

The 2River View

18.1 (Fall 2013)



HOLDWAY

new poems by

Lenny DellaRocca, Judith Barrington, Rebecca D'Alise
Karen Donovan, Gary Dop, Marcel Gauthier, Marjorie Maddox
Christine Marshall, Carolyn Murdoch
Barbara Schwartz, Lauren Shimulunas

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Lenny DellaRocca

Bird Café

There was a dusty bird finished with everything,
evening stirred in the trees
and the figs were never consumed.

Above the noise of conversation
at the sidewalk restaurant,
I overheard a man say something

about the Café Verona. I wondered
why my ear tuned to just his words
in the miscellaneous air,

why my eye sought out that bird
sleeping among elms and wrens
as if nothing on earth mattered.

These were equations to me,
physical realities
caught by chance in nonlinear

verbatim by the formula
which sends art out among chaos
and finds a place for itself.

As if all possibilities had been
ruled out
except that bird

and a voice saying Café Verona.
There was, and could not be,
anything else in the world.

Judith Barrington

Before

I never saw my father kiss anyone
not even my mother. Surely I'd remember—
a shadow image in my blood: him kissing
someone somewhere for some reason
even if only for duty.

(In that image he bends his head to a child
or smaller adult, touches a wrist with one finger,
slides his arm around a shoulder.
In the shadow he bobs his head near her cheek:
but do his lips really touch skin?)

What I can't believe is that I was conceived
without kisses. There must have been kisses—
even if they floated out the window
to be smashed by the bombers rumbling overhead
nine months before my birth.

Here's what I'd like to believe: before
bombs and blackouts, he was the sweetest
smoocher, the easiest man to laugh with
when someone like me strolled with him
beside the sea, her arm tucked warmly into his.

Judith Barrington

Charcot Marie Tooth Disease

*Often, the muscle loss happens unevenly,
which can cause physical deformity.*

And here's another question: which of my parents
can I blame—or thank—for this reminder
of my ancestry? Who passed along the gene that propels me
face-first onto the sidewalk, and forces me to learn
words like myelin and mitochondrial?

My mother's feet were as ugly as mine
which makes her the chief suspect though
like me she carried on walking dogs
and dreaming of her heyday on the tennis court.

At night I toss the ball, drop my racket behind
my shoulder and swing high over my head.
Asleep, my winners ignore the frayed threads of nerves
and garbled messages caught in their webs

but by day instructions from brain to feet or
feet to brain travel along lines like telephone wires
tangled in trees that have grown too fast—wires
that sag between poles, runways for squirrels,
perches for a supreme court of gloating crows.

Rebecca D'Alise

Your Patient

She plays you like a telephone,
the green-hued touch pad
biting the night into shrapnel
with its mechanical F sharp.

She can't help it. Even during sex,
bent and curled over me like a fist
as your thighs try and fail
to hold in the briny flow of our familiar

rhythms, even then she is there, waiting
like a question to be wrapped
and tied with rough twine, waiting
like a heated metal key pressed to the underside
of your forearms. She has tongued her way down

to where I have set my anchor firm
to where I have lain my hand against the agate
of your heart and have woven a nation. She has come
with a bridle bit, which she sets against her own teeth,

and dares you to grip the leather reigns. Later she comes
into the hours of us, when you are almost glass,
but still enough mud that she can undo shape,
and I now think, not even the rain
not even the rain.

Rebecca D'Alise

When We End Our Lives

Perhaps it happens in myth
even before Lucretia's hand leads her body off
in surrender to Sextus, where the point of the knife dimples her
throat and the sound waves quiver the blade just enough
that something in his hand feels slighted.

But maybe it's different than that—
maybe it first happens in the timbers of a voice splitting
and falling, in the act of gathering back our spilled bones
to reassemble them in the toothpick boxes we're all given

in our earlier lives, the dimensions too small to hold them all.
After that, the last lungful is really nothing at all—
just note cards and lilac and birds.

