.  
I wanted to wash  
their hair, your dolls.  
Wanted to look  
at their breasts  
in the bath, look  
between their legs.  
I waited for you  
to go to parties,  
"Soldier Boy"  
by the Shirelles  
in your hand. Girls  
danced the Watusi.  
I played with your dolls the summer I first got hard.

William A. Greenfield

### Sometimes

Sometimes when you speak I can't comprehend  
what you're saying. The words are lost in the noise,  
the hum of yesterday's laughter and the emanations  
that clang and clatter.

You could be asking me if the roads are icy or telling  
me that Phoebe ate my lottery ticket. All could be  
drowned out because an aroma makes noise.  
I could hear the beef stew.

Sometimes when I speak I can't comprehend  
what I'm saying. I spew some gibberish because  
you're wearing flip-flops and your feet are still of  
interest to me.

You could be wearing chain mail and I could still find  
something of interest, your answer to why the squirrels  
must be fed, your voice pleading, "oh please, oh please  
scratch my back."

Sometimes the white noise from the Brookstone box  
is the distant rumble of the IRT express as we huddle  
in the bowels under Lexington. You breathe softly  
while I sip the Bali Hai.

You might tell me it's time to move along, to find  
some new underground hideaway. Then I wake to the  
morning sun and the bouquet of violins playing in  
the folds you left behind.

William A. Greenfield

### The Settling

I exchanged the milk for one with a later date. You asked what difference a day could make. You should worry about the dust on the chair legs and I'll worry about the age of milk.

It's the way the light shines that gives things away, the floating of dust in the stillness until it settles on old wine glasses and window sills.

When you hold souvenirs up to the light, you can see where the dust settled into the Lake George coffee mug or the crack in the Orlando shot glass.

Whether it's soil lifted by the wind or the thinning of tissue, it just keeps changing form like energy that moves from the body to the flower.

It is my detritus with a memory of what I once was and what I will become as it travels from a flake of skin to the maw of a hungry mite.

In the abandoned railway depot a generation of commuters and ticket agents settle onto the wide planks and into the bottle caps.

Gather it up like amber from a fossil. Discard the wings and skeletons and see who stood in the hot sun before their last long train ride.

Lenny DellaRocca

### Thief at Play with Dolls

*Why did you steal my dolls?* I don't know. Mother put that three-foot creature at the end of the hall, remember? The one with cold eyes that looked out to the Twilight Zone? Scared Phil one night when he came home high on speed and girls. He took it out back, buried it under that tree with the face of Saint Anthony in it. Why do some trees live in yards that haunt them? But I think I just wanted to see them, your dolls, naked. Needed to touch them, because they twinkled in their pinkness, their eloquent, still lives with nothing in their eyes except the kind of love that whispered like Princess telephone calls between you and Anna late at night. I wanted Barbie most, because she sat in the center of the shelf above your crying bed. I wanted them, your dolls. I think they wanted me.

*Sara Eddy*

### **Coming Back**

Some days on the path  
you feel how the weight  
of your ribs and your  
old breasts hangs on  
frayed rope safety-pinned  
to your aching shoulders.  
Some days the pine trees  
rub a song against each other  
and you feel the bowl of your pelvis  
slop with the vast soup  
of your guts, while your  
hips grind in their sockets  
like a ball point pen  
in a dusty desk drawer.  
Some days your head echoes  
with phantom memory  
or true, and the muscles  
in your neck feel inadequate  
to holding the container  
of your skull. But Pileated  
woodpeckers insist.  
Bobcats and weasels  
impel you from the shadows.  
Trees talk to each other  
about the rain, and days  
come when your back  
feels straight and strong,  
and pine needles love  
your sure and steady feet.

*Tim Gavin*

### **Divine Property LXVIII: Favorite Bird**

Red winged black bird what was wrong  
With my limb parallel to the pond  
  
Your delight seemed tinged in grace  
But you threshed out your breath and  
  
Flew away like a spiked spirit  
Penetrating night with a flamed tongue  
  
Asking questions of me that only you  
Can answer where you find me  
  
Looking at the surface of water  
Filmed over with your black feathers

Tim Gavin

### Divine Property CVI: Body

I could never answer your question,  
Who will save me from this body of death?  
I never thought the body as a snare, more  
A full moon waning and waxing through  
Its own course and time.

Isn't this the body  
with an expendable organ removed  
And placed in a hazmat container for safe  
Disposal, removed for relief from indigestion  
Or remorse; the body adopts, pivots.  
The body wears thin as a membrane,  
Eventually brittle, sensitive to touch and pain.  
Weakness settles in the heart, lungs and legs.  
Eventually eyes and ears dim;

I can't hear any chirping, but I  
Hold fast to music and lyric.  
The body ravaged and sanctified  
Through fits and turns, passions  
And betrayals. It desires passage  
From phase to phase.

Sara Eddy

### What binds you

to the earth  
that has been tracked  
into your kitchen by the dog?  
How far will you go  
in your attachment  
to the base good  
of soil, humus, loam  
when the next steps are mop,  
oil soap, dog bath?  
Some things are good  
only in the right context—  
weeds that heal bee-sting  
(common plantain),  
encourage digestion  
(yellow dock),  
or make a good salad better  
(stinging nettle)—  
but a nettle is a nettle, too:  
on bright afternoons in the garden  
when you're gathering currants  
your hand will brush its perilous leaves  
and its sting will last for days.  
And now you must decide  
whether to uproot the patch  
or suffer for your salads.

*Michael Estabrook*

## **Rocking Chair**

. . . in the mirror I see my grandfather  
with his gray hair, baggy eyes, old shoes  
but I'm not ready to be him yet . . .

I wonder what  
my grandfather did every day  
in his little room  
off the living room at the front of the house.  
I know he'd sit in his rocker  
read newspapers both The Daily  
Home News and the New York Post  
but you can't read newspapers all day long  
so what else did he do?  
There was nothing else in there  
that I could see  
no books or hobbies or TV  
not even a deck of cards.  
Sometimes I'd glance in  
and he'd be sitting in his rocker  
staring out the window into the street  
at nothing in particular.

*Michael Estabrook*

## **Somehow**

. . . I wanted to be like Dante  
putting everyone where they belonged  
above, below or in between . . .

I recall the first time I read  
Dante's Divine Comedy  
all the way through  
as a medical sales rep  
carrying it with me faithfully  
as I trudged through airport lounges and hotel rooms  
diners, doctors waiting rooms, company lobbies . . .

Not because I was trying to show off  
traipsing around with such an important  
work of literature  
but instead because reading it lifted me up and out  
of my humdrum existence  
into a world I scarcely could've imagined  
with demons and torture, angels and sunlight  
and everything in between.

Expecting that merely reading of every word  
would save my soul somehow.