

The 2River View

22.4 (Summer 2018)



The Beach © 2018 by Maria Filopoulou

new poems by
Scott Coykendall, Wendy Taylor Carlisle
Donald Illich, Elizabeth Landrum, Michael Lauchlan
Laine Kuehn, James Miller, Karen June Olson
Matthew S. Parsons, John Sweet, William Walsh

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Contents

Scott Coykendall

After house painting, I dream my dead brother ...

Wendy Taylor Carlisle

How it Was

Sombrero

Donald Illich

The Known Fires

Where the Child Belongs

Elizabeth Landrum

Layers in the Litter

Laine Kuehn

Twilight



Swimming Toward the Horizon © 2018 by Maria Filopoulou

Laine Keuhn
Without Keening

Michael Lauchlan
Fortune
Yeats Calls

James Miller
August 2017
Two Approaches to Dead Time

Karen June Olson
A River
Voice Lessons from a Writing Class

Matthew S. Parsons
Betcha Didn't
Honky Tonka

John Sweet
notes on the aftermath
poem like the faded hearts of martyrs

William Walsh
Raising Flowers in December
Wine Tasting at Wilber and Rudy's Farm Table

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Scott Coykendall

After house painting, I dream my dead brother comes in a rowboat

Awake and unable to remember what he said, I drift
through the house, still scrubbing
the stubborn paint from my hands, cooking eggs,
watching my daughters float
on their lavender sheets. In the clear light

of the kitchen, I see that he and his boat were behind me
all day, yesterday:
there while I hauled paint up the ladders, there while I
hauled ladders around the house.
He didn't call out. He didn't pitch in.

I do the work of living, getting on with it. He shadows me.
That's the way he always turns up—so quietly a day or a
month or a decade may pass
before I remember he's standing between me and the sun.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle

How It Was

I tell you, he used to light me up.
We drove that road like it was a four lane.
We drove the four-lane like it was
a road to jubilation. That hard tarmac

paved our way to joy. But one day
I came awake and when he called,
my throat closed against his name.
"Wrong number," I said, thinking,

what nonsense can stand in for love
now I see passion is only pain
by another name? I'm half-convinced
amour could just as well be a fast car,

a BMW, a Porsche but I'd settle for a Fiat or a Kia,
any kind of car they don't make here.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle

Sombrero

Maggie's redneck husband was relentless
when he found the fat man's letters
about Maggie's thighs and breasts.

In evenings of ion and suspicion, the wind blew
the stars around over their valley
and the moon came up and shined the cattle
while the lake moved like a fish rodeo.

But when speaking of betrayal,
there is barely anything new to say,
nothing novel about infidelity,
nothing cutting edge about a blond hairstyle

which as we know, is nothing but
a wild sombrero, aglow above
your ordinary, carbon-based life.

Donald Illich

The Known Fires

One burned on top of a mountain,
never going out, constantly hit

by the gods' lightning, in place
of zapping another deserving mortal.

Another smoked on a sea of oil,
which they'd never be able to clean,

loading the sky with smog and gas.
A hundred singed the open plains,

eating the grass that barely held
the dirt together through the winds.

And a hundred more lit the darkness
in a town made of lamps and propane,

smelling the scent of fumes everywhere.
But it was the smallest blaze that left

its mark, fed by birds, consuming houses,
killing those who waited too long to escape.

That was a flame worth worshipping.
that even the heavens would watch,

hoping it did not reach their gates,
wishing we could extinguish it totally.

Donald Ilich

Where the Child Belongs

Some say he could be raised up
by his mother toward the sky, so
all in the village could see his height,
power. They'll bow before him,
handing over assorted gifts to him,

from powders to diamonds. Others
view him as a devil seed, who should
be left on a mountain to be devoured
by a lion. They don't want to name him,
for fear that he might gain from words,

enabling him to charm other children
to his cause. What he is to himself
no one knows; he seems innocent,
but perhaps he's too blameless.
He talks to animals in their language,

but he somehow forgets the speech
of crows and buzzards. Most agree
he should be raised in a normal home,
where he'll learn how to read and mow
the grass, nail boards and drive a car.

