

# The 2River View

16.3 (Spring 2012)



Christina Antipa, Victoria Anderson, Katherine Berta  
David Ebenbach, Shirley Glubka, Howie Good, D. Lifland  
Jo McDougall, Linda McCullough Moore  
Laurence O'Dwyer, Sally Van Doren



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**Cover**

*Starry Night with a Wagon in Yellow and Orange with Red*

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*If This Be Not I in Deep Orange with Red*  
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*Christina Antipa*

## **Vultures**

I saw vultures playing today.

*No, they were fighting.*

But one wasn't chasing  
and the other wasn't running away  
and they dipped and swirled  
like big black leaves.

I saw vultures play just as children do.

*No, they were courting.*

But one wasn't chasing  
and the other wasn't running away.  
The sky looked wet and satisfied  
and desert animals printed messages in the sand  
with their feet.

I saw two vultures flap lazily.

One kissed the other's cheek  
with her death-encrusted beak.

They were not in a hurry  
as the sun crested on their pink heads  
and made them both glisten  
bright with blood.

*Victoria Anderson*

## **Low Songs**

In this old stone corridor with its narrowing plank of sunlight, the throatiest coo in Mexico comes from the pigeon above. Just death in another disguise. At the Mercado a cardboard child's toy is a funeral procession complete with a treadmill for moving the mourners. The last turn of the crank provides the coffin. Last night the flamenco singer's voice registered as low as the pigeon's. No translation was necessary. Here no one is trying to beat death. Elbow to elbow they walk toward it. I'm tired of pumping myself full of remedies. Next month I will go to my mother's grave and spread a blanket of marigolds. At five we'll share a cocktail mixed strong. I'll transport beauty and arrange it just so. Then I'll explain the dance, the thundering purple shoes, the lift of the skirt, and the dancer's hands working like birds, furious with ecstasy and death.



*Victoria Anderson*

## **Summer's Noble Species**

O the spotting and naming of summer's notable species  
the lesser the common the varied

but names cannot tame  
the young male Ruby-throated hummingbird  
who masquerades as female from spring to fall

or the smallest hummingbird  
in the guise of a moth

or the largest moth the Death's Head Hawthorne  
who carries a skull-shaped pattern on his back  
and drops wing dust when flying towards light

and while a moth is never a butterfly  
butterflies arose within moths and were beautiful

.  
no clubbed antennae or brown wings  
just slender smooth abdomens never gorged  
on night blooming plants

no gorging is for the moths and microbats  
for the Greater Noctule bat believed  
to catch and eat small birds in midair

much can be expected of those dark velvety  
things whose forelimbs serve as wings

whose small teeth can bite a sleeping man  
who might never feel the sting  
who might wake convinced and chant

O false vampire big-eyed spear-nosed sucker-footed  
O funnel-eared communal rooster  
O large and naked O sacred summer bat

*Katherine Berta*

**Rib**

You, of whom  
I am supposedly made,  
tighten your fingers  
around a lung.  
If you open out  
I am splayed,  
animal  
meant to be  
carved up;  
in it there is a justice—  
take me away from here,  
this filet going to him,  
that to her,  
everything in pieces.

You told me  
you've changed your mind—  
there's no such thing as sin,  
only the division of a person  
from parts of himself,  
the organs seceding  
one after another,  
the thoughts too.  
What, then, am I,  
meted out—  
what can I contain  
(everything defined  
by what it holds)—this bone  
there, that spleen, heart?  
If you take me,  
you take me apart.

*Katherine Berta*

## **To Sew, To Cook**

We take the work in hand.  
You take it by the hip, to guide it,  
you say. You shoot  
from the hip, as they  
say. The lisping consonants  
work themselves, trace  
the edges of a lip, laze against  
the head of a bed.

The things you say here  
gather meaning to meaning,  
a ruching, a folding over,  
a bending  
to reveal something  
gross or intimate.  
A thing built to contain.

We put things inside—  
let us jar  
sugar, flour, let us  
shelve the jars. This is  
comforting, the arabesque  
of a kitchen. The folding logic  
of appliances  
meant to be stored. Once it's gone  
inside, it is gone. Once we eat,  
we eat.  
Make it about  
containment—what may I hold  
with my hands  
or otherwise? What may I hold  
in my mouth?

