

The 2River View

19.3 (Spring 2015)



The Recurring End © 2010 by James Deeb

new poems by

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Mark DeFoe

**Won't You Please Help
Tiffany the Tiny Pom-Pom Girl and
Little Kevin the Quarterback with
Their Expensive Operations**

From snapshots taped to a collection jar
they smile. We leave our quarters-worth of hope
where we buy beer and smokes and gas the car.

On the way to our local friendly bar
their eyes, guileless and devouring, grope
at us from the altar of their Mason jar.

Sunday we barbequed, almost broke par.
Monday—there they are—those desperate folk
who crave our loose change when we gas the car--

Quick trip or Get 'n Go—can't let small things mar
our laughs, our profits our plans—make us choke
on the guilt that seeps from a half-full jar.

Salesperson, plumber, trucker, software star—
no time for sorrow in a dusty jar.

Michelle Acker

Sublimation

There are mountains in Alabama,
which are probably really more like hills,
except to a girl growing up in Florida.
They rise tentatively over the cotton crop,
their slopes no steeper than the roofs of houses,
they rise barely above the treetops—
tentatively, but not apologetically—
they have been here for centuries—
they rise gently above the cotton and the corn,
above streets with names like Bumper Crop Lane
and Slaughter Road, above streets without shoulders,
Methodist churches and Baptist churches
and Korean churches, above grazing cattle.
I knew these mountains on horseback,
and their welcome sight when traveling by plane,
and slight ascent when by car.

there are fjords in Norway,
carved staunchly from water and ice,
they stand as if a law of the universe,
as if you are not below nor they above,
but everything around, and in its right place.
I gazed on these mountains from a rain-slick boat,
eating tea and waffles as if I
could never eat again.
There was a sense of belongingness here,
of rightness, looking to the rivers of snow,
I thought, this is a safe place,
a good place, things are okay here.
I took pictures of my tea
and felt right.

there are mountains in alaska.
surrounding a low valley
they tower like ancient
kings and queens
wearing crowns of snow.

Michelle Acker

down in that valley,
the cool valley
of flowers and grass,
a sparkling creek,
the faint ghost of white fang,
down in that valley i stood,
and i could hardly look at them,
the biggest things i'd ever seen

the three thoughts

all life is accumulation
and death decay—this
is the first thought,
and there is nothing wrong
with building a shrine to
yourself, especially if
no one else will.
but here is the second thought:
to accumulate is to decay the other,
to be alive is to take life,
to give life is to lose life,
to have energy is to lose matter,
to do is to destroy
the universe. some scales are
tipping and never
tipping.
life and death are not
different. you are alive even as
your cells die. you are dying
even as you live.

the third thought:
just forget it.

Karla Huston

Doves at the Edge

Sitting on the icy shore
of my heated birdbath, they look

a little confused, feathers puffed into fluffy,
gray parkas, they hunch shoulder to shoulder,

seem to squint into bright light glinting
on snow, tails balanced in water.

And today they are gloomy angels perched
on the wire above the garden, wings open,

spreading to gather what they can,
beaks moving to some unheard story.

They balance like clothespins, tails steady
as rudders, holding them asea in the morning air.

Karla Huston

This Tornado Loves You

Neko Case

This tornado loves you, doesn't want you
to forget, so it leaves
a sign each time it touches ground.

This soft breeze loves you, too,
so much it'll sift through your screens
at midnight. Sometimes it loves

to see you sweat. This blizzard loves you.
See how it wraps you in cold, stings
with sleet. Misery appreciates you,

wants you to kneel before it
to beg forgiveness. This soft snow
loves you. It prickles your cheeks

and make you cry with cold,
fills your hair, your lashes with wet light.

Lois P. Jones

The Reluctant Daughter

I stayed with death
until I lost my shadow. Dumpsters
rolled through me same as before.

