

# 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**



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

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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](http://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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## **Contents**

### **Jason Deen**

The Way In  
Fully Still  
Two Music

### **Deborah Finch**

15 Perception of Hades  
as Recorded in Persephone's Diary

### **Roger Johns**

Part of a Folk Tale  
Kite Festival

### **Rebecca Lu-Kiernan**

Sex Addict in Therapy  
To the Bat Living in the Air Vent

### **Patti Marshock**

Dreams

### **Judith Pordone**

Armor of Amor  
Private Disgrace

### **Harding Stedler**

Master of Trust at Three  
Drifters at Sea

### **T. L. Stokes**

The Peribaca

### **Susan Vaughan**

Dracula After My Birthday Dinner  
The Armored Car Company Supervisor

### **Chocolate Waters**

Mom, Dad and the Other Woman  
Discarded Rain



Jason Deen

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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

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**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

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### **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.

## **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

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### **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

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## **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

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### **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

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## **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

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### **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

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### **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

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### **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

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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

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## **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

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### **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*.

**Roger Jones** teaches the creative writing program at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, and is the poetry editor of the online journal *Ceteris Paribus*. He has published one book, and his poems have appeared here and there for the past twenty-five years.

**Rebecca Lu Kiernan** is the editor of *Gecko*. Her poetry appears in places such as *MS.*, *Idiom 23*, and *Verandah*, with poetry forthcoming in *Asimov's Science Fiction*.



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**Patti Marshock** is an oncology nurse in Phoenix, Arizona. She has poetry forthcoming in *The Cancer Poetry Project: Poems by Cancer Patients and Those Who Love Them* from Fairview Press.

**Judith Pordon** is constructing a poet's colony in Pas Ancho, Jalisco, Mexico, on the banks of Rio Cuale. Her poems are published in such places as *Recursive Angel*, *The Ledge*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Tulane Review*, and *Zerozine*.

**Harding Stedler** is a retired teacher currently working as a writer and proofreader in Cabot, Arkansas, where he also edits a weekly poetry column in the *Cabot Star-Herald* and serves as secretary of the Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas.

**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](http://chocolatewaters.com). She has three collections in print and has toured throughout the United States, but makes her home in Manhattan.

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