

# The 2River View

10.1 (Fall 2005)



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New Poems by  
Arlene Ang, Lightsey Darst, Matthew Flaming  
Richard Freed, Laura McCullough, Lauren Mitchell  
Ed Shannon, Henry Stanton, Lisa Zaran, Kirk VanDyke



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*The 2River View, 10.1 (Fall 2005)*

**Contents**

*Richard Freed*

On the Morning That You'll Die

*Arlene Ang*

The 49th Day

Schoolgirl Knees

*Lightsey Darst*

Notes to the Fifth Lover

Proxy

*Matthew Flaming*

Four Couplets

*Laura McCullough*

Axis Around Which

Religion Is the New Black



*Systems Gave Birth to the Cage* © 2005 by Gregory Euclide

*Lauren Mitchell*  
Nonlinear Dynamics  
Some Chickens

*Ed Shannon*  
All Things Must End  
Sacrifices

*Henry Stanton*  
Frustration  
Lust

*Kirk VanDyke*  
I Wish to See Your Face  
Without It

*Lisa Zaran*  
The Blues Are All the Same  
Tenderness

*The 2River View, 10.1 (Fall 2005)*

*Richard Freed*

**On the Morning That You'll Die\***

I shall eat red cherries  
on the morning that you'll die

The first I'll mix with bitter herbs  
and watch your faint light passing

The last I'll join with my own blood  
and drain to everlasting

\* Although the six lines above can of course be read as a poem, they also can be sung like a light-hearted Celtic folk song, followed by a hummed refrain of the reader's choosing, and repeated as many times as desired. A sing-a-long usually increases the experience.

Arlene Ang

### **The 49th Day**

He breathes, and slowly, dreams of falling:  
this is where we overlap hands, sometimes

voices. Moon waxes inside a bubble coming  
down the IV tube; the night nurse calls it

the unavoidable extinction of bluefish, not  
unlike pulling dried stitches out of a wound.

The oxygen tank is dark-green and gurgles,  
*refillable* another word for *tomorrow*.

Somehow I keep thinking he needs a haircut,  
20 ml more of water, some vanishing cream

on his legs. It's easy to get lost between  
Bach fugues and Fauré's Pie Jesu like a scratch

in the vinyl record. Yesterday he talked about  
going back: that pond where they caught

tadpoles, those lemon trees in the horizon,  
his mother, brown-capped and smelling

slightly of burnt candle wax. A robin idles  
outside the window: isn't there another way

to say goodbye? At brief intervals, he wakes.  
Together we listen to the gathering silence.



*Arlene Ang*

**Schoolgirl Knees**

waver a pulse of rain, the evening  
shallow and plasmic like an artificial

pond in late winter. The after-dinner  
mint foil by her hand, waterlogged,

eyes the photographer's lens.  
Soil. Her left shoulder forms a cusp

of moon. She is anonymous,  
like rigor mortis, the feral odor

of latex. Police lines throat a yellow  
ring-a-round the rosie. She: bloodless

stump, the slaughtered doe.  
Distant lightning glistens car hoods,

the coroner's black shoes, her red  
nails, the stillness of freckled skin.

*Lightsey Darst*

**Notes to the Fifth Lover**

In winter I wanted easy things: peeled  
apples, strawberries with the caps cut off,  
you. But in winter  
no one leaves-only spring.

Sitting in my chair on the last  
day of May, wrapped up. We are sad, almost  
all the time. But with the snow  
on the sill, I stayed  
too cold to feel it.

Did you think I didn't love before you came?  
Seasons only can be of interest:

berries that brighten, shrivel, burn  
and fall away.

*Lightsey Darst*

**Proxy**

My eyes live  
so far from  
my mouth they don't  
speak the same language. Because no word

blinds my eyes they stay  
bound to outline, motive spiral. While his body  
remains lovely, my eyes cannot

say they do not love him.

When my mouth says it,  
neither my hands nor  
my feet nor the conjurer's rope  
of my spine

believes me.

*Matthew Flaming*

**Four Couplets**

1/

Walking through the quiet Polish neighborhood in Brooklyn, alone on a warm evening near the beginning of that summer, he saw a little girl dancing by herself to the sound of a tinny polka playing on the glowing cellphone that she clutched in her upraised, twirling hand. It was, he'd thought then, the most modern thing he'd ever seen.

