

The background of the entire page is a complex, abstract pattern of overlapping geometric shapes. These shapes include large, stylized letters and various polygons in two shades of blue (a deep cerulean and a lighter sky blue) set against a white background. The shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some elements appearing to be layered on top of others. The overall effect is a vibrant, modern, and somewhat chaotic visual field.

**WATERSHED**

# **WATERSHED**

Volume 22, Number 2

*Watershed*

Volume 22, Number 2

Spring 1999

**Editors**

Kiara Koenig

Janeane Rhoads-Peterson

**Faculty Advisor**

Ellen L. Walker

**Cover Design**

Bryan Khorge

Special thanks to Gregg Berryman and the students in CDES 23, Fall 1998 for an exceptionally rich selection of cover proposals.

## Contents

### *Malama MacNeil*

- 1 Solstice Tai Chi
- 2 Honolulu: 4/83
- 3 For H.
- 4 At Westerbeke

### *Dana Huebler*

- 5 The Hunter's Quarry

### *Douglas Hesse*

- 16 A Perfect Thing

### *Judy Salee*

- 17 Written Near A Window at Dawn

### *Greg Rappleye*

- 18 Comet
- 19 Letters to Yeltsin
- 21 Morning at The Artist's House, Key West
- 23 The Blueberry Field
- 25 At the Ice Dock

### *Zu Vincent*

- 27 Talking Over Stones

### *Audrey Small*

- 35 Star Notes

### *Roxanna Glang*

- 37 Beginning Again

### *Roxanne Brooks*

- 38 Mai Tai in Kaua'i
- 39 Keep Still
- 40 To: Raymond Carver Re: Happiness

### *Ryan Michael Atencio*

- 41 The Ken Waldman Night

*Noreen Austin*

43 Souls Gliding

*Eva Questo*

44 A Tribute to e. e. cummings:

*Chris Baldwin*

45 San Diego Free Clinic

*Dana Huebler*

46 Buffalo Chips

*Amy Antongiovanni*

56 She says Venus

57 Come In

*Malama MacNeil*

---

Solstice Tai Chi

*for Suzanne*

we practice  
in the grey light of morning  
cold numbs lips and nostrils  
while heat rises inside our clothes  
prickling pain in fingers yields  
to streaming *chi* as the breath pumps

moving quickly, almost in unison  
you lead, I follow  
match speed, copy intensity  
within this flowing moment  
we are no longer separate as  
a passing train's sound surrounds us  
in this booming, flashing, trundling now  
as big as a boxcar, a boxcar,  
as big...

we turn, circle, spin the energy out  
let it move chest and arms, lift leg,  
weight this foot now, now that  
my narrow being opens wide  
to hold the shimmering cold  
radiates from the whirling center  
so vast  
immense within, finds  
the winter landscape of origin  
the polar point of equilibrium  
where matter  
has its source  
and all is possible

we practice the way of balance  
to advance, we yield  
to rise, we sink  
moving fast, we stand still  
warm to the heart  
we eat the cold

---

Honolulu: 4/83

*in memory of Sharon Robison*

There were no palms on that other skyline  
but it is the same  
watching the evening shade into twilight.  
The hour of prayer is past  
and remembering floods in.

Once there was a window  
and a city beyond.  
On the corner of the street below  
was the storefront  
Culture Center Of All Native American Peoples.  
The table where we sat was blue  
(or was it the enameled pot,  
or the mugs from which we drank?)  
watching night fall.

That was the last time.  
What remains is the dazzling blue  
the echo of drums  
the remembrance of love flowing  
(as freely as the coffee,  
as unerring as the dark.)

Here, as the day exhales into night,  
the pidgin lilt of softball hushes in the park below  
the pastelled sky dissolves  
and evening rain has come, as it so often does;  
just a passing shower,  
like my tears,  
the briefest of blessings.

---

For H.

I woke this morning in a panic  
before dawn  
afraid to move  
I could find my courage with neither hand  
duty the motive  
I rose to wake children  
cook oatmeal  
slice oranges with precision  
I brushed one's hair  
found books for another  
lingered in good-bye hugs  
made tea  
you found me there  
at the kitchen table  
in tears over poems of loss

*in a world which contains  
the possibility of  
annihilation  
the holocaust  
the slow decline  
the death of mothers  
the loss of sons  
fear is not  
unreasonable*

you offered me the comfort of your arms  
brought me to your bed

*so long as there is  
passion in the daylight  
love binding to the core  
union possible  
we are  
perhaps still vulnerable  
perhaps still liable  
to hope*



---

## At Westerbeke

weary from our work  
we rested in the sunlight  
napping in deckchairs  
taking in the day  
you slept beside me, friend,  
your breath open to the afternoon

I lingered at the edge of sleep  
knew the play of breeze in hair, on skin  
and smelled the roughworked pillow's scent  
of wool, and felt the steady pulse,  
the weighty lavishness of letting go

low and far away, the small plane's steady drone,  
and nearer, the gardener's rhythmic rake  
were obligato  
to scattered feasts of birdsong,  
the sounds, seeds broadcast  
and once,  
the startling three-toned bray of a donkey  
sounded near the gardens

reclaiming sight, I found the hillside's  
purple vinca bloom  
saw eucalyptus' shelter  
the company of oaks and  
a shifting sky so blue the eyes were shy to see it

a turkey vulture's wheeling flight so black against the  
brightness  
rode the thermal of my musing  
and, in one long bell-toned curve,  
sighed into being  
at its end

## The Hunter's Quarry

Jane arrived at the summer house the day after Labor Day. In the gray light before dawn, she loaded her Pathfinder and drove the three hours from Wellesley to central New Hampshire without stopping. It was still morning when she pulled off Route 3 and onto the road that led to the lake. As she drove along the narrow, winding road, she peered through the trees, checking for familiar cars, and was relieved to see the driveways empty and the houses deserted. A man's bathing trunks flapped on a clothesline behind one house and a child's raft lay deflated beside another.

Jane drove to the end of the road and parked the car in front of her house. The lake sparkled in the morning light—blue sky, clouds and trees reflected on its glassy surface. She breathed in the crisp air, which already smelled of fall. This would be her home for the next year, maybe longer. Maybe, she realized, she would grow old and die here.

The only condition that Michael had put in their divorce settlement was that he could enjoy the house one last summer. He came with their son, Will, and Marisel, the woman he had left her for. Jane spent a tormented and lonely summer in Boston thinking of them visiting their old friends, drinking cocktails and laughing in the summer light. She amused herself by imagining what the cocktail crowd would make of Marisel, a 28-year-old songwriter who worked as a bike messenger at Michael's law firm. They stayed until early August, and Jane had waited a month to come, wanting their presence to dissipate and hoping to avoid any of the summer people. She did not have the strength to pretend not to notice their sympathetic looks, or to smile through the silence of their unspoken questions.

Grabbing a suitcase, Jane walked up the weathered staircase that ran along the side of the house and opened the door. She stood for a moment, inhaling the stale, musty smell that had greeted them each June for the past 20 years, since she and Michael had first started coming here, when Will was still a baby. Then she walked through the house and opened the windows before going back down to the car to finish unloading.

The first few days she devoted to cleaning. Starting in the bedrooms, she stripped the beds, washed the pillowcases, sheets and spreads and hung them out to dry. Then, using one of Will's old baseball bats, she pounded the mattress of her bed, pausing between blows to watch the dust clouds explode into the air. When she was done, she sprinkled the bed with baking soda, waited a few hours, then vacuumed it.

In the kitchen, she loaded the dishwasher with load after load of every dish, glass and piece of silverware in the house, washed the cupboards, and cleaned the refrigerator and stove. She wiped down the stair railings, moldings, and window sills, dusted and polished the tables and shelves, and sprayed and squeegeed the windows.

Finally, there was nothing left to do but vacuum, mop and wax the floors. Upstairs, vacuuming underneath the nightstand, she found an earring that must have belonged to Marisel. She shut off the vacuum cleaner, sat down on the floor and examined the small teardrop-shaped emerald set in gold. Turning it between her fingers, she imagined them making love on the bed behind her; she could hear Marisel's moans and Michael's grunts, smell their mingled sweat.

She made a fist around the tiny earring and let the post dig into her palm. She squeezed harder, until tears wet her eyes. She waited for more, craving the release of a raw, wailing sob, but all she felt was a dull sadness. The same leaden paralysis that had gripped her since Michael had asked for the divorce. One morning nearly a year ago, after taking a last bite of toast and a long sip of coffee, he had told her, simply, that he had fallen in love with another woman. And that was that. Jane did not cry and tell him she loved him; she did not rage bitterly, throw dishes, plot revenge. She just slipped into a numb acceptance and waited for it to be over.

After he left, she stood by helplessly as her life of more than 20 years fell away. People she and Michael had known for years became distant and polite. The wives offered their sympathy, of course, urging Jane to call if she needed anything, but she could see a fear in their eyes darting behind the veil of compassion. Like they didn't want to catch whatever it was that had made Michael leave her. Their reaction didn't surprise her, really. She'd seen it often enough, the divorced couples spiraling further and further out of their social orbit until finally they disappeared altogether. Jane refused to sit around and wait for this to happen, so she decided to just leave and start her life over.

Now, feeling drained, she climbed onto the bed and fell into a deep sleep, still holding the earring. She awoke the next morning to the ringing of the telephone. It was Mary, her oldest friend, calling to wish her a happy birthday. Later, other calls came—a few friends from Boston, her parents from Arizona, and, finally, her son. Will, who from the start had seemed determined not to let the divorce affect him, talked glibly about his classes, the Lacrosse team, his roommate, before saying he had to leave for practice. Jane hung up feeling depressed and empty.

