

The 2River View

23.4 (Summer 2019)



Hollywood Beach, Florida, and Palms © 2019 by Jan Matson

new poems by
Bree A. Rolfe, Ishanee Chanda
Harley Anastasia Chapman, Charles Finn
Susan L. Leary, Cameron Morse
Sarah A. Sousa, Travis Stephens
Taylor D. Waring, Richard Weaver

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Bree A. Rolfe

A litany of bad decisions

Part One: Omens

The only remaining
correspondence between
the two of us— a New York
Times article about Marfa
and a reply of yippee.

Jon Krakauer's Under the Banner
of Heaven on audiobook—
Mormonism, blood
atonement a six hour
drive through desert.

The first gallery with photographs
of Katrina's destruction paired
with poems from children left
in her wake. Something beautiful
repurposed from storm
but still destruction.

Bree A. Rolfe

Part Two: Take it All Back, Take it All Back

Some farm-to-table restaurant
with a name that involved
chicken and electricity
where you bring your own wine.
A loud table of sophisticated
middle-aged couples, tipsy and deep,
deep in conversation. Us, silent,
draining everything we brought.

A bar after, a folk singer on a tour,
finishes his set and we talk
too long about Club Passim.
All of your drinks on my tab—
scotches piled upon scotches.

The couple staying in the apartment
next to us: you tell them
you're from Brooklyn and I say
but you're from Connecticut.
An invitation back to their place
for wine that feels like a proposition.

A Milky Way themed air stream
trailer that sells grilled cheese—
you screaming at me from a bean bag
chair, everything misshapen
in black light, and so twisted, I walk out
and back to our rental alone
through pitch-black streets
with no real sidewalks.

Bree A. Rolfe

Who's going to love the dying girl?

It all unravels: a smashed phone
a disconnected call, an overturned
coffee table, a locked bathroom,
chunks of my hair, unmoored.

Part Three: Aftermath

Triplicates of paperwork.
A gas stop, a guy on a Harley
with a sympathetic look
and then cheap sunglasses.

A legion of bugs sacrificed
on my windshield with no substance
in the world other than sheer
will to scrub them off.

Six hours to forget:

I'll leave you in a shallow
grave in West Texas.

Ishanee Chanda

The Journey to the Center of the Earth

I am digging through this / with empty bowls / and
calloused hands / The shovel is cold / and dead /
next to me / They say underneath the dirt / the
decaying bodies / there is a shattered / broken door /
to somewhere / less heavy / On the other side / of the
universe / gravity runs the wrong way / It pulls you /
into the air / arms above your head / Prayer is done
standing / God kneels / at your feet / He must be across /
this expanse of death / and rot / and acidity / kneeling
on / the other side / I am digging / God / I am coming /
I am / burying myself / alive / at your feet

Ishanee Chanda

Mirror

you pool / in my throat / in the mornings / the
taste of your lips / always caught / between my
tonsils / and my tongue / it has been months /
and i am still / licking you off / my fingertips /
like honey / and age-old soaked wine / what if
loving someone / is not holding them / in your
mouth / when they are gone / i try to swallow /
but the words get stuck in my throat / shards of
glass / slide into my stomach / they call love the
silver death / and i think about the mirror / in
your bedroom / all warm wood / and roses /
your smile reflected / in the morning light / if
this is death / what a glimmer it carries / what
a wonderful / graceful / way to go

Harley Anastasia Chapman

Hawkmother

I'm trying to turn my mother into a hawk.
Her coffee is too loud,
she prefers wings made of rabbit.
I tell her all the redemptions of the hawk,
how he wings gold at sunset
how he spots prey for x miles.
She tells me I should brush my hair.
At night I break the bird
& put its body limp under her pillow.
By morning she is pink clay.
When her boyfriend comes home water-eyed
she is on him, a king's bird.
I watch her clean her teeth
as if she has a bone to pick with.

