

WATERSHED

The artwork is a complex, abstract composition. The left side features a vertical band of red and orange, suggesting a sunset or a body of water. The center is dominated by a large, dark green shape with yellow and light green spots, resembling a tree or a cluster of foliage. The right side is a blue field filled with thick, black, irregular outlines that suggest buildings or a cityscape. Interspersed within these black shapes are red symbols, including what look like stylized crosses or crosses with horizontal bars, and some red circular or spiral motifs. The overall style is expressive and graphic, with a rich color palette of red, orange, green, blue, and black.

WATERSHED

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WATERSHED

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Editors' Introduction

The editorial staff of *Watershed* would like to thank every one who submitted work for the spring 2006 issue, especially those who responded in ways that provoked deep thought about the theme of change—the inevitable metamorphosis which we discover in the world around us and in ourselves. After considering a few ideas, the team decided that, because this is a season associated with blossoming flowers, graduating seniors, and an unstoppable transformation, change would be an appropriate theme.

Change arrived in the form of short fiction, photography, and poetry. Each contributor interpreted the theme in a different way, making it an enjoyable challenge for the team of editors to read and interpret each piece for themselves. “The Bridge,” by Gary Brune, tells a story of returning to school for a second chance and a new beginning; Kelly Smith’s “Summer, 1992,” reminisces about fleeting childhood memories during long, hot summers; “For Love of Dandelions,” by Nathaniel Miles Millard, confronts readers with the loss one feels when a significant other grows apart as a result of travel and new surroundings; Julia Martin’s untitled photograph of a graveyard under water captures ideas about the inevitability of death, juxtaposed with the uncertainty of nature.

After considering more than 200 submissions, the editorial staff chose the following pieces with hopes of inspiring you to think about change in new ways.

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The Curb

Now clean,
bright red
from the downpour.
Clear streams
in the gutter.
The rain,
like your sterling words,
changes everything.

Elliott Park

Sand

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Sean Melody

Lithium

My mother's neighbor of ten years, Art, had called in a panic over the noise coming from inside her house. His message was short and anxious. When I arrived, the house was dark. I knocked to no answer, and then entered the side door to the kitchen, because she'd always told me not to come in the front door when this happens. I used the spare key, hidden as always beneath the meteorite I gave Mom when I was ten. Inside there was no movement. I called in a whisper as I went from room to room, feeling my way with outstretched hands. I knew not to turn the lights on. The nightlight in the bathroom pushed a thin fan of light into the hallway towards the living room. A quiet had fallen like the aftermath of a tornado. The form huddled in the far corner of the living room was Mom. I was pretty sure someone else was on the floor across from her.

"Mom?" I moved closer. In the weak glow I could see disheveled hair hanging in front of swollen eyes. Her knees were drawn to her chest, arms locked around them. She was 43 but looked older. I spoke delicately so as not to startle her. Breathing came in soft pulses. She'd been there some time, staring. She was barefoot and her blouse was torn. Her back was to the wall. Again, "Mom?"

Softly, "Yes."

"Do you want me to turn on the light?"

Quiet to the point of invisibility, "No."

"I'll sit here in this chair. You'll be all right. I know it." I sat in the rocking chair grandfather made and looked at the figure in the corner. My mother. Was there anyone besides me who hadn't trampled her? I knew not to touch her. We sat facing each other in the dark. She spoke again. I couldn't make it out.

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear you." I crossed my arms so as not to appear threatening and then unraveled them when I realized I might seem closed, judgmental. I sat forward and placed a hand on each of my knees. "What is it, Mom?"

She held her head between her knees towards her feet, her response scarcely audible. "It happened again."

"I know. I drove up from Carlton as soon as I got Art's message. How bad is it?" I was ready to do whatever it would take to help lessen her fears. "I'm here for you."

Without apologies she spoke, "I want to die, you know?" "I know, Mom. I understand." I did understand. I had seen her go through five men since my own father had left. Each time it was the same. I had lived with her through three of them before I left for school. It was as if life were a vending machine dispensing violent men like rancid candy bars, one after another. The wrappers were always appealing but on the inside, they were rancid.

Her small home on the edge of town was filled with the few remaining keepsakes of her youth. She had been a cheerleader. A photo of her in her uniform with the large "V" on it had held its place in the living room for 15 years. There was a painting bought with green stamps in the '60s of a beach with waves coming in, one after another. She loved it. I had repaired it twice with duct tape—on its backside naturally. You could hardly tell it had been torn. The only other thing was the rocker. These were her treasures, and of course there was me.

She raised her head and looked through me, "Tom."

"Yes, Mom?" I folded my hands together on my lap and sat back, causing a slight rocking.

