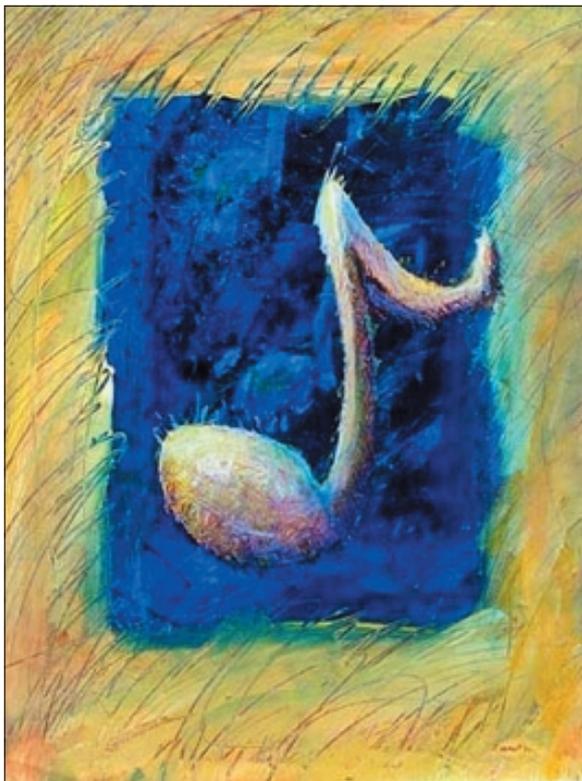


The **2River** View

5.3 (Spring 2001)



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new poems by

Jason Deen, Deborah Finch, Roger Jones, Rebecca Lu-Kiernan, Patti Marshock, Judith Pordon, Harding Stedler, T. L. Stokes, Susan Vaughan, and Chocolate Waters

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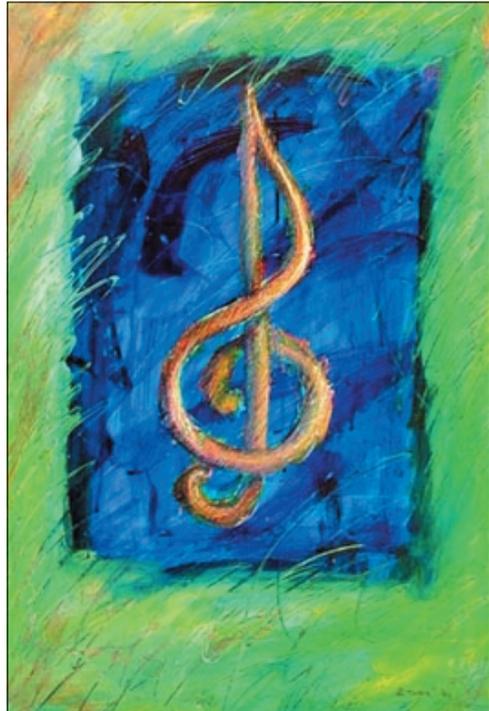
Richard Long, Editor

About 2River

2River is a literary site on the Daemen College webserver in Amherst, New York. The address is:

www.daemen.edu/~2River

2River publishes *The 2River View*, a quarterly journal of poetry, art, and theory; and occasionally publishes individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. All publications first appear online and afterwards in print. Interested contributors can read the submission guidelines on the 2River site.



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The Way In

Knocking at
the door of the
hearthall, I
can see a great
light if I match
my eyes to the
edge of the jamb.

Vibrating,
the door sets the
hinges to
high creaking and
small bits of rust
fall from them, to
the warming floor.

Jason Deen

Fully Still

Besetting peace
across days of food,
behind us, the hours
heavy and miles walked.

Sounds lost along this
way hear subtle noise
and promises kept
fail gracefully still.

Jason Deen

Two Music

Your voice is a slow drink,
poured easily into
my ear. It gently
lifts and falls,

now thick, now light,
not needing its other
parts for completeness, but
waits, outside, before
tumbling into me, as
autumn does, when strength is
used and needed.

I feel it as a wind
which catches the edge of
a seashell, that fills and
refills this

shell constantly, setting
the entirety to
warm vibrating. I breathe
deep and listen—shell, voice,
ear—and in that distinct
low hum I hear the world,
part and whole.