Harley Anastasia Chapman

Life Study

I have made my life a study
of silence, the culmination of your
warnings. I hang lilac from the bramble
in our backyard, mother,
drench the peonies in insecticide.
When their heads hang
carpenter bodies fall like snow.
That's what they get, mother.
Don't they know what is ours?
A family of groundhogs have
burrowed near, I saw them
waddling in a line by the garage.
A mother & three kits.
Do you remember that house
you lived in for a summer,
how the owner caged
the groundhog before he could
undermine the front porch?
How the creature clawed against
the wire & it was so hot that day,
his paws blood-shiny, mouth
frothing. We tried to shade
him, provide water
but we couldn't become things
he could trust. I wanted so badly
to free him but couldn't bring myself
to open the cage door.

Charles Finn

Morning Coffee

They would wake early and carry their morning coffee to the porch, the Fabergé rise of the sun theirs for the taking. She'd salute the yellow orb with a tiny bow of her head and he'd raise his mug. Then they'd settle into the wicker rockers that once belonged to her mother. The chairs kept time, they liked to think, with the past and the present. Ritual was everything, and the birds, the morning light, they brought a great calmness. After a while, he'd reach over and take her hand and she knew they were building an architecture of happiness together, one that would never be torn down. Even on the overcast or fog wrapped mornings they sat there, a pair of mute cranes in their bathrobes and slippers. They did this without speaking, listening to the progression of bird song, to the flute-like and chime-filled voices—and it mattered, mattered very much. By the time they finished their coffee, they had heard everything they needed to know.

Charles Finn

Somewhere

She dreams of white swans sitting on dark patches of lake. Hawks, lifted by thermals, pegging themselves to the midday sun. She dreams of grizzly bears making jam in their bellies, and beavers hoarse from shouting when their trees come down. Lying awake in the pre-dawn light she dreams these things, and he can feel her beside him, going deeper and deeper into the animals' lives. Most often she dreams of birds, of an inexplicable pull, of flying south with the moon for weeks on end. She wants this she tells him, how she longs for an uncontrollable ache rather than the one she has. He doesn't say anything, but in the morning he takes her out to the lake where the migrating waterfowl stop over, where they make love, where together they walk, hand in hand, as far and as fast as they can.

Susan L. Leary

The Cleanest Sheet of Ice

Through the cleanest sheet of ice, I watch my brother drowning. He watches as I watch. Both of us hurt by winter—by water & wind & their shared set of teeth. My mouth stuffed shut with the whitest orchids. His eyes paled into the color of snow. This is what addiction will do. Will place your body & the body of the one you love in freezing temperatures & separate them with the cleanest sheet of ice. So clean, my brother & I can almost touch. Almost console one another. The ice ablaze with all that feeling. & how it never stops—not the water rushing, nor the earsplitting sounds of a grown man wailing. The sound of my brother drowning & not knowing how to die.

Susan L. Leary

My Brother Can Say Some of the Prettiest Things

My brother can say some of the prettiest things. Can tell you about the water & the soft smack of the net. About the sound of the line unraveling into the mouth of the finest-looking snapper. All that sweetness in the ear, just for him. How the sound of it barrels into the grit of his blistering palms. In them, the sound of who gets to live.

Like I said, my brother can say some of the prettiest things. My brother, whose hands fidget together like loose puppets across his lap. Who sells food stamps for Roxicodone. Returns to us sporadically & goes unshowered for days. My brother, who leaves in the toilet the basest remnants of a body. His mother, who splits the skin of her fingers to clean it.

But my brother can say some of the prettiest things. Can tell you what evening smells like in the middle of nowhere. The way the lungs open to that scent of stillness between a man & nothing but the earth. All that sky accumulating, just for him. How the smell of it draws near the most hidden parts of night even the stars had forgotten. That now in those stars, something heroic.

Except my brother has no home & no work. My brother, who carries the dirt of an entire city in his beard & pretends he wants to change. You see, my brother can teach the sad irony of people who say the prettiest things. But I can teach you the sadder irony of people who hear them. Like each time in parting, when he tells me he loves me & I believe it.