*Matthew Flaming*

2/

Over the course of eleven years they'd traded a vast assortment of unthinking nods, smiles and inclinations of the head in the hallways of the building where they both worked, but had spoken less than a dozen words; it took her a month to notice that he was gone. On the day that she did, Shellie bought two bottles of wine and drank them both, alone at home that night, and thought about all the places she'd never traveled to, and cried.

## *Matthew Flaming*

3/

My friend dreamed that his job was to go to various sporting events, dressed in a cow costume, and dance for the crowd. In this dream, he told me, my friend felt a satisfying sense of pity for another man, who was also dancing in a cow costume, because my friend's costume was new and expensive, with a large shiny udder, while the other man's suit was old and decrepit and slightly threadbare.

*Matthew Flaming*

4/

On the 10th floor of the skyscraper, sitting in the lobby of the auction-house where she was about to sell the last of the family jewels, the young woman looked out a window and saw a man in coveralls, on the roof of a neighboring building, lowering a flag from its pole. As he unfastened the flag from the rope a sudden gust of wind took hold of the fabric and wrenched it from his hands, carrying it up over the street: a brief, bright bird.

*Lauren McCullough*

**Axis Around Which**

In Lakewood that weekend, three boys  
died; the Sabbath, you know, and no one

could turn off the stove left on accidentally  
as night fell. And all weekend it burned,

and the family that believed, slept anyway,  
and then the fire, and the trucks arrived

in 3.5 minutes, less than the average, but  
not good enough. What now has fallen

on their heads, this mamma and poppa,  
like all mammas and poppas who protect

their children and hold their hands up  
to fend off the falling mountain of sky

and the world so tumblingly fertile  
that it makes the head spin? As if each

of us were at the center of the earth,  
the axis around which it all revolves.

Imagine your arms and legs extended,  
the world depending on you, but you

know you're inadequate every waking  
minute and week and month and year

and millennium, and how you try so hard  
until at last you can't help but fall asleep.



*Laura McCullough*

**Religion is the New Black**

Across the meager river  
there is a woman  
lying in a muddy pool;

her hands open  
and close around  
the drying air, pleasure

in a faint breeze across  
her sliced lips whispering  
all she needs to hear.

We wear religion, brown  
the new black, faithful nothing  
goes out of fashion.

It isn't religion, but water  
and a horizon like a precipice  
off which we could dive.

*Lauren Mitchell*

## **Nonlinear Dynamics**

A gun fires and something living  
falls into the mud, expels oxygen,  
is swallowed by molecules,  
but is still separate. Separated.  
It's no different from an equation  
whose answer makes you uneasy.

It's the separation that vexes me.

Or when missiles fly renegade  
down onto a hospital and separate duty  
from common sense, and the Cambodian girl  
whose face was separated from her skull  
by a Pol Pot mine, or how blood  
diffuses in water.

It's not a problem of physics.

And is not cosmic theory, though may  
want to be. But something beyond Atman.  
Look, as the sky bends, beyond the centrifuge,  
past the blue screen juggernauts,  
can you see them?  
Where smoke furrows on mud and piss  
Can you hear the fissures snaking?

*Lauren Mitchell*

## **Some Chickens**

Inspired by Gustav Klimt's *After the Rain*

Not that chickens are the most noble of fowl, but they thrive in a zen stasis of peck-step—and they know their prey as well as any. An ant of lizard is no match: everything remains in its place. I've seen them in markets dangling by their feet, open mouthed, their sharp tongues protruding, wings spread as if they could fly out of their misery. Or even fly.

And they roam freer than others—

But where would you go if you were a chicken? Out beyond the fences? Into the roads and cities, to get a desk and a chevy? You don't need walls to know them. Like the woman who gazes at the planes overhead while sitting in traffic. Or the man who shoulders his cross up a steep hill and pauses to look at the fields. And those who watched, because we see our face in the eyes of every corpse.

But just look at them stippling the grass among the flowers—it's as if the sky could fall and they would know where to run.

*Ed Shannon*

### **All Things Must End**

Even muscles, drained in splitting  
stumps or heavy fork of haying, stack  
agony like sap dripping from injured

trees until tissues scar, mend,  
subsiding in relief, in new vigor.  
Things build: wheat stretches,

corn expands, weeds wander, weave,  
wallowing in pleasures of abandoned  
spaces, forbidden acres and inches.