Breathing deep and hearing
the world vibrate
with, and me:
within me.

Deborah Finch

15 Perceptions of Hades
As Recorded in Persephone's Diary

I

At this hour,
 I float
away from your shadow,
a bubble blown
or imagined
by a girl of six,
maybe your daughter.
 It pops
on the neighbor's porchlight
with a small wet smack
ending yet another dream
that I can live
without you.
Perhaps my escape
was a child's thumb
 plucked
from a sucking mouth,
at least its round trip
ended with sound like that.

2

Every day
my thoughts slip
one molecule at a time
away from your kingdom
 of tunnels and madness
into mesquite canopies
where hunting whipsnakes
flex their lengthy muscles
from thorny branch to branch.
 Moving air
from summer's exhalation
circulates the scent
of congealing late-night panic,
passing through arroyos
into neighborhoods
where windows shudder
 at the sight of sun
 in the veined red eyes of dawn.

3

Summer's glare
strains into living rooms,
spreading over aging wives
 asleep on chairs
in underwear.

 Sun strikes glass,
tissue lint drifts in air,
lured from twisted shreds
trapped in crocheted blankets.

 But in the shade
of your damp firmament,
kisses move with rushing sounds
enveloping me from everywhere,
and you don't care
if I am gray-haired,
 fat,
 or breastless.

4

Purpose evaporates
in a reflexive burst of thistle-seeds.
Seeds glide down on parachutes
brushing earthen flanks
 of burning-dry acequias.

Demeter's hand
sifts such seeds through shadows
in her daughter's mind.

 She spins around
in Zia's dance to grow new corn—
tornadoes daze New Mexico.

 Husbands pull
 their young wives down.
Drought abounds. A daughter's life
 seeps underground.

5

Plumed seeds land in arroyos
where water stored for Indians
 vanished into Texas,
where innocence
and munificent mothers' tears
streamed,
 trickled,
 dried.

Demeter searches for liquid beads
to string her daughter's psyche
into a silver rope
for climbing slopes
 of Hades' hold
to a mesa top
 of sanity.

6

The dark folds me
in river silt and cottonwood ashes
blown from the Pueblo
 of Isleta
into the water swirling
around my father's death.
I lie down
in irrigation ditches
beside abandoned bodies
of men I could
 have loved
and hold their skeletons.

7

My mother wanders
 on levies
in her loose black dress
using a Oaxacan cane
to divine directions
from my sadness.
Its parrot head
speaks to me in Spanish,
 repeating
names of men
I never slept with.
Her toes may graze
my marriage crown.
Its tips emerge
like willow shoots
from deposits of salt
and tamarisk needles.
 My mother closes her eyes.
The river reaches south
 and dies.
 And so you will lie
and rock beside me
in the darkening ebb of time.

8

You kiss my wrist, its pulse, and stay,
 saying
 My channel wash
with its dragging sound
of quail bones tangled
in leaves and algae
 is fine,
and what I say
or don't say
will n(ever) leave
your mouth
or mind.

9

Boldly take me,
Hades,
 shadow inside me,
 hand on my soul,
into your lonely den
where secrets aren't lies
I tell to myself.
Take me from places
where nothing,
 not even dogs
 or fathers,
can step without fear
of small things
 dying,
of someone
wetting a bed.

10

 Here
is where I turn around
to the sound of dogs
from childhood
 barking in joy
to see me.
 My hands
remember fur and tongues.
I follow footprints
back to paths
where shoebox pets
were carried solemnly
out to a backyard realm
of earthworms
 and tiny mouths.
Their deaths were absorbed
 with kissing sounds
similar to whimpers
of prostitutes
 asleep
on underground trains.

11

In this crawlspace,
you lifted my soul from poems
and embraced its swirl
 of surrender,
pulling out spines
from words and rhymes
and jamming them
into your heart, but,
 trapped in labyrinths
of a raped girl's mind,
you almost bled to death
mouthing praises
I didn't recognize,
pleading for love
in foreign languages
only my parrot,
 who died from neglect,
could translate.