Karen Donovan

Orient

Heel prints of men and cattle
mark the ground at the watering place
The mean wanders from center point

I love you I love you I love you please
At the watering place
men and cattle wander

Look I'll mark the ground
Here is where we'll meet
Right here

Scores wander off the curve
Fresh prints of men and cattle, filling with snow
I know you can find it, it's on the map

The map is a map
There is a forest there is a steppe
There is a watering place

Point line plane solid hypersolid
Angle radian perimeter sphere, cherubim seraphim
Men and cattle, later a panther

Find Sirius Rigel Aldebaran
Horizon: The tabletop The doorstep The road

Orchil sunset
Sweet fig
Tracer bullets
The woodsmoke
The slipknot
The clove

Karen Donovan

Origin

About how in the beginning it was
strong yet viscoelastic with certain properties
that distinguished it from sheet metal
About how you can walk out on it for ice fishing in January
About how it flows when warm like asphalt
O how light it was

Which made it advantageous for aerospace applications
Hallelujah how there was no darkness in it
because we had had enough of that
About how it made everything
except for everything that wasn't since there isn't
anything else than what keeps on getting

made and remade from ingredients the experts dispute
About how nonlinearly it iridescently was
hard to predict with a tendency under load to deform
As worms grow wings hillsides implode bones rattle up
from rotor-whipped sands and begin to sing like flutes
O how in the beginning it was

Gary Dop

That Night in Mobridge

On the reservation when we spoke in tongues
as boys and I claimed to see an angel
outside our window, you said you saw it too,

but we didn't describe it
(the sense of light in empty space
the sense of bright form, indivisible)
for fear we were lying—today, for fear it was true.

You remind me we were boys, and I see
doubt swallowed you like candy sucked to nothing.
Now, I don't want to speak with you for fear

I'll be swallowed. Looking out the window
and seeing nothing, I ache for something
bright in all this darkness.

Gary Dop

Tributary

A fallen, split, and half-submerged tree guards
the gathering waters from the surrounding spirit

of the city. She's worn of her bark, dead white
like the underbelly of a beached whale. When the trout

and bass pass under her, they leap out
of Rice Creek into the Mississippi. A cardinal,

redder than the falling sun, lands and lands again
on her trunk. He lifts his wings from her dead branches

and calls to us to live, to remain here
under the green gleaming canopy, to be

where death touches life, where death is life,
and life is a tree, a leaf, a seed falling in peace.

Marcel Gauthier

9/12

Morning dark. In the pick-up ahead
a cigarette at the cracked window
jabs into the flying air, ashes
bouncing by like beads.
Hovers there.

As it does throughout the long commute,
my focus wavers (taillights, the stitching
of white lines) and I find myself
thinking. Thinking of what?
I should know because

next moment there it is, wheeling mid-air:
the end, the bright surprise. It explodes
on the hood, sprays sparks
across the windshield,
goes blank.

But the after-world is clear. Ahead a stoplight
turning yellow, turning red. And all of us
slowing, pressing to a mass—floating
as on a black river. Impatient
as shades.

Marcel Gauthier

Nothing Like a Hand

*Her aunt heard that the touch of a dead man would
erase her birthmark, so she took her to the morgue....*

Instead a dull
and formless chill, a deepening
pressure and tingling
as the mark awakens, releases
its hold....

She pictures
what will take its place: a white
scar shaped like a hand?
Or the ghost of a rose?
Will people stare—still—then look away
for what is gone? She tries to imagine
her face without it, but sees
air where it should be,
sees straight through.

With her open eye,
she watches her aunt,
expectant, tight-lipped.
Sees the disappointment
when the hand is removed.
And by the third hand,
anger—*Stubborn child....*

Knows what her aunt's hand
will feel like gripping hers
when they finally walk back
between the closets of the dead
through the seeping cold
and the aching smell
and into the sun.

Marjorie Maddox

Annie Oakley

Before

Buffalo Bill shook his sombrero
to start the crowd clapping for your big finale,

before your mustang lurched under your kick
each week for seventeen years,
and those in the stands of The Wild West Show
waved their arms like lariats in the dusty air,

before you tossed back your hair,
cocked that sleek rifle, and aimed
at the soaring glass balls
that splattered like pigeons at your bullet's touch,

you were just

Phoebe of Patterson Township,
nine, a child with a gun,
distraught over the death of your father;
a girl walking away
from Woodington, Ohio,
into the wild woods,
where, before an audience of pine,
you would hunt food for the hungry
family you'd left behind.

