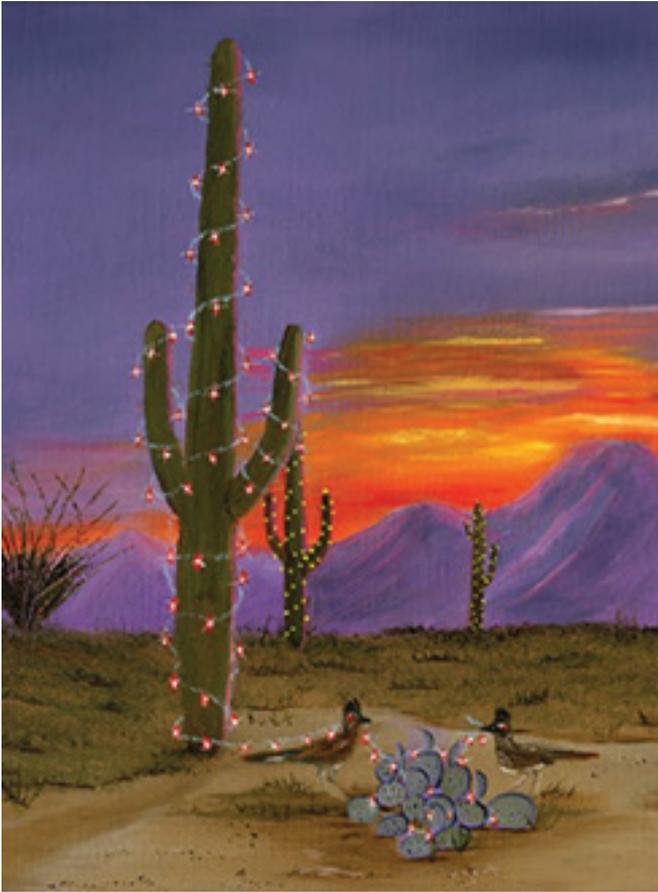


# The 2River View

26.2 (Winter 2022)



new poems by  
Henry Cherry, Ashley Choi, Matthew Freeman  
Amanda Hartzell, Michael Lauchlan  
Connie Post, Marc Petersen, S. Segal  
Ahrend Torrey, John Whalen, Nancy White



# The 2River View

26.2 (Winter 2022)

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*The 2River View, 26.2 (Winter 2022)*

*Amanda Hartzell*

## Quiet Anniversary

I'm not about to start loving in a way  
that is really about forgetting.

It's winter. So remote not even  
wind can find us. Flour dusts

the table, the sky fills with planes.  
I keep the list of what makes us alive

on my tongue, the brightness, the sour.  
What good is gratitude if it splits a body

open and burns down the pretty house?  
I count the planes. It's cold enough

but I still know which number  
you are, what miraculous arrival,

still let frost gather like a curious  
touch on my year of flames.

*Henry Cherry*

## **Arrangement of Atoms**

We rode big American sedans into the hills  
where fires came with mudslide afterthoughts.

We plowed into embankments, into empty warehouses.  
We lost the things that made us who we were

while clutching uselessness, a bottle of grain alcohol  
for posterity. Cigarettes burned holes into the vinyl seats

charting that month's progress. We stuck cassettes into the  
mammoth dashboard stereo and listened for the abyss.

They died on side roads, far from gas stations and became  
attractions for other animals and lesser vermin.

But for the moments when they had filled tanks and  
fresh tires, they drove with a gentle cushion of sway.

*Henry Cherry*

## Moonlight Across the Poplars

When I hear the radio switch into the  
silence before the song arrives,  
it's a bit of relief from the onslaught  
of advertising and disc jockey  
talk. The bit of nothing before the music  
becomes a wave.

I see the way things might land  
in between windshield wiper sweeps,  
behind laundry machines, a millisecond.  
A hint of static languishing within  
a pale anticipation.

The label of time is useless, like snow, if  
you don't know its absence. The  
numbering procedure that filters along  
into absurdity, refusing to admit  
that its sequential identity  
becomes a wave.

The force of air, the breadth of wind, the  
scent of smoke running into skin; each will  
elongate and erase. Establish and decay.  
The insistent departure nothing but  
a pale anticipation.

Ashley Choi

## Death Blowing Bubbles

I passed Death on the way home from school one day.

He sat on the stoop of a nurse's, blowing bubbles into windows—  
wasting time

For a minute, he looked the way my mother did,  
when she broke the rules and took a 12-hour shift with no lunch  
break.

And for a minute, I almost felt sorry for Death.

