

The 2River View

10.1 (Fall 2005)



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New Poems by
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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

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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 *Niederngasse*. 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.

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.

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.

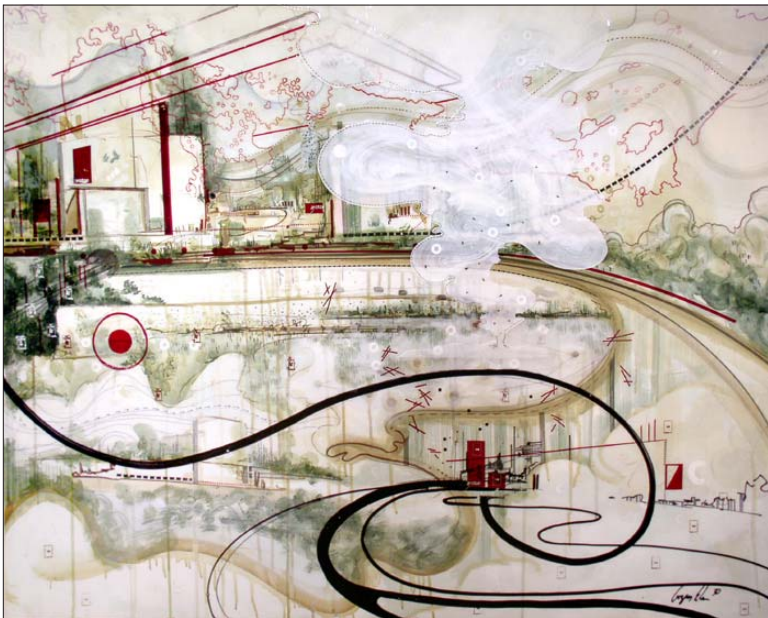
Lauren Mitchell lives in Honolulu, Hawaii, and is beginning the process of thinking about trying to complete her BA in English.

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.

Kirk VanDyke is an entomologist living in Laramie, Wyoming. Aside from scientific publications, his poetry and prose have appeared in *Modern Drunkard*, *Mountain Gazette*, and *Owen Wister Review*.

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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