WATERSHED
Watershed

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Introduction

Searching inside himself, an author connects not only with what is uniquely his but with a collective human consciousness. He draws from the past and projects a poetic present into our future. Imagination spirals out to the unknown to return again to the individual writer and his audience in a circular motion that many selections in this issue exemplify.

Staff members often have diverse tastes but, as a group, they evolve definitions that shape an issue. *Watershed* selection is a dynamic process, and it is a process Lois and I have anxiously enjoyed.

As always, *Watershed* is nothing without Ellen Walker’s patient and unobtrusive guidance and her trust in the learning that occurs during each issue’s selection. We thank her.

_Elizabeth Singh_

_Lois Hicks_
Barbara L. Kimball

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I sit beside
your bullseye
on the golden bale of hay.
Concentric circles move
out to embrace
what is,
past wild grapes
and Jupiter,
the steppingstone you
pinpoint
each clear night.
And here I sit to write
beside my fallen garden,
earth under my nails,
at the still yellow eye
ringed with blue, red, black
white spiralling out.
Finally I listen.
For light years
arrows have been humming
toward my heart
Seed

Lying curled on my side
I look for you
   in cracks
   on ceiling and walls,
High up in one corner
   ivy grows through a gap
   that the shifting foundation
   made not long ago.

White summer-hot sun pierces through
   long crystals at the window,
Playing color on my naked face,
Sparking me to wake and
   rise stumbling
   to another day's heat.

There have been five new moons
   since
I heard—through soft-bright blankets
   of stars and nightdreams—
Your footsteps falling heavy
   on the giving porch,
Your keys jangling, twisting,
   for the darkened lock.

I have washed all flavor of our loving
   from my ocean sheets,
The lost mountain scent of your hair
   gone from my pillows too.
I've been wearing a pair of old blue
   jeans you left behind,
Though lately the zipper won't
   close over my melon-belly
This tiny vine that grows to fruit inside me
   reaching tendrils to my heart.
CowTrees Momentarily Interrupted

These generous trees are wild.  
Not one severed  
at the shoulders.  Nor  
cursed for his litterful leaves —  
a rich blanket of yellow straw-grass  
and green potpourri.  Beneath  

these wild trees graze docile cows  
in shiny brown oak  
and black slanky coats.  
One thunderous head bellows  
without human reason.  Perhaps  
to echo another.  Then  

an airplane brumbles above  
us.  The trees become distant  
splotches, breathless silhouettes  
of unnamed faces frowning  
silently at their long shadows cast by the setting sun.  
And when  

the jet is over our heads,  
new, untagged calf ears  
flinch cat-like and nervous.  
Sifting mouths pause, and lowered heads  
are lifted, until  

the sky is calm again.  We chew  
and moo  
momentarily  
interrupted.
Geraldine Mahood

Flying through the twentieth century I missed you

My face pressed against a cool pane
small square of glass
Down below
far
you are
beneath a blanket of white and blue
Surrounded by voices and their bodies
I watch for you
miles below
some where
there
down
through
the
deep
drop
Unfair of the sky to hide any clue
Eyes search as night blackens my view
I am past
dark deepens
raindrops collect on my pane
slide a line
and fall freely
To you
driving east

(a sunset in a fuel gauge)

racing up a road
I might have missed
an intense orange
exiting
pomegranate sky
a show to ensure remembrance
lost
as it was
it was not
but was reflected
and was reflected upon
Robert Lundergan