The next time I passed him, he was pacing in front of a grocery store  
humming the melody to Sinatra's

### *That's Life*

and for a minute I wanted to laugh,  
before i remembered the irony of laughing  
in the face of death.

\*

When my mother called to tell me  
that they had found tar running a race in my brother's veins,  
I remembered the softening apple I had blended into a smoothie  
years ago

It's funny to think one bad apple could have led to this.

I'd like to think I asked the doctor  
to stay away. I wish he didn't overwork himself sometimes.

*Ashley Choi*

\*

Sometimes I dream of white velvet wrapping my body  
in a final embrace,

while the drowsy scent of lilies  
clings and hides in the creases of carefully pressed clothes.

And Earth as the greatest seamstress  
picks me up and folds me into her cloth and lays me down along the  
rest of her stitches.

And she sings to me the crashing of the waves and  
love songs of whales while my eyes close.

It's at these times that I don't miss my mother.  
It's at these times I find that she's here.

Matthew Freeman

## I Appropriate the Literal

I was outside smoking behind Parkview Place with my iPod and Diet Dr Pepper making a vain attempt at relaxing when my young homeless destitute writer buddy came up to the fence again to bum a cigarette so I turned off the music and got up at length and brought my pouch and papers to the fence and tried not to touch his fingers during the major COVID transaction and he's been so quiet and in a trance I even earlier at first thought he was a ghost and I'm such a dolt I took it literally when he said he was looking for his family because now I can apply the several severe interpretations that have a lot to do with hippies and vampires or really anyone with really big eyes like a social worker who paints on the side but I tell you I have a good heart and remember all too well what it was like turned loose into the boarding home where the literal and the symbolic merged into one so he's talking about someone who will take him in and teach him how to reconstruct the ego because now he's living in the unconscious and it's clear he's given everything he's got and ought to be some spectacular genius or rock star and what exactly separates us because why do I have a domicile and struggle for peace and put on Enya and write and say things straight out with no patience for any criticism and once too was radiated by the universe and heard the same call walking away and able to hear whispers from a hundred yards behind me without one dull scholar who could understand it and I am thinking it's not enough to say we're on different sides of the fence as he rises up and puts his arms in the air and walks over to the circle where the stoners sit like an errant god and damn I haven't made that move since the observation room in 2001.

Matthew Freeman

## A Plea

Something terribly wrong has happened.  
I think I've become pure.  
Oh God, now I'm going to have to  
counsel people and shit. I'm going  
to have to relinquish all my possessions.  
The Lightning Hopkins CD! And the Mahler!  
I'm going to have to leave behind  
the dusty old flag in the corner  
they gave me at my father's grave.  
Now I'm going to have to view the Beatles  
as a foolish teenage phenomenon. Well,  
I already don't have a car so that's cool.  
Shit! Am I going to write platitudes?  
I swear I didn't do this on my own.  
I was always looking at beautiful people  
over coffee at Starbucks. My ridiculous claim  
was that it was more about aesthetics than lust.  
So I guess I've been proven correct.  
And now God has done what I myself refused  
to do. Nothing can stir me. I should have seen this coming  
when I kept referring to sex as an inordinate waste of time.  
But still, I was somewhat interested. Now I'm dead.  
Now I'm really really dead. I wanted  
to be famous but now I'm going to be famous  
for having been ripped apart in a Bacchanal.  
This is awful. Imagine the weight on my back!  
I'm going to be just like Supergirl, no, Wonder Woman.  
All my third-grade daydreams are happening.  
There are going to be drunks coming  
out of the woodwork for advice. People are going  
to want to know what to do at work.  
It won't matter whether I'm tripping out or not.  
I'm on the clock! But what about my own  
drunken escapades and horrible utterings  
from decades ago? I'm not worthy to say a damn thing.  
Please let me loose. I'm weak. Send me elsewhere.

Michael Lauchlan

## The Rest

Staring            I tell you that once  
I ran a jackhammer    Or    small

as I was            I rode along  
on its bucking downward imperatives

as it    pierced a slab and made  
a small contribution to my hearing loss

Later    we added our ungainly chunks  
to the hills of a concrete recycling yard