Tonight, fire engines scream just one  
block away, rushing to a sudden light.  
Tonight, Mount St. Helen growls in discontent;

Vesuvius, Etna, and others turn one eye upwards.  
Solar flares stretch impossible arms,  
interrupting radio waves, carrying cancer.

We see this only through telescopes, Hubble—our  
minds uneasy with ignorance, mysteries, enigmas.  
Still we slap mosquitos, spray Spring hornets,

trim surging Summer greens, split Fall wood,  
peel Winter flesh. Caught in the joy of doing,  
we embrace these throes with hearts ready to burst.

*Ed Shannon*

## **Sacrifices**

I

Silver oaks spread long roots, thick and twisting, emissaries of abandon, push sod away, stretch to foundations—house, bare feet, other trees far and near. I cut away volunteers rising from base, twice as thick as my thumb, bundled and tied in six foot lengths for recyclers to haul away. But roots? Do I dare to take axe in hand and chop, pull them away from cemented blocks of basement? Like hair some things are easy to trim and discard, but these courtiers of moisture, nourishment, survival, how does one cut that deep, risk destruction, loss of shade that eases stretching out and up?

II

In back yard, next to the flowering plum, a lilac bush, choked with wild grape vines, maintains dead branches in forlorn hope. Chainsaw takes lilac and vine as close to earth as possible. I leave two trees rising from this tangle of death and life. One grows solid and branching, the other a single feeble trunk, bent, leaning to the safety of numbers. Gnarled stumps and bare dirt circle stronger brother, weaker, yearning sibling. In high limbs abandoned vines brown and wither, dark homage to what was. I think of plum tree carved to overturned bowl, like those gracing homes in carefully sculpted developments. Not today, not with warm rain tapping skull where hair once flourished, not today, not today.

*Henry Stanton*

**Frustration**

I can not have that shadow waiting down in the moonless valley for me  
I go down to drive it off  
have faith and pursue the unknown end a black gurgling stream  
my staff shattering the new ice in the hollow of the bend and  
driving off the selfish clouds  
on the other side a fox was killing a cat  
from out here stopped down the steep side of the hill listen at my  
own bark and yowl  
nest of cloths hangers still thrown down on the bed  
even if my wife's been by

up there in my home a strict indoor light  
none of the things have meaning I have found are there any more  
neither are they here smell of crushed onion grass  
sad angry as I am at spring that morning  
blossoms on the cherry tree swell and  
foolish cardinal sings before the breathless sun rises.

*Henry Stanton*

**Lust**

*This species is split!*  
*Aristophanes*

What ache am I for?  
Which direction do you blow?  
Which petal in this search peach and pink orange and green  
fluttering leaves lush rose of the winds?  
Who are you standing in the garden one cocked hip who do you  
want me to be my hands crumbling up clods of black earth?  
Dark lover dirty lover bite down hard on my nipples harsh cracked  
and sweaty lips  
like the day you were born  
make me bleed.  
That was the day that splintered  
our square shaved head with the shaft staff fashioned from the  
broken spade.  
That was the day we grew back up split and put together I will love  
you but  
be myself?  
don't make me laugh  
a filigree of broken bones  
my longing is terrible.

*Kirk VanDyke*

**I Wish to See Your Face**

It is a wait that follows the hours  
a place to call home  
as surely as the breath comes  
the birds an hour before dawn  
the smell of food in the plaza  
and music late at night from windowless houses,  
it continues  
and everyone waits.  
I wish to see your face in dark eyes  
surrounding me,  
to momentarily fool myself into believing there is something more  
than this patience with the passing  
hours.



*Kirk VanDyke*

**Without It**

Someone out there has a word  
the precision of it  
like a great engineering feat  
with high  $R^2$  value  
but the Buckhorn Bar crowd gets by  
with a *fuck it*  
and we all understand  
while sitting sipping a beer  
checking the pockets for loose dollars  
to help pass the time  
that ticks so slowly  
without it.

*Lisa Zaran*

**The Blues Are All The Same**

for Jackson C. Frank

It seems almost too far fetched really,  
too difficult to believe.

This unassuming moon shining like a copper plate.  
These milkcrate blues.

This soft trellis of sound  
wobbling through the wind  
as if pouring out from the window  
of some lonely house on the hill.

