

# 2RV

17.4 (Summer 2013)

# The 2River View

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new poems by  
John Guzowski, Taylor Graham, Kip Knott, Katherine Mitchell  
A. Molotkov, Dave Nielsen, Andrew Oerke, Suzanne Parker  
Andres Rojas, Megan Volpert, Steven Winn

2River  
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## Contributors

Megan Volpert is the author of four books on communication and popular culture, most notably about Andy Warhol. She has been teaching high school English in Atlanta for the better part of a decade. The poems printed here are forthcoming in *Only Ride* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2014).

Steven Winn is a San Francisco writer whose poems have appeared in *The Able Muse*, *Antioch Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Florida Review*, *Poetry East*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Poetry*, *Verse Daily*, and elsewhere.

## 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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Katherine Mitchell holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Missouri—Saint Louis. She works professionally as an Alexander Technique teacher and teaches Argentine Tango at Washington University in St. Louis with her husband, Michael.

A. Molotkov has had poems recently accepted by *Kenyon Review*, *Mad Hatters Review*, and *Word Riot*. A. Molotkov serves on the Board of Directors of the Oregon Poetry Association. He co-edits *The Inflectionist Review*. [www.AMolotkov.com](http://www.AMolotkov.com).

Dave Nielsen studied English at Brigham Young University and is currently a PhD student at the University of Cincinnati. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Parnassus*, *Ploughshares*, *The Southern Review*, and other magazines.



Andrew Oerke has had poems in *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, and numerous other magazines. In 2006, *African Stilt dancer* and *San Miguel de Allende* were published jointly by Swan Books and the United Nations Society for Writers and Artists. Subsequently, Oerke received the United Nations Literature Award. His most recent collection is *Never Seek to Tell Thy Love* (2010). Oerke passed away in early May.

Suzanne Parker is an editor at *MEAD: A Magazine of Literature and Libations*. *Viral*, winner of the Kinereth Gensler Book Award, is forthcoming from Alice James Books in September 2013.

Andres Rojas came to the U.S. from Cuba at age 13. He holds an M.F.A. and J.D. from the University of Florida. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in, among others, *Barrow Street*, *Cossack Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, and the *New England Review*.

Silver Lake, Michigan: Sunrise

The 2River View, 17.4 (Summer 2013)

## Contributors

John Guzowski has work in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Ontario Review*, and *Writer's Almanac*. *Lightning and Ashes* is a collection of poems about his parents' experiences in Nazi concentration camps. His novel *The Germans* is forthcoming from Cervena Barva Press.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the California Sierra. Her poems have appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and the anthologies *Villanelles* (Everyman's Library) and *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present*.

Kip Knott is the author of four collections of poetry, the most recent being *Afraid of Heaven* (Mudlark). His poetry has most recently appeared in *Four and Twenty* and *Right Hand Pointing*.

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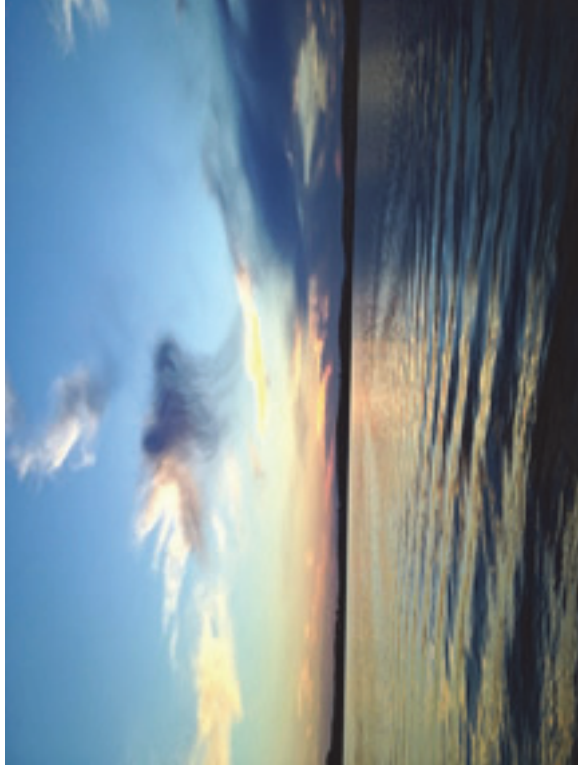
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Silver Lake, Michigan: Sunset