The marching out of ghosts
and the kneading of identity.
I was another spirit in search

of water, missing the feel
of touch. Inside your womb
respite from an umbilical-free

world. Inside, nothing but sunlight
filtering into unformed eyes.
I didn't know you, really.

I followed my sister
from the train she threw me off of.
Dachau or Paris?

Or was it a boxcar
of yellow grain? Details are lost
the way a foot is too large

for a glass slipper. Life
made me love you
mother. And now I wonder

which train took you away.
There is no place
dry enough for all this rain.

Lois P. Jones

Thirty Seconds at the Light

Her face was earthy and gnarled like a figure from the Potato Eaters. Her cheeks, red onions shining in the heat. No time to read her sign. I didn't care what it said. All I could feel was the sun blistering her skin as she balanced on the meridian. I waved my hat in the air and she ran toward me smiling as the light turned green. No one honked.

Thank you, bless you. I thought of the life my hat would have sheltering one woman at the height of summer. Happy the chin strap would keep it safely on her head. Thought of the other drivers as witness—how we only have a few seconds to love the world as the fire leaps between us.

Kevin Kinsella

As Though

When I first saw the photograph
of the two of them sitting
in their starched kitchen whites
on the steps out behind the restaurant
he with his arm around her
and she leaning close to him
almost dropping her cigarette
and both smiling for the camera
I readily understood that
they were once happy together

but now here are his swollen eyes
staring heavily into the camera
as though daring me to guess again
with his arm held tight around her neck
pulling her close with such force
that she almost drops her cigarette
while she smiles bravely as one does
when someone is recording
a quiet moment of time after work
in the days before they lost everything

Kevin Kinsella

Knife Work

My grandfather could peel a whole apple
with a small pocket knife so that the peel
stayed connected in one curling piece
like a single helix twisting in space

and while I was left handed like he was
and young and sober like he wasn't
I could never pull off the trick myself
without nicking my finger and bleeding

all over the fruit and the peel
which he'd take from my shaking hands
and rinse in a pot of cold saltwater
so that the apple didn't turn too brown

then laugh and tell me to go wash my hands
before my mother saw all of the blood

Laurie MacDiarmid

The Clock of His Shoes

Late at night,
face pressed against
the virgin pillow,
he relives his wife's

cool smooth skin,
and, with a tiny pain,
realizes how those
we once loved

remain in the world
as echoes:
his father's voice
in the blue jay

that taunts the fat tabby,
his dead child chattering
somewhere across the street,
and his sad-faced mother,

her measured stride in
the clock of his shoes
against the granite floor
of an empty museum—

the sound of her
sliding before him
into each room, as her body
once slid,

parting the air,
into church each Sunday,
solemn and swollen
with faith.

Laurie MacDiarmid

If My Father Came Back from the Dead

would he wear plaid shirts
short sleeved with pocket protectors
and jam in pens like crowded teeth

would he tape the corners of his
thick black glasses and get fat around
the waist

would he drink in front of the boob tube
while mom makes dinner, holding forth
about asinine students—is it just me

or do they come out of the womb stupid?

if he came back from the dead would he
smile at me lopsided let me smell
the scratchy wool at his neck

would he run his big hands over
my yearning back til i'm warm all
the way through

or would he make me track him down
to the freezing river and then
dive in

would he swim out into the unbearable
winter dark
and shout: if you want me so bad

come get me

Robert Manaster

The Art of Being Intimate Strangers

At sunset, rising
From behind a massive cloud,
Shafts of honeyed light
Tone the blue above into
The shade of a lover's last kiss. Further,
There's a thinning outward of this light.
Even this moment begins to wisp: let go
Like a window curtain
Pulled back just long enough to see
A woman whisper to a man and their bodies
Snuggling into one
As they stroll by unaware.

Robert Manaster

In the Deep Recess of a Period

While nearby sway the dissonant
Leaves, a crow stiffens to a branch,
Uncorks towards strips of cloud
As shriveled as dried cherries. Look
At me. Here, I wish to be
Desired once more. Come here
Like the late summer wind that swells
The shade of a plum tree. Come near,
Come near. To sense your voice is like
Pressure of rain about to fall.

