

# 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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*The 2River View, 23.4 (Summer 2019)*

*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 gascans, 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."

*The 2River View*, 23.4 (Summer 2019)

## 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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