She wondered if Michael would call, and what she would say if he did, but after Will's call the phone was silent. Talking to people after days of interacting with no one had left her exhausted. She decided to forget about mopping and waxing the floors, and quickly vacuumed the rest of the house. Then she opened the doors and windows to air the place out, and left them open for the rest of the day. That night, at sunset, she burned the fat bundle of sage that Mary had given her before she left. As it burned down to a smoking ember, she opened a bottle of wine and drank to her new life.

\* \* \*

In the weeks that followed, Jane settled into something of a routine. She passed her days quietly, seeing hardly anyone, just Mr. and Mrs. Salvaggio, who ran the General Store; a few locals now and then; and Eddie McGee, an old fisherman who still fished in the lake on cold fall days. Often she'd see him out there, sitting in his boat smoking cigarettes and watching his line in the water.

Jane spent hours staring at the lake. She had told herself she would use the time here to write, but so far she had written only a few disparate pages that she'd hated immediately. A few times, feeling guilty that she wasted so much time just looking out the window, she tried to write about the lake—its power and austerity—but all she came up with were a few prosaic lines that embarrassed her.

Now, as she did most afternoons, Jane sat at her desk gazing out the window, her pen hanging limply over a blank page. The lake was as gray as the November sky. Whitecaps raced across its choppy, skittish surface, slapping against empty weather-beaten boats. Around the lake, on a brown bed of dead leaves, trees stood silent and bare. Houses peeked out from the woods, sprinkling the landscape with color. Most were empty now. The summer people had evaporated after Labor Day, and the weekenders had stopped coming weeks ago. Only the few locals remained.

Looking at the lake, as the last daylight slipped away, Jane wondered what it would be like to swim in it now—just dive in and feel the icy water surround her naked body. She closed her eyes, imagining the bracing sensuality of moving through the cold water, the dark underbelly of the lake pulsing below.

Opening her eyes, she saw the tip of a rifle moving across her line of sight. She leaned closer to the window and looked down to see a man passing her house. He had a rifle slung across one shoulder and three dead rabbits hanging from a rope on his back. Just as she pulled away from the window, he looked up and caught her eye. He did not smile or wave, just stared at her with hollow brown eyes.

Jane stared back and waited for him to pass, but he turned and began walking toward her house. She fought the urge to bolt the door, telling herself it was just some local, hunting in the woods. Still, hearing his heavy steps on the stairs, she looked over at the corner to check for the rifle that her father had insisted she keep on hand.

One knock on the door. She froze at the sound of it and stayed rooted in her chair. "Yes?"

"You got a phone?" the man yelled through the door.

"A phone?"

"There's a car crashed up in the woods by Route 3. I need to call the sheriff."

Reluctantly, she got up and walked the few steps to the door. She opened it several inches. The man wore an orange baseball cap, a red and black hunting jacket, army fatigues, and mud-splattered boots. He had black hair and a heavy five o'clock shadow. Jane guessed his age to be around 30.

She held onto the doorknob. "Is anybody hurt?"

"Not hurt, just dead." He smiled grimly. "A driver, no passengers."

"My God." She put her hand to her chest and waited for him to respond, to share in her horror, but he just looked at her with placid eyes.

"It happens. Probably just some loser from Boston making a run to stock up on tax-free liquor."

"I'll call the sheriff and tell him."

He raised his eyebrows and smiled sarcastically. "Can you tell him where the car is?"

She hesitated, trying to think of a way to keep this stranger out of her house. She did not want to appear unneighborly in this small community. More than that, she felt silly giving in to what was probably a groundless fear. She opened the door wider to let him in.

"The phone's over there," she said, pointing to the small table by the stairs. As he dialed, Jane breathed a quiet sigh of relief. Harmless. Just needed to use the phone. Then she remembered the pay phone in front of Salvaggio's, just up the road and closer to Route 3, and wondered if this was some ploy he was using to get in her house. She edged backward toward the rifle in the corner, keeping her eyes on the hunter.

"Jim? Joey Carmichael here. How ya doing? Listen, there's a car crashed in the woods by Route 3, about a mile past Kittredge Junction. You can't see it from the road. It went over the embankment and took a nose dive into the trees."

The man stood in front of the phone with his back to her. The dead rabbits bounced against his back with every move he made. Jane could not see his face, and wondered for a moment whether he was really talking to someone. Something about him seemed familiar, but she could not imagine where she would have met him. She knew she would have remembered him if she'd seen him around town.

"Must have happened sometime in the night. I saw it this morning, just after dawn, on my way into the woods."

Jane frowned, digesting this information, and stepped back, closer to the rifle. What kind of person leaves a dead body rotting in a car while he goes hunting?

"Dead," he said into the phone. Then he turned around and asked for her number.

"Why?"

"The sheriff wants me to stay here in case he can't find the car. He'll call when he's found it."

"I see. May I talk to him?"

He looked at her strangely. "What for?"

"I'd like to talk to him, that's all."

He glared at her, then shrugged and held out the phone. "Go ahead."

Reaching for the phone, Jane felt immediately foolish. She could just hear the locals gossiping about the paranoid divorcee from the city living alone in the woods without a man. "Never mind. The number's on the phone."

The man relayed the number to the sheriff, then hung up. He turned around to face her and, leaning against the stair railing, folded his arms. Jane thought about the rabbits pressing against her freshly washed stair posts.

"You don't remember me, do you, Mrs. Whitfield?"

"No," Jane stammered. "I'm sure I've never seen you before."

"No? I used to play baseball with your son...little league. I was the catcher."

Vaguely she remembered the chubby black-haired boy who squatted behind home plate shouting orders at her son. Vividly, though, she remembered Will on the pitcher's mound, poised and staring intently across home plate; that summer she had felt the first pangs of the loss of her little boy.

"How's Billy anyway?"

"It's Will now. He's just starting his final year at Harvard." She forced herself to keep the pride out of her voice. Will was lean and blonde and still barely needed to shave. She could not believe this man was the same age as her son.

"Harvard. Whoo-hoo. Good for him." He scratched at the stubble on his chin, rubbing his thumb along the deep, uneven cleft carved like a wound in its center. "So, how's Mr. Whitfield?"

Certain that she detected a smile tugging at the corners of his lips, Jane leveled her coldest look at him. "Mr. Whitfield and I are divorced." As soon as she said it, she realized she could have lied. Should have lied.

He nodded knowingly, as if in this remote stretch of nowhere he had seen everything. "Traded you in for a younger model, huh?"

She locked eyes with him and waited for the anger to come. Instead, hearing him speak the unspeakable, give voice to the cliché that had been hovering around her for nearly a year, almost made her laugh. Younger model. That was exactly what she'd expected when Michael had told her he'd fallen in love with another woman. A younger version of herself. Blonde, pretty, agreeable, a woman who could move into their house, their life, and effortlessly assume her position as Michael's new wife, charming their friends and flattering Michael's colleagues, and slowly dimming all memory of Jane.

But when she'd met Marisel at the house one day during the move, Jane had been stunned. Physically she was striking—long curly red hair, green eyes and freckles, legs longer than Michael's—but Jane was prepared for that. She was not prepared for this entirely self-possessed woman, with an unnerving air of innocence and indifference, as if she were open to anything but had already seen it all. In her presence, Jane felt like the younger woman. Marisel was the first person since the separation who had greeted Jane without any nervous embarrassment. She'd just smiled warmly and held out a long elegant hand, greeting her as though she were welcoming Jane into her house.

The man was staring at her, his eyes piercing and greedy, waiting for her to respond. She refused to give him the pleasure of any reaction.

After a brief silence, he gestured with his head to the rabbits on his back. "Mind if I put these down in here?"

"Actually, I do." It felt good saying no to him. "Put them out on the porch."

She went to the door and waited as he tied the string of rabbits to the wood railing. The wind, blowing steady and strong through the trees, stung her cheeks. The sky had darkened to a deep charcoal gray, and all she could see of the lake were the whitecaps speeding across its black surface. The rabbits, tied to the stairs with their front legs reaching toward the steps, looked poised to run, but their dead eyes stared dully into the night.

"I need to use your sink." He said this gruffly as he came back inside. Slipping the rifle from his shoulder, he leaned it against the kitchen counter, then took off his hat and hunting jacket and hung them on the rifle tip. He wore a white thermal shirt that clung to his body, and as he stood at the sink vigorously scrubbing his hands, the muscles in his shoulder blades danced beneath his shirt. Watching him, Jane felt an involuntary swell of desire, an unfamiliar warmth rippling through her. A crazy image flashed through her mind: she saw herself beckoning him toward her bedroom, disrobing as they mounted the stairs, and laughing seductively as he threw her onto the bed.

She shook herself, disgusted at the fantasy. This man—boy, really—was the same age as her son. And a creep, to boot. Still, a part of her reeled with the sensation, the return of sexual feeling after years of numbness. Her sex life with Michael had died long ago, and lately, the only sex she thought of was the sex he was having with Marisel.

"You remember my mother, Mrs. Whitfield?" the man asked, wiping his hands on a dishcloth.

"Your mother? No, I don't think I do."

"Sure you do. She was the heavy-set lady who came to the games and sat in a beach chair by the backstop."

"I don't remember." Of course, she did. How could she not? The woman, with her black, beauty-parlor hair and flowered tent dresses, hollered endlessly from the sidelines, a cigarette burning in one hand and a sweating can of orange soda in the other. Thinking of her, Jane suddenly felt afraid again.



"The year we won the championship, she decided to celebrate—invited all the parents to bring their kids to our house for a surprise party. Remember that?"

"No." But the memory had already sprung forth, like a forgotten dream that erupts into consciousness, unbidden and unwelcome. It was the summer Will turned 12, and the last year he played little league; he was still young enough to be bursting with excitement about winning the championship. Michael had laughed when they got the invitation, a bright orange card printed with balloons and exclamation points. Jane had tried to laugh with him and said nothing when he'd casually tossed the card in the trash, but on the day of the party, she'd spent hours worrying about it.