Marjorie Maddox

Battlefield in Peacetime

Not four score seven years ago—but one
we joined our homes, our names, our aging hands
for and against the battles that would come
and treaties fired, as those from this land

of Gettysburg, the dirt that bloodied love
for love of other still. Husband, we live
out of two pasts: a weakened frontline of
dismembered plots; unplowed field left if

not remembered. We, almost pacifists
in such as love, count up all others' wars
(here, and in our lives): their fists and kisses
loaded and exploded; the way our scars

in middle-age forget to fight. Defend
to death with me our peace, my allied friend.

Christine Marshall

Elegy for Day

A white horse with one red eye wings toward you, red tulips suck your air, burning hair rises from the ash. Day grows hotter with every page. The sidewalk sizzles when you flick your sweat. Finally the light begins to blue at the edges. Upstairs, the man who watches news all night scrapes the window open for some evening air. When you were young, you ate the mercury from the thermometer. Ran your fingers through the white candle flame. You think of heat as a molten backbone helping you stand. Imagine yourself in wings, flying up and up, chasing the sun as it sets.

Christine Marshall

Elegy for Night

If, when the moon has drizzled to the other side of the river, you are still huddled on a bench made of skinny green slats by the river's edge, you will sing to yourself a song comprised of braided floral wreathes and shepherds' names. The island hasn't shifted since last evening, you will sing, even if I like to pretend it has, as Manhattan raises its shimmering head like a newborn lamb in the grey light. By then, your legs will be stiffened into the shape of a wishbone, doubled against your chest. Birds will warble their aubades in tones as yellow as the sun you imagine crowning on the other side of the city. Night was the kind of friend whose shoulder you could press your face into, the kind who would say Here, now, cry, arms closing around you tight and strong. Night was a blue velvet rabbit's hole you allowed yourself to fall through, soft fibers caterpillaring your skin. Night has left its imprint: tracks of night across your cheeks, the shadow cast behind you as gather your legs in the cool morning light.

Carolyn Murdoch

The Bird

A blackbird flew head
first into our picture window.
It left an oily portrait of a driven
bird with solid eyes,
wings spanned for furious flight.
There is no shadow of doubt in
this portrait. It is all success.

And yet we know what happened.
We put on gloves and found
the creature hobbling in our yard.
It was beyond repair, but our daughter hoped
there might be a salve,
some honey,
a place to lay it down and let it rest.

The last piece is the hardest.
We know nothing of a bird's fear.
It would not hear of hope.
It wanted no salve, no honey.
It went on shrieking,
It lay down in the dust.

Carolyn Murdoch

The Crowd

The crowd takes their things
and leaves the lights, empties
into dizzy streets. You
are one of them, as
night splits open like an orange,
and you are two, three, four, then
countless pieces of who you used to be.

You want to join the revolution.
You will go with anyone, anywhere.
You could die right now in this
overwhelming moment.

Think of it, thousand fold
each heart unfolds the fingers of each fist,
applauding madly.

Be quick and do not look away.
They are carried easily,
they are not afraid.

Barbara Schwartz

To Fear Him Reverently

I

In the back of the barn
where the hay's stacked and the eggs cold,
my grandmother prayed in Polish, stolen
papers wedged between her thighs.
The man she peeled potatoes for strode
out from the house, told her
Get undressed.

His leather jacket slapped
the sides of the door—She rose
in the stable, stole his horse and rode
west, her hair whipping the invisible
beard wreathed across Roweno.
This is the version I heard at six.

Later I heard how
she scrambled to the woods, dug herself
a tunnel, slept for months with others
in a dirt hole. I imagined she started the Resistance.

At thirteen I learnt the worst of it:
He tore his pants apart, stroked
her cheek gently, then slit
her smock, blowing pipe smoke
through lashes, buckets knocked
over—yelping—

Men, all of them, animals.

II

(And now, several versions later, amazed by my own body and how it doggedly calls the same man over and over, I wonder if anything I've learnt has survived. It's only at night when I drink too much that I think

one day I'll have a child. Inside me, I see her with a shovel digging to get out and her father digging his hands inside me to help her, and suddenly the bed, it too, is a shovel, and we are all three underground where we should be.)

Barbara Schwartz

To Set the Mother Bird Free

Down the path she turns
to the branch watching the blue
veins coil in her hand. A leaf falls—

proof of the sky's flesh. Above
her fingertips she listens to the imaginary
owl hoot at a thumbprint of the moon.