Darren Morris

Cloud Seeding

Cloud seeding—otherwise
known as delivering a chemical dust
high in the Earth's atmosphere
to encourage rainfall
in a particular region—seems
about as selfishly misguided
as sandbagging a flood.
You only sandbag a river
to distract yourself from the inevitable.
It is a massive over-estimation
of existence. This is what I am
thinking while we're fucking.

Darren Morris

Steampunk

At the center of beautiful women
who do not love us
burns a white flame.

We are machines
that consume and desire and want
for such abiding loneliness

that to invite it
is to extract blossoms from the rain.
I am the elevator that opens

on each floor in the metal
hotel of your heart.
And on hearing the laughter

down the endless
hallway, I press a button
and slide shut my doors.

Jack Powers

In Fear of Heart Attacks

Especially the big ones, the lights-out, no-time-to-negotiate kaboomers. You can bargain with the little ones, beg for another day, week, year. In the end, I'll ask for an extension to see some as-yet unborn grandson's fifth grade recital. Just wheel me in to see him in gold-buttoned blazer and red tie. I'll be saying, Then you can take me, Lord—I don't believe, but I like a name when I haggle. One more trip to see Derain's London Bridge. Wheel me one last time onto Bermuda sand. One more chance to watch the weaving mass under the stars at Grand Central. Then I'll go without a fight.

Sure I will. I'll lie like it's bedtime and I'm four. You think I'll know when to go? You think I'll make room for the kid waiting for my table? Maybe. But I've always been bad at leaving parties, looking up to see it's just me and the sleepy hosts. Always afraid I'll miss something: Phil passed out on the sofa with a mascara goatee, Chuck making out with the new au pair, Dolan singing "Running Bear." No, I won't ever agree to leave.

Jack Powers

In Praise of Heart Attacks

Not the sneaky kind at forty when your kids are seven and nine.
Not the cheap ones that fence you into smaller and smaller yards.
I'm talking massive coronary in the late 70's—82 tops.
Here to not here in an instant. I've seen the mind go slowly
from What was I saying? to How did we get here?
to There's a woman in our room trying to dress me. Not for me.
And the body dwindling from walking to walker to waiting
and wheezing? Slow decline into silence? Uh uh.
No sir. A massive stroke could do. Something sudden
and self-contained. No clean up. You're thinking it's bad luck
to say aloud. Or bad form. It's cruel to the survivors.

No. Survivors
wipe your drool and your ass, try to remember who you were.
They should thank me. You think I'll chicken out? Maybe.
Maybe in the end, something's better than nothing.
But if there's a button I can push, I'm buying. So at let's say 78,
stop the Coumadin, the Heparin, the Beta Blockers,
the latest magic pill. No more static. Let the heart know
when it's time to go. Say farewell. Let's end this show on time.

Juanita Rey

Behind the Foreman's Back

The others laugh behind the foremen's back.
The man has only a thumb on his right hand.
He lost the other four to an accident
with the machinery.

They call him Captain Hook,
though he has no hook,
merely a stump and a solitary thumb.

Marcial is my fellow countryman.
He laughs as loud as any of them.
And he can't do a hard day's work
with two hands.

Too much time talking baseball
with his compinches.

I don't defend the foreman
though I know he would me.

After all, he's shown me
the photograph of his family.
He too is Dominican.

Came here with empty pockets.
Now he does well.

Vacations at the shore.

Comfortable apartment in the city.

But then he looks at me,
and even Marcial,
feels too guilty to be proud.

What if I, a man, could get....
had got pregnant,
like poor Juanita, he says.

What if I had it too easy
like lazy boy Marcial.

He's given muscle and sweat
and time—so many hours—
to make it work.

But it's not all perfect, he says.
He has those missing fingers
just in case.