All afternoon, she had told herself she was going to pack up Will and drive over to the house, Michael or no Michael. But when the moment to leave arrived, she did nothing. She kept looking at the clock, telling herself there was still time to go, but when it was finally too late, she relaxed and breathed with relief. She joined Michael on the deck for a glass of wine, telling herself their presence would not be missed. Now, as the memory reclaimed itself in the present, she thought of Marisel, and knew that she would have gone to that party without a moment's thought and that Michael would have accompanied her willingly.

"I guess you wouldn't remember. Since you never came. Nobody did except the townies. All four of them."

Jane squeezed her arms and glanced over at her rifle in the corner of the room. She resented being made to feel guilty about some minor, regrettable incident that had happened so long ago. She felt suddenly impatient and annoyed—tired of dealing with this intruder. "What do you want me to do, say I'm sorry? Call up your mother and invite her to tea? You're talking about something that happened ten years ago."

He looked at her, surprised, and then said quietly, "My mother's dead, Mrs. Whitfield."

Jane murmured an apology, and the man shrugged and looked down at the dishcloth in his hands. "Anyway, whatever. That was the last summer any of us townies hung out with the summer kids. You know how it is—around 12, 13, everyone gets old enough to know better. The locals start hanging out in the woods drinking and getting high, while the summer kids take tennis lessons, cruise around the lake, and throw parties at the Boat Club."

He folded the towel neatly, set it on the counter, then waved his arm, brushing the thoughts away. He leaned back against the counter and crossed his arms, surveying the room. Jane could feel

him measuring the worth of the contents of her life—the antique rocker, the Navajo rug, the cabinet full of collectible pottery.

She felt exposed and uncomfortable and wished he would leave. “Look, I’m sure the sheriff will be calling any minute.” She checked her watch. More than ten minutes had passed, the sheriff would surely have gotten to the crash site by now. In the silence, she looked over at the blank page laying on the desk and felt ashamed somehow by the sight.

“You a writer?” he asked, following her gaze.

“I don’t know. I guess you could say that. I mean, I haven’t written in years, I’m just...” She forced herself to shut up, angry that she had told him so much.

“That’s a lonely thing to do.”

He stated it simply, without derision. Jane searched his face for a sneer, but saw none. A wetness filled her eyes. “This is a lonely place,” she said.

“Yeah, tell me about it.”

Jane thought of the morning, a few days before she left, when she’d sat in her car outside Marisel’s Allston loft, where Michael now lived, and waited for him to emerge from the old brick factory building. He came out wearing a three-piece suit and carrying his 500-dollar briefcase, looking completely at home as he walked along the littered sidewalks, stepping past homeless people, on his way to the trolley. He did not see Jane, and as she watched him walk away, she realized, finally, that she had lost him.

The man nodded in the direction of the desk. “Actually, I write, too.”

“You?” She could not even imagine him with a pen in his hand.

“Yeah, me. I write when I’m out in the woods, at night beside the fire.” He shook his head, disgusted. “You summer people. You think you’re so damn smart. You don’t know anything about any of us here.”

Jane did not know what to say to this. Of course, it was true. Finally, she asked him what he wrote about.

He frowned, trying to assess, Jane assumed, whether she really cared. Then, with a shrug, he said in a quiet voice, “I don’t know. Hunting. The woods. The lake.” He laughed and shot her a look. “The summer people.”

Jane did not laugh with him. She looked down at her watch. “It couldn’t be taking this long.” It occurred to her again that he may have been talking into a dead phone earlier.

*Douglas Hesse*

---

## A Perfect Thing

in this life,  
my arranged price,  
I look for a perfect thing  
that once found  
I know will fall  
like perfect things do  
    ...and should. Do and should.  
A perfect thing that stays

is death  
is something a young man  
built on flashes of love,  
is something I  
should let out of my hands  
    ...when it's time for letting. Letting go.  
Without a perfect thing

there would be no trembling,  
without letting go  
there would be nothing to tremble  
in this symmetry waving  
beautiful and terrible  
    ...in this perfect. Letting perfect go.  
I have tried to say it all

under stars shining barely  
from the black,  
just enough perfect  
more than enough black,  
letting me sleep

*Judy Salee*

---

Written Near A Window at Dawn

The woman who did my mother's ironing for instance, her house of chicken wire and tar paper, a canning pot of beans on the stove, nine children, the oldest sitting in a broken down car in the driveway staring over the steering wheel. At what? He was touched my mother told me, and wasn't I fortunate not to have to live that way, girls gathering around me in the driveway admiring my clothes, our car. Their feet were dirty, hair uncombed, eyes hungry for what they thought I had they didn't. My mother handing their mother the agreed upon dollar an hour, as if those dollars would become a multitude of loaves and fishes. Or love.

it's the mother of all weariness,  
plus-sized and full-figured, it is,  
my friend,  
every synonym for large.

2

This fall, Boris Nikolayevitch,  
meet me in Oslo,  
where we will take the steaming baths  
of the Tøyenbad, commiserate  
over shots of *Stolichnaya*,  
restore ourselves with samovars of tea  
and quiet readings  
from Akhmatova's *Requiem*.  
In the declining light  
of a November afternoon,  
let us sit quietly in the Galleriat  
and contemplate the works  
of our comrade, Edvard Munch.  
Consider your likeness  
to the man in the blue window  
of *Night in Saint-Cloud*,  
of which Edvard said,  
"For me, life is a window in a cell.  
I shall never enter the promised land."  
I am turning from the lakefront  
in his canvas, *Melancholy*.  
"The air is mild," Edvard wrote of it,  
"it must be wonderful to love now."  
To see our lives depicted  
with such exquisite clarity!  
Barely ruling your vast country,  
me, guarding the boundaries  
of my unruly heart.

---

## Morning at The Artist's House, Key West

Below the tin roof and pewter sky,  
the Czech gardener gathers leaves  
from the sapodilla tree.

He sweeps the bricks and trims  
the bougainvillea, the coral vine,  
the creeping fig. The haze clears,  
the sky blues,

the traffic and ring of mopeds  
pick up. I hear the gardener  
speaking to the maid,

*No, no, no*, trying to be understood  
in a new language. Consider the  
Victorian geometry: Gray clapboard  
and lavender shutters, the haphazard  
design—porch over porch, over  
added-on rooms—all this,

topped by the octagon  
of a silver cupola. To my left,  
the aluminum sheet roof  
of the Old Stone Church  
glows. As if it might be the sky.

As if the roof might be something new  
and separate from the sky.

Past the fountain, an iron fence  
divides the courtyard  
from the walk. In the street,

an orange panel truck,  
its paint softened to a dull patina.

The words that once described its use  
are blackened out.

The truck awaits some new direction,  
the words to say some new use.

A fire truck races by. Then a police siren  
can be heard, approaching life or death

from a different angle. Behind me,  
on this rooftop deck, a woman  
in a blue bathing suit. The sky and clouds roll  
through the parabolic curve of  
her sunglasses, green on green  
against each plastic lens.

---

## The Blueberry Field

“American poetry is full of ‘Oh, poor me.’”  
– Mark Strand

Snow melt. The water ponds  
in orderly rows, shadowed at times  
then flaring. Early evening,  
and the declension of light  
fires the bodies of the plants:  
cinnamon, garnet,  
simple brown and umber.  
Along the fence line, a white building.  
You cross the field, thinking of yourself  
as a displaced person.  
Dressed in the black  
of a minor functionary,  
hands thrust in pockets,  
the letters of transit safely pinned  
against the lining of your coat.  
Within an envelope, perhaps,  
the photograph of a woman,  
sepia-toned, because it *must* be so,  
the spider web of a fold  
just marring  
the dark luster of her hair.  
Or, gutted and bled of color,  
is this the opening sequence  
of a lost Russian film.  
An enemy of the people  
moves through a tracking shot.  
Cut to a crow, the man’s black doppelganger,  
open-mouthed and settling its wings.  
Then again. The first scene,  
framed at a distance.  
Thesis, antithesis, synthesis.  
The agony of one, weighed



against the triumph of Soviet agriculture.  
You lean through the gessoed wash  
of the white building, a treeline  
and a thin blue sky. On film, light  
and the stagy grays  
of filtered silver acetate.  
You walk rapidly and without purpose.  
In a field so neatly arranged,  
there is no reason to do otherwise.

---

## At the Ice Dock

November comes near the mouth  
of the river. I've driven down  
from New Orleans, to haggle over  
the price that must be paid  
to get mullet iced, boxed, and  
free-on-board, bound for Pascagoula.  
Near the mooring lines,  
an orange forklift accelerates  
and retreats.

They are unloading tuna  
from *The Mother of Jesus*,  
a longliner out of Mandeville.  
Miles of line circle the reels.  
Hundreds of blaze-orange floats  
crowd her foredeck, like refugees  
from a cautious land.  
I squat down to touch a yellowfin  
laid out by the dock workers.  
The pupil of its yellow eye  
is a black disc. A streak of yellow disappears  
along its side, then appears again  
in the fins and finlets  
that stretch along the back  
and underbelly, like the savage teeth  
of an ancient hacksaw.

Last night, I drank until  
I could no longer calculate,  
then wandered through the rainy streets  
of the French Quarter.  
Young black men with trumpets,  
tubas, saxophones, and drums,  
huddled under awnings, pressed  
into alcoves and sheltered alleys,

stepping in place  
to a slow and mournful jazz.  
The crowd stood motionless,  
and the Halloween costumes  
grew horrific in the rain.

