

# The 2River View

21.3 (Spring 2017)



*They Call Me at Home* © 2017 by Richard Long

new poems by  
Deborah Brown, Lauren M. Davis, Audrey Gidman  
James Harms, L. I. Henley, Lowell Jaeger, Richard Pacheco  
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*Lauren M. Davis*

## **Inside of Women**

I.

I knew a woman  
who

after she swam in the ocean  
was filled with its sand

and when the doctor removed it

he found inside her a pearl.

II.

Inside tiny apples my lips often find

the core absent of seeds—  
many hollow stars

have reminded  
that inside me a mouth

would find the same hollow,

my young body / bones too thin,

on a hunger strike.

But tiny sterile apples seem safe for eating.

*Lauren M. Davis*

## **The Secret**

When I forget to say amen  
at the end of a prayer  
it's like leaving something  
that should be closed,  
open.

Like I'm not home  
and have left a window agape,  
and a storm has begun.

Like the rain will enter me,  
flush out the things  
I'm not ready to part with.

I rushed home  
during that storm,  
and pushed the heavy glass

up to close where I had once opened it

the water rushed like a tide,  
down my forearms,  
filled the empty cups of my bra  
where lately space has collected.



*Lauren M. Davis*

Papers on my desk below  
absorbed the rain,  
rusty water filled my mouth.

With a towel I soaked it up,  
like I didn't want anybody to know:  
committing to a secret.

These papers will dry  
this window I can keep closed / shut  
but my aching body  
is the one  
who will never forgive me,  
and will never let me forget  
the secret only God knows.  
Amen, I am forgiven,  
Amen, I must forgive myself.

*Deborah Brown*

## **Ghost Prattle**

A few black branches and wished-for ghosts  
murmur in the clouds.

Adorno said that writing becomes a place to live. You crawl in,  
pull each letter closer. One hides your face from the sun.

The curves become mother and father, the sharp slash of the t,  
the angles of the k, sister and brother. Sometimes they speak,

sometimes they do not. The glottals are soft to the touch,  
they do not insist on their sounds. You live

under the shadow of reaching branches  
and the longed-for ghosts whisper, not so far away.

*Deborah Brown*

## **What I Know about the Night Sky**

The new moon is never visible  
on the night of the New Moon.  
When the sky is darkest  
you sometimes see fireballs flash,  
and through the night  
newly-bare branches reach towards the sky  
while my brother has electric shock therapy,  
convulsions he won't remember. They cut  
some connections in the brain,  
the ones that fine-tune grief.  
While I pace, I look for Andromeda,  
so many light years away that the light  
I see tonight was emitted  
when woolly mammoths and sabre-toothed tigers  
roamed here. The next day my brother  
reaches out to me from the darkness  
he's wrapped in. He tests the light.

Audrey Gidman

### **Meditation 51**

The leaves on the old maple twitch in the afternoon breeze—bleeding soft reds and yellows  
into their green shelves and it's a Thursday, which means the bagpipe players have gathered

so as not to practice alone but become a brick wall, and today the mantra is Three Blind Mice  
in the small park gazebo downtown

(though each nail is chewed too roughly to reach the surface) and the leaves now look in groups  
to be dancing  
—I tap along on the scratched wooden coffee table

dipped sun behind them—a rustle like chiffon dresses—  
attached by branches swinging like hips and glowing with the bright-

is turning gold, turning poetry and  
and the air  
God is whispering—

Audrey Gidman

### **Meditation 59**

I walk down the sidewalk writing invisible poems to the taste of  
in my mouth. The sun  
just bright enough to call the water out  
graying mounds of snow.  
It is early March in the mountains of  
There are coins jingling or bells chiming  
The sound cuts  
Others are out walking too and they can't seem to hide.  
They avert their eyes but keep soaking.  
There are souls on the street and they are

blood  
from below  
the Northeast.  
somewhere.  
uprooted.  
bending.