I was locked in battle with gravity  
No more            Tonight

a neighbor's leaf blower contends  
with news and phones that chirp

elsewhere    elsewhere    Meanwhile  
outside in the loud dusk    a cottonwood

is whispering bright and dark and our eyes  
play over a bowl of peaches that burn

for sweetness            for this moment of light  
as our hands find hands and cheeks

to touch            and we retain  
what nests within an hour

*Michael Lauchlan*

## Vanishing

Set on creosote-drenched sleepers  
hailed by horse cart and handcar  
through miles of woody bog,  
rails glow in early light  
as if lit from within, howl  
with red suggestion, horn wail  
gut longing, and train whistle  
distance even when there's no train,  
just kids tossing rocks at signs,  
walking along the one path  
their parents don't know.  
In spite of all that's been  
and what's next, these rails  
lift us for a while, as when  
eight bars of brass supplication  
cut through the smoke of an old  
jazz club and lifted our heads  
as the slim alto player vanished  
into a solo, eyes closed, soul  
fixed on the line of players  
in a million bars, a line back  
to words wept on a railroad platform  
and every goodbye since,  
every beaten, begging return,  
and all who've blown tracks,  
rivers, and willows through a reed  
or tried to say real words  
out loud to a lover.

*Marc Petersen*

## In a Rule-lined Room

I'm in a rule-lined room.  
I know it when a woman  
In the third row shouts out,  
Pedagogy! without having  
Been asked. There's the slow shuffle  
Of arthritis. Every foot is weak.  
Yes, yes. I quite agree. Method.  
Nothing without a sound method.  
Their voices sound like burning paper.  
Like red ink. Like quizzes.  
One voice sounds like a triangle.  
One ting. We hear it.

*Marc Petersen*

## **She Was a Good Singer**

She was a good singer  
And a good guitar-player.  
She played a Guild,  
Like my brother.  
She died of cancer.  
When I listen to her,  
Not often, I see I was wrong.  
My brother, whom I thought  
Was great, really never did  
Any better. His death  
Two years ago didn't leave  
Any waste. Hers didn't either.  
Usually, you can't mourn anybody  
You don't remember.

Connie Post

## In the Emergency Room on Saturday Night

On the wall, a red cord says  
"pull for help"

I tell myself to ignore it

after discharge papers are signed  
I hold my husband's hand  
in the parking lot  
I think I see the same cord  
creeping through the cracks in the concrete  
but soon realize,  
it's only someone's lost  
shoestring

When I go to bed at 2 a.m.  
I pull the sheets back,  
again, the same cord  
peaks out from the underside  
of my pillow

I reach for it  
but my hands turn to sand  
and now I cannot tell anyone  
that my hands are gone

when I close my eyes  
I see the red cord  
dangling from the inside of my eye sockets  
taunting my frontal lobes

I count the times it sways back and forth  
I count all the bones in my body

I pray to the sheets that cover me  
like a shallow grave in the night

Connie Post

## Three Months Since the Funeral

I made breakfast this morning  
from your waffle iron

the batter hissed softly  
as it met the grill

as I waited  
I pulled out the butter and maple syrup  
I played your favorite gospel songs  
I heard your voice saying  
"don't keep me alive by false means"

as the weeks go by  
I find ways  
to clear out your house

I return to your kitchen  
with an overabundance of canned cherries  
and all the unused flour  
in the cupboards

I have a long way to go  
before I can donate all  
the fabric  
from the hall closet

but for this ordinary  
Saturday morning  
I return to making breakfast

I am squeezing the  
juice out of an orange

I am folding in eggs  
into places that remember you

*S. Segal*

## Diagnosis

There were no children  
in this hospital wing,  
only grown people  
with deep psychic wounds.  
Yet handed to me  
to hold like a small child  
was my diagnosis:  
schizoaffective disorder.  
I promised  
to take care of it.

The sound of feet shuffling  
in group therapy  
insistent as disinfectant.  
One woman howls  
of wanting to die.  
The clouds shift  
like babies in their cribs,  
a few disturbing visions  
appearing in my peripheral  
demanding to be rocked.

*S. Segal*

## Schizophrenia

Imagine residing  
in a mental hospital  
and seeing a woman's  
green paper gown  
as a brilliant purple  
sari. Amid white walls  
and odors of disinfectant,  
who can blame me  
for refusing  
to see it the right way?

*Ahrend Torrey*

## It Doesn't Have to be Lavish to be Grand

We gather from miles and miles with backpacks,  
masks, children lugged on our shoulders. We assemble  
from miles and miles by the hundreds  
to the Colorado River in kayaks, canoes, and pontoon boats,  
to watch the extraordinary show of bats— explode  
into the pink sky, like blackfire,  
from under the South Congress Bridge, in Austin.

And eight o'clock arrives... sunset arrives... nine o'clock arrives,  
and nothing,  
but what we believed would be a ten thousand bat show of black  
glitter,  
turns out to be three or four bats dashing—  
from under the bridge in a blur.

Then I stop for a minute, and I think for a minute:  
this is it, though not the explosion of blackfire we'd thought it to be,  
this is it—

the extraordinary miracle of life, we'd all been waiting for.