Railroad Ties

In this station
I watch the people
come and go.
Their lives,
like steel rails on the horizon,
only appear
to touch.
They run
to the end of the line
held together
by decaying ties
once hewn from a forest.
laughing fish point

we dipped our helmeted mouths into the well of the air  the dew-cool shade of the ridge  the trailing pine  sunlight thrown ochre-dry
a string of shimmering birds around some mashed road-thing
lifted in unison, gone over the range-wire before we passed
I patted a knee and yelled, Miriam, turkey vultures
our shadowed center-line stitched image obscured by the shadow of clouds  the winged silhouette
of a hawk and the immediacy of a leathered hand
a reflected grin, scent of gas
up ahead along side blur and gone of surroundings:
rusting machinery, startled cows
spotted wildflower reds
a hundred street corners  a hundred faces look out from their lives
tip your head and laugh  the insects taste like sugar
layered clothes move like muscles
death a black mouse across black snow
elements, Michigan, Upper Peninsula, 1983

earth  stumbling under a streetlight-lit gut of warm beer
down where the tailings mountains slide
into the oiled Ishpeming River
I fumbled in my pants for an offering of pennies,
laid them on the rails
here, Northern Copper Mining, Inc., this is yours, too
streaming a string of piss on each
this is the blood  this is the body
air brings up juniper  diesel  lip-taste of machine oil
the balance of shoeleather on gravel and on night

air  you might smell bear
or walk into the wrong bar some night
drop down a flooded mine  scream like a rabbit
caught in the chainlink
or picked off by an owl in the neighbor's field
and I lay upon my back tracing ceiling shadows  in August
I hear two or three a night  forgotten sounds
as is the yellow of dandelion floes
under a diamond-black sky

fire  the ember snowball in my bare hands  I hurl
it into the snow-salted wind thru dry cattails
at the iced-lake's edge,
estrangement in winter is easier;
our private worlds of self-destruction
held warm in woolen arms.
we stood on Lake Superior  in the ice-blue air
the scarves whipped and swirled.
in March ice shanty holes drop from lake ice
into bottom mud  the snowprint melts into the carpeting
clothes slough in closets like bodies
and wind lifts like music across glass
water thru the snow-blanketed pines I heard the earth-pounding
wall of Tequamone Fals I stopped the pickup
got out in the breath-clouded sun snow-walked
to the waters frosting into mist into ice
into waters I dipped a cupped hand and drank
and my forgotten toweled body is a salt stream rising;
in time they all come over the falls: Michigan Erie
Superior Huron Ontario we who were born of the dark
peninsular waters know the cyclical affinity
the concatenation of currents;
we peer into the depths and wonder
what down there holds onto a man and what lets him go.
Nothing Dies Greek in Illinois

Not the boredom, but the oppression
of staring out that same window
where heavy gray clouds relieve
something of the midwestern sky,
soaked with the seat of moderation
and humidity too uninspired to write.
It's thought which tranquility murders.

This has never been my love,
bigotry appalls me, I'm fed up
with cornfields of empty days,
counting minutes filled with nothing
moving into the next.

Tractors on highways
attitudes, lives and
rusty pick-ups;
everything moves slow here
old people so content
with loneliness and toothless smiles.

Nothing dies Greek in Illinois.
Tragedy never occurred except
for the common fading away
of everyday rather decrepitly
without so much violence
as to awaken the grandchildren.

I've always remembered it this way,
since childhood, those subterranean summers.
Empty now, the gravel roads that frightened me.
So down home here
everyone lives a masquerade
desperate of dying dreams.
Even the birds stand as still
as the days, as the houses
like stage props against
a background of fear
that won't acknowledge the emptiness
surrounding them.

Naperville, Illinois
August 1986
Matchmaker Meets Charlie

As a bet it started. Like a baby I was sleeping when Cosmic Charlie, he shakes me awake. “It’s time to go,” he says to me. “Where, go where?” I’m all asleep, you see, and I don’t know from Adam who’s this man. So he says, “it’s your time to die. We’re going now.”

I sit up and reach for his arm—to talk to such a man in your bedroom at night you need his arm—but my hand, it goes right through. I suddenly know who’s this man. I tell him I have business unfinished. I couldn’t go just yet. So I make the bet. I tell him, “You give me any four people, I make one perfect match and one awful match. If this I cannot do, not only am I not the matchmaker I think I am, but you take me now, no questions asked. But if this I do, you give me one hundred dollars American and one more month.” He is the sporting type and he takes the bet. He gives me these four. Such a bet, oy!