Here, the packing goes on.  
The tuna are weighed, flesh  
is cored. Each fish is boxed,  
laid out on ice. Each box,  
the size of a small coffin.  
The dock crew close and band them,  
then stack the boxes, one atop  
another. The orange forklift does its work.  
Beyond the dock and across the dead air,  
the day is moving slowly  
toward the impossible blue  
of the Gulf.

## Talking Over Stones

Billy told Leena and me about a place called Bear Lake up on the creek, said it was a great swimming hole, real private, only watch out for the caretaker. Worse than mean. Probably growing a patch he didn't want anyone messing with. Last time, he caught Billy on the dirt road as he drove out, and stood in front of his truck with his gun raised, screaming. A crazy s.o.b., Billy said. But it's worth the risk to see Bear Lake, man.

Leena and I hadn't been married very long. We were both twenty-one and had never had what you'd call a real fight. All summer Leena kept saying when are we going to chance it and go to Bear Lake. She was dying to see it, and wasn't worried by Billy's stories.

Nothing much worried her. She said I took care of that for both of us, and I guess I had gotten paranoid from watching all those blood and guts training films. I know people who go into fire fighting are supposed to be fearless, but it's not true. (Leena says of course it's not true, all of you are just trying to out-run trouble.)

Anyway, with one thing and another, it was autumn before she talked me into it, Indian summer, ninety in the valley. I tried not to mention the fire danger. Leena hated it when I got off on that, and I didn't want to irritate her. She was tired of the heat, and we were broke. We didn't even have enough money for sitting in a nice cool movie theatre, but swimming was free, except for the gas.

We packed a lunch. She made peanut butter cookies and to please me, those little seaweed wrap things her mother taught her to do, with pork and rice inside. I took my old Nikon. Photography was my hobby, and ever since I met her, I couldn't stop shooting pictures of Leena. That's what lust does to you.

Besides, she was beautiful, had a delicate face and loads of long black hair, plum dark eyes. Very exotic looking with her mother's Japanese features and her father's American height. I overheard a guy in a bar one night saying how in every relationship there's one person who's more afraid of a breakup than the other, and I guess in my marriage, that would be me. At least I always felt kind of privileged that I had someone like Leena.

Billy's directions were vague. Head up Highway 32 into the mountains and then drop back down a certain dirt road toward the

creek. The road winds around. After about twenty minutes, you hit water. Drive the car off into the bushes to hide it, look for a deer trail to the left, and parallel the bank.

The road was rutted and dusty, rock strewn. I worried about my oil pan the whole way. Leena sat next to the passenger door so the wind could hit her face, send her black hair whipping back. She wasn't fussy about things like her hair. When I thought of Leena I thought of smooth, how she always looked so smooth, no matter what.

On the deer trail, our sandals kept crunching pinecones and what Leena called little acorn hats. It was already cooler, and the sun-baked, downed pine needles smelled like the earth popping open. We probably would've stopped there to swim but the water was autumn low. Leena said it made a sound like water talking over stones.

Water talking over stones. She was good at poetic stuff like that, which made me think. If I could get the right picture, I could blow it up poster size and write that line underneath, really make something nice to remember our day. If I could get the right picture.

I carried our lunch in a backpack, following Leena through patches of sun and shade. I was thinking about getting the right shot to go with her words, how it would definitely have to have her in it, and how happy I was to be with her, glad she'd finally cooled off from the valley heat and was in such a good mood, when she stopped suddenly.

"Look, Jay!" she cried. "That must be the caretaker's place." We'd rounded a bend and above us on a knoll sat a ramshackle trailer. It looked like it'd taken root. A stack of half chopped wood lay scattered in front, with an axe sucked into a stump. The axe gave me a start. Billy hadn't said anything about seeing his trailer from the path. If you could see his trailer, he could see you.

"We'd better go back," I tugged on her arm.

"Now?" She looked surprised. "We're almost there."

"He might have seen us."

"I doubt it." Leena frowned up at the place. "It looks pretty dead. I don't think he's around."

"There's a truck."

"Which means he's probably off on foot somewhere." She smiled her smooth smile, appraising me. "Come on." She pulled from my grasp, and I could tell she enjoyed the danger of sneaking in, which made me feel silly for not enjoying it, too.

But I couldn't help it, Billy's story about the caretaker confronting him with a shotgun started rattling around in my head.

Just how crazy was he? A Vietnam vet, Billie said, an ex-Green Beret. You sometimes heard about that kind of guy going nuts and killing people.

What if he was out here somewhere on foot? As we passed the knoll and headed back into trees, I started thinking how remote we were, and looking over my shoulder. It was awfully lonely, down right isolated, in fact. And there were plenty of places a guy could hide. He could track us from any dense stand of manzanita, or follow behind us from tree to tree, shotgun trained.

"I wish we hadn't hidden the car," I whispered to Leena, spooked. "If something should happen to us, no one would know where to look."

"Stop worrying Jay." She didn't whisper. "Not all of life is a disaster film. If he catches us we just say we're going to the creek, and nobody has the right to own a creek."

She was big on principle. I wasn't so much worried about principle as I was about that gun. If it came to that I knew it'd be up to me to protect her, and it was too easy to think of a scenario in which I'd have to. So maybe I was letting my training get to me, but how could I not? Most people had no idea what could go wrong.

I was about to insist we turn around, when we found Bear Lake. It was all Billy said it would be. The creek dropped considerably here, down a basalt cliff into a wide still pool carved from lava rock. Sun blazed the water, huge dogwoods and elephant ears fanning the edge. A waterfall at one end made thin lace this time of year. I got the Nikon ready.

"Look at this! Aren't you glad we didn't leave?" Leena cried. "And all to ourselves, too!"

I had to admit, it was gorgeous, although I said I wished we'd see a few other people around.

"Oh, no, that would spoil it," she moaned. "Being alone is the best part."

Maybe she was right. I followed her up to the top of the ledge where the creek dropped into the pool, liking the sight of the backs of her hard dark calves. Liking the pretty sheen on her cheeks when we stopped at the top.

From here we could see a few straggling clouds mirrored in the still water below, its surface skimmed by burnt red leaves. And we discovered a tunnel through the rock, drilled so evenly it must have been manmade, and tall enough for us, crouched over, to reach the far side of the pool.

I started snapping pictures of sun baked rock. Leena said she was in love, stripped naked, and dove in. I looked around good, but except for a wave of gnats in front of my face, nothing moved. Then I looked at Leena, swimming so happily, thought what the hell, laid the camera aside and I stripped, too.

Sometime later, laughing and shivering, we stretched on the warm rock dome near the tunnel and Leena spread out our lunch. "But first," she said, taking something from the backpack and holding it up, "a little celebration."

"Where'd you get that?" I wasn't into pot myself, I suppose I was kind of conservative. Not that I hadn't tried it a few times, I just didn't want to get in the habit. With my workouts and wanting to be more or less in law enforcement, it seemed kind of hypocritical. But sometimes, when Leena got it from her friends, I indulged. That's what she called it, indulging. She lit the joint and waved it under my nose.

But smoking turned out to be a bad idea. It gave me that creepy feeling again, that we were being watched. After a few hits, I started noticing how extra sharp each sound was. I jumped when the afternoon breeze came up, and skittered leaves from the trees, when the pinecones let go and clawed down the pine bark, and the stones threw back our voices.

"You know," I told Leena, "we weren't that quiet in the water, splashing around. What if the caretaker heard us?"

"Relax, Jay." She laughed, and paid no attention to my trying to shush her. "You know you always get a little paranoid when you first smoke. It'll pass."

She threw her body across the glittering rock and told me to come here. And it was that exact moment the grass bowled me over, like the waterfall had suddenly burst over the side of the basalt, a torrent. And her thin bare arms and flawless skin with only the one little brown mole just above her elbow.

She was running her fingers over the bridge of my nose and around my eyes, down my cheeks and across my chin in a secret language of ours. I traced her features back. Water talking over stones, water talking over stones were the words trickling through my head the way they do when you're high. It was really nice, then.

Afterward, Leena said, "See? Nobody's here but us chickens." And she opened her arms and shouted. "It's all ours!" her voice

chasing along the pool. I wasn't so high anymore, though, and the creepiness came back. I stood up and put my shorts on.

"Good idea, let's take a walk." Leena jumped up and grabbed her shorts and shirt, and before I knew it she'd taken off into the woods, barefoot.

"Leena. Come back!" I got nervous really fast. Worry about the caretaker hit again like a boulder in my chest. I felt clumsy hunting my sandals, strapping them on. Anxious, I left the remains of our lunch spread across the rocks, and ran after my wife.

Leena was a jogger, she ran fast and easy, with a surprising light strength. My feet fell heavy behind her. But I was in good shape. I caught up with her near the trailer.

"What's with you? Be quiet," I said. She was giggling and staring at the dilapidated place above us. Suddenly she stopped.

"What's that smell?"

"What smell?"

"Something awful. Like a dead animal or something. Only worse."

"I don't smell anything." But when the breeze hit me in the face, I did smell it.

"I don't think he lives here anymore." She was sober now, staring at the trailer. "It looks deserted. Let's take a look."

"Are you crazy?"

She'd started up the incline, yanking at bushes and clawing for footholds in the rotting sprawl of leaves and needles. "Leena, come on."

She stopped, taunting me. "What are you worried about? You're the future fireman."

"Damn it, Leena." I could have killed her right then. Why'd she have to spoil things? Why risk getting caught? She was being so childish.

At the top of the knoll, on the edge of the clearing for the trailer, the smell was stronger. Not a smell, a stench. "Nobody could live here with that," Leena reasoned. "I'm going to peek in the window."

"No!" I hissed. My legs shook a little from the steep climb and my head felt heavy coming off the grass. I was sweaty and prickly, and imagined I'd just hacked through poison oak and its plague was spreading across my bare chest and legs.

