

The 2River View

21.4 (Summer 2017)



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2RV

new poems by
Sidney Thompson, Nickie Albert, Brent Canle, Natalie Crick
Matthew Dobson, SAS Dunn, Edward Harkness
Steven Huff, Eric Pankey, Marcela Sulak, Adin Thayer

2River
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About the Artist

Sally West is an artist in Sydney, Australia. The images here in 2RV are from her 2014 series of Beach Studies.

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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The 2River View, 21.3 (Spring 2017)

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Big Wave by Sally West

Natalie Crick has poetry published or forthcoming in journals such as *The Chiron Review*, *Ink in Thirds*, *Interpreters House*, *The Penwood Review*, and *Rust and Moth*. She lives in the United Kingdom.

Matthew Dobson teaches English at a boarding school in England. His poetry has been published in *Acumen*, *Neon*, *Rat's Ass Review*, and elsewhere.

SAS Dunn holds a BS in Natural Resources from Cornell University and a MS in environmental communications from SUNY—ESF. Her poetry has appeared in *The Perch*, *Rio Grande Review*, and *Straylight Literary Magazine*. She lives on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Edward Harkness is author of *Saying the Necessary* and *Beautiful Passing Lives*, both from Pleasure Boat Studio press. His most recent chapbook, *Ice Children*, was published by Split Lip Press in 2014. He lives in Shoreline, Washington.

Steven Huff is the author of two books of poetry, most recently *More Daring Escapes*; of a forthcoming story collection, *It Just So Happened*; and editor of *Knowing Knott: Essays on an American Poet*. He teaches in the Solstice Low-Residency MFA Program at Pine Manor College and lives in Rochester, New York.

Eric Pankey is the Heritage Chair in Writing at George Mason University. His twelfth collection of poems, *Augury*, is due out this fall from Milkweed Editions.

Marcela Sulak is the author of *Decency and Immigrant* and co-editor of *Family Resemblance: An Anthology and Exploration of 8 Hybrid Literary Genres*. *The Selected Poems of Orit Gidali* was longlisted for the 2017 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation.

Adin Thayer grew up in Virginia mountains and for the last 16 years worked in Rwanda and neighboring countries in Africa. The experiences and people she has encountered through that work inform and inhabit her poetry.

The 2River View, 21.3 (Spring 2017)

Contributors

Sidney Thompson has work in journals such as *American Literary Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *The Cortland Review*, *Rhino*, and *The Southern Review*, with other poems forthcoming in *Flock* and *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume VIII: Texas*. He teaches creative writing at Texas Christian University.

Nickie Albert has placed poems in *Burning Word*, *The Legendary*, *The MacGuffin*, *New Plains Review*, *Wild Goose Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Jupiter, Florida.

Brent Canle is completing his MFA at the University of North Carolina—Wilmington. His poetry has appeared in *Best Poems*, *Poesy*, *Sweet: A Literary Confection*, and elsewhere.

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Adin Thayer
Maybe god is this:
Measuring Cups



from *Beach Studies* by Sally West

and the careful line of wizened glue along a crack
in the vase she filled with peonies

when her youngest daughter married. How can I
part with what she used?

Her life in which a cup was dropped in argument
or haste, while blueberries

waited for sugar while the children played outside.
In which glue sufficed

for the umber vase from China. The tree forgets
a limb taken by wind,

wasps leave the leathery globe they labored to build.
I grant the given world its neutrality

but feel, as I reach, some residue in the things
that furnished that life.

In a village far from where I live, a gourd held water
poured over rice, a spoon

stirred as night rose through a mud house.
Does some woman lift

the gourd that once held seeds then water
while she played,

does she pause in wonder that it remains
so shaped to hold the past?

Adin Thayer

Maybe god is this:

sand strewn with eel grass
and morning spume,
two oystercatchers strutting
ahead of my slow feet
until they squawk off
into the marsh and startle
a white egret who resumes
her stone still stance
near a snail shell backside up
in marsh ooze, its inside
the rose gold of some peach
still ripening in sun
somewhere else, a shell here
and one there,
each a curved home
ready to crack and fall
into beautiful pieces.

Measuring Cups

Now I stack my mother's measuring cups
by the kitchen sink.

There will always be the dent near the lip
of the small one,

Sidney Thompson

First Love in Latin

Because I asked, you took mine
with you, and before a closed door
and a white block wall you whirred
and whirred—your Easter-yellow skirt
for after-school hostessing whirling
among dust falling, then halfway back,
across rows, you flung it wheeling
with a fair aim and a laugh and it struck
home. You insisted many subjects later,
when excavating the past for signs
we'd missed we'd end, I should've
laughed, too. Listen, I should have.

My ruinous memory even supports
what I've seen since: the point's
shadow doesn't shift; it's more, still,
an uninhabitable island, an unerasurable
error, than a peak, closer to math
than honed words—this tiny gray cloud
I caught that never rains or drifts. How
goddessly of you to leave for scale
inside my fist and every shake and pat
and private stroke this lifelong pencil
of hurt.