So I study them up, these writers. And to Cosmic Charlie I say, "With Robinson Jeffers goes Edith Wharton, she makes him fine kolleh. In heaven this match was made (I make the joke, yes?). But Henry James, that oyf-kapos, with Kate Chopin—such a match shouldn’t happen to a dog!” Mr. Charlie, he makes such a face. “So excuse the expression, already.” A joke, he can’t take a joke, or what?

So to Mr. Charlie I say, “Now I go shopping. Where’s my money?” Dumb he isn’t. “It is necessary that we test the match,” he says to me. With sense, he’s loaded! So to the Fairmont Hotel—such a place is San Francisco—he brings them: Into a room—so small a mouse can’t feel at home. Oy! And watch he makes me, he wants I should sing, too? So listen, Mr. Charlie—such a boychick—he puts them there, how I don’t know, and we watch.
"Why, Henry, most refreshing to see you again."
"Edith, you’re looking well. How long has it been?"
"Thankyou. Quite some time. You exhibit a most dreadful pallor. You must have recently been working long and hard."
"Yes, I have. These longer stories are most definitely a very tricky business. You always find me out, Edith. How do you know, and how do you hide your working so well?"
"My dear Henry, I do not hide it; I just never allow its exposure in public conversation. But I am forgetting my manners. Mr. Henry James, meet Mr. Robinson Jeffers, the man promised to me in the match."
"The pleasure is entirely mine, Mr. Jeffers."
"Please, call me Robinson."
"Very well, Robinson. You are a lucky man. Edith—um—Mrs. Wharton is a fine woman, and a fine writer. When we were together in Paris we spoke every day about style and technique until . . . ."
"Please, Henry, I am Edith. Among my friends I prefer to be so addressed."
"Quite right, my dear. I know your work, Robinson, and I find it immensely powerful. I believe the images you use communicate beyond the mere word; but with all respect, old man, I feel your poems are highly critical of our society. Take, for example, your poem, ‘Shine, Perishing Republic.’ I remember something of . . . America settling in the mould of its vulgarity, thickening heavily to Empire’ or something like that. It is Europe mouldering! After all, we in America are the very pinnacle of development, what with all the decadence in Europe."
"Civilization is a dying reality."
"I see. A debatable position if ever there was one. . . ."
"Oh, gentlemen! Do either of you know the whereabouts of Kate Chopin? Her arrival was timed with ours, yet she doesn’t seem to have appeared yet."
"Edith, you are, of course, aware she is of Creole blood, by virtue of which she may be expected at any hour: they have no sense of punctuality. Why she was invited upon this . . . this . . . excursion I’ll never know. She is probably lying in the sun, pondering fashionable lateness."
"Why, Henry, what do you hold against such a frail, passionate woman as Kate? Or is it all women whom you despise?"
"Edith, I have read her works. That should be enough, as we all know. An author’s very soul is revealed in her works, and Mrs. Chopin bares herself in such an undignified manner as to give all women a poor image up with which they should not put! But I do not hold all women accountable for the transgressions of one who has fallen.
all, my dear, you are a woman."

"Henry, you are too kind. Have you any idea, Robinson?"

"I'm afraid not, Mrs. Wharton—er—Edith. But I have read her
texts also, Henry. Please do not misunderstand me when I say her
work is not without merit. Have you considered the notion that through
her female fiction, she is proposing the myth of Aphrodite as an
alternative to the patriarchal myth of Jesus?"

"You notice, of course, my pause, indicating I have not considered
such forethought in her work. Perhaps it is just my being blinded by my
opinion of her as an id-oriented female, full of desire and longing but
doomed to failure. She will never reach the unattainable. She is the
perfect Romantic, quite like Wagner's music in that by reaching for the
unreachable, she is by definition a failure."

"That is a very apt analogy. But I'm afraid it deals only with the
surface aspect of her work."

"Robinson, your analysis is quite in-depth... and true. But, Henry,
your allusion to Wagner is quite perfect as well. Only Kate herself
can..."