Leena stepped into the clearing and hesitated, and I thought, No sound, no warning shouts, nothing. Only the edgy breeze leaning the pine trees. She crept over to the window.

"Oh, my God," she breathed, stepping back. "Jay, commeer."



"What?" I looked over my shoulder for a swarm of caretakers.  
"What is it?"

"He's dead."

"What?"

"He's dead. The guy's dead in there." She looked startled.

She was right. I could see him too stiff for life and hung over the kitchen table. The table was one of those cheap old Formica types. He had on a dusty corduroy jacket that wrinkled at the elbows like the fingers of a too worn glove. The refrigerator door was ajar, as if he'd meant to get out something to eat but had paused in the act, slumped in the chair, and put his head down for good. "Christ," I swore. "Let's get out of here."

"Wait." Leena rubbed at the glass, stared inside. "God, it's horrible. He's rotting, Jay. He's been here a while. Look at his hands. They're all purple and black."

I didn't want to. I wanted to go back to Bear Lake, get our stuff and beat it. "Leena, what are you doing?"

She'd gone around to the sliding door, was trying the latch. "It's open." Her hushed, church voice.

"You can't go in there."

Leena ignored me and I was shocked to see her slip inside.

The smell was even worse with the door open. I gagged and faced away. She'd gone crazy, smoked too much pot, she was always wild on pot. I had to get her out of here before she freaked out, did something really stupid. But when I went inside she was standing behind the dead man with the smoothest look on her I'd ever seen. Not crazy, not scared, not anything as far as I could tell. In the dusky light her eyes glowed.

I was going to be sick.

Jesus, I thought, she's actually got him by the shoulder, like somebody cutting in on you on the dance floor. Maybe I was dreaming the way the ground roped up in a snake's back. When she pulled him upright the man's head fell to the side, what was left of it, but his face stuck to the Formica. I'm not kidding. On the tabletop was the back of his face, like the inside of a mask, with two slitted holes where the eyes should be.

I don't know how I got to the door. But then I was outside losing my seaweed wrapped lunch in the dirt. And Leena was beside me, holding my shoulders, her cheek on my back.

"Are you all right?" she cried, "are you all right, Jay?"

"Why'd you touch him? Why'd you do that?" I gasped.

"I don't know, I just did." I felt her shudder.

"You shouldn't have!"

"What's that got—"

"—You just shouldn't have!" I cut her off.

She stiffened. "What's the matter with you, he's dead, isn't he?"

I stared and stared at her bare feet, which made me sick all over again, her going in there without shoes.

I couldn't believe it, when we went to collect our things, that Leena insisted we take one last swim. I just wanted to get out of there.

"Well, I'm going in," she sulked. She'd been quiet since we left the trailer. "I want to get that smell off me."

So I sat on the high rocks, in shadow now, watching her stroke through the water. I was bone tired, there was no way I was going to swim.

Leena seemed oblivious. "You should come in," she called to me, flipping on her back, "it'll make you feel better." Her voice carried so well up the cooling stone it was as if she stood right next to me. "Besides, I'll never get you here again. Not after today. This is our last time ever, Jay."

I couldn't believe she was worried about that now. "Hurry up, Leena. We need to find a phone. Call the police."

"The police?"

"Tell them what happened."

"Why?" She glided belly up and frowned at me. "That will only make it worse."

"How can it get worse?"

When she came upright, water sliding from her shoulders, I could see the goose bumps on her arms. "Because we'd have to admit we were here. Answer questions and stuff."

I blinked. I wasn't sure I was hearing her right.

She tread water, said, "What I mean is, I don't think we're obligated to do that."

"We don't have a choice."

"Sure we do." She bobbed in one spot, watching me.

"I can't believe you. Don't you even care that a man's dead back there?"

"It's sad. His dying alone. But Billy said he was a mean old man. Maybe he got what he deserved." It could have been the shiver in her voice, but her words sounded clipped.

"Leena," I choked on her name. Suddenly I was more scared by her, than anything else. "That's so cold."

“Look, Jay. Don’t come unglued. You’re going to have to see a lot more of this in your work.”

“You don’t get it, do you?” It occurred to me I could yell now if I wanted, there was no one to hear.

“Get what?”

“The whole day, I thought he was watching us, I thought he was spying on us while we were swimming and eating and—doing it. I even saw his shotgun aimed at us through the trees. And all the time, he was dead.”

“Yeah, and you were so uptight, you almost ruined everything. I told you not to worry.” She clamped her teeth so they wouldn’t chatter, and looked up at the sky as if the water were warm as hell.

“Uptight!” I jerked to a stand. “I wasn’t uptight. I was right. Something was wrong. It just makes me sick to think it doesn’t bother you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

I stared at her, so smooth.

“What?” she snapped. “I’ve got a stone heart? Or just a stronger stomach than you. You’re so transparent, Jay.” She ducked under and sliced across the pool, her wake cutting through the scattered leaves. Even angry, she swam so easy, with hardly a ripple. I had to admit, she was right about my weak stomach. But I knew there was more to it.

“You’re right! This is the last time! I’d ever come here again!” I shouted.

She’d heard me. She’d stopped at the far side of the pool and glared back at me. She looked blurry with the distance, and the water smearing her face. It occurred to me she might be crying, unless it was a trick of the glancing light. And it gave me the shakes to realize I couldn’t be sure.

I thought of how sulky she’d looked earlier, when I’d asked her to pose in the rock tunnel. I’d been excited by the way I could frame her naked body in the basalt arc, to get the thread of sun behind. Seeing her come into focus in my lens had made my bones light. Now I ached to remember how clear that picture was.

For a long minute, neither of us moved.

I took a step forward on the rock. There was no hope for it, I was going to jump. What else could I do? I loved her. I cannon balled in, and swam beside Leena in the cold until my skin was so chilled my teeth rattled.

Star Notes

“Of Meridians and Parallels man has made a net and this  
net thrown upon the heavens and now they are his own.”

– John Donne

Facing east—9/3/98 9:00 p.m.

I’m looking for the Pleiades  
without luck.

The moon is luscious tonight  
and won’t be slighted.  
She is gathering branches  
leaves and remaining acorns  
around the hem of her skirt;  
her mischievous little ones  
are nowhere to be found.

10:00 p.m.

My husband points overhead  
to Altair, Deneb, Vega  
vaguely east, south and west  
stars he remembers from dawn  
and twilight at sea;  
but we aren’t at sea.  
We grasp the Big Dipper—  
a known quantity—  
and trace its base  
to the North Star.

Facing southeast—9/5/98

On the sky’s beach  
the moon is a pearl  
her grey cloud shell.

Sunset—9/6/98

Clouds flaunt red banners  
long leaves streaming  
before the sun.

Daytime—9/7/98

My net wasn't meant  
to chart stars.  
Like fish on the rim  
of a celadon dish  
they slip away  
tell their stories.

## Beginning Again

Hours had passed  
since I'd thought of you  
but while shopping for nourishment—  
for the new tastes I've discovered  
without you—  
time spent  
filling my pan full of the fresh colors and shapes  
that mingle with wilted herbs  
and dance with the anticipation of  
being known—  
my eyes dropped like ripe fruit,  
and in your absence  
penetrate my skin—  
between the juicy strands of my grief  
and the pathetic faces of cordiality—

announcing the erection of  
a fence between the vegetables  
and the herbs—  
those brittle bodies  
pasty and expectant  
bending down and petting  
your grass covered walls  
circulating your scent  
bringing forth nausea  
instead of an appetite  
from this moment on  
only half of me marches on—  
one arm around the day's duties  
the other is moving with the past, and  
curling  
like the wet pages of a book.

Mai Tai in Kaua'i

(sonnet to d.)

An army of wind—yours—combs the palms here & bends.  
Of pineapple and papaya would breakfast aloha taste!  
While magpies & Hawaiian swallows dare nearer to our chairs,  
Waiting for a crumb of banana bread or mango muffin,  
The sun threatens not to care for us today,  
Moves between clouds. The ice cream man operates  
From his surfboard here, clouds kiss like blue cotton  
Candy, but without your wax-eyes, it's freedom I fancy!

For your spark: the culprit who curls these waves  
Like a newborn's fingers—whether not the fickle sun  
Tries to melt my mai tai today, the waves die crashing  
And calmly into the shoreline of my body;  
The island magpies & swallows invite you here, my darling—  
But tonight the waves accompany my army, bed & smashing!

---

## Keep Still

Or four times more, a smile  
Unadultered, unaided—Hail!  
Holding your noon should upon me  
Be like another sun scolding.

Alley-echo keys, keep still, please  
But much like a begged jury,  
Chores, glue, fury of honey.

And four more. For still sentences  
Must, like years-ago's art, cheaply  
Digress, weaken the walls of a calling:  
Keep a little moon in the neighborhood.

Dawn, dewlings, all, doubt  
All that drama-learnt smiles,  
Meanwhile...



---

To: Raymond Carver

Re: Happiness

You, Gary's pal, professor Thompson's road trip  
partner, drove with alcohol, up past 32,  
smoked a little, blew clouds with Gary or brother.  
Come night, you spoke often, drove to broken  
road of weeds with lover, as have I, Mr. Carver.

At what time would your lover tell you it's alright?  
With hair-bleach, she knew the color of your sky—  
just a case of the have-not's versus the have-I's?

Time into time, as sunsets lay Las Vegas  
to a carded sun-rise, my lover & I attempt  
to discard the relativity of chocolate death,  
like his mother's, as she lay dying—fight  
like your car coughing through Montana,  
while driving with Gary, or his brother.

Carver, nothing is as rich as Chico summer  
Except chocolate, water and the road to a lover.

## The Ken Waldman Night

There we were, spackled in rain.  
Both of us cold and wet.  
I wore my sandals—*chanclas*, I call them—with a red  
*sweatshirt*, she calls it—to see the man who plays a fiddle.  
Dusted with spray, we make like an arrow,  
true and straight on our course.

