

The **2**River **V**iew

3_1 (Fall 1998)



POEMS BY Yumiko Awae, Erin Bealmear,
Robert James Berry, Janet Buck, Colby Chester,
Ruth Daigon, Jennifer Ley, /lisa, Brent Long,
Ruben Quesada-Vargas, Duncan Ford Young

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Cover

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for the birds the birds the birds

Yumiko Awae

our wings are made
of polyester, topped
with real bird-feather
icings. we don't hurt them;
some of them spare their fluff
when they die
(says 'donor' right on their
flier's license). our wings have
plasticine hinges, not weak
like those of Icarus. they come
with insurance—they come
with parachutes instead of
airbags. our wings are shrinkable,
in case we want to pose as
people. we can put them away
under our backbones for walking.
we can wear lights on them
at night and cover them with
sleeves under harsh sunlight. it's
100 washable in warm water
and the whiteness never fades.
they can fight blood stains and
repel dust. they're waterproof
and tearproof; they work better than
handles and are lighter than hands.
under a tubal sky we fly
in a loop until we become
one solid orbit, commanding
foreshadowing clouds to
break apart, stopping the rain.

torchalarm

Yumiko Awae

he went gingerly to bed
after the light there is
no more pain; the flash
is so strong that any leftovers
would be missed by the blindness
it's starting to itch where
my wings would've grown
i followed him into heaven
and dragged him down into hell
he quite liked it and felt nice
with all the imperfect souls
who slipped and chipped their fingernails
at the edge of the cliff
he understood those who
had been abandoned by the rope
that was supposed to have saved them
but instead was covered with wax
and made them lose grip
the moving target was
difficult to catch but
the reward spoke bundles
i buckled him in my
angel cutter and dissected
the shit out of him
i folded him into a key
and tucked him into
my secret fifth pocket
to protect him from
bodies of freaks with
noose bruises
i'm not dead yet but i'd sure like to feel it

Who Decided

Erin Bealmear

I would never know the sensation.
My feet have never left the ground.
My body has never been smothered with food
while lying on bedsheets, my chest stripped
of bra, covered with homemade jam
by a man who I'm not very sure whether I like
very much and he licks and kisses
passing his tongue across my body
sucking juices . . . tasting tang . . .
our eyes never quite meeting.
But nothing like this happens.

Who decided that I was going to be the good one.
Who decided and why wasn't I consulted.

Ashes

Robert James Berry

for my Mother

Swing the mattock
Slice the baked clay

Flints, chalk
The blade works through
marrow of roots
fashions the six foot plot

Cotton seals my mother's
nose mouth

... Her rings favourite dress

I do not know you

earth sun-brown
rills onto teak
 over final flowers

I am standing farewell
Then Tonight
Your lips still
Your mask chalk

Fingerprints

Robert James Berry

Evening bleeds red
Into the skin the pores of the sky

Night's head is bent towards the slow wash of the sea
Her feet moving over the gravel

The Channel bills the land
The tide turns a shingled hand over the
Blue chin and black stubble of the sand

The salt grass old thorny bushes
 and sudden crimson flowers
 of the dunes
Then damp open scrub

Houses built here
Dark peat and kindle backed up
Driftwood burning acrid spitting
In all our homes

The heavy animal sound of the ocean's rollers
 smothers us.

If I press with my fingers in the dark
They shall leave no mark.

Reading

Robert James Berry

for Ahila

eyelashes dip on the open book
She is reading
will not look up

The words are printing tall tales
on the intricate lace
of her feather hazel head

Lean long wrist bangles
 reach down
Turn the page
 my page

She rests
 then her eyes walk

A scarlet moon is rising from
 the printed ink

Her ankles bracelets shake softly

This is for you to read

Honest Elephants

Janet Buck

I had a date with diaries
I didn't keep for forty years.
Tears wore suits and stunning ties
of stoic garments well-rehearsed.
I can't explain the shock of knowing
they were dressed for eyes approaching,
gainfully employed by courage,
immigrants and emigrants
just searching for a place to sleep.

Crying towels were there to smoke
but pages had to dry them out.
The weight of silent avalanches
growing in the gaps of pride.
Snakes of disability that
bounce around like basketballs.
Behave a little bitter still as
cramps that grab a garden hose.

