

2RV

22.3 (Spring 2018)

The 2River View

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2River

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new poems by

Justin Hyde, Jenny Ahn

Yvonne Amey, Bill Freedman, Anna Keeler

Jane Medved, David Nielsen, Virginia Slachman

Rebecca Starks, Sally Van Doren



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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, Editor  
2River

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# The 2River View

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Anna Keeler is a queer poet and fiction writer. Her work has been published or is upcoming with *Ambit Magazine*, *apt*, *Cleaver Magazine*, *FIVE:2:ONE*, and *Poets.org*.

Jane Medved is the author of *Deep Calls To Deep* (New Rivers Press 2017) and the chapbook *Olam*, *Shana*, *Nefesh* (Finishing Line Press, 2014) Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Cortland Review* and *Mudlark*. The poetry editor of *The Ilanot Review*, she lives in Jerusalem.

Dave Nielsen is the author of *Unfinished Figures*. Other poems have been published in *Ploughshares*, *Poetry East*, *The Southern Review*, and elsewhere. He lives in Salt Lake City with his wife and their five children.

Virginia Slachman is the author of three collections of poetry, a memoir, and one novel. A recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, she currently teaches at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Rebecca Starks is a co-founder of *Mud Season Review*, a director of the Burlington Writers Workshop, a freelance editor, and a teacher of lifelong learning at the University of Vermont. Her poems have appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Rattle*, *Slice*, *Stonecoast Review*, and elsewhere.

Sally Van Doren, a poet and artist, is the author of three poetry collections, *Promise* (LSU Press 2017), *Possessive* (2012) and *Sex at Noon Taxes* (2008), which received the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American poets. She lives in New York and St. Louis and posts daily excerpts from her ongoing poem, *The Sense Series*, via Instagram@sallyvandoren.



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## Authors

Justin Hyde lives in Iowa where he works as a parole officer. His work is published or forthcoming in *The Alaska Quarterly Review* and *The Iowa Review*.

Jenny Ahn is pursuing a Poetry MFA at Columbia University. Ahn's work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Apogee Journal*, *Into the Void*, and *Palimpsest*.

Yvonne Amey holds an MFA in poetry from the University of Central Florida. Her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have appeared in *Bending Genres*, *The Los Angeles Review of Los Angeles*, *Vine Leaves Journal*, and elsewhere.

Bill Freedman is a retired professor of English Literature and a scholar of modern literature and the history of baseball fans. His poems have appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *The California Quarterly*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Nation*, *The Quarterly*, *Rattle*, *Shenandoah*, and elsewhere.

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### **Mildred's Granddaughter**

This is a poem about a woman who lived forever. She lived through years of poetry readings. She lived through many presidencies. She lived through the births of her sons and grandsons. She never stopped for death and ate when and whatever she wanted. She lost track of time sometimes, but it never caught up to her. The motivating principle of her life resembled a mass of hyacinths levitating over the house next door. The neighbors invited her in and offered her tea in every season. She drank it to warm her heart, to flush out the memories of those who would not love her.

Sally Van Doren

### **Domesticated**

I left Black Creek to come  
here to distance myself  
from the magnolia leaves  
pressing themselves against  
my south-facing windows. I  
sought to distinguish myself,  
the self desperate for the  
dithyramb, the self opening  
and closing the door to the cellar  
in my doll-house on wheels.  
My mother had painted the doors  
blue and the stucco walls yellow.  
I was not inclined to flock  
to the forever she followed,  
but I brought her flowers  
yesterday, yellow daffodils  
to fill her crystal vases.

Justin Hyde

### **that summer**

we'd cut the top off a pop-can  
one of us would steal a little gasoline  
from our father  
out on the west edge of the trailer park  
tucked up under the highway overpass  
like hobos  
we'd drop one of our  
g.i. joes in the  
gasoline bath with  
a lit-match  
silent full  
attention  
swirling the acrid burning fumes  
with wooden sticks  
squatting there  
that last summer before our dicks got hard  
women came  
simple truth disappeared  
& we turned inscrutable  
like our fathers.