"Pardonnez-moi, mes amis, for being so late. The hairdressers in
this city do love to talk. Oh, you must be Henry James, my match for
tonight. I did not ever dream that a man who writes such the beautiful
English could be so ruggedly handsome. Dressed as you are, in
dungarees and work shirt, I would suspect you to be a stone mason, not
a writer."

"Excuse me. You are right, I am a stonemason, but you are also
wrong. I am Robinson Jeffers. This gentleman in the suit is Mr. Henry
James. You, I presume, are Katherine Chopin?"

"Kate. Sacre bleu. I feel the perfect idiot. My apologies to you both.
... Well, should I ring the room service? Perhaps some wine might save
me socially, though I really don't mind making mistakes. After all,
mistakes are a part of life, you know. You must be Edith Wharton. I love
your work. And such a surprise ending in 'Roman Fever'! How did you
ever think of it? You must be a trickster at heart!"

"Perhaps. I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Kate. May I
present Mr. Henry James?"

"Again? Hello, Henry... Room Service, s'il vous plaît. What will
everyone have? Robinson?"

"Port. Room temperature port, please."

"Of course, room temperature. I'll have a mint julep. Edith?"

"If you please, just some white wine. Henry?"

"I'll have the same, Edith."

"Very well, mes amis... Well, here we are."
"Yes."
"Please, Henry, your manners."
"Quite right, Edith. I apologize for my rudeness."
"Thank you. Kate, Henry and Robinson were just discussing your motivation for writing, with Robinson suggesting an alternative to the patriarchal Jesus myth and Henry describing you as a true Romantic in the manner of Richard Wagner."

"Alors, gentlemen, you both flatter me. I must confess I really wanted to write the true communications between man and woman—in the manner of the Yellow Book. But because these take place behind closed doors, as it were, I felt I would never be published. So I toned it down un petit peu. Still, I didn’t make much from The Awakening, did I?"

"Such decadence."
"Henry!"

"It is true, Edith. Kate’s works are truly decadent, what with her advocating the disintegration of American life! In allowing the erosion of the woman’s role in society, she shakes the foundation of our culture! It is a danger to Humanity!"

"Humanity is the mold to break away from."
"Merci, Robinson."

"Robinson, my good man, you must admit that a woman’s place is in the home."

"That might be convenient, Henry, for you, but I will only admit that work exists inside the home and that it has been traditionally done by women. Edith, how do you stand on this matter?"

"Well, I feel a woman should care for her children. This is first and foremost. But as far as traditional work is concerned, it seems just as uncomplicated for her to do it as well and leave her husband free to work outside the home. You must be aware from your extensive literary background that tradition has a basis in reality, Robinson."

"Well said, Edith."

"Thank you, Henry."

"Humans project upon the Universe all our crazy ideas, but the Universe is oblivious. This is the great irony."

"Ces sont des bon mots, Robinson."

"Merci, Kate."

"Gentlemen, Kate, I do believe our libations have arrived. And this reminds me that during the previous—er—discussion I wondered how you felt about Art; that is, about writing. Does Life imitate Art, or does Art imitate Life? Henry, how do you feel?"

"My dear, I have always allowed my writing to mirror life itself
because only by the careful control of Life as depicted through Art can
the writer affect his message in a subtle manner. A writer should require
the reader to entertain some thought.”

“Those are my feelings as well, Henry.”

“Quite right, Edith.”

“Robinson?”

“Culture produces the Artist, Edith.”

“Tres bien. I just write; I do not think. My ideas come from the
heart.”

“My point exactly, Kate.”

“Tres bien, Robinson. May I call you Rob?”

“May I remind you, Kate, that Robinson is my match for this
evening. You are most fortunate to have been paired with Henry. I’ll
thank you to limit your discussion to writing.”

“Mon Dieu, you must have a very low tolerance to that small glass
of wine you’ve drunk. Perhaps another glass might calm you. Allow me,
and please accept my sincere apology.”

“Perhaps I am a bit addled. I’ll accept your apology if you will
accept mine. Please, let us return to the topic at hand. Where were we,
Henry?”