The undertaker here was art.
He dug a crater for the shame.
The answer net was just release
of currents of an inner voice.
Cross a bridge. You have a river.
Coax a bud. You have a rose.
The elephants of honest walked
because they didn't have a choice.

Librarian on Break

Ruben Quesada-Vargas

As you sit
hidden—like a mannequin,
skin dyed
a realistic shade of skin,
eyes midnight blue
silhouettes, with crooked strawberry lips—
the fumes of French vanilla
espresso, a nebula
in search of a nose,
dissipates to orbit the earth
into the nostrils of stars
forty-six light years away
from the chair
where your body has been
propped
for the past
ten minutes.

The Day the World Ended

Colby Chester

Thursday,

a dry dawn.

Of course, no one was expecting this would be the last. There were only a few signs: rivers clogged with bones of children and birds, chairs, tires, broken window frames;

roads and bridges had long ago buckled under the weight of people trying to escape.

There were no trees left and the sky appeared to have a hole in it, a huge sore through which black rain oozed like pus.

Many of us

were sure there was still time. The experts insisted, for instance, that the air was becoming less visible, the way it once had been before the climate warmed. Oceans were beginning to stink again. This was a very good sign,

they told us—

it meant that life was returning.

Felling Centuries

Colby Chester

Minutes can pass
between the first dull thwacks against the wedge
to force submission and the huge trunk's final
list to death, or so it seems when you watch
a logger fall a giant.

He moves aside, wide shoulders dusty
in a shawl of kerf, his saw's whine mute at last,
swipes a stiffened arm across his sweat-seamed brow
then leans against the handle of a tool that takes
no credit for this Herculean feat. And then

so sluggishly it seems that it will never yield,
that immense accumulation of water, earth and air cants
downward, fibers popping, then groaning, then
screeching as if centuries of winds and storms
and droughts were all expressed at once, and with its

verdant crown blurring, the beast that raised
no fists, thrust no horns, brought no contagion
to the land
it softly nourished, bluntly thunders to the ground,
its shock-waves rumbling for a massive instant
before all
is still, so still the forest seems distraught with
shame; and

what was just before a thick, prolific world lies
broken now, exposed— a fallen god that cries
for clouds
to shade its nakedness. All that's left is stump,
a jagged ridge of splinters—pale fingers
reaching for the sky.

Invasions

Ruth Daigon

They move in towards the house. Snakes
slip through hedges. A red fox
squatting on its tail, devours apples

from our tree. The lawn's sieved by rodents.
A shadow of a wing covers the wall.
With a terrible hunger they inhabit

my green jungle of sleep.
Lewd, toothy, carnivorous, they signal me
with dream claws and fangs.

I signal back with ancient mouth
and furred throat until the bloodrush
in a linkage of dreams.

Slow Return

Ruth Daigon

Something lies half-buried, waiting.
Silence has its holding place in cracks,
crevices, erosions. On overgrown corners,
thistles raise their spears, rocks their humps.
Weeds tighten roots in a stranglehold of green.
Vines twist through rotting lumber to crown
the house before the slow return, beyond lines
of shatter, back to a dream of animals again.

Hidden from the world in a couch of grass
and leaves, secure from storms that pass, I
depend on old migrations, a slow measuring
of ends and where blindness leads, I follow.
Above ground scrub grass bristles and the scent
of danger's everywhere but I know how safe
a safe distance under earth is and how far.

Hennaed Hands

Jennifer Ley

And in her left palm
the receiving hand
for it is not as well trained
as its sister
and thus must be content
to remain passive, open,
I'd paint a sun.
Turn her flesh
to crystal,
put her shadows to flight.

And in her right hand
the sender
the talented one
there, I'd place a star
patient with its spectrum
sure in its magnitude
unafraid to be perceived
as small
against the night.

Legacy

Jennifer Ley

This pain is a story
layered, cracked
some would call it scar,
root deep down towards
that first burn, first cut.
(We were all virgins once;
we were all smooth
and whole before the knife.)

Now time heaps new folds
upon my skin
and some days like a paper plane
I soar coached by his origami hands
until the heavy fist
(Is this memory?)
comes crashing down,
crumples me like paper
and tosses me away.

I'd prefer to be ash on those days,
I'd prefer to rise on a heated flame
and change my molecular form,
make my atoms dance.
(I bought a new dress
all fancy frills and bows
but it hangs so.)