*David Ebenbach*

## **Panegyric**

She can't see much out the window—  
the lights in the jewelry store  
are too bright, bright off the  
expensive things and their glass cases—

but she can see her kids in the car,  
the girl old enough to watch the boy  
a few minutes. Inside, the man  
behind the counter smiles, leans

forward with his hands  
on the glass cases. He can tell  
the mother's not here to buy.  
From her coat, from her face.

In her hand, a small clutch  
of things: her wedding ring, now  
pointless, two bracelets, a necklace  
she loves, because her father

gave it to her before he drank up  
their prosperity. (Shift-weary, she  
remembers never having to work  
as a girl. She remembers

the cushioned house of a  
country doctor.) But there's  
little substance in memory;  
she opens her hand for the man

behind the counter. She'll do this  
and then she can take the kids  
to the market. The man  
leans forward some more.

*David Ebenbach*

## **Things We Can Be Sure About**

Certainly our mother  
put plastic bags around our feet  
before we stepped into boots.

We pointed our toes into the sharp corners,  
as though the bags were carefully shaped for feet,  
but our heels were loose in plastic space.

And then our feet stayed dry,  
aside from our own sweat,  
which left our skin dead and white.

The snow outside was high,  
standing over us like grownups  
on either side of a shoveled path.

Certainly we were wary of snowballs,  
which required aim,  
and raised the body's fear of ice.

But the hallway out to the front door  
was dark and taller than any grownup,  
haunted even in full-on daytime.

Certainly we knew what meant what  
as we stood in the vestibule on overinsulated feet,  
between the snow pushed up against the porch  
and the heat of the well-known house.

*Shirley Glubka*

## **The Bone Goddess**

Ten years she stands  
stoic, silent  
in this under-heated room.

If a goddess is given,  
let her be spare.

I am not a Goddess person,  
but the bone —  
the bone is another matter.

*Shirley Glubka*

### **Comes the Clear and Humble Poem**

Daily the difficult, the inexplicable, the gift.

Grit to transparency ground,  
deeply tinted, heated,  
carefully cooled,  
broken.

Pieces then, fitted and placed,  
based.

Lead seals the treacherous,  
the accidental / edges.

*Howie Good*

## **RKQD4NV**

Tell me something interesting. About constellations. Or Portland, Oregon. Maybe Facebook. One of those. Everyone I know who has a job hates it. I find running at the bottom of a swimming pool relieves faux pain. Last night Jesus appeared again on TV claiming that he was Betty Lou. And though there was no wind, the puddles shivered. None of this could really happen, of course, until it does.



*Howie Good*

## **Underworld**

1

Traveling through streets of winos, we held hands the whole time, the driver taking us wherever he had been paid to go. You spoke of home, the curious blue fog, a funeral attended by only four mourners. I wanted to say something, too, but it was now night and rainy, and I had just enough body to keep a soul in.

2

I wake up feeling no better—worse, in fact. The news advertises the apocalypse. I think about changing my name and leaving, but I can't while I'm still half-asleep. And where's there to go, anyway, on a morning being built from cannibalized parts?

*D. Lifland*

## **The Doctor's Hands**

My grandfather paid his way  
through college & medical school,  
playing the piano in bars, restaurants & night clubs  
in Boston, New York & Philadelphia.  
In my parent's living room  
is a picture of him in a tuxedo  
sitting on a piano bench,  
his fingers splayed on the keys.  
He looks young & handsome.  
My grandmother said the first thing  
she noticed about him were his hands.

Later, when he had his own practice  
& could afford a piano,  
he'd play for my grandmother  
while she ate dinner.  
Then he lost a finger in an accident  
& immediately sold the piano.  
In all the pictures taken afterwards,  
his hands are behind his back.

*D. Lifland*

## **The Figurine**

I left the jade green elephant at her apartment.  
She brought it back from a work trip to India as a gift  
& I placed it on her dresser that night.  
I enjoyed looking at it when I stayed over.

It was a handsome elephant with a strong trunk  
& a wonderful color that sparkled  
in the lamplight. And it had a wise expression,  
like it knew something about this world.

I'm glad I never took it home.  
Given the circumstances, I would've  
placed it in a box on the second shelf in my closet  
with the other things.