“Actually, I was looking across the room at that painting and I
seem to have lost the thread of conversation. I was just wondering what
the artist must have felt as he gazed at his model, what he was thinking
as his brush outlined her supple musculature.”

“Were you referring to her breasts, monsieur?”

“Mrs. Chopin, you are so vulgar, so decadent!”

“Decadent!? Zut, alors! Such accusations coming from an author
who deliberately withholds information from his readers. All so he can
make money! Decadence, indeed!”

“My dear Mrs. Chopin, my technique is thoroughly valid, and it
has, I admit, made me quite a comfortable living. It is you, however,
who are embroiled, yes, Embroiled! like all of Europe, in the passion
for money! I feel this is because you haven’t made any to speak of.”

“I must confess, Henry, I have always wanted to become
successful as a writer. But there is always the problem—sacre bleu—of
the man! The problem of the man is one of love. I cannot solve this
mystery of love, but it draws me to it, mon Dieu, it does! And this I
explore in my writing. My women, mais oui, struggle to love, and to live
beyond, outside the constraints of male-dominated culture. Like petite
moi. Perhaps that is why I sometimes turn to the use of the drugs. They
help my troubled soul to temporarily escape my body.”

“Please, a bit of restraint.”
“Cochon! Your dignity is but a mask! You hide there and you are a man to whom nothing is ever destined to happen! Quel barbe! Give me excitement!”

“Perhaps, Jeffers, you might calm her. I fear she frightens Edith with her outbursts. And this moist air of San Francisco! It must chill her delicate sensibilities to the very bone, just as it does myself!”

“Henry, I am fully able to speak for myself. She does not frighten me. On the contrary, I am rather embarrassed for her. She shows obvious underhanded intentions towards Robinson—a point I have cautioned her about once before. The wine has actually cleared my senses to the point that I can feel her animal desire. I must say, Kate, I am ashamed.”

“I will not apologize again. It is you who are embarrassing us. You’re drunk!”

“And you’re crazy! When I wake up tomorrow I will be sober, but you will still be crazy! Robinson, you must denounce this...this...woman of the night!”

“Actually, I quite enjoy her joie de vivre.”

“Enough! I am cut to the quick! I knew we would be in a difficult town, in a difficult company, so in my purse I have brought...this!”

“Edith! Put down that gun! It might go off!”

“Go jump in the lake, Henry! This is between she and me.”

“Mrs. Wharton, the two gentlemen and myself do not wish a scene. But I, too, come prepared to this town. I can destroy us all with...the contents of this satchel! I suggest that you place the gun quietly upon the table. If not, I will open the bag and set its destructive capabilities into motion—instantly!”

“Do you deny that you have the hots for my date?”

“No, Edith, I do not. Robinson is handsome, restrained, and yet he has a power, a masculine power, that comes from Knowledge. Quite unlike...”

“You give him up or I’ll pull the trigger!”

“And I’ll open the satchel!”

“Oy, this I need,” I say to myself. I was all wrong. I work my fingers to the bone, to the very bone, and make the perfect match, all for what? I should hit my head against a wall, maybe, just as much could come from it. But if I live to be one hundred twenty, never will I see such a scene again. Mrs. Wharton, she pulls the trigger, and same time Mrs. Chopin, she opens the bag. I cover my eyes, may they all die.

But my ears, they must be deaf. All I hear is the laughing. I look. Mrs. Wharton, she stands there pointing the gun at Mrs. Chopin. Out of
the barrel hangs a cloth sign with “BANG” on it. And Mrs. Chopin, she laughs so hard, her sides could split, God forbid! Her bag is open. The little man, Henry, at the top of his lungs yet, he yells, “If nobody wants me, I’m leaving!” And he picks up his chair and throws it right through the window! He jumps, he jumps after it! Oy vey!