But the story has a life
of its own, a pen clutched
in its calloused hand.
It calls from inside the wound
seeking to gain another chapter,
scratch the itch
and mend.

Rorschach

/lisa

Rorschach!
You devil!
what magic you do
displaying jungian shadows
on a page
like a peep through
the keyhole
who do you see?
do you read the white?
or the black?
or mix them in shades of gray?
spider people
building webs
catching innocent flies
coyote calls
did you meet the turtle
sitting on her back
or were you lost
in her shell
unseen?
get out the rosary
to save your sins

when the light shines
from the inside out
whoops!
the stars are hidden
in the blinding bareness
of day's dark gleaming
oh Rorschach!
You devil!
flash your light
in the oral cavities
releasing souls
from the liver's deep caverns
bring up the bile
like the dying
staring into nothingness
glazed in transfixed posture
frozen
like the stillness
of a mind.

confessions

/lisa

check that catholic guilt
at the door, boy
you think a confession
settles a sin into oblivion?
absolves you from the karma
of sedentary life
over-ripe like rotting fruit
thoughts like maggots
feasting on the meat of the mind

check that catholic guilt
at the door, boy
get with the program
construct your skyscrapers
from solid materials
not sugar that melts like cotton candy
on saliva's demand

check that catholic guilt
at the door, boy
fear not what you can do for they
trying to make them do for you
stop the solid jello slide
from slinking down the stairs
and stand upright

check that catholic guilt
at the door, boy
and sit by my side
driving in the fast lane
of realities built from perspiration
from nine to five to seven

A Moment of Reflection Occurring In A Diner Between Nashville and Memphis

Brent Long

The waitress is not half-bad,
and neither is the food
if you keep it in context. But
the young couple in the booth

near the corner trouble me,
the way an old song will
during a certain time of year
or a friend unwittingly conjuring

up a nightmare with a snide comment
about one long-forgotten mistake or other.

The highway feels like
a drawn-out consequence.

But I've made up my mind—
I'm headed out for Boston
or some northern constellation.

If I knew what was good for me
I would sleep or sit here another hour,
counting the reasons I have for drinking.

Maybe drop a quarter in the jukebox
and let some cowboy tell the truth
about the length of this life,
the physical vernacular of love.

The Person for Whom This Poem Is Written Will Know It

Brent Long

Though your husband no longer
hears that dead man's voice in his sleep
every year like clockwork his memory
scatters its slow seed through your terrain.

Forget the warnings these years have brought
you, that circle of men in orbit around whatever
it was they thought you offered. You have all
paid hell, I am certain.

Wide-mouthed in wonder,
the observation of your survival
has been recorded by those whose money
rests safely on fast horses;

your well orchestrated demise
was not lost to those who were watching.
Unscathed and wiser for the experience
the perfected art of forgiveness.

And what now, woman?
The slow lob of poetry navigates
its performance through the
silent auditoriums of night.

What now to be discovered
on love's timeless battlefields?
Perhaps a newer moon?
A younger nebula with fresher skin?

While Recounting Their First Engagement, He Expounds Upon A Truth About Himself

Brent Long

The one across the table from me
smells of rain as she excuses herself
and passes by.

Too much of one thing,
not enough of another
someone sums up the state
of affairs in Argentina

and I am awaiting her return.
Deciding it worth the risk
I order another drink while

on campuses all across the country
young boys shoot their mouths off
for lack of anything better to shoot.

She slips between tables
as my entire being
casts its vote for trouble.

I'll not deny desiring her.

Gravel and Cobalt

Duncan Ford Young

The road is constructed of the crushed ghosts
Of alcoholic sinners, elderly before their time.
Under the blanket ear-muffs of a too-loud muffler
Hear them groan and whine
Of the ceaseless rubber friction,
The daily grind-up of gravel
Ground back down in a rush hour penance dance.
“Even the inconsequential sting,” they say,
“Of bikers waiting in vain for the change of
tension in their legs
Feels like a combine shearing the molecules from
our existence.”
The road wishes it could turn its face away
On days that fall cobalt,
On clouds that lay low like slabs of iron slate,
Like lids on desire.
But the rain falls, finds cracks,
Breaks down a morsel at a time.