Juanita Rey

The Man Who Got Me Into This Fix

Hola!
He waves through the car window.
I shrug him off.
Qué nos paso.
He's half pregnant though he
does not know this.

Chica, he calls me.
He hears the American word "chick"
and he plays with it
like he does with all women.

I return to my job arranging tulips.
The uglier I get,
the defter my hand at beauty.

I will see him drive by every day
until I grow so fat
he will no longer know it's me.

I'll just be one more fulana
bearing someone else's baby.

He is an empresario.
A fine word for when there is no meaning.

Ron Riecki

My Brother Thinks I'm Suicidal

I'm trying to keep him
from crying, telling him
that poetry does not mean
I'm dying for graves. I mean
that he needs to calm down.
He keeps seeing me falling down
into the holes, I mean, hells
of it all, the mines like Hell
in this town where we're owned,
where we don't seem to own
anything, only this worry for
each other, this lack of forest,
this ten-hour shift, deep need for rest,
and I say I pray I'll stay alive for him.

Ron Riecki

The Things I Never Should Have Done

They include matches. There is a moment where I tripped a child, when I thought about fucking a blind girl, where I chopped down Jesus when he was wanting to date me. I hate all these closets, the way that they open so fucking slowly that you almost hear the skeletons, their privates rubbing together, the pubic bone's connected to the public bone, the fucking bone's connected to the paparazzi bone. I wish, sometimes, that I could have been worse, much worse, a Pol Pot of the library, a fucking Hitler of my high school. There's a punk phase you go through where you whip it out in front of everyone in study hall, their fucking mouths all hanging there like noose-victims and you realize that even evil can sometimes feel so boring and that good can be so motherfucking awesome that it makes you want to cum until there is nothing left but peace.

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Contents

Mark DeFoe is Professor Emeritus of English at West Virginia Wesleyan College where he teaches in Wesleyan's low-residency MFA Writing Program. His poems have been published in *Kenyon Review*, *Paris Review*, and *Poetry*, among others.

Michelle Acker is a student of English at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. She is a near-lifelong poet as well as an aspiring filmmaker.

Karla Huston is the author of *A Theory of Lipstick* (Main Street Rag) and seven chapbooks, most recently *Outside of a Dog* (Dancing Girl Press).

Lois P. Jones is host of KPFK's Poet's Café. Her publications include *Narrative Magazine*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *The Warwick Review*, with upcoming work in *Eyewear*. She is Poetry Editor of *Kyoto Journal*.



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Kevin Kinsella is a freelance writer and poet living in Brooklyn. He is the translator of two collections of Russian poetry: Sasha Chernyi's *Children's Island* (Lightful Press) and Osip Mandelstam's *Tristia* (Green Integer Books). His work has most recently appeared in *Bombsite*, *The Bridge*, *Pif*, and *Tarpaulin Sky Magazine*.

Laurie MacDiarmid is Professor of English and Writer in Residence at St. Norbert College, in De Pere, Wisconsin.

Robert Manaster is a poet and translator with co-translated poems in *Hayden's Ferry Review* and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. His own poems have appeared in journals such as *Image*, *Rosebud*, and *Spillway*.

Darren Morris holds an MFA from Virginia Commonwealth. His poems appear most recently in *The 2River View*, *The Missouri Review*, *New England Review*, and *New Ohio Review*.

Jack Powers teaches at Joel Barlow High School in Redding, Connecticut. His poems have appeared in *Barrow Street*, *Cortland Review*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*.

Juanita Rey is a Dominican poet who has been in the United States for five years.

Ron Riecki likes to write about the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. His books include *UP: a Novel*; *The Way North: Collected Upper Peninsula New Works*; and *Here: Women Writing on Michigan's Upper Peninsula*.

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About the Artist

James Deeb holds an MFA from Western Michigan University. His art has its philosophical roots in texts like Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, the work of the German Expressionists, and the writings of authors like J.G. Ballard and Charles Bukowski. Deeb refers to this artistic strand as the dystopian minority opinion.

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
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