In a month she will be old
and the tree just beginning to bloom.
She hears leave and breathes, catching

her face in the window. Each silver plate
aligns on the table. Her husband
notices something's missing—

she walks through the doorway, her mind
still part of the bark. At dinner they talk through
glassware and think of the blue shutter

flapping in the bedroom. Pass the knife she asks
reaching over wings and boiled eggs.
This is how they touch. Upstairs

her night breath shakes the branch and the owl
flies from her mind—I can still hear
her talons shifting along the bark.

Lauren Shimulunas

Baggage Claim

The paper says he lay in front of a train
and that's how it happened.

I wait for my suitcase.

In the terminal, a man kisses a woman.
In the terminal, a man kisses a man.
Everywhere around me,
someone is departing.
Someone is reunited.
I used to believe a penny
on the tracks could derail a train.

How could he lie there,
feeling the vibrations?
The shaking?
Did he think of whether he locked his car,
whether he left his electric blanket on?

In my town the rails were rusty before I was born.
There was a bridge of tracks
stuck alone in the river,
but the only trains we heard
sounded cartoon whistles on Saturday mornings.
He would've had to find some other way.

Finally the carousal whirs to life.
And I forgot to feed the birds.
Fuck the birds.
They can starve,
the little bastards.

Lauren Shimulunas

Girl

He won't marry me on Lake Michigan—
knows he'll drown. Knows that's silly.
The Pacific is deeper. The Atlantic is colder.
He knows.

I grew up on the lake. Toes stuck in cold sand,
steely waves pulling me like a lost magnet.
He won't marry me on Lake Michigan.

I understand.
Sometimes a girl goes missing near the lake.
And sure, we search.
But after the first hours, everyone knows.
She's gone.

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Contributors

Lenny DellaRocca has poems here at *2River* and in *Nimrod*, *Sun Dog*, and elsewhere. His book, *Alphabetical Disorder*, is available at Amazon.com.

Judith Barrington has published three poetry collections and two chapbooks. In 2012, she won the Gregory O'Donoghue Poetry Prize. Her memoir, *Lifesaving*, won the Lambda Book Award.

Rebecca D'Alise holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia University. Her poems have been published in *The Bellingham Review*, *Cerebral Scraps*, *Ex Libris*, *Stuff Magazine*, and elsewhere.

Karen Donovan is the author of *Fugitive Red* (University of Massachusetts Press). Her poems have appeared recently in *Blackbird*, *Conjunctions*, and *Mudlark*. For 20 years, with Walker Rumble, she published ¶: *A Magazine of Paragraphs*, a journal of short prose.

Gary Dop is an English professor at Randolph College. His poems have appeared in journals such as *New Letters*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Rattle*. His first book of poems is forthcoming from Red Hen Press.

Marcel Gauthier received his MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he was a Randall Jarrell Fellow. A recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, he lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Marjorie Maddox is Director of Creative Writing and Professor of English at Lock Haven University. A Sage Graduate Fellow of Cornell University (MFA) and recipient of numerous awards, she has published nine poetry collections, most recently *Local News from Someplace Else*.

Christine Marshall teaches at Davidson College and has been a finalist for *The Nation's* "Discovery" Prize and the Ruth Lilly Fellowship. Her poems have appeared in *Agni*, *Best American Poetry*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Cimarron Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Nimrod*, and elsewhere.

Carolyn Murdoch lives in Northern New Jersey. Her work is forthcoming or has appeared in *Confrontation*, *Gargoyle*, *Narrative*, *PANK*, and others.

Barbara Schwartz holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. Her poems have appeared in *Nimrod International Journal*, *Vernacular*, and *Virtual Writer: A Longford Literary Project*.

Lauren Shimulunas is a recent graduate of the University of New Hampshire MFA program. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in journals such as *Blue Collar Review*, *Cider Press Review*, and *The Cortland Review*.

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About the Artist

John Holdway currently lives in a small yellow house in Springfield, Oregon, with his wife and son and works daily in his studio. John moved west after receiving a BFA in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. He has and continues to exhibit and sell his work around the world.

www.johnholdway.com



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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

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ISSN 1536-2086

www.2River.org

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18.1 (Fall 2013)

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