And then maybe later the road wakes from a
feverish coma,
Like a beaten prisoner in an isolation box,
To squint into a watery sun, bright and obnoxious
As secret government experiments with laser
and crystal.
“See through the scalpel glare,
Contrails scratched across the blue,
Our fortunate brothers
Who endure only minutes, not years,
Before sun and sky sift them out of existence.”

Steering Wheel

Duncan Ford Young

The steering wheel's faded and out of moisture,
But I remember when it was as minted as
Your uncle in those old pictures,
Hair slicked back like molten brown iron,
Smiling tan in a 1973 orange-ribbed turtleneck.
(At the nursing home his arm hangs over the bed
Like a rusted boom.)

I've tried the dashboard treatments,
And they leave the wheel slick and lemony
Like trailside-rotted fruit, bled of juice
in summer.

But there are still the fine diamond shaped
creases in the leather
Like those in crispy fall leaves before they crumble.

The ways in which my hands have gripped this wheel:
Casually with my left hand
As the right moved boldly to her brushed velvet knee
(Too soon as it turned out)

Firm

As I tried to squeeze my mind away from fear
And onto a narrow path free of dangerous thoughts;
Recklessly

As I arched my neck to catch the rear view
mirror mouthings

Of songs I wish I wrote;

Or not gripped at all

But pounded with the fat sole of my hand

As anger rose and fell like sea spray

And I made a ledger entry into my book of dark places.

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Authors

Yumiko Awae is a professional lazy and amateur artist in withering in Los Angeles. Her poetry has been published in local zines across the nation. Currently, her CD collection exceeds the number of poems she's written, a balance she hopes to change.

Erin Bealmear is a recent college graduate with an expertise in the Wintergreen Lifesaver Effect. Her passions though are color copiers and printers, two amazing yet underrated inventions.

Robert James Berry is a Londoner, currently living on Penang Island, in West Malaysia, where he lectures in English Literature and Language at the University of Science.

Janet Buck teaches college writing and literature and has published in journals, magazines and anthologies across the United States. Her poetry sites on the web have received more than thirty awards. Writing, she says, is a tuba in a long parade that chases pain and sorrow to its dissolution.

Colby Chester published his first book of poetry, *Seizing Paradise*, in 1992. Three original radio plays have been produced for broadcast over KMPC in Los Angeles. His Christmas story, *Writer's Cramp*, was recently produced for NPR. He currently lives in Seattle, producing narrative and dramatic radio.

Ruth Daigon edited *Poets On:* for 20 years. *Between One Future And The Next* (Papier-Mache Press 1995) was followed by *About A Year* (Small Poetry Press in 1996). Web Del Sol recently

published her latest chapbook on the web. Her awards include "The Eve Of St. Agnes" (*Negative Capability* 1993 and 1994) and "The Ann Stanford Poetry Prize" (University of Southern California 1997). Her autobiography is in the Contemporary Authors Autobiography series.

Jennifer Ley has had poetry many of better literary websites, including *Recursive Angel*, *Grist On Line*, *Poetry Cafe*, *Agnieszka's Dowry*, and *Zero City*. She also edits *Perihelion*, on Web Del Sol, and *The Astrophysicist's Tango Partner Speaks*.

/lisa started writing poetry at the middle of her life. She started with a journal on the local freenet, slowly changing to a vertical form. She said she wrote vertically, but her friends called it poetry. A local folk writer told her to write naked. She tried, but found it got cold in the winter.

Brent Long has had poems in numerous publications including *Cold Mountain Review*, *The Portable Plateau*, and *The Appalachian Review*. In 1997 he was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by the editors of *The Portable Plateau*. He did not win.

Ruben Quesada-Vargas is a student, currently editing a Latin American poetry anthology and serving as a Poetry Editor of *Mosaic Art and Literature Journal* at UC, Riverside.

Duncan Ford Young is a meteorologist in the Navy and lives in Hanford, CA. He has poems forthcoming in *Conspire Poetry Journal* and *Neurotic Buffet*.

2River

About

2River, a literary site on the Daemen College World Wide Web Server, publishes *The 2River View*.

2River also publishes individual authors. These collections, as well as all issues of *The 2River View*, can be accessed at

<http://www.daemen.edu/~2River>

For information about submissions, please visit the 2River website, or send email to

2River@daemen.edu

All mail is answered within a day or two.

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