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Steven Winn

### Watching the Water

fall  
all that  
way makes the  
mind resist its  
plunging certainties  
as the eye  
flies up  
through foam-  
ing perturbation  
to find a  
silver strand  
slung loose  
in limber  
free  
fall  
and then  
another and  
another after that  
each one a  
wish to end  
incorporeal  
in mist

A. Molotkov

### from *Time and Absence*

xxx

eighteen people died as I wrote this line  
may someone remember them

xxx

let's count silences  
let's share absence

on the vast snow field  
of life's empty page  
our words  
are grains of sand

how much sand does it take  
to defeat entropy?

and yet  
we are a story  
that took fourteen billion years  
to write itself

and I wonder  
about all that sand  
all that snow

xxx

a melody  
doesn't exist all at once  
we hear a memory  
enjoy an absence

A. Molotkov

we pretend that the past  
is a living reference

that the moments  
comprising our lives  
make sense as a whole

that a note ago  
we were the same

that a song  
feels our presence

that a chord  
struck at birth  
still rings true when we die

we believe that a melody  
remembers us

xxx

I unfold the ocean  
and let it spread  
over the table

the future  
doesn't bother me

you are floating there  
on a boat  
too small to see

I become one of those  
who watch you from the distance

And now how easily  
it takes you in,  
the insult of it vanished  
in this intervention  
of someone else's pleasure,  
the blunt, concussive  
fact

of it,  
the way it wraps him up  
in it,  
the beat  
repeating and repeating  
in the space between.

And then the light turns green.



Steven Winn

## The Beat

You feel it first, the  
thump  
that thuds from nowhere up  
and detonates  
a panic  
so complete it takes another  
beat  
or three to register  
the car that's slid up  
beside you, window cocked,  
Gucci Mane throbbing from  
in there  
through air and pavement, floorboard  
into you,  
where panic flips to fury  
in a beat  
a beat  
a beat  
he marks, head dipped and  
turned away, thumb tapping,  
lightly tapping on the wheel.

let me know if the years we have  
are enough for us  
can I express absence  
more vividly  
than by keeping silent?  
I fold the distance in half  
and then in half again  
until you're close  
I stay awake  
while you answer  
xxx  
the sand  
the snow  
I draw a few continents  
on a paper napkin  
and those who live there  
don't realize how flimsy their ground is  
can you refresh all my memories  
at once?  
can everything explode  
in slow motion?  
say nothing in my mind  
keep your distance  
in my worst case scenario  
I die  
as I write this last word

*Taylor Graham*

### **Border Patrol**

Sun's behind the mountain,  
sky barely dim enough to see -  
it's coyote hunting time.  
We aim for the wild north corner  
through rimrock, up the creek  
that rips our fence out after storms -  
fence we put up to keep  
sheep in, aliens out. My dogs  
alert me. This morning  
Loki dashes ahead, small,  
sable Shepherd; in faint light,  
I might mistake her  
for those marauders. Boogie  
pads along beside me,  
assures it's safe  
to let the sheep out - a new  
lamb, no older than the ones  
killed by coyotes,  
those aliens who lived here  
long before we came.

*Megan Volpert*

### **We see something terrible and bloom**

Look at the sky, so you know what the emergency is. Fires happen at night. Floods happen during the day. Every natural disaster wants to perform when it can be best seen. There is this special type of black mold that only grows where there has been a flood. It's toxic. But there is also a mushroom, a black morel, which only grows where there has been a fire. It's delicious. The event is not really the thing, just a seed. In museums, I probably spend sixty percent of the time looking at people looking, and just forty percent looking at what they're looking at.

*Megan Volpert*

### **We all fight**

I think it would be cool to own a switchblade. But that means carrying it around and then that means using it, which seems like no fun. I'm not a violent person. Go ahead and throw me under the bus though, because I can lift it with my tongue. No kid ever bullied me in school. For years, I didn't understand it was because of my smart mouth. I didn't even know I had one until my father put soap in it. All people are strong and most don't know what their strengths are. The life is perfectly salvageable. It's just the person is not yet interested to be saved.