*James Harms*

## **Accidental Bohemian**

Slim boy on the sidewalk, you must be mine, headphones locked to your ears as light leaves the earth around you, day draining away like a voice calling you in for dinner. You love the wind hiss at the edge of song, the sweet leak of music that stains the air around your body as your walk turns to dance on this quiet street near home. I slow the car to keep pace, to stay just behind and out of sight of you, to watch you sing in a privacy so complete I'm called away, returned to some central mind in the sky beyond your little brother's small cloud (painted on blue paper and taped to the refrigerator), where each of us is stilled in time and left at the open door, beyond which are windows without rooms, a place I'll always join you. Call it love.

## **From My Lips**

Each night around ten  
I stand over my son's bed  
for a few minutes and watch  
him dream. I usually pull  
the blankets closer to his chin  
and kiss him before checking  
the humidifier and stacking  
the books on the floor next  
to his bed, the books  
he's dragged under the covers.  
We all do this, parents.

For years now I've loved  
a song by Grant McLennan  
called "From My Lips," which  
includes the following lines:  
"Sometimes it all falls apart  
at the seams, and you wish  
for the peace of a child's dream."  
And I'll admit it, as I kiss

*James Harms*

my son and tuck his covers  
tight, I think about all that's  
fallen apart in our lives

and I lean in close and listen  
hard to the dream leaking  
from his little body. I let it  
change the salt in my life  
to sugar, at least for the few  
minutes I stand there watching him.  
His peace is no more complete  
than any I might find, but I  
believe in it. That's what  
McLennan means I think,  
that it's the surrender

that matters, not the treaty  
that comes of it, a child's  
uncomplicated dream, not  
how we interpret it. My son  
and I both lost, but he deserves  
none of the blame; his peace  
has precious little back story;  
and so it will save him.  
I don't need saving.  
I need him. And I'm not  
ashamed to say it.

L. I. Henley

**And would it matter if I *could* sift the truth**

from the rye? This is my best dress  
and I wear it when I sweep  
the bees and oleander buds from the breezeway.  
I wear it when I'm on my knees cleaning up  
the egg yolk, the syrup, the spilled coffee.  
I take it off before my husband comes home  
because this dress is just for me—  
and now y'all have seen me in it.

I'm tired of your questions, I'm tired  
of my window facing my neighbor's door  
and seeing mourners with their casseroles  
and lilies.

Truth is born in circles and dies before it can  
be held, like a baby too pure for this world.  
You all want to know what happened, but you have to wait until  
the next stone gets dropped. And when the future  
becomes the now, you'll be back here,  
on my porch, asking what happened again,  
trying to pick the flame and turnip moths  
from the shifting grain.



*L. I. Henley*

### **My baby I love more than my husband**

but I love my baby as much as I love  
my lover, the way he frowns when a little milk  
flows into his sucking kiss. My husband  
I love more than my father,

who once shaved my head for loving  
Darren, a black boy, in the field  
behind the barn.

If I could, like a dog, save all my love for just one thing,  
what would it be?

Not a baby, not a man. Something steel  
and gray and shaped like a train  
or a bullet or a long-necked bottle  
for me to stare at or sit on  
or throw across this stretch of tumbleweeds  
and crows  
like a faithful boomerang.

*Lowell Jaeger*

## **The Goat People**

That day Grandmother bundled the blankets,  
and Grandfather harnessed Chaco to the cart  
to move us up the mountain toward summer  
meadows where the goats could graze and fatten.

That day older brother would leave us again  
and cross the river toward the edge of everything  
the clouds passed over, where the Jesus People  
chanted songs older brother sang for us nights beside the fire.

That day the goats had wandered into a thicket  
of chaparral and cactus. Older brother hacked with his machete  
to set them free, and when they burst forth bawling  
I hurried behind, herding them toward Grandfather's cart.