Mrs. Chopin, right away she says, “Zut alors, Edith, you wouldn’t back down. No, indeed. Nor would I. Let us now get destroyed. This satchel contains the finest herb on the West Coast, the Mythical Motherlode Mindfuck from Mendocino. I’ll roll us a huge spliff, or would you rather smoke the pipe? Ce n’est pas une pipe, eh? Ha!”

“But, but, my Henry! He has jumped out the hotel window!”

“Henry, il est une souris: he is a mouse. We are on the ground floor. Just listen!”

“Thay, mitther wonderful, where have you been all my life? Hey, fellows, look who just dropped into my arms! Let’s go have a drink. Oh, love your tie!”

“Kate, I had no idea you knew the California coast.”

“Oh, yes, Rob. I visit here every year at harvest time. Would you care to go back out there with me?”

“I’d be delighted. Edith, I suggest you chase after Henry or you’ll lose him for sure. Some of these queens are so po-sess-ive! Take my arm, Kate?”

“Au revoir, ma cherie.”

So, I should fight City Hall, or what? You win, you lose. It makes no difference. Writing, from that they make a living? Oy, to me is shmutz.
the hand

came just before the solstice and last night
was so cold I took a swig of bourbon offered
on the street corner
by the hand of a tooth-missing smile in rags
as we spoke misty-mouthed in the frozen air.

that warming shot of eighty proof; given, suddenly
became God sharing God with God and We
all wore the same shoes treading the Mobius path.

noticing the signal change
I crossed the street.

curb alighting, nearly stumbling, bourbon
belching, blundering, I wondered why I took forever crossing
that street—the hand remembered, nodding
from the other side.
The sun warmed my shoulders as my feet slapped the dirt in an easy rhythm. Passing a farmhouse, I glanced at the wide front porch. An elderly man sat in an old rocking chair, playing a violin and wearing faded jeans and a tee shirt. The notes, in assorted chaotic pitches, drifted disjointedly across the long gravelly driveway. He paused, looking up, and with the hard wooden chair grinding into my backbone as I leaned back, I gazed at the dark grey ribbon of blacktop with rows of tilled fields on the other side. The sun was bright and I squinted, watching a runner lope gently alongside the road.

"I wonder who that man is," I mumbled half-consciously, hearing the words pass my lips as I again jogged down the road, looking toward a distant line of orchard trees.

Running,
I was sitting;
From my lips
fell
words that were not
mine.
Only the mockingbird sings
at the edge of the
wood.
Good Morning Christopher

Hot white light
silver slice
blinding on the countertop,
fluorescent orange screams
beneath my gaze.

"Coffee anyone?"
A shelf full of machines purr and hum
surrounded by sounds,
styrofoam silos stacked,
colored dreams displayed in racks
edible too—
And then there's you hawaiian print,
purple and blue,
flash and glint,
sachet across the room.
Varnet smile
in a halo of sunlight.
Life, you say,
is easy.
**Mission Bell**

The mission bell  
rings in old San Juan Bautista  
echoing out  
clanging  
into the vineyards and rolling hills  
but not quite beyond  
into the open fields  
where migrant workers stoop to pick  
bright red tomatoes  
which will soil the shirt  
stain the soul  
leave the reminder  
of work endured  
to bring happiness  
while leaving no mouth unfed.

The bell cries loud  
it shakes  
the adobe walls  
still not to be heard  
throughout the dusty valley  
but even those it does reach  
cannot be pulled from the field  
to hear the message  
that will be sent this day.
Another time

may prove the better
to go sit and hear
the words that come
from the mouth
of the padre
who sits in the garden
for the better part of his days
and prays for his people
to let his words
stay to fill the stains
on their souls
to be worn with pride
and work the land.

Echoes ring throughout the countryside
cutting through the still dry air.
They do not join together
to hear the word
but the word must not be enough
for the wooden benches
are empty.

It comes again:
pure is the sound
There is a certain eloquence to the symphony of the treefrogs this evening, and the sugar pine has more reverence than a cathedral spiral against the crisp half-lighted night. The moon has not yet risen. It waits. Day has gone, only night lies beyond the twilight, and yet my soul climbs the long sky trying to taste the fragrance that spills over from tomorrow, and lingers in a left-over memory from today. Continuity hangs in suspension waiting for something that has never happened, yet has been there every night since that first time.
To A Special Friend In Holland

When winter drives the birds to flight,
and rains slice the forest bare,
scents of the North Sea will guide me.