*Jo McDougall*

## **Grace**

Because you have willingly lost  
an empire, effectively disinheriting  
your children;  
because you have wasted every talent  
ever given you;  
because each crystal moment of your life  
you have trumped with greed—  
you can now relax  
into the state  
of grace denied—  
never being called upon to love  
or grieve at funerals  
or say Thank you.

*Jo McDougall*

### **In Meadowlake Park**

Taking the park's long path,  
I come upon a family of four:  
father smoking a huge cigar,  
mother in purple flip-flops,  
boys ages three and five  
by my hasty reckoning—  
racing on their jubilant trikes.

A dispute breaks out between the boys.  
The father hands the cigar to his wife,  
kneels beside the boys, his voice  
quiet, deliberate, cutting the air  
the way he might peel an orange.

Then tenuously, as if from a frame  
stopped in slow motion, the four  
begin again—father reclaiming  
his cigar, mother retrieving  
a flip-flop she'd stepped out of,  
boys wobbling, subdued and fallen,

the wheels of their tricycles rolling now,  
orderly now, as a brisk cloud  
reaches toward the sun to reproach it.

*Linda McCullough Moore*

### **Hawthorn Mountain**

My friend Nancy tells me she'll be buried on this summer's hill  
where daysprings meet the aging farmer before dawn has torn  
the covers  
from the night; where beauty is at home. And so it will be when  
Nancy's three mean daughters have grown old themselves  
and one day travel long to stand beside her grave, they  
will have to run the gauntlet of this grace, come face  
to face with what is beautiful in what we have  
not made, stand on the highest rise  
above the valley  
thinking what a thing a lifetime is.

Let not even I imply she should have saved her money, spent the  
eleven thousand, three hundred and fifty dollars on Lipitor and  
long term care insurance, thus assuring these three daughters  
not even really nice as children—would burn her body up and  
pay some stranger to sprinkle the ashes (that is what they will  
call us then) out on the Atlantic, because, "Mother liked the sea."  
The sea: that grave no one will frown if you don't visit.

There are not many ways to bring our children home.

Linda McCullough Moore

## One Plan

My grandmother spent years dying. Always slightly terminal.  
I think there was a lot of that sort of thing back then.

And then she died. Just like that.

She was only six years older than I am now.

I thought she was a hundred.

Anticipating death was just a thing my family did.

When my little sister Eileen was in the ninth grade

(I would have been safely off at college, dealing with death

Only on holidays and school vacations),

they thought my Aunt Ethel was checking out,

and asked Eileen to spend the night with her.

“No,” Eileen said. “I’m sure she’d rather be alone,  
and get a good night’s rest tonight.”

Eileen didn’t go. But neither did Aunt Ethel, eighty-five and  
mean and strong today.

Maybe if I think I’m dying, I could send for Eileen, and she’ll refuse,  
I’m very certain, just won’t come, and neither will my death.

There should be some little ritual like that when you are dying.

Some delay procedure you learn in advance that signals,

*No, not just at this moment. Give me five minutes,  
just to catch my breath.*

*Not yet.*

*Not quite yet.*

*Laurence O'Dwyer*

## **On Precipitation**

How is it that I never learned any of that language?  
That old weakness whereby what we understand  
is forgotten instantly,  
and what remains hidden in a symbol  
remembered always, never to precipitate.

People too are like language: never experiment!  
The ones I weighed out into test tubes have disappeared long ago!

The ones I kept in bottles are in bottles still. Brighter now.  
Their crystals harder, like a pharmacy that has been locked up  
for eternity.



*Laurence O'Dwyer*

## **Stroh Violin**

You would ring at one o'clock every Sunday,  
or a little after. That stroh violin,  
with its resonator and string.

It's sound is a guide for the perplexed—  
patented in German, 1846.

Now it's one or a little after. This is not sad.  
I want to tell you, simply: I have fallen  
in love again. Make no big plans.

Just play that stroh violin and be glad.