That day I ran away from older brother who called out  
and scolded – Come with me! Come with me!  
Suddenly I was a little brown goat; the sand  
beneath my hooves golden, the canyon walls glowing flame.

*Lowell Jaeger*

## **The Jesus People**

Grandmother touched older brother's head  
each time she stood and stirred the embers to blaze,  
and older brother hunched his shoulders  
as if Grandmother's hand hurt like cactus spines.  
The goats huddled close, watched us, said nothing.

Older brother had crossed the river with the Jesus People,  
helped them climb the canyon, brought them  
into the high summer grasslands to find our camp.  
The Jesus People smiled like famished dogs, ate  
Grandmother's fried bread, and talked and talked

while older brother nodded and told us the meanings  
of what the Jesus People said. They said Jesus  
loved his sheep. Said they raised cattle and lacked  
summer grasslands to graze them. They looked at me  
when they spoke, mostly, and Grandmother snugged her blanket

around me and pulled me near. Grandfather chewed each bite  
slowly and stared into the fire, the creases in his jaw  
like broken rocks in the canyon, telling how all things pass,  
all this talk, talk, talk. Like the arroyo dries again  
after rain. Like yellow blossoms return and fade on the sage.

*Richard Pacheco*

## **Blind Man**

Like the blind man and  
the elephant  
every time we meet  
I come away  
with a totally different you.

*Richard Pacheco*

## **Fresh Coat of Paint**

Even the fresh coat of paint  
cannot hide  
the shreds of wallpaper  
still clinging to the walls  
in a crevice by the door.

*Sarah Wetzel*

## **The Crow**

I refuse to give in, as I refuse  
the tin cans and wailing of the child two floors up

as I refuse this morning's televised car crash, the volume  
still reaching me at the bath's bottom.

This dark din, as useless as three baths  
in a day, useless as the stuttering static of the man

paralyzed, his wheelchair capsized into the crowd  
rushing from last night's symphony, his guttural rage.

A crow flies through the house, which makes  
my dog crazy. Underneath the water, I listen

to his muffled barking, the crow  
flapping couch to kitchen chair, flying again

and again into the sliding glass door.  
Once, the dog almost had him.

*Sarah Wetzel*

## **Wanting It**

Make him stay with your father's gold watch  
or watch

the hours down, and still so much  
remains for the taking, for stealing.

You think of rope, a man's arms  
like rope. But again  
you leave the doors unlocked, your hands  
cached in a box  
and the computer running.

Upstairs, you've hidden the one thing

that can't be hidden. The dog is sedated  
but it

won't stay quiet.

*Rodd Whelpley*

## **Equus Poiesis**

after *Odyssey*, Book IV

You think what animates a creature—lives  
inside him—comes from deep inside him.

But after such hard years, the land denuded,  
it's scarcely clever to pull the rigs and spars, these lines

From vessels set to take us home; form this gift,  
this built thing, you believe can speak to you—

An object taken in to complement your mood today  
that, you hope, will whisper, echo every secret you can coax,

Which is exactly what we crave. No victory, but you,  
our Helen, outside, singing to this wooden thing

In the voice of everyone we've ever loved. We leave  
for you this silent horse, a poem that you now murmur into life.



*Rodd Whelpley*

## **Middle Illinois**

for Wallace Stevens

My apologies for the mountain  
that without syntax or sound coaxed us to the back yard.

In middle Illinois, it rises, unseen, mystical on a horizon just past  
the rows of houses that, not ten years before, were fields of corn

and, at some time beyond reckoning, a salt sea teeming  
with coelacanths and Tully monsters, where now the dog

rolls on my plate of grass, squeaks his rubber pork chop toy, answers  
the calls of spring's immigrant birds, hungry to feed their nestlings.

The mountain has kept me from writing all these things,  
their precepts, practicalities, their ultimate causes.

