

# 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

*Etseta=OUA=1* © 1998 by Don Bied

***2River View, 3\_1 (Fall 1998)***

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## for the birds the birds the birds

Yumiko Awaë

---

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 Awaë

---

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  
nose 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    acid    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.

## **2River View, 3\_1 (Fall 1998)**

### Authors

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**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

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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](mailto:2River@daemen.edu)

All mail is answered within a day or two.



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