12

Do you know—
 O dark asymmetrical
whorl of unknown—
The dam of my soul cracks open
into your endless flowing.
I veer down the infinite
drain of this universe
as it bypasses heaven,
 where hell
is a diversion route
to someone else's explanations
 for God
 and dying.
I turn without yield signs,
knowing no destination
or reasons to stay or leave
 save the warmth
 of your rising flood in me.

13

And every night,
my thoughts pace downward
using someone else's feet
until the end of my knowledge
is reached.

For one last time,
last time,
last time,
I take that dark frightening
bungie-cord flip
away from netscapes
keyed for the seeing
down into the furious
inner roar of being,
clutched by Hades' gravity.

14

Cottonwood leaves
choke ditches and sewers,
gather in pools of old women's eyes.
Tanagers fledge their young, fly south.
Red feathers bleed from river sides.
You think of suicide.
Your thoughts reach in my mind.
Autumn calls my name,
Persephone!
I cry to my mother,
Goodbye,
I love him!
Goodbye.

15

Know, Thief,
 brief traveler
 to surface plains
to wed my soul with yours,
that I find
all dispersed stars
 and every black hole
of my imploded self,
 intact,
 revolving
like a newborn galaxy
on spokes that arch
outward from your deepest
 velvet
 love of me.

Part of a Folk Tale

Thing is, after the man shot the armadillo,
the dog wouldn't let the poor thing lie.
First the man buried it out behind the barn,
out of the dog's sight. Or so he thought.
Somehow the dog found it, dug it up,
left it in the back yard. So the man
re-buried it, this time farther in the field,
and walked off wiping his hands thinking
That's that. But the dog dug it up again,
this time in two pieces, and lay one in the yard.
By now the odor was growing. The man
whipped the dog, and buried the pieces
way out behind the high corn. He leaned
the shovel against the barn thinking *That
should do it*. But what did he think
that night, as he lay down in the room's
hot summer dark beside his new bride,
and reached across the moonless dark for her
and the death odor began to seep again
through the opened window? Rising,
the man looked out to see the dog panting,
near the porch, on which the seething
formless piece of carrion lay, dug up
once more, and brought back to the house
to lay before the master, like an offering,
under the window of the room where
only a moment before the man
and his young wife lay touching.

Roger Jones

Kite Festival

Today a hundred kites flap, bob and dart
around in air—one shaped like two legs, feet
and black pantaloons; one in a round whirly
multi-colored hurricane; one a great soccer ball.
Box kites, animal kites, even people loitering
holding makeshift kites made of yarn,
sticks, old plastic shopping bags! Each year
the kite show comes to town, and dutifully
the gods reply by sending one splendid blue
cloudless day with a full zephyrous wind—
this time from the north (usually it's
from the Gulf, full of moisture and warmth)
and with just a remnant of lingering winter chill.
There are kite ballets; the kids ride the jiggle bus;
people gnaw roasted weiners on a stick
and big hot corn ears pulled full-shuck from
a roaring oven. Dancers dance, singers sing;
whole families out in fields of knee-high grass
clutch small kites. The kites ride full wide
streams of air, up great billowing surges and drafts,
and soar popping diving swimming like
the days. And for a short time, we feel our lives
go slack, as if we could dance them on a string,
hurl them up there, let them flutter all day
to color the perfect cold cloudless blue air.

Rebecca Lu Kiernan

Sex Addict in Therapy

Does my desire unnerve you?
Crawling over you like a jaguar
Muscled for the strike, down on
My haunches, unblinking
Lips parted, my breath condensating
In your ear?
Are you happier to hunt me over a
Half scrubbed toilet, oblivious
To you in yellow gloves and pinned
Hair, woefully accommodating you
Bending like wet, underfoot grass?
I miss slow, swollen lips. Bring
Fresh lilacs, pulled, not cut
Moist from dirt, dragged through
Sand, delicious orange melon to
Drip down our elbows and chins, a
Blood crimson sky buoyant on ocean
Salts at eclipse. Bring Tiger Balm,
Handcuffs, nipple clamps,
We bob away.