So we get there and the place is packed of course.  
The windows toward the back are dusted in rain.  
We follow the path, stay on our arrow.  
The people beside us, their coats are still wet.  
There he was, an almost burly man with his fiddle.  
The tips of my ears and my nose still cold red.

I studied the man and had a vision of Red  
Sands, New Mexico, where grandpa told me the course  
of events that led him to take up playin' the fiddle.  
In the New Mexican desert the rain  
was harsh, so harsh it was not wet,  
but dry and powdery, frozen and cold like those arrow

heads when those Apache let fly their arrows.  
They pierce flesh and hurt and burn and sting blood red.  
Dying slow isn't for me; give it to me fast and wet  
like those movies I watch. Their faces contorted, their shadows  
are coarse.

Inside it's sunny. Outside my body, my eyelids are dusted with rain.  
In the back of my eyes I hear a fiddle.

Avelino Atencio used to play some fiddle.  
With a stump for a hand, he maneuvered the bow true as an arrow.  
I'll never forget the dreary day when the rain  
kept me and grandpa talking for hours about the Red  
Sands and our forefathers, and the coarse  
shadows tonight are just like water; taut and wet.

I awaken to the sounds and sights of muse and wet  
shoulders all around. The Alaskan poet is making love to his fiddle.  
His hair is big and long, but matted with coarse  
chops down to his beard. His notes pierce my flesh like a dove-tail  
arrow.

He spins his tales of rural plane crashes, in his farmer red  
flannel. Between the sounds, I listen for rain,

Souls Gliding

An afternoon mowing his puffed lawn,  
he shuffles from bathroom to bedroom  
yellowish-pink, shriveled  
naked  
Pop hesitates  
slack-mouthed.

He looks down to me,  
his withered skin  
sunk around his eyes,  
losing their blue.

I shrink into Nano and hide  
beneath her apron.  
Her floured handprint  
marks my back.

Later, he falls back.  
She loosens buttons around his  
wizened neck.  
Smooths his  
clammy wisps;  
Milk, he asks once more.

She stands over him holding the glass  
transfixed.  
Quivering, fluttering waves  
splash.

Near their window  
beside the carpet stain.  
Her apron discarded, her rings cleaned,  
we see a brushed white bird  
alight on his sculptured deer;  
he leaves with us in his wings.

A Tribute to e. e. cummings:

[adore this goddess, womanfakekind,]

adore this goddess, womanfakekind,

so. Beauty is a comfortable sight:  
your gift (love and eternal vanity unsafely beyond)

siliconing with the bigness of her littleness  
—fats defy one suctiontube  
into a sunnybeach; legs extend

unwish through anorexia where when till unwish  
devours on its unself.

A body made  
is not a body born—adore rubber flesh

and facelifts, poor wrinkles and sags, but always this  
fine specimen of barbiemagical

perfectionism. We models know

a fat case if—listen: there's a hell  
of a good plastic surgeon next door; lets go

*Chris Baldwin*

---

San Diego Free Clinic

*Guess everybody's a Medusa*  
*when blood is poison,*  
says the tambourine monkey beside you;  
the free doctor licking stenciled lips  
as if considering some routine-  
your inevitable fate by envelope,  
when fresh stomach acid  
flames and the deep hydraulic  
waves ditch you on cold shore  
past the papers' shuffle  
through numbers and names

*the test was negative,* he says  
before you are ready  
and you find a world familiar again  
with sharp corners and space;  
and leaving, you ask the nurse  
for the rubber tie and she  
smiles, fuck you, busy as death  
but you are already at the bar  
balcony overlooking the pacific  
for an 11 A.M. sunrise that  
coats the beachside blocks  
with fumes of forgotten sleep.

## Buffalo Chips

Hank Styles wasn't surprised when, first thing Monday morning, before he'd even sat down, his boss summoned him to his office from the speaker phone. He'd been expecting it for days. "Come on in here, Hank," the creative director said, in his quasi-sing-song voice that made everything he said sound like it wasn't meant to be taken seriously. Of course, everybody did take Joe Darling seriously, and Hank could feel the eyes on him as he walked through the large cavernous work area – one vast space with no dividing walls – toward Joe's office. The day had barely begun, but already Briggs, Orson, Bernini – BOB, for short – buzzed with movement and sound. People shouted across the room, assistants in short skirts and fat shoes walked busily through the office talking into portable phones, and a few art directors played pool around the table in the center of the room.

Hank could see Joe in his enclosed, windowed office at the far end of the room – tilting back in his chair, feet crossed on his desk, talking into the phone. He waited at the door until Joe looked up and acknowledged him, impatiently motioning for him to sit down as he turned back to his conversation. Joe stayed on the phone for several minutes, talking about the Lakers game he'd been to the night before, casually mentioning that he'd met Shaq at center court, had a beer with Jack Nicholson. Finally, he hung up, swung his feet off the desk and turned to face Hank.

He regarded him for a few moments, then shook his head sadly. "Hank, Hank, Hank," he said. He leaned forward, pressed his elbows on the desk, and folded his hands. "What are we going to do about you?"

Hank said nothing, just stared at Joe and waited for him to continue.

"Three weeks, buddy," Joe said. "Three fucking weeks you've been on this account." He spread open his palms. "Hank, it's a bill-board, for Christ's sake. A couple of lines of copy. What's going on?"

Hank forced himself to keep his expression blank. "Nothing's coming, Joe. What can I say?"

"Nothing's coming." Joe smiled, staring at Hank and gravely nodding his head. "All right, so I guess that's what I'll tell the

client when they come in tomorrow and ask to see the brilliant copy you've come up with."

"I need more time." Hank said this simply, refusing to let any note of apology or contriteness enter his voice. But even this felt like an admission of guilt, and a dark, self-loathing crept through him. Absently, Hank wondered when he had started hating his life.

"Can't give that to you, pal. The client will be here in the morning expecting to be dazzled by Hank Style's copy, and I'm not going to tell them that one of my best writers couldn't think of anything inspiring to say about Buffalo Power Bars." Joe went on, talking about his responsibility as creative director, all but whining about how the burden of this crap always fell on him.

Hank tuned out to the patter, not even trying to listen. He let his mind wander and drift into the fantasy that had been hovering around his consciousness for several weeks. Lately, at odd moments, he'd found himself wondering what it would be like to live in the world when it was uninhabited – pre-civilization, or modern civilization anyway. He did this now, as Joe droned on. He pictured the walls of the office crumbling away, the brick sides of the building disappearing with it. He struggled to form an image of this little stretch off Main Street without buildings, cars, pavement, people – just dirt and brush and wild animals. The image shimmered, half-formed, and became a little sharper the more deeply he let himself feel it.

The chirrupy ring of the telephone startled him, bringing him back to Joe's office, to the harsh glare of the fluorescent lights, the low buzz of the computer, Joe's ubiquitous presence. Joe took the phone call and turned his back to Hank.

It had first happened a few weeks before, one morning when Hank was hanging out on the boardwalk, avoiding going in to work. He was sitting on a bench, drinking cappuccino and staring out at the water, when an old homeless man came up and sat down beside him. "Tell you a story for a dollar," the man said in a raspy whisper. He spoke as though he'd lost a chunk of his vocal chords. "Tell you a story for a dollar," he repeated, until Hank laughed and told him to go ahead, tell him a story.

Really, the old man didn't tell a story at all, just started talking about LA in the old days. He was one of the original Okies, he said, came out here as a kid in the twenties. LA was a different place then. A different place. You wouldn't have recognized it, he told Hank. Miles of cow pastures covering what became Culver City; La Cienega Boulevard just a rickety wooden road; and north



of Wilshire, in Santa Monica, nothing but empty fields spreading north.

The old man's story fizzled quickly, and the two sat in silence for several minutes. Then, the old man stirred, and shouted, "I was in a movie once!" He looked at Hank expectantly. Hank stared into the squashed gristled face and tried to imagine the man as a boy in the twenties, a young man in the forties. Then he reached for his wallet and pulled out a five-dollar bill, nodded at the old man's "God bless you, mister," and watched him hobble to a liquor store nearby.

Hank looked out to the ocean, thinking of LA raw, new, and undeveloped. Still the promised land. He had never really thought of it as anything but what it was. Sure, in the 15 years he'd been out here, he'd seen plenty of change. Old landmarks torn down to make way for new developments: the Tiny Naylor's on La Brea, one of the original rollerskating hamburger stands, now an anonymous mini-mall; an old movie palace on Pico and Westwood, now swallowed up by the Westside Pavilion. But he'd never thought of it as anything other than cement replacing cement, concrete covering concrete.

Hank closed his eyes and tried to picture the images the old man had described. The sun warmed his eyelids and soon he was seeing a swirl of red molten lava. Then something moved through him, like a swift and sudden wind, making him feel like he was entering another dimension, where space and time disappeared. He saw the beach as nothing but surf, sand, and sprawling brush. Minus the palm trees, the rollerbladers, the boardwalk, the even line of pink, blue, beige and white stuccoed buildings; the homeless people sleeping under trees or aimlessly pushing shopping carts; the neon surf clothes hanging outside the boardwalk shops... Just blue water and a spreading sea of white sand swept clean of beer cans, plastic tampon holders, wadded diapers, and cigarette butts. As the image took hold, Hank felt embraced by a vast emptiness that was at once utterly calming and filled with possibility.

"Hank?"

Hank opened his eyes, surprised to realize that he'd closed them. Joe was looking at him strangely. He didn't speak for several moments, and Hank enjoyed seeing him at a loss for words. Finally, Joe waved his hand vaguely in the direction of the door. "I've got to get back to work," he said, and waited for Hank to get up. "Tomorrow, Hank. Don't let me down."

