

2RV

18.1 (Fall 2013)

The 2River View

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HOLIDAY

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

2River

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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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# The 2River View

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**Gravesite**

*Lenny DellaRocca*  
Bird Café

*Judith Barrington*  
Before  
Charcot Marie Tooth Disease

*Rebecca D'Alise*  
Your Patient  
When We End Our Lives



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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](http://www.johnholdway.com)

*Karen Donovan*  
Orient  
Origin

*Gary Dop*  
That Night in Mobridge  
Tributary

*Marcel Gauthier*  
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*Marjorie Maddox*  
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Elegy for Day  
Elegy for Night

*Carolyn Murdoch*  
The Bird  
The Crowd

*Barbara Schwartz*  
To Fear Him Reverently  
To Set the Mother Bird Free

*Lauren Shimulunas*  
Baggage Claim  
Girl

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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## 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

*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.

*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

||

(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 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.*

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.

*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.

*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.

*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.

*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.

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.

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,  
distracted 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.