*Taylor Graham*

### **Cowboy in the Woods**

I'd lost the trail from Thunder Mountain to my car. I was consulting my map, following dog and sun through aspen grove when, from between trees, rode a cowboy. He reined up his sorrel right in front of me, hooves almost touching the toes of my boots. "This is private property, you're in trespass." Raspy voice, clipped like horseshoe on granite. Nice sorrel, careful on its hooves. "Name's Denny Martin, I work for Mr. Scott, he owns this land. Roadhead's off in that direction." He gestured past his shoulder; then, without seeming to move, shifted his weight in the saddle. Cowboy and horse disappeared into forest, leaving just a breath of tobacco behind. As if he'd ridden straight off the Marlboro prairie into that upcountry aspen grove. Two years later, I happened on the obit. Denny Martin dead, lung cancer. What caught in my throat wasn't barbwire. I wonder what happened to his horse.

*John Guzlowski*

### **Eye Contact with the Dead**

Don't make eye contact  
with the dead in their coffins.  
They've suffered long enough,  
walked too long upon the earth,

smelled its sweet air in the morning,  
loved the people they've loved,  
loved you as much as they could,  
probably more than you guessed.

Now, it's time to look away.  
You don't need to see their eyes  
on you as you turn away,  
their eyes watching as long

as they can, watching until  
you turn into your own grave.

*Andres Rojas*

### **Seeing My Father**

How did his car lay, solitary,  
a lesser moon deflecting moonlight  
barred by the shadows of pines,

my own from the porch light behind me  
bent, another layer in the glass  
under which his hands rose to the wheel,

barely seen through pollen and dust  
as in life, his too-small chest and head  
a reflection of glare and tried eyes,

wanting, perhaps, more than was there:  
the non-gesture of breeze on branches,  
the moon half hid in a cloud-cage sky.

*Andres Rojas*

### **Encore**

We fly, angels all  
    now gravity's loss,  
instruments of air better than real,  
have Winehouse or Holiday voices  
    at will, even Cobain's,  
  
hold no jobs, can find anyone  
known or not but seldom try, spend  
our time instead with our one true one.

Scientists tried to imagine

how the world dawned thus.

Now they spend their days  
with their one true one.

Priests too. Still

when I float off the grass  
invoking like Parker  
    on an unseen sax,  
my solar plexus knows I'm not.  
And I'll never be. Him.

*John Guzlowski*

### **The World after the Fall**

Eve stood there  
for a moment  
and watched her grace  
dry up like water.

Whatever sunshine  
had lingered on her skin  
was gone

and when  
she looked at Adam's face  
she wondered  
what she could say  
to him.

They had words  
of course—  
They learned them together  
but neither spoke.

What could  
she say?

Sorry?

Next time,  
it'll be different?

I didn't understand?

She just shook her head  
and he did too.

*Kip Knott*

### **Elegy for Someone yet to Die**

Buildings lean a little  
toward the moon as it slips  
quietly out of the city  
swallowing stars as it rises.  
I skim its reflection  
on an oily puddle with my feet,  
breaking it into halves  
then quarters, one phase  
spilling into the next,  
marking this moment  
of my life in slices of light  
added, then subtracted.

*Suzanne Parker*

### **Mulberry Picking**

I don't think the orioles know their own splendor.  
I don't think the mulberry tree knows it shivers as it holds them.  
I don't think the berries' juice can slake any thirst as large as this  
yet I march out each morning, colander in hand and beneath  
the outrage of the crows pick what is difficult, sweet, what stains  
under the nails and seeps into the tracks we all carry in our skin;  
like a river, my greed flows purple, fast, and thunders  
throughout the day, marking me, for all to see.

Suzanne Parker

### Feed

The red fox keeps killing  
the neighbor's chickens  
for the thrill of it,  
for bone snap and heat  
+ stain + greed + warm  
blood flooding the mouth,  
for snarl+ legs+ the cornered  
shiver of white feathers  
in a viscous breeze,  
for the low belly, tail high,  
that red declaration  
aflame in the field  
+ fast, fast before its  
even dragged the last meat  
off the bone it is looking  
at the few hens scratching  
in the rafters, as if  
heat could be cloaked  
by dark as if their cries  
weren't already his,  
as if desire could be salvaged  
with one small meal.

Kip Knott

### Voices

In these woods,  
elms drunk on rain  
step out of their bark  
and cry for you.  
  