Hank stopped at the door and turned to Joe. "Or what, Joe?"

Joe blinked, momentarily losing his cool, and then smiled. "Remind me again, Hank, how much are you paying on that Land

Rover and that beachfront condo of yours?" Joe paused, obviously relishing the moment. "Hey, maybe you'll finally find the time to write that screenplay you've always talked about."

Hank stared at Joe, could see the hardness in his eyes, anchored behind his contented, laid-back demeanor, but he was tired of the game. "You really enjoy this, don't you, Joe?"

Joe looked at him thoughtfully. "It's just business, Hank."

"Right," Hank said, making a move to leave, but Joe stopped him.

"Oh, and one more thing, Harmon," he said, pronouncing the name slowly and deliberately. "You're not in Kansas anymore. Remember that."

Fuck you, Hank thought as he walked out the door. Years ago, when he'd first joined the firm as a junior copywriter, he and Joe had gone out drinking, and Hank had told him his story. The whole thing – growing up on a farm in Kansas, his mother raising six kids by herself, Hank coming out to LA to study screenwriting at USC. He'd even told Joe his real name – Harmon Schreck – and how he'd spent the whole drive from Kansas to LA trying on different names until, on his way through Needles, he'd settled on Hank Styles. Every so often, Joe would throw the name at him – along with the quip about Kansas – and Hank would wonder how he could ever have been so green as to consider him a friend.

On the way back to his desk, Hank stopped in the break room to make himself a cappuccino. Two of the traffic girls, chattering about their weekend, made room for him at the machine. He saw them exchange wicked glances as they stepped aside. Great, he thought, as he watched the cappuccino burble into being, I've become fodder for the office gossip mill. He had an urge to tell them his fantasy, just to see the look on their faces, to give them something real to talk about, but instead he quietly picked up his cup and left them alone with their chatter.

Back at his desk, he found his partner, Mike Bean, perched on the edge of a file cabinet, twirling a basketball, waiting for him. They were one of several teams in the agency, working together as copywriter and art director to create ads for the accounts they were assigned to.

"Hey, Dude."

"What's up, Mike," Hank set the coffee by his computer and hit the power key. "You're asking me?" Mike let the basketball roll gently to the floor. Hank glared at him as he sat down. "Oh, Christ, not you, too."

"What are you talking about?" Mike asked innocently.

"The Buffalo fucking Power Bar account, what else? Are you going to get after me about it, too?"

Mike held up his hands and laughed. "Not me, buddy. From what I hear, Joe's already got that covered."

"Yeah, well, you heard right." Hank clicked on the icon of his favorite golf game and waited for it to boot up. "Why don't you come up with something for once?"

Mike slid down from the file cabinet and pulled up a chair from the next desk. He sat down, clutched Hank's arm, and put his face close to his. "Because, Hank, you're the idea man and I'm the execution man." He spoke slowly, as if he was talking to a child, and tried to keep from smiling. "Remember?"

Hank looked into Mike's clear blue eyes, rimmed with a thick layer of blond eyelashes. He wondered if Mike ever gave his life a second thought, questioned its value, woke up feeling tired at the thought of another day. He pulled his arm away. "How could I forget?"

Mike smiled and raised his eyebrows. "You're the conceptualizer, I'm the actualizer." He reached down and picked up the basketball again and set it spinning on his index finger. "Okay, so listen. I'm going to Malibu for a shoot today. You need me, call my pager."

"They just want to see an idea, Mike, not the artwork. I'm fine."

"Glad to hear it. I just want you to know I'm there for you." He said this with mock gravity and waited for Hank to laugh, but Hank stayed focused on the golf game. "So, anyway, what are you doing this weekend? Delaney asked me to invite you and Paula for dinner. She wants to try out this new recipe some chef gave her at a party last week."

Hank closed his eyes and shook his head, a half smile pushing at his lips. "Paula and I broke up a couple of months ago, Mike," he said tiredly. "Remember?"

"Oh man, I keep forgetting." He set down the basketball and got up. "She was quite the babe."

Hank said nothing. He didn't miss Paula, really – he'd felt only a vague loneliness since she'd broken up with him – but it irked him that the person he spent more time with than anyone could not hold onto the basic facts of his life.

"Speaking of babes..." Mike said, in an undertone. Hank looked up and, following Mike's gaze, saw Allegra Baumgarten making her way toward his desk. She walked with a decided clip, efficient and businesslike, but made no effort to check the fluid swish that accented her every stride.

"Hey guys, I'm glad I got you together. Peter wanted me to show you these mockups of the Buffalo Power Bar wrappers." She

placed a large square of foamcore on the desk and leaned over to look at the wrapper design with them. "Whaddya think?"

Hank looked down at her bare legs, tanned and toned, and wondered how she could wear her skirts so short and bend even slightly without showing anything.

"Looks good," Mike drawled, barely glancing at the design.

Hank looked thoughtfully at the wrapper design, gold lettering on a brown background. He thought of the muscle boys and girls he saw every day on Main Street making their way to Gold's Gym, wearing skimpy Lycra shorts and tops, carrying gym bags, and looking scornfully at the flabby and flaccid that slouched past. He laughed and looked up at Mike and Allegra. "I just had this crazy image – thousands of bodybuilders walking like soldiers down Main Street, chewing Buffalo Power Bars in unison."

Mike looked at him vacantly, and Allegra pretended not to hear.

"Whatever, man," Mike said. "I gotta get going. Call me if you need me."

Mike left, and Allegra stood quietly, waiting for Hank's okay. "It looks fine, Allegra," he said finally, and watched her pick up the foamcore and walk away, leaving him alone again.

Hank turned back to his computer and tried to concentrate on the game. Soon he was lost in the computerized golf course, lulled by the chinky rhythm of irons hitting balls.

Over the weekend he'd gone to a party at a hilltop home above Mulholland Drive. Soon after he'd arrived, he'd gone out to the deck to escape the loud music and the laughter, the roomful of bodies. He'd stood at the edge of the deck looking out at the grid of lights that carpeted the Valley. The lights grew brighter as the sky turned from a dusky yellow to a spreading pink to varying shades of blue, until finally it was black and starless, anonymous above a glittering sea of lights. He'd closed his eyes, picturing blackness where the Valley lay below, the faint outline of the mountains in the distance, beneath a celestial panorama of sparkling light.

After a while, a girl came over and asked him what he was looking at. He'd sized her up in a glance – film industry rookie. She was blonde and gorgeous and in her mid-twenties, although the way she dressed and carried herself she could have easily passed for 35. At first, Hank was tempted to throw a few Hollywood party lines at her until she went away, but then he decided to just tell her the truth.

"I'm trying to imagine what this looked like hundreds of years ago, thousands of years ago. When there was nothing but mountains and valleys, and maybe a few Indians." He watched a flicker

of uncertainty cross her face, disrupting her placid expression. He waited for her to say something flip and walk away, but after a moment, she smiled and leaned forward on the railing.

"Wow. I used to date a guy who grew up here – in the Valley during the '60s. He told me it used to be mostly orange groves. I can't even imagine that."

Hank closed his eyes and pictured himself driving through Van Nuys with nothing but miles of green farms around him – but mini-malls, fast food joints, and bland, smog-soaked buildings kept cropping up in his imagined landscape. He gave up on the image and turned to the girl. "Where are you from?" he asked.

"Iowa." She looked sideways and laughed. "Surprised?"

"It takes more than that to surprise me," he said, assuming the cool, cynical tone he usually used with women. He was beginning to feel attracted to her, and it made him uncomfortable. Stealing a glance at her, he could now see – past the makeup, the black leather jacket, and the platform sandals – the fresh-skinned, blue-eyed, freckled innocence and toothy smile that reminded him of girls he had known in Kansas.

"Yeah, well, it surprises me sometimes. When I go back, all my friends give me a hard time about my clothes, my job, my California accent... But it's like they expect it of me, they want it. I mean, they put me on some kind of pedestal, think of me as living this glamorous life they never dared to go after."

"Are you?"

"Am I what?"

"Living a glamorous life?" Hank turned to her and let his eyes graze her body. His stomach tightened with arousal.

"Oh." She stared out at the Valley. "I don't know. I mean, yeah, I guess. When I go to a party and meet some hot actor or director... Or when I drive down Sunset in my convertible and the sun's just set and the lights are coming on... I guess that's glamorous. I don't know. Mostly, I'm working so hard and I'm so tired all the time that I forget to even notice." She looked at him and frowned, then let her gaze fall back to the Valley. "I mean, sometimes it seems like just so much bullshit."

Hank said nothing, and they were silent for several moments, the whir of the freeway and the steady din of the party pulsing against the quiet of the night. The girl pressed her hands into the railing, then straightened and laughed. "What am I saying? I love L.A. People would kill to have my life."

Hank didn't really hear her. He was gearing up to ask her out, and trying to think of the best way to do it. Just as he was clearing

his throat, though, a man came out to the deck and grabbed the woman's elbow. "Let's get out of here," he said in a low, gruff tone.

"Sure," she said. She turned from Hank and walked away with the man, calling out a casual "Bye" as they stepped inside.

Hank watched her go and waited for the scent of her perfume to fade. Then he resumed his effort to make LA disappear. But now the lights of the Valley, its perfect gridline, shone even more strongly, and he could not form a pure image.

\* \* \*

Now sitting at his computer, wrapped in the green glow of the golf game, he mindlessly pressed keys, striving for the perfect stroke. A shadow crossed the screen and he looked up to see Joe staring over his shoulder.

"You're making this way too easy for me, Hank," Joe said, letting a laugh creep along the edge of his words.

Hank didn't bother asking what.

"I just stopped by to tell you I'm out for the rest of the day – I've got a meeting in Hollywood. I'll be looking for that copy on my desk first thing tomorrow morning."