Rebecca Lu Kiernan

To the Bat Living in the Air Vent

Dear Bruce,

I have left you seven headless mice
in the refrigerator next to the lamb
and a silver starling in a cigar box
decorated with shell shaped macaroni
spray painted gold on the pie shelf
next to a jar of fireflies.

I miss you already.

Patti Marshock

Dreams

She dreams she will fall asleep
and a knight in a pure white robe
will come and merge
into her side
under golden light in a tall room.
and he will dance with her,
a slow waltz,
he has long black hair,
with swooping waves
and so does she,
and she can't tell where his begins
and hers ends
and they are both barefoot,
the floor is covered with clouds.
and he doesn't carry a sword
and she doesn't wear diamonds.
and they whisper
and they don't tell each other
everything
they sit at a lunchroom counter,
backs of hands touching on the
stained formica counter top
and they work a cryptic puzzle,
and the clues spell out their names
they watch people who look
like their dogs
and they eat hot pastrami
with gooey melted cheese
and they walk out into the sunlight
and he's wearing jeans
and she has pink fingernails
they get into a yellow car
that putters up a hill
and sticks coming out of second gear

Patti Marshock

and the traffic lights are
purple and brown and hard to read
and her friends come to her house
and they bring the notice from
the community association
that there is a rule about keeping
a knight in the backyard
and he hides in the corner and
pretends that he is a ceramic owl
and she paints the backporch
so she can watch him
and a dark green stain gets on her
face and on her hands.

The river runs downhill
and she glares at the boat
the owl with sharp hooked talon
intent on catching
the fools who
get too close.

The water is overflowing the banks
and the weeds have grown over the edge
but her gardening gloves have shrunk
so she pulls them barehanded
turns her head and notices
that the knight has disappeared.

Judith Pordon

Armor of Amor

He walks with a swagger,
smokes on corners with
casual aplomb,

sits stationary in front of the tube
feigning calm,
while muscle tension churns.

Across town she waits
in a chocolate haze
for the wayward bastard

to waltz in with an apology
or roses and open her
locked longing.

If not for Pride cornering them
they could have made up
but Pride barricaded them

preventing Pleasure
and laughed
while Life went down some other street.

Judith Pordon

Private Disgrace

Shame sleeps
behind the barbed wire
of self recrimination.

Sleeping forever is closest
to heaven.
A blot of error.

Fallen expectations
hold him
by his very breath.

He is tempted to throw
very air away
before some hunger starts again.

Some pulse of Desire,
dependably lurks,
even in his bed,

not empty, because he is still
in it. Even the end
may not bring relief.

Even in heaven God might say,
We expected more from you,
now go try to make some angel happy.

Harding Stedler

Master of Trust at Three

She vaults from floor to shoulders
where she stands ceiling tall.
She loves the thrill
of going airborne
at almost three.
Her infectious laugh
is reward enough for me
to volunteer again.

Atop my shoulders,
she begs never to come down,
feels safe in a world
of ceiling fans.
She clasps my thumbs in trust
until I surrender her to mattress,
where she bounces her way
to safety on solid ground.

Harding Stedler

Drifters at Sea

Rough waters give new meaning
to the word drifter.
Fishermen disappear
then reappear
in boats they can't control.
They glide in and out of coves,
from behind dead trees
standing naked in the lake,
under piers and out.
How can they catch fish
in angry waves?

No vagrants here.
Nothing homeless about these men
enjoying the sport
of venturing out to sea.

T. L. Stokes

The Peribaca

My thoughts are boring;
not so much like blind worm fears
carving tunnels in moist hemispheres,
left or right, they forget which way
to turn;

but like colorless chatter,
echoing off borders of the skull,
easily forgotten trails of arid
meaninglessness; an unsalted dish.

Where are the visions,
terrains of dust
under camel's ancient feet,
where spires of polished memory
birthed by screaming volcanos
become misplaced monoliths?
Stones stacked, then unclothed
bit by bit by deserted winds.
The people call them fairy chimneys,
the color of England's old thatch roofs.
Great towers with delicate heads,
like stone cocks
with nothing to hold them.