Nickie Albert

Evidence

The world is turning
and sometimes there's
evidence.

In the living room
on my old, blue couch
I watch the skyline

like television. Lights
flare on in various windows.
I look for the colors

of the Empire State,
violet and white.
What do they mean?

My mother lies
in her hospital bed
unaware.

Her chest rises and falls
with each mechanical
breath.

There's a star in the sky
just below the sash
of the window.

Some planet? Some sun?
Sometime later I see
it has risen.

Marcela Sulak

Undo the Sky

Leave your guide
books and home, and measure instead the rate at which
the bulbous

blue sky bounces it

self slowly up and down on the tightrope
of the power lines by the highway, the nuclear power
plant plunging daggers

until the trees close ranks, the rail road
scattering its ties like a child, the crop dusters buzzing all
over the sky of

fields left out in the sun too long. I

have looked to the clotheslines to see what long johns,
dresses, bikini

tops and how far I've

come from Texas after all this time. Now

the inevitable moment we remember Marion,

the kindly crop duster

who once folded a dollar into my

9-year-old palm for doing such a good job pacing the fields
beneath him, holding

a red flag, while Ordram fell from the tanks of the plane.

How his biplane flew

years later into the power lines. His neck sliced like

a horizon. His head fell like a sun. How

his name, Marion, after the Mother

of God, foretold his plane would be pregnant with eternity,

he who was so swift

in death, and slow to anger in life, for

whom the idea of sky was now something else all together.

Marcela Sulak

Family Friendly River Park

Welcome! This is a family friendly river park! For your safety and the safety of the water, please observe the following regulations. This is a family. This is friendly. See the ducklings paddling at the precipice of the dam? Do not use your empty beer bottles as weapons. Honor your father and your mother. Honor the local gods. Grow tomatoes, squash, corn, and potatoes. Do not fornicate more than you can help it. Crush some cochineal. If fornication results in the birth of a child, raise it. In order to have a family of your own, you must be asked certain questions at some point in your life. Or you must ask them. The answer must be yes, eventually.

Welcome! Welcome little vulture family with the grumpy adolescent, tail feathers scraggly in the wind. Welcome, calm mama vulture, black and sleek. Soon we will spread our wings. Soon we will comb the wind and learn the currents. Soon something will die.

Welcome! As you can see, we are friendly here. We believe in families. We are sorry if you do not have one, but maybe, god willing, one day you will, too. Do not curse in your speech or in your tattoos. Say good morning. Say how are you. Say good afternoon. We do not hold an ounce of malice to anyone. We are very friendly, very kind.

Nickie Albert

Enough to fracture
my picture.
Evidence

the world has turned
a small degree
a million miles.

Requiescat

Mortise and tenon, hold her.
Oil and herbs, wrap her tight.

Adopting composure, I slip
into a shift, straight and classic.

Lay her out, now.
Lay her down.

Lips sown shut to keep
the jaw from slackening.

One last look
then the fire.

Now the dirt.
I stand roses by the tree.

I leave the yew.
The red berries.

Brent Canle

Orowac Creek

That's where your mother and three uncles
played as kids, all their kids too;
where water clovers throbbled

in current and clear memory;
where they found that boy dead
with all the sticks shoved down his throat.

They said cousin Thomas did it
and it took three year to send him to Rikers.
Now it moves like slow mud

with only the long necks of turtles among styrofoam.
This world is still flat. A flat clean stone good
for skipping which teeters

on the shell of a turtle, which teeters
on the shell of another turtle,
on the shell of another turtle, and all the way down

permanently. God has a plan for him, Uncle says.
Okay—
But we can do better:

how about— when the world wavers
there is no meaning greater
than a turtle's twenty-five year yawn.

Eric Pankey

Residue

To think, I look up slightly to the left and off:
There where contradictions remain unreconciled,

A provenance of ghosts,
A haze I call the distant ochers.
I reside in thought and thought is residue—

How once, for instance, I heard among

Many children crying, my own child's cry,
And I could not reach her.

The fact it was a dream did not matter.
Shame—dormant, sequestered in the cells—
Uncoiled and re-emerged, multiplied.

Eric Pankey

Off Rural Route One

The young woman climbs a ladder into the loft's darkness.
Nothing is said, but you are expected to follow.
You hold your breath; hear her blouse buttons loosed.
Late summer afternoon light slants through hay dust.
In time nails work their way out of the wood,
Rust replaces the gleam of their hammered heads.
In the side yard her father argues with the farrier,
Her mother kicks open the screen door, says coffee's ready.
With little to go on, without further ado, you exhale.

Brent Canle

To the Mexican Bagboy Outside My First Apartment

I've never understood feelings
Maybe they are moles that pop up
in no particular order
and need to get whacked
Maybe they are the wild fruits
we consume on our journey home
What are these dark thoughts I have
when I stand on your line to watch
that sparse mustache come in
like brown spots ripening a banana
like cargo ships from the South
maneuvering their hulls into tight ports

Natalie Crick

Spring

The sky's pale luminescence
Spreads over earth like butter,
Eternal sunshine of a Spring day.