If we find any danger, it will be from
our occasional visits as uncles, aunts.
We look closely for signs on his body,
a wen or a number. We believe we'll
know a monster when we spot one.

Laine Kuehn

Twilight

The hawk comes for the jay, sweeping in
from the southeast white pine.
Her shadow travels briefly over snow
before it is swallowed by darkness
made bluer by dusk.

The man at the window,
one hand hidden in a dishcloth,
does not see what happens—only the shadow moving,
the precise descent.

An imperfect, golden tapestry
spills from the kitchen window into the dimness,
where it seems as though nothing is moving
but branches.

It is quiet for a time
both inside and outside the house.

Laine Kuehn

Without Keening

Like silk
being drawn over a body
in the dark, the grief comes.

Not even the veery's call
with its hundred fragile fingers
can pull it aside. The sound fills the trees,
rolls along them like two white marbles
down a glass funnel.

The silk smells slightly sweet:
cardamom and honey.
It is feather-light.
It is so long
it could wrap around a thousand bodies
and still trail into the sea.

Elizabeth Landrum

Layers in the litter

i

There is poetry hidden in the litter.
If I stay still long enough, a thirst
will take me there — Touch
fallen feathers long forgotten by the owl,
river-tumbled stones, one finger of a bat wing,
mound of silver lichen cuddled with twigs,
honeycombed bone of antler shed from
its pedicle, just after the velvet withered.
Remember
the times you carried my pack,
helped me cross rushing streams on a log.

ii

Surely you know that I, too, have cursed
the young buck that rutted on rosemary shrubs,
because they were mine, and I had plans.
And I have scorned the bat in my rafters
because I felt fear, though I didn't know why.
Yet I have welcomed the echoes of owls,
as if they were given to expand us,
and I never believed a tree would notice
its missing pieces, never knew that my boots
would matter to the lichen-covered rock.

Elizabeth Landrum

iii

Yes, I have swallowed more well- polished lies,
now stones in my throat, and I have come to love
a store of things that looked like ours for the taking.
How hard to unravel the passed-down lines
twisted into every sinew and synapse. How hard to
envision this planet where the ones who are gone
are the ones who were gifted with minds
that could plan and imagine, outlasted
by those who could not speak
their poetry in words. Listen
as trees carry on their conversations
in silence . If we leave it, the lichen will last,
turning stone into soil so something else
might grow. Bats will adapt as they have
for millions of years. Owls will still fly
with missing feathers. Antlers will thicken,
branch, then shed again. What is lost
will be forgotten, while all that remain
will go on making more of themselves
for as long as they can

iv

Some time before our final apologies
when we are no longer lulled into believing
that we can own the future, let grief
become our lullaby, and hope
be redefined. Let us prolong peace,
if not our species, and not forget the layers
left lying in the litter. Attend
to what matters—the music of water,
patterns in a feather, a circle of hands
around the fading fire.

Michael Lauchlan

Fortune

She told me how they'd laugh,
looking back at us
shopping for cars or hats

as neighbors are piled into vans
and hustled out of sight.
When I asked if we might

remain invisible, she took
a thoughtful drag and smiled
unbrightly, a whiff of smoke

seeping from her gown. Reasons
will drain from us, she said,
like blood from a headless bird.

Michael Lauchlan

Yeats Calls

poetry a quarrel with the self.
When I argue with my lover,

I see an eyebrow rise and long
to take her side against my own.

She holds in turn worlds within.
How can I ignore children

trying to board a train, those
her eyes find first as they cling

to a mother's coat? I can't miss
her rage at men who disinherit
the meek. How can I ignore—

that woman sitting there—
what breaks a stanza's heart?
what lights an iamb's fuse?