Cameron Morse

Mississippi Singalong

We wake to the clink
of a flagless pole like ice
in the bottom of a glass, the clink
of the lanyard in the hands

of the wind. We walk in the cold.
The willow hangs its leafless vines,
light bulb filaments, sun
cascading over the cast iron fence.

Whose house is this?
The earth belongs to us, our descendants,
earthlings, but the house is not
our own. Below it flows the river.

Before which we balk.
The river shuffles its feet, choppy
cowboy boots, in its deep blue blouse.
I believe in you.

Even though we're worn out now,
I believe you will always be near me.
Below us, the river carries the river,
its tune, its melody.

Cameron Morse

Trespassing

Stray with me. Fasten and fixate.
A wagon wheel leans against the pickets.

Go, investigate.
Investigate the flowerbed, the basketball goals

and extension ladders lying on their sides.
These summer houses are mostly empty in December,

these gas cans, iceboxes,
leftover pelts of snow on unraked riverside lawns.

It's unlikely that you will remember this,
how you stumbled among the rusty boat trailers

in the pre-dawn where I don my coveralls.
It's unlikely you will remember me at all.

What does the water have to say? What does the light
have to say to the water? And you, would you please

just call me Daddy? I know you know some words.
It's just us out here on the rock bank

of the Mississippi. Let me lean over.
Whisper something in my ear.

Sarah Sousa

The Other World

What is broken here,
there is whole. The mirror's
bad luck sealed for good
along its concentric spider's
web of cracks. The head
of the doll pushed back
onto her body. Synthetic hair,
jagged-cut with dull scissors,
long again and, oddly, human.
A skull, a vase, an old love
mended. Hole in the ice, heart
valve, clasp of the necklace.
The razed house reconstructs
itself, bone by charred bone,
burnishes the empty rooms.
And rivers flow back to their source:
Wet-dark trees. Raindrop
at the tip of every leaf
reflecting the inverted world
like a woman feathered with mirrors.

Sarah Sousa

Witch

Wich: a bundle of fiber.
Wik to twine and twist,
connected to spinning
a hasp, a skein of yarn.
Wik the coiling roots
of the tree. Women
twisted flax and other plant fiber
into wicks, dipped in tallow
and burned. The word
wicker for willow wand
baskets, the word
weak meaning flexible stalk,
wice for witch hazel's pliant nature.
Wicket, a turning
gate. The measured turning
of time, a week.
Wicked, the making
of knots and plaiting the fibers.
Wicked the conjuring of cloth
from beasts. Wich,
when the field grass assembles.
Witch when it burns.

Travis Stephens

Traffic Report

today on the highway
a shattered pile of
wood pieces, jagged sharps
amid a tangle of
fabric and batting.
I believe it was a couch.
A sofa.
Splattered, shattered and tossed.
Stuffing had become cover
& cover had become threads.

Yesterday
on the freeway
between exits
traffic slowed but didn't stop
even as a white van
nosed into the guardrail
facing traffic, poor thing,
billowed smoky flame.
Rain fell as the firemen
lit off the hydrant.

Morning traffic abandons
dogma & prayer for
the solid laws of physics.
The favorite: a body in motion,
second best, equal reactions.
Each day a reaffirmation,
and too often a lament.
Why oh why me?
Why today?

Travis Stephens

From the right
a flatbed truck merges
bearing a tarp covered load.
I slow to follow.
The tarp is loose
in one corner, a black
shroud of secrecy.
What could it be?
It could be anything:
an articulated clamshell bucket,
emergency generator,
sculpture
for the civic center,
a wrecked Bugatti.
Swaying, rocking.
Ohio plates, is that a clue?
Maybe Lebron's trophy collection
or the relocated mausoleum
of the Bessemer family.
Brake lights.
I go left and let it go,
in my rear view mirror an
ill-shaped lump of commerce.
Maybe headed your way.
My exit seven minutes away.