T. L. Stokes

The peribaca guard caves
where Christians hid themselves
painting Maltese crosses
that spoke their hearts,
carving empty faces into walls
where pigeons came to live.
After praying they would eat one
or gratefully watch
what pigeons took for granted—
wings, carrying silenced prayers
to windows of heaven.

My inner eye, waiting,
hungers for—

a ticket to Cappadokia,
almost ready to turn away,
change my perspective,
fingering the ache
for this poem-in-waiting,

yet afraid, too busy
watching worms
searching for their eyes.

Susan Vaughan

The Armored Car Company Supervisor

He can't sleep; his boss won't get the message
that every driver needs a specially fitted
bulletproof vest and can't just borrow Henry's
while he's in the hospital. His place

is such a living monument to chaos
his wife gave up and got her own apartment
across the parking lot. They pass and wave,
driving each other's car. When he gets home
on graylit Sunday mornings after driving
all night to Reno, Stockton or Eureka
(to fix an ATM that lost its alarm code
or ate up customer cards), he shoves his laundry,
gun belt, unopened mail off the sofa
and turns on his TV. He loves cartoons.
His favorite is The Tick, that superhero
who's turned the superhero thing on its head.

He snickers as the media representatives,
laboring under a vast misapprehension
due to scoundrels' trickery, thrust their microphones
into The Tick's face, anxiously inquiring,
Sir, is it true you're going to blow up the earth?

and starts to snore at last, his righteous hero
all indignant, telling the misled planet,
Gadzooks no! That's where I keep my stuff!
and floats on wings of angels for a moment
off to that sane and well-protected world.

Susan Vaughan

Dracula After My Birthday Dinner

After old friends had gifted me and tottered
homeward at dusk, I dozed on my sagging sofa,
TV grumbling, and dreamed of a shadowy den
with flickering pastel torches, strangely goopy.

And when he turned, I saw that he had lost
through poor dental hygiene at last his horridical uppers
and yawned in his La-Z Boy, watching the news after dinner,
harrumphing, *Mina, where's my goddamn glasses?*

She must have burned and buried his monstrous cape,
for he wore a terrycloth bathrobe in robin's-egg blue
and brandished a goblet, cursing those bastards in Congress
and Cable Time West as his picture sucked inward and died.

But then, of course, I woke up and laughed like a maniac
to think I had even dreamed that someone as hard-ass
as he—good Christ on a bicycle!—could have forgotten
the taste of young blood and settled for cheap red wine.

Mom, Dad and the Other Woman

Wake up mom
We have to get to the hospital
The doctors say he may not make it
through the night
My mother stirs
rolls back a sleepy eye
the covers shift
oh she says
that's too bad

When my father dies
Uncle Billy and I go to see
the other woman
secretly

She throws her arms around us
 Wailing
Oh dear god
 Sobbing
how can I ever live
 Shrieking
without him

At last
I sigh
the grieving widow

Discarded Rain

Early morning, pouring.
homeless man at the bus stop
speaks to me
but when I start to answer
he bursts out singing
about a rainy night in Georgia.
The notes climb up his soggy nose,
bounce off into the sky.
Suddenly he crouches on the sidewalk,
rolls his pants down to his knees,
still singing,
squats,
relieves his aching mind.
I flee to the next stop,
lose my umbrella to the rain.
When I board the bus,
old man occupies a front-row seat.
Pant legs hug his ankles.
I slip away at Lexington Avenue,
hunch my shoulders against the rain,
burst out singing
about Georgia.

Authors

Jason Deen lives and works in Washington DC, but dreams of living elsewhere.

Deborah Finch works for the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is the author of *Heartbeats*, with poems in *Arizona Writer and Photographer*, *Field and Forest*, and *Tapestry*.

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T. L. Stokes lives in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared online in journals such as *Little Brown Poetry*, *Rogue Scholars*, and *PoetrySuperHighway*, and in print with the Ancient Wind Press.

Susan Vaughan has a master's degree in English and works as a court reporter in California.

Chocolate Waters has recently released a limited-edition CD or her work entitled *Chocolate Waters Uncensored*, available from chocolatewaters.com. She has three collections in print and has toured throughout the United States, but makes her home in Manhattan.

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

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