James Miller

August 2017

On inauguration day, I promised a poem
every Tuesday,
 for the duration.

The fourteen that followed?

Last night's sirloin
left a stain in the center
of our favorite pan.

There is no sign of the frogs
that lived under the hedge
early this summer.

Would that I could feed
the wasps, fill up their maws
with fray and trace:
paper for their cozy nests.

Years ago I heard the Quakers say:
 Woe unto the bloody city
 of Lichfield!

I would ask for less.

A rustling and a supping.
 Beetles drowsed
 in their gloaming damp.

James Miller

Two Approaches to Dead Time

i

The train to Chicago,
on the South Shore Line
from Hammond—

you're hobbling past harrowed
households, slow enough
to look again.

But don't. One glance
will call down the flames,
melt swingsets to holy sonnets.

ii

Wal-Mart parking lot, 8:32 PM, scoring
isopropyl and applicators for the show.
Black car: its low engine

thin as metro popcorn sludge.
He rattles and stops ten feet away,
slams and stands. Gun, or gurn?

Two handfuls of heikegani burp
from his bowels, scatter among
monster trucks and Christmas carts.

Karen June Olson

A River

A river snakes lowlands, gathers
rain and wind blown
seeds, ferries folks
and summer picnics,
a fishing pole, a kayak,
children who will leap off
a dock.

But a river is not
a dream—
it's our fathers homemade stew, chemical
plants, the garbage barge, and weed-free
fields waving grain.

There's a hush in the house
where the cards are dealt—what glow
leaks from the landfill?

All things run
all things run
down to the river.

We forget
what is drawn
from the faucet.

Karen June Olson

Voice Lessons from a Writing Class

She had forgotten her armor,
hid behind veils of addiction, relapse,
and crashed cars. Only the wall clock
spoke with loud ticking seconds.
I wondered if she cared less
for poems and more for razors
to sharpen her voice.

In the valley a dirty wind
swirled. If I followed
her to the river
—would she keep her dress,
leave her boots in the reeds, cradle
stones?

Rivers speak stories in water.
I couldn't hear
what she had left to say.

Matthew S. Parsons

Betcha Didn't

I bet you didn't know
your uncle was an undertaker
Man he done took under more men than any man had a
right to
if any man had a right to anyway

Yeah, maybe he drank a little
Maybe it got to him

Maybe he spent last Friday
walking around the tree in his front yard
with a rifle shouting out for God and everybody to hear
"Damn it I've treed you now you coony son of a biscuit!"

I guess a person could imagine he found his way
up in that tree after that coon
and fell out
Killed hisself
the poor bastard

And maybe he did
Maybe he wasn't all there

But I bet you didn't know he was tough neither
I bet you didn't know he chewed coal like cud
When you sat up straight
in the saddle
on your high horse
and he was layed up
in his homemade coffin

betcha didn't know he spit fire

Matthew S. Parsons

Honky Tonka

I slipped a curve
swerved on a country road
and saw a load of busters
flustered and fighting at a night time stop
with a couple rag tops slopped over to the side
of the parking lot

The dance hall stalled with all the big trucks
tucked into tiny spaces
defaced with bulky bodies
bad mileage
and silage sitting in the drivers seats

Men were creeping on the street
preaching at the air
and pairing their banned bourbon with purple pills
They were silly old boys acting like young ones
fumbling for first in a sand box boxing match
Then they left their toys in the dirt
and slipped inside to flirt with all the older women
who sinning won't abide
best leave that stuff outside

John Sweet

notes on the aftermath

and then after
your lover's suicide you
spend a year painting
nothing but death

you dig tunnels
that go nowhere

fill them with broken glass

with the splintered
teeth of strangers

leave the door at the end
of the hall open in
case the
house begins to fall

John Sweet

poem like the faded hearts of martyrs

the minotaur in his labyrinth,
which is as it should be,
and all the ships lost at sea

the planes
which disappear

turn up again
hundreds of miles away
in a thousand smoking pieces
and everyone dead

everyone dead

so many bells to ring and
none of them make
any sound at all

William Walsh

Raising Flowers in December

My daughter is running her fingers up and down the piano
this afternoon, practicing her scales as snow falls
on the geraniums in a terracotta pot
on the back porch, now, about an inch thick.