*Ahrend Torrey*

## Now That It's as Cold as It Gets

Now that it's as cold as it gets in the Deep South,  
think how the dead-doe hangs  
from the hunters' tailgate—  
head, bobbing, down the highway...

When they get her home, hang her up  
from rafters in the shed, they won't understand  
as blood drips from her pale tongue and pools  
at their feet. But as they pull/ and pull/ and pull  
—they'll soon find out—

just how badly she wants to keep, her skin.

*John Whalen*

## High Holy Days

To a river behind a brand new dam, there's no good color.  
The lake cowers beneath gray clouds.  
Unlike wind (whittled stretches of hunger  
misrepresenting stories of flood), rain remains optimistic.

Different kinds of water explain things differently.  
When a glacier's melting, none of us argues:  
we're huddled again in a trailer north of Colville  
where it's May, and everyone's drinking beer.

Then it's a Saturday wedding with cases of champagne.  
We're tented together on a small lawn  
to toast an embarrassed groom and kids  
sliding into a plastic pool. Grass clippings,

lately stuck to the bottoms of tiny feet, float belly up.  
Reflected clouds growl with electricity.

*John Whalen*

## **Let Coyote**

Let the wind run me into the fields.

Let the fields open me.

Let everything stuck inside of me loosen at its own pace.

Let the prayer of pain.

Let the loss of redemption.

Let quail fuss in the bushes.

Let the loose dogs of Spirit Lake Road

run me through the sleeve of breath

five miles home.

Let home be heart and heart home

like home used to be. Like light.

Let coyote run me. Let wind.

*Nancy White*

## **Eats Like a Bird**

I have no stop but teeth.  
The world a bully a belly

where star tree animal cliff  
go to die. Welcome sinew and rot

grub beak bark and reeking omen I  
pulverize and amber everything.

Be the last wave la fin flashing  
at the end of the reel the fall

complete the landing's  
not soft and I will not be sorry.

*Nancy White*

## Happy Ever After

to remove my own name would be  
suicide but the name is killing me

the sand the ice and knife of it  
have to go I will tear it away eat it

with my hooves grind it into the ground  
I will leave here as the animal I

began born fang and talon ready  
hungry to travel high and overlapping

## Contributors

Amanda Hartzell holds an MFA from Emerson College. Her work appears in *Carve Magazine*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *The Knicknackery*, *New Letters*, and *Petrichor*, among others. From eastern Pennsylvania, she now lives in Seattle with her husband, son, and their dog.

Henry Cherry, a former cowhand and chef, is now a Los Angeles journalist and photographer. His work has appeared in *Cordite Poetry Review*, *The Louisiana Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and the recent pandemic collection *Hello Goodbye Apocalypse*.

Ashley Choi is a 12th grader attending Stuyvesant High School in New York City. She enjoys reading and writing poetry, performing for her school's theater company, and attending speech meetings.

Matthew Freeman is the author of several collections of poetry, most recently *Ideas of Reference at Jesuit Hall* (Coffeetown



Press) and the chapbook *Exile* (2River). He holds an MFA from the University of Missouri—Saint Louis and is active in the poetry community. Find him on Twitter: @FreemanPoet.

Michael Lauchlan has contributed to *Bellingham Review*, *New England Review*, *The North American Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. His most recent collection is *Trumbull Ave* (WSU Press).

Marc Petersen is the author of *This is My Brother Talking*. Since 2005, he's been writing *We Paid for the Fence*, a book of accounts.

Connie Post has poems in *River Styx*, *Slipstream*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Verse Daily*. Her book *Floodwater* won the 2014 Lyrebird Award. Her newest book *Prime Meridian* was released in January 2020.

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Ahrend Torrey enjoys exploring nature in Louisiana where he lives with his husband, their terriers, and their cat. He earned his MFA in creative writing from Wilkes University and is the author of *Small Blue Harbor* (Poetry Box Select).

John Whalen is the author of *Caliban* and the chapbook *Above the Pear Trees*. His work can be found in *EPOCH*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, most recently in *Catamaran* and *Terrain*, and forthcoming in the *Hollins Critic*.

Nancy White is the author of *Sun, Moon, Salt* (winner of the Washington Prize), *Detour*, and *Ask Again Later*. Her poems have appeared in *Beloit Poetry Review*, *FIELD*, *New England Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Rhino*, and elsewhere. She serves as editor-in-chief at The Word Works in Washington, D. C. and teaches at SUNY—Adirondack in upstate New York.

*The 2River View*, 26.2 (Winter 2022)

## 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.

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