I'll see pink sunsets: blue winds,
white sand dunes swaying with sea grass
and long memories.

When thunder rides the swaying pines
I'll bend the wind and catch
the tang of salty spray.

Then four dimensions disappear,
space will sing of distance bridged,
and you will find me.
Moon Dog's Return

They say there are times—
when Moon is full
and Southwind sifts
spring on the land;
and Redbud Tree wears
a pink spangled crown
and Wild Rose sprinkles
night with perfumes;
when Grass is bent
with tiny gilt
pearls and Horned Owl calls
long mournful tones;
when Deer slips
down to river's edge
and all Fish gather
in dimpled pools;
when Coyote steals
close on cotton feet
and Breeze has velvet
and silver breath—
He glides out
of hills from
some yesterday and tells
of times when cookfires burned
low and peacepipes
were smoked and long
stories were told.
They say there are times—
if your heartbeat is right
you might catch
a glimpse of a shadowy
form that walks
tall in moonlight on
moccasin feet and wears
on his head the eagle's
dress, and you might hear
the throb of a distant
tom-tom or a chant
to the moon when
night is near gone;
you might see a quiver—
empty of arrow—
or a tear stain
the pool where all fish
gather; you might notice
him slip up a distant
moonpath, back
to the hills; back
to the past.
They say there are times—
Barbara L. Kimball

The Fog Is A Wanderer

Fog is a misty
soul lost from the sea.
It creeps over moist
ground: looks for a crevice to seep
into, to curl up in, to wait
for spring.

It embraces
the naked oaks, makes black blurred
sculptures of gnarled
beauty within its blue-grey veil.

It blends
with the wind and swirls
through the wilted forest.
It slides under the sheltering
bough of a pine tree and whispers
to the sleepy birds of other places.

It finds my window:
looks inside at the fire, clings
there, waits for me.
It is so still. . . .
It has its own silence,
like the slow drip of water on cotton;
like the final breath of a very old woman.
Mari's Lover Struck By Lightning
In The Country

Nearly evening, and the storm has shouldered in. He will not make love with her
the way he wanted
this first downpour

of Autumn, as she is living elsewhere.
Wherever lightning comes from,
it comes close,
rain on all sides diverted

by the pressure of this desire
breaking into night.
As though it were a bottle
his body rocks
but does not tip
and if he spills

one cry, it is to her
absent like God but mindful

of an honest prayer. Sweet aftertaste, full shove—
this atmosphere
lays down blanched and liable

one love every stroke of danger,
one mercy each revival.
Craig Gingrich-Philbrook

Airships

1. Blossoming

Blue never occurs to squash flowers. They are too frightened, impatient. I have not forgotten that vines face death too. Now Autumn comes. Him gone. Not dead,

a storm is here again this morning. Damn lover, damn harvest. I cut the waste-wrack out and spill late petals, dried untouched. They are yellow never blue. I have noticed. Never blue.

2. Debris

I shoulder my past to the compost heap. This morning, passing the graveyard, a tabbied sky looked down on some cat staring at an open hole. Somewhere a devouring worm turns to moth and means to shudder away but the cat pulls it down. My own little animal leaves wings scattered in the hardwood hall.

3. Preference

That is, the hardwood I walk naked and wet to my lover, map of the ocean world pinned up in the corridor. Borneo is blue, but never alters. The night sky lies as blue as Borneo, but flashes,
flashes almost as if the soul were cresting fresh
from someone. I enter her and wonder if the aliens have hearts.
If they know where I love her is where I loved him. Not a place
on the body. Not a buried blossom. Not a decomposing
heap of sea.
The Begging Bowl

The birds of paradise grow so thick
we must split and replant them
almost every year in the backyard.
Like now, digging around the roots,
separating the huge stalks
we break off caked dirt so the plants can breathe.