Are you hiding in the light  
of invisible animals?  
A blue jay cackles  
as if it knows.  
  
The steady voice of an oil well asks  
*Where? Where?*  
  
In the distance, the brittle Ohio  
breaks and the throats  
of smokestacks choke on stars.  
  
Darkness blossoms in bare trees.  
I hear you calling  
from the white cave  
of this page.

*Katherine Mitchell*

### **The Evening of the Last Calm**

The man works quickly,  
repairs the blue-jay's wing,  
ties three knots with blue thread.

He remembers pulling weeds,  
killing spiders.

He is now happy for any living thing.

Lying on the living room floor,  
he imagines stars overhead  
and leaves falling  
curled like paper catching fire,  
imagines multiple pairs of steps  
scattering the hunched leaves,  
multiple sticks sharpened  
for roasting marsh mellow.

He remembers singing nude  
under a chandelier of running water  
and robed with a choir,  
voices a scaffold to the nave,  
the ceiling vaulted  
inside his mouth.

*Andrew Oerke*

### **The Sands**

The sands drip through a woman's hourglass-  
body of their own accord in passing.

They leave themselves to join themselves.

They count their sandy seeds like rosary beads  
as they sacrifice themselves to the past, one grain at a time.

They unload the moving van of the wind,  
and store the foam-rubber sofas of the moon.  
The water spreads a plastic cape along the beach,  
whose castles are built to crumble in seconds.

Clouds shake a salt and pepper shine and shade  
on a progress of camels, packages and merchants  
in a caravan for the Sultan of Curious Eyes.

Finally, the sand spins like a madman  
whirling a dervish, and sinks back in dunes.  
Anchorites and cacti live in the desert  
where the soul has no distractions  
and mirages wave the real from our eyes  
so the "great sloth heart" can wake to its feelings  
and the mind make images that slander the dust  
with daydreams and visions that will not rust.



Andrew Oerke

## Dear Children,

When you were this small, I showed you how both index fingers jammed up tight together could raise a steeple; then we opened our doubledoor thumbs, tumbled our clasped knuckles inside-out and rolled over and, Hey! look at all the people stacked like mumblety-pegs in their pews. Uncle Carl made nickels disappear and reappear suspiciously close to the cuffs of his pants.

Wish I could hand you the secret but the secret is you *are* the secret. If only you trusted yourselves instead of them; it would save you so much time.

Wish I could dash to your shadows and say: Lead them west in the morning to new frontiers, and east of the moon at the end of the day. Parents fade into the back country where children cave into parents themselves. You are all I have left for a legacy. My ripe old words will glean their clauses with commas that curl up into periods themselves that will go to sleep inside themselves period; at which time I will have done all that I could and wish to God it were more than I ever did.

When he walks to the lake for water, algae covers its surface like clouds. He assigns identities - sea horse, beard, wheelbarrow.

He holds the pan level on his way back to the house, avoids open fields, though he has seen no one.

He ties a flashlight over the card table, inverts the lid of a sugar bowl, adds water with a tattooed spoon. The blue jay rests like a scar on his open hand.

*Dave Nielsen*

### **Poem About a Deaf Woman**

Imagine the lid of the piano  
slammed shut,  
or a glass chucked  
against the wall—  
Imagine all  
that the animal hears—  
dog, bear.  
Think of the sound

of the road  
from the pasture's  
far corner—  
or of a lover's breathing,  
beside you in the dark.  
And don't forget  
conversations  
in the elevator,

the talk that isn't yours.  
No music to comfort,  
yet no wind;  
look out the window and see:  
so many trees  
like people  
dancing to their headphones.  
She can't hear

the pipes ticking  
or the rain,  
yet each moment is pounding,  
wave after wave

softer than a tiptoe.

*Dave Nielsen*

### **Riddle at the Beginning of Time**

No prophets yet.  
Still, so much to be foretold.  
Even God is a little uncertain.  
Stones have yet to decide  
upon silence,  
and men gather  
at the water contemplating  
the world's first ship.

Of course there is a fat baby,  
at its mother's pink  
nipple—the world's first breakfast.

Does it feel early?  
A fish jumps:  
the world's first circle.

In the forest a wood cutter leans  
into his very first chop:  
something like philosophy,  
something like bells  
coming over the treetops.

What a moment!  
A poet grows introspective  
in the middle of a crossing.