*Sally Van Doren*

## **Bound**

Whoever impeached my son, whoever  
punched my son, whoever collapsed  
on my son, breaking the brittle  
cartoon appliquéd to our front door —  
I forgive you. Your rash wheezing, though,  
is no substitute for doing the breakfast dishes.  
We dawdle at the hospital, eyeing the reclusive  
personnel who stalk the emergency room  
without name tags. The shrill whistle  
of the ambulance metabolizes our  
genetic predisposition to nurture. In this vial,  
his soul's magma coagulates with the slab  
of sentimentality I threw in. I threw it in  
hoping that it would thwart the condensing process.  
I threw it in, unmediated, without the silly man's interference.  
It was a risk and now I wait to see if our porcelain iris  
will expand or contract. If you would like to join me  
on this indistinct stoop, then take the thorn  
out of your cleft chin and have a seat.

*Sally Van Doren*

## **Monopoly**

Trapped in incentive alley  
the fuming board game  
revised its diffident warehouse  
and strutted out into the membrane  
ignoring the undercurrents of flame  
and adrenaline. The magnet  
zipped in its larynx elongated  
and with each gulp coins and  
jewelry flew to its throat.  
With binoculars it was possible  
to detect the receding compulsion,  
that urge, some might call it,  
to climax again and again.  
Here, take this tablet if you  
can't yet live the allusion.  
This goblet's tenured. There's  
no mystique about it. If you  
check the watermark on the quit deed,  
you will know your eyes are dilated  
and your personal aquarium  
is ready for your morning dip.  
The tide is inconsolable.

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## Contributors

Victoria Anderson directs the Writing Program at Loyola University in Chicago. Her poems have appeared in *Agni*, *Cortland Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and *Mississippi Review*. *Vorticity*, her second book of poems, is forthcoming from Mammoth Press.

Christina Antipa, a songwriter who lives and works in California, has composed and recorded four albums. A poet, too, she is now editing a collection of poems written in Seattle, Washington, from 2005 to 2007.

Katie Berta, an Ohio native now living in Tempe, Arizona, is a recent graduate of Arizona State's MFA program.

David Ebenbach has appeared here at 2River and elsewhere at *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *Subtropics*. *Between Camelots* (U. of Pittsburgh Press) won the Drue Heinz Literature Prize.



*The Night Studio in Maroon Red* © 2012 by Endi Poskovic

Shirley Glubka, a retired psychotherapist, is the author of *Green Surprise of Passion: Writings of a Trauma Therapist*. Her poetry has appeared in *h.o.m.e. Words*, *Narramissic Notebook*, *Puckerbrush Review*, *Seems*, and *Sinister Wisdom*.

Howie Good is the author *Dreaming in Red*. Proceeds from the sale of the book go to a crisis center. His chapbooks include *The Devil's Fuzzy Slippers* (Flutter Press) and *Personal Myths* (Writing Knights Press).

D. Lifland has been published in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Compass Rose*, *descant*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Red Cedar Review*, and *The South Carolina Review*.

Linda McCullough Moore is the author of the short story collection *This Road Will Take Us Closer to the Moon* and the novel *The Distance Between*.

Jo McDougall, a native of Arkansas, now lives in Kansas City. Her five books of poetry include, most recently, *Dirt and Satisfied with Havoc* (Autumn House Press) and the chapbook *Under an Arkansas Sky* (Tavern Books). *Daddy's Money: a Memoir of Farm and Family* was published in 2011 by the U. of Arkansas Press.

Laurence O'Dwyer won the 2005 Hennessy New Irish Writing Award for poetry. He holds a PhD in paradigms of memory formation from Trinity College Dublin and is a research fellow at Goethe University.

Sally Van Doren curates the Sunday Poetry Series for the St. Louis Poetry Center. *Sex at Noon Taxes* (LSU Press) won the 2008 Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets. Her next collection, *Possessive*, is forthcoming from LSU Press in fall 2012. "Preposition" is featured as an animated film in the Poetry Foundation's Poetry Everywhere.

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### **About the Artist**

Endi Poskovic is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, most recently from the John D. Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center (2010) and The Open Studio Centre, Canada (2009 and 2008). His graphic works are in the permanent collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and elsewhere. Poskovic teaches at the University of Michigan, holding a dual appointment in the School of Art and Design and the Center for Russian and East European Studies.

### **About 2River**

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry and art, quarterly publishing *The 2River View*, occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series.

Richard Long, Editor  
2River  
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# 2RV

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