Taylor D. Waring

a snowman to abduct me

all night the snowman spoke of his moon
with an unknown
glacial drawl

by dawn i could see the furred
corpse of a squirrel
emerging
from his tinfoil
top hat

a rusted antenna & what appeared

to be an abandoned alternator
blooming
behind his copper ribcage

he told me
he came from the other side
of mars

where it is always winter

i said i understood
how it feels to scan the sky
with my bones
hoping for an alien beacon
to call me home

why everyone in the universe is alone

Taylor D. Waring

a snowman to warm me

his eyes marbled into diamond
as i poured his slick remains
into a shot glass

shaped like a pistol

our heads cocked
back & skyward
laughing
like lamps

i did not know how to thank him
for the buzz

as i lit on fire
what was left
of his face

this is terrible
only if you don't
know

it is always winter on his planet
it is always snowing
in his head

Richard Weaver

Hunter S. Thompson

I may have been, in my own words, a tortured man for all seasons, but it's infuriating to die. Not that it's unexpected. Or even inconvenient. It's just a pisser.

As Dylan sang, an idiot wind. Not gonzo. Although I was supremely pissed at my wife (now ex) at the time. Still, death it is, and dead I must be. So, Owl farm

is available. I live there after all. And worse, football season is over. For me and that lovable fart Nixon. I know he evacuated earlier. Work with me here. OK?

I'm dying. Remember? Tortured as well. I won't explain shit, especially the last thing I wrote. One word: counselor. According to no less an authority than The Rolling Stone,

who kindly published what they thought was my obit, my last words were – "Relax. It won't hurt". You empty a gun into your head and see if that makes sense?

Hell, having my ashes blasted out of a cannon over Woody Creek canyon was a walk in the goddam park.

Richard Weaver

Seamus Heaney

The moment appears, unannounced,
though I sensed its approach, and felt

its hand take mine. You too will know
this comfort upon exit. I grow larger

as time collapses. Your presence,
everywhere in the room, outside,

and beyond. Filling my heart. My lungs.
Becoming the blood I was and am now

unbecoming. "Do not be afraid."

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About the Authors

Ishanee Chanda is a prose writer and poet with publications in a number of journals. She has also written two books of poetry: *Oh, these walls, they crumble* and *The Overflow*.

Harley Anastasia Chapman has appeared or is forthcoming in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Euphemism*, *Not Very Quiet*, *Soundings East*, and *Storyscape Journal*,

Charles Finn is the editor of the literary and fine arts magazine *High Desert Journal* and author of *Wild Delicate Seconds: 29 Wildlife Encounters* (OSU Press 2012).

Susan L. Leary has appeared in journals such as *The Christian Century*, *Gone Lawn*, and *Into the Void*. Her chapbook *This Girl, Your Disciple* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.



A Walk in the Sun © 2019 by Jan Matson

Cameron Morse is the author of *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award, and *Father Me Again* (Spartan Press). The chapbook *Coming Home with Cancer* is forthcoming from Blue Lyra Press.

Bree A. Rolfe has appeared in *5AM*, *Chorus: A Literary Mixtape*, and *Redpaint Hill Anthology Mother is a Verb*.

Sarah Sousa is the author of *See the Wolf*, *Split the Crow* and *Church of Needles* and of the chapbook *Yell*. Her poems have appeared in the *North American Review*, the *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Tupelo Quarterly*, among others. She is on the board of directors of Perugia Press.

Travis Stephens is a sea captain who resides in California. Recent credits include *Apeiron Review*, *Cirque*, *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*, *Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Gravitas*, *Southword*, *Stoneboat Review*, and *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*.

Taylor D. Waring plays in the psychedelic sludge band Merlock. Waring is also the Managing Editor of Willow Springs Books.

Richard Weaver is the author of *The Stars Undone* (Duende Press). His poems here in 2River are from a collection based on the final words of famous people, some of which have appeared in *Adelaide*, *After the Pause*, and *Loch Raven Review*.

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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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