Justin Hyde

## between the cracking knuckles of human thought

sitting  
on a tiny chair  
next to my son  
at the parent teacher conference  
teacher  
pointing to a bar-graph  
explaining percentile rank  
i am focused  
on her left hand  
the nail  
of her pinkie finger  
immaculate  
rounded  
phosphorescent-green  
the others  
have been  
chipped into submission  
hit & run  
by the pell-mell  
akimbo rush  
of children  
she points  
to another bar-graph

Rebecca Starks

## How a Mother Loves

When their dog disappeared out back, last May, fifteen years after they'd brought him home, she looked until she found him, down the hill and under some hemlocks where he'd lain down to die, the way animals do—she says she knew that's what he was doing—and though he was too big for her to lift and she had no cartilage in the joint of one hip she got him up the hill too steep to mow and into the house to his spot by the door and he lived there another week and a half, with her lifting him up with a towel each morning and hugging him to sleep at night, since he could neither stand nor lie down, nor remember what to let go of, to fall asleep.



Rebecca Starks

## For Sappho

In the woods, the stillness. The hush  
of everything hanging: heavy, humid,  
the tickle of sweat. Helices of gnats  
mating with motes of light.

There—you see that isolate leaf  
oscillating drunkenly

like a little mask of Bacchus  
dangling  
in Catullus' courtyard

prick for the first drop of rain,  
hand raised eagerly—  
so sure it has the answer  
the rest huddle waiting for?

But it is like that:

out of all the leaves the beech hosts  
one is seized by love—and  
cannot, cannot,  
stop its wingless trembling.

i stare  
at her hand  
thinking to myself:

norman rockwell  
would have missed  
this detail

but caravaggio  
would have captured it  
perfectly.

she leans back  
in her tiny chair

crossing her left leg  
over her right.

my throat throbs

it reaches  
for her loins

i shit you  
not.

Jenny Ahn

## Neighbor Sestina

My neighbor plants flowers at the gates every season.  
He was cast out by blue cheek bone.

He said god my arms but I all I hear  
was the silence strangers could afford  
wave snap flush clay crack.

I was the cartilage and the hound.

The raw fence crying for days like a hound.

The windows smoking so I know it's a ripe season.

I want to hold my neighbor, cradle her in the crack  
and feign wellness in her smallest bone.

At striking moment, things lose the balance they can afford.  
Her mask buckles. I hear

the floor peeling its lumber, hear

the beige light trapped in the corner, a hound

my neighbor does not have. Their locks afford

the house very fine openings. To season

their steps with grinded rocks and bone

is to dust my kneecaps until they crack.

I am funneling their pain rising through the crack

in the door. They don't know. He doesn't hear

the closet shuddering. Closer, her bone

hovering in the eye of the hound.

He said no god no it wasn't the right season

but what can my neighbor afford

ii

The ducks are standing on the pond's thin ice,  
wings tucked, the late sun casting the last  
of the day's shadows. I know it's ice, but maybe

they stand on water. After the first

step, the ice gives way. They fall. It's such a small  
falling. Perhaps they have too little

faith, or perhaps it's merely the sun has worn

down the pond's frigidity. A man watched this

with me, a young man come from the market. His life

is so secret, you can see that in how

his face hides nothing, as if he expects all

that is promised. He smiled as the ducks fell,

not in the way a mad child

would smile, being able to see only

the miraculous. I thought for a moment

that young man might rise

into the last of the day's light, so

delighted he seemed, witnessing

this fallen world

where nothing is harmed.

Virginia Slachman

## Starless Field

i

All the horses are gone. All the horses are broken. One horse left in the windless and moon-lit drifting. His hooves pound the earth without anger as a mad child might a wood toy, blows from his little hammer, each one the same. The world is full of grace, isn't it? The dogs are also mad and mindless, biting the slim and delicate tendons....

Foolishness, yet they killed the horse. Starless field, the dogs' mouths hung with blood. And the horses pound

the earth, broken. They are no help at all. The child continues, intent, giving himself to his pure

work because not one of us can exceed what we are. In the air, scent of wood smoke, the field still as rapture.

besides what they displaced to afford. I am the one who thatches their crack in the door five times a season. The kitchen marble, not as cold as I hear, salivates at the toes of a hound, rasping inevitable as bone.

No, she says, I am not the town of this bone. He howls, so why can't we decide to afford— My neighbor falls and looks up to the hound. The fire blowing on the eardrums. Smallest crack I know. This town is where I can hear the quietest season.

My neighbor's season arrives to afford phantoms like a hound sucking on sweet bone. I crack it open, just enough for them to hear.

Yvonne Amey

### **January, Dam #5 Road, I Visit the Cold**

Breath is a place where ghosts roam  
but I remember this family  
of broken dreams  
and how they'd become trapped  
inside darkness that smelled of grief  
and rain and how they kept to themselves  
and how their porch lamp cradled light  
in the shape of God  
and I know how hard they worked  
to get nowhere  
and when you smashed  
that Jim Beam bottle across my cheekbone  
I saw what it looked like when they died alone.