I like to think of myself
breathing like that. As if some soil
was lifted and not replaced too soon
and I became open again.

Every summer the shovel reminds me:
Dig deep!
I can't stay like this.
Before The Storm

Here, the Madison runs northwest.
Downstream is a stormfront.
7:30 and the sun leans.
Clouds glow
a color somewhere between pink and gold.
A color like skin,
skin after love.
The sun falls
and behind an enormous boulder
in a slick,
this color is held for a moment,
maybe a minute,
like a picture or memory.
The fisherman sits on the grassy bank
and does not think.
Sits and gazes,
and the river runs.
Darren Marshall

The Way Home

Waves close slow
like memory
Slow roll meets slow roll
meets slow roll
Mottled and grey
seagulls chase momentum
The sun falls
beyond the horizon
and fog wafts near
holding fast
and clinging
Clinging to anything
within reach
Waves

As if confusing love and lust could be fatal.
As though the buttons on your blouse undid themselves leaving you open to interpretation.
Remembering how my hands were waves searching your secret beaches for that perfect black agate.
At night the self grows small this movement is absolute.
Leaving us nothing more than what we give or take.
Simple Delicate Blossoms

If only
forever
is the dogwood in bloom
and not the hawk
picking apart
the innocent young
run down
in that second of indecision.

If only
you could know the pain
of the rodent
having its flesh picked
from its bones
without strength to cry
mercy.

Simple delicate blossoms
so unlike
those animals
that kill to live,
how I wish I could leave
this body
and open into myself
a petal at a time.
**Contributors' Notes**

**Michael Bertsch** states that he "once wore high-top tennis shoes and is a member of a well-known granfalloon."

**Joseph F.L. Felice** was writing short fiction by the age of five. Raised in the illustrious agricultural capital of Hollister, he attended private schools and graduated from Christian Brothers in Sacramento. Writing has always been his form of escape.

**Felicia Ferrance** is currently loving, working, and schooling in Chico with hopes of starting an outdoor school on the Northern California coast. Her poem is dedicated to her father.

**Craig Gingrich-Philbrook** lives and works in Chico and is having profound difficulty getting people to use his real name.

**Ken Hardy** has always wanted to be one of the few select people taken by alien visitors to gain hands-on experience of alien life forms. As a graduate of the Chico ROTC program, 2nd Lt. Hardy will integrate his 4½ years in Chico and an English degree and apply them to another planet—the U.S. Army. He is 23 years old and hopes to become a high school English teacher and baseball coach someday.

**Harley C. Jamieson**, an English graduate student at Chico State, is currently writing his thesis on the fiction of Walter Van Tilburg Clark. A widely traveled military veteran, Harley was an ESL instructor in the Yemen Arab Republic. He lists his main interests as "reading, writing, and running."

**Barbara L. Kimball** is still working on her MA in English Literature. She is presently in Holland, soaking up sights, scents, and sounds for more poetry.

**P. Koronakos** is entombed hilarious and fed and resides in Chico.
Robert Lundergan—born in Bennington, VT, burial place of Robert Frost; raised in Visalia, CA, Gateway to Sequoia; worked in Huntington Beach, CA, Surf City USA; student currently residing in Chico—“came into the world looking for a home and found many.” He adds, “I brew a great pot of coffee, I love Susan and her apple pies, and I sometimes write but not often enough.”

Geraldine Mahood lives in Paradise, CA.

Darren Marshall lives in Susanville, CA.

Daniel McColgin notes that his poem is one of seven written between Illinois and California, in which he put down “over two thousand miles of words, boredom, and bliss.”

Betsy McNeil is inspired to write so she’s doing it.

Ken O’Connor has lived in Chico since 1977 and is currently working as a personnel counselor. He states that “poems in progress are different by handful.”

Susan Wooldridge likes to make things and perform with clay, sticks, stones, and words. Susan lives in Chico with her family and works with California Poets in the Schools.
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