Shoots lisp through soil,
Eager at first and indistinct
As babies teeth.

They're queened,
Now crowned.

She arrives, babbling with flowers,
Throwing crumbs for birds and bees,
Plunging her wet hands into nude sands.

Buds sleep in velvet cases
That gleam along branches,
The wakened white stars lambent as flame,

The lawn blue as dusk falls.

Steven Huff

The Hall of Rashes

I went there to use the men's room since none was closer.
I passed displays of diaper rash and shingles, second-stage syphilis,
hives and measles. The older I get the more I have to pee
and I get into situations like this. Poor Job pictured with
weeping carbuncles, do you think I liked looking at that? And these
other guys in the men's room wanted to show me their rashes,
and me to show mine. And they wanted my phone number.

Steven Huff

Famous singers die

so mysteriously sad, and you can name them all,
but some lyrics survive to save your soul's genitals—.
Imagine that one classic song knew your name,
and it knew you were dying and it came to your bed, and you
breathed out your soul into its arms like a new infant.

Natalie Crick

Soul-Seeker

Like a wrought birch in dead earth,
He waits for the missing souls.

The bank of fern stands poised.
Nothing breaks their stillness.

No feral wail from the hills,
Cry of an eagle, crackle of leaves.

Only bones
And scattered rocks.

Ashen remains
Wash out into the world,

Strewn in the storm,
Flanked with driftwood.

The fruit from the trees
Sinks into rot.

He waits.

Not even a worthless soul
Condemned to wander forever.

He picks up a lifeless bird
And holds it close.

Matthew Dobson

The Boat

THE BOAT appears unexpectedly in the traffic... a white
vagabond. *Tomas Tranströmer*

When I came to the city center,
a boat glided
from behind the mall.

It was large and white with no crew
only the ferryman's shadow
flitting up there,
and a ladder hanging from the side.

I had dreamt of this.
The shoppers walked around it,
eyes on their screens
or each others' eyes.
One or two put their hands on the ladder
and climbed up.

The boat barely rocked.
It was more an iceberg: so white
it was blue,
so pure it hurt to look at,

and most of it below street-level
like when you put your hand to your face

and imagine the skull, the icy contours,

like when you put your hand to your face
and feel it going cold,
hardening.

Edward Harkness

Potatoes

He came to me on one of those mild,
late winter days, my gloved hands gripped
on a hoe handle handed down from someone—
Aunt Philomena, it might have been,
or Ted Strickler, both gardeners, both gone.
Sweating, I'd flung my jacket on a limb
of the plum tree, went on breaking clods
with the nicked hoe blade until I was stopped
by the odor of cinnamon and pine.
I'd backed into the rosemary bush,
releasing its tang, releasing too my father.
He appeared as he had in his last year—
cheeks papery, ashen, eyes dull, thin scruff
of beard no longer white but yellow.
He told me he was okay, said I needn't worry
or feel sorry. And just as when he lived,
having lost by then his sense of taste and smell,
he laughed, went on and on about how much
he loved my potato wedges—salted, roasted
with rosemary, daubed lavishly, as always,
despite my frown, with mayonnaise.

Edward Harkness

The Path

Last night's rain brought down
needles from the big pine,
quilting the path to the river,
whose heavy breathing is not so much
like music—more like wind
rasping in the aspens.
Leaves glitter with river light—
the air sweet from pine pitch.
Patches of hillside orange
flare and smear on the current
blended with blue afternoon.
A kingfisher chitters upstream
toward the deeper tones of evening.
Across the river, in a hemlock snag,
a pair of cedar waxwings loop
back and forth to feed on mayflies,
whose wings are flakes of light
rising and falling over the river.

Matthew Dobson

Stains

He sank one at the bar,
a whisky, neat.
Then watched flies shuffle
along the baize,
through the stains, sweet and tacky
like last week
when he'd grabbed at the brakes,
let the gears shift
themselves,
until they tipped into gorse,
ling
just blossoming.
And sparks flowered
when the circular saw
sliced them out.
He heard blood
slide down his bedroom walls,
sluice through floorboards,
and every stain he saw
was hers.

SAS Dunn

Disturbing Clouds

I've come to this
spit of land thrust
out into the Atlantic
to find a life newly
made from ashes.
Only to find that the
clouds race above
these sands and lands
in some race I cannot join.

Where do you go,
all you clouds rushing
out of the south?
Why must you terrify me
with your endless marching
above my head? Why do you leave
me behind, rooted and alone?

SAS Dunn

Still I Am Here

Sometimes I think there
is a hope. Then I see
there is not.

Sometimes the rains
do not stop.
Then there is no rain.

Sometimes I see.
Then I am blind.

Still the birds sing
in the spring,
and leave in the fall.

Sometimes there is a full
choir of coyote.
Sometimes a coyote's call
is not answered.