David Nielsen

### **Run For It**

Sometimes if I listen carefully  
I can hear my daughter  
arranging the furniture  
in the dollhouse behind me  
  
a chair scraping across the floor  
a table pushed up against the wall  
the little fake food  
clicking against the plastic plates  
  
my own wrist watch  
ticking like a grandfather clock  
and if the window is open  
something bigger  
  
a car  
the wind yes  
the mountain  
like a great big animal  
  
breathing through the screen

David Nielsen

### **Bullshit**

In my house the plates  
have been known to wash themselves.

The clothes too,  
piled in a heap on the couch,  
hot after the dryer,  
have, from time to time, risen up,  
crossed, and folded themselves,  
like some kind of resurrection.

You say the bathroom won't tidy itself,  
but maybe it will.

Maybe it all happens  
best when you aren't looking.

In the bedroom the god of this story  
sleeps soundlessly

beneath a silver moon.

Yvonne Amey

### **you a heart but not glass**

I followed your belongings blowing  
through old Britner's field,  
there among the scattered October  
and coping saws were your broken promises,  
the chrome bumper you mowed  
that terrible stranger down outside Philly  
and now I think it's time I had a heart to heart  
with my unfinished self  
how nothing you could do made  
me unlove you  
how your newly upholstered sofa  
dangled our legs just so  
to Old Dirty Bastard  
how we laughed so hard  
I thought we'll never breathe again  
for a day, a year, forever.

Bill Freedman

## The News

The phone rang at 2 a.m.  
Silence.  
I could not sleep.  
In the morning I saw them,  
the familiar trio,  
two in uniform,  
inching up the walk.  
Heard them knocking softly,  
firmly, advising me to sit,  
asking someone to bring water.  
Their faces fraught,  
their voices trained and factual,  
concerned.  
They informed me, again,  
of the death of someone far away  
I'd never known.  
I thanked them,  
showed them out and  
tried to sleep.  
The phone.

I am thinking of the lungs and how one side  
sorts the blood and sends the rest back to the surface  
where it feeds the trees. I am thinking of the trees,  
which are the cure for us, the many exhalations  
never seen, how the horn is not metal or wood but  
what we call the body, twisted and bent, providing  
certain passage. Even the guards of tongue and teeth  
have to move aside when it's time to send the last breath out.

Jane Medved

### **Nissan is the Ram**

and the shiny fence of teeth, the restless tongue,  
the burnt palette, the five places of the mouth

where speech is born. They say the evil eye  
will flee the five-fingered hand and that our world

was given five unsteady oceans. I have been  
in three of them and water changes

color everywhere. In the five books he left us  
Moses narrates only one, which leads me

back to speech, how even breathing has a sound  
and sighing is a kind of prayer. By that I mean,

there are all sorts of ways to get God's attention.  
Look at the moon who reappears dressed up

in borrowed light so diffuse she can only return it.  
And the ram, who gave its horn so that the angels

could say, this is how language begins in the belly,  
where air is broken down, but not digested.

Bill Freedman

### **The Hair of Graves**

A child said, What is the grass?  
fetching it to me with full hands;

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.  
—Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

Her plaque lies flat,  
her name and years of passing through  
obscured by weeds and grass  
as she is.

Nothing stands  
to call to passers-by or catch an eye.

One would trip or trod on her  
to find her, or kneel

and part the tangled hair  
to imagine hers, at six

or twelve or seventeen,

when her mother brushed it back  
and tugged when something caught  
and said, "Hold still,"  
but did not mean like this.

Anna Keeler

### **Botswana Agate**

I dig my hands into lottery tickets  
Because my birth was breached  
By a sensitive something eye.

Soft like soul,  
I'm like a living, breathing coupon—  
Always looking for discounts.

Teasing karma out of  
It's mandala dress,  
I am fire;  
I offer her no protection

But the proverbial O.D.  
Of freedom of stability.  
I stand back here  
Acting like the damn  
Statue of liberty.

I repel luck,  
And crystallize toxicity  
Between my fingers.

An error occurred.  
I'm repressing the light.

Help me.  
I don't want to struggle.

Anna Keeler

### **Explosive Neon**

You had a single romantic bone in your body;  
I'm sure those soft x-rays removed it.

How noble to wear denotation like angel wings  
And tell me you're inert because you're primordial.

Loner, you tell me. You've always been a loner,  
Just like the space below your dermis is always red-orange.

"No one can hear me."

I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

"No one likes you."

Yeah, I know.