"Right," Hank said. After Joe walked away, he sat for a moment staring at the screen. As a boy in Kansas, in the farm country he'd grown up in, he could walk for miles and see nothing, no one – no houses, no cars, no signs of life, just green fields spreading to the horizon, a flat ocean of land. All he'd ever thought of was getting away from that emptiness, moving to a crowded city and filling his life with people and things. It seemed strange to him now to be yearning for what he'd worked all his life to escape.

Finally, he quit out of the game and went into Quark. He opened a new file, downloaded the Buffalo Power Bar logo, and printed two copies of the page. He picked up the printouts and stared at the white pages, blank except for the logo in the corner, willing an idea to come. Used to be, this was the most exciting, rewarding part of his work – that moment of fermenting creativity pushing to the surface, pulsing into consciousness. Now he was just digging through the sledge for something to say.

He grabbed a pen and one of the sheets of paper and sketched out an empty, crumpled Power Bar wrapper in the middle of the page. Below it, he wrote, "Eat It." On a second sheet of paper, he drew an opened Power Bar with a big bite chewed out of it, and wrote, in the space left by the bite, "Bite Me." Then he grabbed his backpack and the sheets of paper, walked back to Joe's office and set them on his desk. He looked at the concepts one more

time, wondering if their meaning might be lost on Joe – if, in fact, he would like the ideas. No way, he concluded, staring at his words. Joe liked it “in your face,” but he was too much of a coward to take it that far.

Hank left the office unnoticed, through the back door. A salty, crisp sea breeze greeted him. The sky was bright, free of smog. A rush of freedom surged through him as he walked down side streets toward the beach. For the first time in a long time, he felt sharp and focused even though he had no idea what he would do next.

When he got to the boardwalk, Hank took off his shoes and walked barefoot to the water. The sand was warm on the surface and cool and moist below. Finding a spot on a crest of sand overlooking the ocean, he sat down and watched the waves roll in. Surfers lolled on their boards in the deep water and a few rode small waves to shore. Couples strolled hand-in-hand along the water line and children searched for shells in the sand. An occasional jogger ran by.

Hank laid back on the sand and closed his eyes. He thought of his mother, her gray, lined eyes, always sad and worried. She'd looked old by the time she was Hank's age, and he looked like some overgrown adolescent. He still worn his hair long, usually under a baseball cap, and his standard uniform was a T-shirt and jeans or long baggy shorts. He tried to imagine how his life would have been if he'd stayed in Kansas, but he could see nothing, only possibilities cut short. No one was left there now. His mother had died several years back and his brothers and sisters had moved away long ago, all living on one coast or the other.

The sounds of the beach faded as Hank sank deeper into his thoughts, until all he heard was the restless pull of the ocean. His eyes glowed orange and his body molded to its bed of sand. Finally, he saw it. The image he had been waiting for. LA before. Before everything. Just a nameless mass of land pushing its way to the ocean. He saw the basin empty and barren, free of smog, freeways, houses, and people, just sprawling desert running wild to the mountains. Dusty, brown, and utterly silent except for the low steady groan of the wind lapping at the ocean, sweeping the sand, and curling into the waiting arms of the mountains. The bay was a deep, sparkling blue, tipped with white, rolling under a cloudless azure sky. Beach and land met in a formless blend of sand and soil.

A loud roar startled Hank, immediately wiping away the image. He opened his eyes and saw a yellow beach truck heading straight for him. He got out of its way, and watched as it sifted and smoothed the sand with its churning, plow-like front, replacing the

trash and debris of the top layer with a clean, fresh layer from below. He picked up his shoes and walked home.

\* \* \*

That night Hank slept better than he had in weeks. And he dreamed for the first time in many months. In his dream he saw, somewhere on a Midwestern landscape, a herd of buffalo lying dead in a long flat canyon. He knew they had been killed en masse, chased over the edge of the cliff and then skinned for their hides. The sight sickened him. He looked closer and saw a mother next to her calf, and could see that both were still breathing. He imagined the pain of lying skinned and dying in the burning sun, and his heart ached with sadness. He felt a deep unspeakable guilt, overwhelmed by the sense of accusation contained in the dream. Then he became angry, indignant. "I didn't do it! I didn't do it," he shouted to his dream. "It wasn't me."

The ringing of the telephone woke him, and he answered it still half asleep, feeling unsettled by his dream.

"Hank, what are you just waking up?" Joe's voice blared into the phone. "Where the fuck are you? The client will be here in a half hour."

Hank pulled the phone away from his ear – Joe's voice was so loud it hurt.

"Listen, I love it, okay? Is that what you want to hear? You're brilliant, Hank. Now get the fuck in here. We got work to do."

Hank cradled the phone against his chest and listened to it click dead. He placed it in the receiver, then lay back and stared at the ceiling. He wanted to return to the place he'd gone to on the beach yesterday. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, willing the image to come. The smell of grilled sausage wafted in through the window from a takeout stand on the boardwalk. He took another breath, trying to ignore the smell, and concentrated on forming the image. A car alarm went off somewhere on the street. Hank opened his eyes and listened closely for several moments until he'd determined that it wasn't his Land Rover. Then he put a pillow over his head and focused again on bringing forth the image. But the only image that came clear in his mind was of Joe in the conference room showing his work to the Buffalo Power Bar people.

Finally, Hank pushed away the pillow and sat up. He rubbed his eyes and yawned, then got up and started getting ready for work.



Amy Antongiovanni

---

She says Venus

like a bridge  
and one elongated star  
will help me roll back  
to the edge of dawn.

I noticed puffed clouds  
*I could actually make them out*  
and their shadows strayed, over-  
lapping each other, like memories of

the infant who needed a name in my dream, the cat's  
breath expands on the window like my heart

and suddenly hope sets in. I'm drinking in light  
when what I really want  
is someone else in my mouth—  
closer to my heart that way.

How can that be bad? You're in love, she said.  
Yes, but with immanent night—  
resurrection, breathing.

I tell her Eliot wrote of the violet hour.  
This is not what I mean, but close.  
Soft gray light drizzled over fields of pinks and orange  
which soon give way to night, not yet—the cast away  
darkness of stars and the edge of, the  
wrong side of  
the world. The moon slips it over  
her curved neck, wanting  
anonymity and rest  
from too many watchful eyes.

—for Susan Wooldridge

---

## Come In

Though light spun its way  
through blinds on the east window,  
you couldn't get past the eggs  
steamed or scrambled—

*Come in, you said  
but the day did not hear you.*

Last night he worshipped  
your upper arms, eulogized their curves.  
All you could think was mosquitoes and wine  
in a very small glass.

You want the pieces of your lives to fit like Legos  
his journey should accommodate you—  
but you finger the orchid, only abstract language  
defines the vast space when he leaves.

The bathtub didn't offer any kindness—  
naked belly, your legs  
scrunched like a clam using its last bit of strength  
against the fisherman's callused hands. A tangle of

honey in your green tea  
for a change, you notice the awnings, their sad hover  
over thankless sidewalks.

While reading *Bright Existence*, you realize time  
doesn't matter, but light— yes,  
light has its way of moving among the dead.

Nono's ghost touched your leg  
last night, alone—  
you were afraid to open your eyes.

\* Italicized lines are quotes from Brenda Hillman's *Loose Sugar*.

## Contributors' Notes

**Amy Antongiovanni** teaches Creative Writing and English 1 for the English Department at Chico State as well as Butte College. She completed her MFA at St. Mary's College, where she studied under Brenda Hillman, Bob Hass, Robert Pinsky, Michael Palmer, and Frank Bidart. She loves Chico and welcomes the chance to publish in her hometown.

**Ryan Michael Atencio** was born in 1977 on the 110 freeway, en route to Cedar-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. He plans to move back there someday after earning his degrees. Presently, he claims he is in love.

**Noreen Austin** is a reentry student, majoring in English with a minor in Creative Writing. She and her husband have lived in the Chico area for thirteen years. She has a seven-year-old son. "Souls Gliding" comes from her childhood.

**Chris Baldwin** received his BA in English Literature from James Madison University in Harrisburg, VA, home of the world's largest free standing concrete mold. He is the calendar editor for the Chico News & Review and a part time music store employee (as long as it still gets him discounts).

**Roxanne Brooks** agrees with George Orwell: "All art is to some extent propaganda." As a journalist, she advertises for the liberation of Cuba, Ireland, and Persia.

**Roxanna Glang** is a graduate student of Psychology at CSU, Chico. Though she has written for many years, poetry is a relatively recent discovery.

**Douglas Hesse**

**Dana Huebler** is a freelance writer living in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. She is currently enrolled in the MFA Program at Warren Wilson College.

**Malama MacNeil** is a native of the central valley, and has resided in Chico for thirteen years. A frequent *Watershed* contributor, she

works as a somatic therapist, practices Tai Chi Ch'uan, and believes in the transformative power of touch and poetry.

**Eva Questo** is an English Major currently pursuing a Master's Degree. She is a non-conformist who loves to travel all roads less taken. "I guess I live a few planets away from reality," she says.

**Greg Rappleye's** first collection of poems, *Holding Down the Earth*, was published in 1995. Recent work has appeared in *Quarterly West*, *The Southern Review*, *Santa Barbara Review*, and *Contemporary Michigan Poetry: New Poems from the Third Coast*, an anthology of Michigan poets by Wayne State University Press.

**Judy Salee** is a poet and writer living and working in Sacramento.

**Audrey C. Small** is a writing grandma and elder college student.

**Zu Vincent** is a "jack of all trades" writer, penning articles, short stories, poetry, screen plays, and novels.

*Watershed* was set in 10 point Galliard by the editors. Computer-assisted layout by Lightside Group. It was printed on Sundance Natural at the CSU, Chico Printshop.

