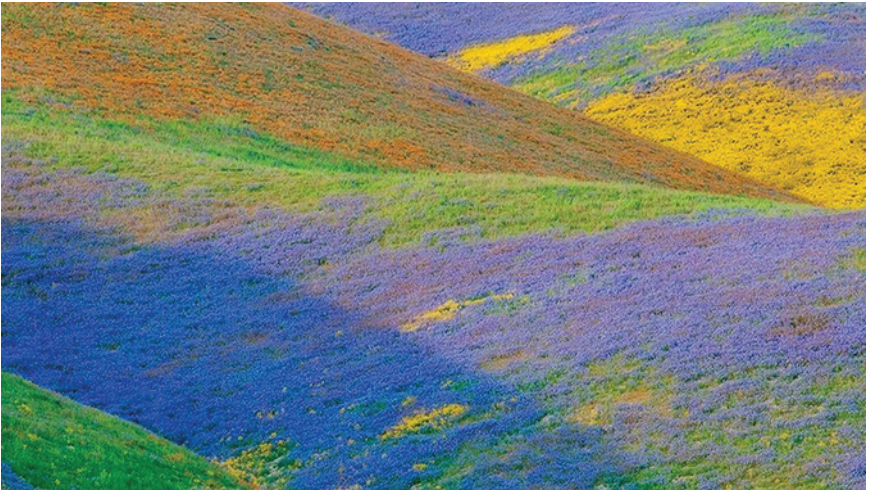


The 2River View

26.3 (Spring 2022)



California Desert Super Bloom 1

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

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Amy Speace

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.

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 journals such as *Atlanta Review*, *La Picciolletta 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.



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.

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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.

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