I bought these geraniums at Home Depot a few weeks ago
during spring break, planted them in black dirt, carefully
watered and weeded them, checking each day for buds.
Lately, the weather's turned warm

and I've been walking around in plaid shorts
and a Duke t-shirt—just yesterday, I sat on the porch
enjoying what's left of The Masters—beer in one hand,
Sharon Olds and Marie Howe in the other. But now,

a nor'easter has swooped down without warning:
school's out, roads shut down,
hot chocolate simmering on the stove.
As I carry the flower pot into the house

to where Olivia's fingers are cascading down the keyboard,
I want the flowers to hear her arpeggios
gliding into the opening of "Come Sail Away" by Styx,
to experience the beauty of her music.

Her brothers, sitting at the kitchen table, are arguing
over a game of Risk. I want the flowers to know
I am saving them from the uncertainty of the future.
These geraniums can live in my house, forever.

William Walsh

Wine Tasting at Wilber and Rudy's Farm Table

After six days of rain, I have the night to savor, hours
to smell the uncorked Bordeaux flowing like the
Dordogne,

where couples walk hand in hand
over stone bridges, admiring the steep cliffs.

From across the room, I search beyond the guests
squeezing between one another, slowly, from one
sommelier

to the next, until I find the understated white pearls
and red dress as lovely as a nude descending a staircase.

As if hovering in a dream above the gallery, the oaky aroma
undresses the future and swirls under my tongue, the desire

to dance with her, the dry taste evaporating
behind our lips. The vintners bless our faith

in the grape, cajole the lingering after-taste—one jokes
about the Gironde estuary in France, where your tongue

will find romance. I could step out of myself, pretend
to be a billionaire and imagine you in diamonds

and nothing else. Sometimes we know what we shouldn't
know,
how in the wine rests the essence of refusal.

This is all I have: the flesh
of my words pressing against your lips.

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Authors

Scott Coykendall teaches journalism, technical communication, and other writing courses at Plymouth State University. His poems have appeared in *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *The Cossack Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, and *Quarterly West*.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle, who lives and writes in the Ozarks, is the author of two books and five chapbooks, most recently, *They Went to the Beach to Play* (LoCoFo Chaps, 2017).

Donald Illich's poetry has appeared in journals such as *The Iowa Review* and *Passages North*. His latest chapbook is *The Art of Dissolving* (Finishing Line Press 2016). *Chance Bodies* was just published by The Word Works.

Laine Kuehn, a graduate of Denver School of the Arts and the University of Maine—Farmington, is a steering committee member of the Belfast Poetry Festival and co-creator and co-editor of *The Lark*, an online literature and arts magazine.



Underwater Swimmers © 2018 by Maria Filopoulou

Elizabeth Landrum, a retired clinical psychologist, enjoys a quiet life with her wife and dog in the Pacific Northwest. Previous publications include *Cirque*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Shark Reef*, *Soundings Review*, and *Southern Women's Review*.

Michael Lauchlan has poems in publications such as *The Dark Horse*, *Louisville Review*, *New England Review*, *The North American Review*, *Poetry* and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. His most recent collection is *Trumbull Ave*.

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Matthew S. Parsons grew up in a farming family in West Virginia before moving to Kentucky to attend Berea College. He lives now on a family homestead and works as a musician and luthier while earning his MFA from Eastern Kentucky University's Bluegrass Writers Studio.

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William Walsh is the director of the Etowah Valley Low-Residency MFA Program at Reinhardt University. His new collection of poems, *Fly Fishing in Times Square*, recently won the Cervena Barva Press Editors Series Prize.

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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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