How beautiful it is,  
the ghost of your voice,  
haunting this empty valley.

*Lisa Zaran*

**Tenderness**

All around me, the sky with its deep shade of dark.  
The stars.

The moon with its shrunken soul.  
Can I become what I want to become?

Neither wife or mother.  
I am no one and nobody is my lover.

I am afraid  
that when I go mad,  
my father will bow his downy head  
into his silver wings and weep

*My daughter, O my daughter.*

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## **Contributors**

Arlene Ang lives in Venice, Italy, where she edits the Italian edition of *Niederengasse*. Her poetry has recently been published in *Envoi*, *The Pedestal*, *Smiths Knoll*, and *three candles*. Her first full collection of poetry is *The Desecration of Doves*.

Lightsey Darst lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She writes poetry and arts criticism. You can read her work online at *Blue Fifth Review*, *canwehaveourballbacki*, and [martists.org](http://martists.org).

Recently featured in *New American Paintings*, Gregory Euclide explores in his art the relationship of space and landscape. In his work, for instance, a wind current carrying spores from a decaying marsh could very well allude to the entropy of particles.

Matthew Flaming is an MFA student in the New York University creative writing program. His short fiction and critical essays have appeared both online and in print. He can be found online at [www.matthewflaming.com](http://www.matthewflaming.com).

Richard Freed is the author of *Writing Winning Business Proposals* and *The Variables of Composition*. A professor in the Rhetoric and Professional Communication program at Iowa State University, Freed began writing poetry a few years ago and has since published in *The Adirondack Review*, *The Melic Review*, and *Octavo*.

Laura McCullough teaches at Brookdale Community College, New Jersey, where she chairs the Visiting Writers Series. Her work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Iron Horse Review*, and *Poetry East*. *The Dancing Bear* (Open Book Press) is due in late 2005.

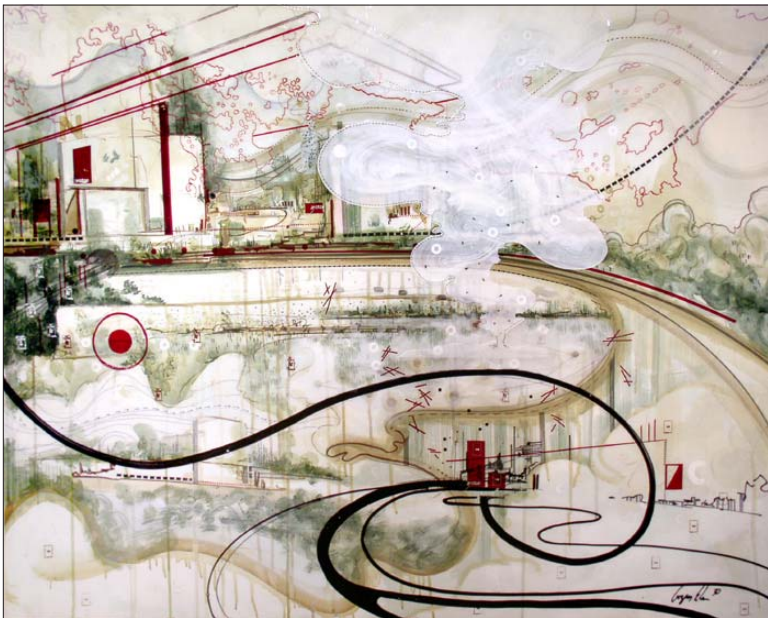
Lauren Mitchell lives in Honolulu, Hawaii, and is beginning the process of thinking about trying to complete her BA in English.

Ed Shannon lives, writes, and teaches high school and college courses in rural Minnesota.

Henry Stanton lives in Ellicott City, Maryland. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *Avatar*, *The Baltimore Sun Magazine*, *The Maryland Poetry Review*, and *Smokelong Quarterly*. "Paradise" was short listed for the Carve Magazine Raymond Carver award.

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Lisa Zaran is a poet and essayist living in Arizona. Her book-length collections include *the sometimes girl* (InnerCircle Publishing) and *You Have A Lovely Heart* (Little Poem Press).



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**About 2River**

Since 1996, 2River has been a site of poetry, art, and theory, quarterly publishing *The 2River View* and occasionally publishing individual authors in the 2River Chapbook Series. All publications first appear on-line, then in print.

Richard Long, Editor  
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