Instead, we loll here with our Buster, who we would be  
if either of us were blessed enough to be this dog,

loyal and only slightly brave, already white around the muzzle,  
already slowed, aging away toward adventures without his master—

perhaps there to chase incessant gulls on a coastline shaded  
by rocked and piney peaks that make sense only to a nose like his.

*Donald Zirilli*

## **American Glinda**

I met Glinda on the road.  
She had a theory about  
those crosses you see in the South,  
something about lynching.  
When you pass by a cross  
in New Jersey  
it probably has to do  
with a drunk driver.

Glinda's one of them  
answer for everything  
type girls  
you meet when you're  
traveling too long.  
She comes along  
when it's almost over, explains  
why you didn't have to go.

She used big words  
she didn't know how  
to pronounce.  
Communicating was difficult,  
but I took her to Tennessee.  
I couldn't think  
of a better place.

She had a theory about Elvis.  
I told her to shut up about that.  
We slept at the Motel Lorraine and she cried  
as she ordered room service.  
Before going out for ice  
and never coming back  
she told me when he said Mama,  
he really meant Mama.

*Donald Zirilli*

## **Learning to Ride a Bicycle with Attendant Vulture**

The well-attended funeral echoed white roses.

They escorted her sister to the altar.

She said Cordelia never missed Lasagna Thursdays  
up to that very week.

She said as many people cried when Cordelia retired,  
and she got sick eating five different cakes.

She said Cordelia quit college to ride across Europe  
but somewhere in Northern Italy, at the top of a walled city,  
she saw her dead father and never rode a bicycle again.

She said what a brave child.

She said Cordelia was only four when the training wheels came off  
and she learned the taste of driveway,  
got her first whiff of today's grand bouquets.

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## Contributors

Deborah Brown is coeditor of *Lofty Dogmas: Poets on Poetics* and co-translator of *Last Voyage: Selected Poems of Giovanni Pascoli*. *Walking the Dog's Shadow* won the A. J. Poulin Jr. Award from BOA Editions and later won the New Hampshire Literary Award for Outstanding Book of Poetry.

Lauren M. Davis graduated from the University of Southern Maine with an MFA in poetry. Work from *Women Bones* has appeared in several literary journals.

Audrey Gidman received her BFA from the University of Maine--Farmington. She has been an editor for the *Sandy River Review* and released a broadside with Foxglove Press (2015). She was the 2016 recipient of the Slippery Elm Poetry Prize. Her work can be found in the *Sandy River Review*, *Slippery Elm*, *The Unrorean*, and elsewhere.



*They Buried Maria* © 2017 by Richard Long

James Harms is the author of nine books of poetry, including the forthcoming *Rowing with Wings* (Carnegie Mellon University Press). His distinctions include an NEA Fellowship and three Pushcart Prizes. His recent work appears in *The Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *The Southern Humanities Review*.

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Lowell Jaeger is founding editor of Many Voices Press; editor of *New Poets of the American West*; the author of seven collections of poems, and, for promoting civil civic discourse, the recipient of the Montana Governor's Humanities Award.

Richard Pacheco is a playwright, poet, artist, journalist, filmmaker, educator, and professional actor. He holds a BFA and an MFA from University of Massachusetts—Dartmouth. In 2015, *Geography* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry.

Sarah Wetzel is the author of *River Electric with Light*, which won the 2013 AROHO Poetry Publication Prize; and *Bathsheba Transatlantic*, which won the Philip Levine Prize for Poetry (2010).

Rodd Whelpley has work appearing or forthcoming in *Antiphon*, *The Chagrin River Review*, *Driftwood Press*, *Eunoia Review*, *Literary Orphans*, *The Naugatuck River Review*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Spillway*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Triggerfish Critical Review*, and elsewhere.

Donald Zirilli has work in *Antiphon*, *Art Times*, *Nerve Lantern*, *River Styx*, *Specs*, and elsewhere. He was the editor of *Now Culture* and is currently a member of the Rutherford Red Wheelbarrow Gang.

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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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