There was a pleading look in her glazed eyes, "This time I had to stop it. I couldn't wait for the police. I couldn't wait for Art to come when I called. I had no choice, you know that, don't you?" She turned her head towards the far end of the room. He was lying facedown on the floor. I was able to see at least the shape of him. So little light came through the bathroom door, left slightly open. Jim's slippers were pointing in different directions. He was near the couch, his right arm reaching forward as if grasping for some answer behind it. It was like this each time. There was Harry, then Roger. They had lasted the longest. Not long after Roger there was Edward and soon followed Gene. A little over five months ago came Jim. I had high hopes for Jim.

I didn't mind helping. She had done so much for me. How many times had she kept them from beating me? None had actually laid a hand on me. She always told me of their threats. I know I was a little annoying, but that was no excuse for Harry's taking that painting and throwing it at me when I was twelve. She said he was drunk the night he went after her. He fell into the bath she had drawn and never came at her again. It was easy to help her with him. Roger was problematic. He came at her with a fireplace poker.

He hit the carpet hard when she ducked, and the poker smashed the lamp, sending heart-stopping voltage through him. It would have been easier if he hadn't weighed so damn much. Edward fell on a knife. Gene left the parking brake off and the Caddie crushed him in the garage between the washing machine and the front bumper. Now Jim was on the floor. I could see the result but didn't know what brought it about. In fact, I'd never actually been present when they died. Mom always told me what had happened. When I was ten, the shovel was heavy and the work hard. As the years passed, it became lighter and there wasn't much room left in the back yard.

"What happened?" I asked. She raised her right arm and pointed her finger at her photograph lying face down on the floor, "He told me that I looked ridiculous in my cheerleader uniform." Her voice was gaining strength even as she began to weep. "I was afraid and the rage welled up inside until I knew I had to stop him. He was cruel to me. He told me he loved me but you couldn't believe him. He was such a liar." Her tears flowed freely. "He came at me and I pushed him back. He tripped over the ottoman and broke his neck I'm sure."

There was movement across the room, Jim's hand. He was steadying himself in order to get to his knees. "Marcia, what the hell happened?" He called out in the dark to his wife, my mother.

She screamed, "My God, he's alive!"

"Of course I am." He rubbed his head. "Why did you push me, sweetheart? I was bringing you the mail." Jim sat down on the couch and shook his head like a dog with peanut butter on its tongue.

"Tom, what are you doing here? What time is it? Why don't you turn the lights on?"

"No, you never turn the lights on right now. Why did you hit my mother?" She grabbed my legs and hid her face, weeping.

"What are you talking about, hit her?"

"You're just like the rest. Why would you do that to a woman? Look at her."

"Tom, look at that bottle there, you'll see. It's nearly full." Jim rose from the couch and flipped the light switch on. It was blinding at first. There was a prescription container

on the coffee table.

"What are you talking about?" I asked. I picked up the bottle and read the label out loud, " 'Lithium,' what is this?"

"Your mother is bipolar, Tom. I knew that when I met her. Didn't she tell you how we met? It was at the drugstore. I'm a pharmacist, right?" Jim returned to the couch where he let his body relax into overstuffed, flower-emblazoned, secondhand store cushions.

"You are? Mom told me you were a retired pilot."

"I'm sure she did. She told Art I was with the CIA, and the hairdresser thinks I'm a plumber. Things like that are harmless. I don't mind. I love Marcia. She's troubled but I love her no matter what."

6 | She burst into a tirade, "He's a liar. Don't trust him, Tom. We have to stop him. He wants to put me in a home and take all my money. He wants this house. Please Tom, stop him. He's like all the others." With that she curled into a ball on the floor.

"Tom, your mother is very ill. She is having a bad time right now. She needs to spend some time in a facility until they even out her chemistry. I was trying to tell her how beautiful she is. I had that photo in my left hand when I was trying to convince her she hadn't changed a bit. In my right I had the mail I'd just gotten from the porch. I didn't expect to be pushed over the ottoman. She came at me like a bull. Down I went. There's the mail on the floor over there."

Scattered on the floor near the ottoman were three unopened envelopes. He sat forward. "She needs help right now, Tom. She'll be okay in no time. I don't want to take anything from her. I want to marry her and care for her."

She mumbled, "Liar."

I thought of the dirt falling from the shovel.

Philip Morris

Of Downspouting and Other New Drains

You could point to the fifth of whiskey you downed
at thirty-three on discovering your first gray hair
and say, "There's the culprit. . . there's the blame,"
when your thirties became a series of quick fixes.
But finger-pointing changes nothing. Besides,
what else would you spit in the face of aging?
A good scotch perhaps, if your budget allowed.

You are a woman in your thirties and alone. You hope
the noises you hear outside are ghosts who tap and sigh.
(Ghosts and other teetotalers:
good company for a frugal woman aging.)
But it is only raindrops falling from the gutter drainpipes,
angled sharply and so new,
they have no clog to pad the sound
of water dripping from pine boughs
to the steely bottom of the metal elbow bend.
The shoes, the mud, the dark,
a pastel sponge in each:
your little coup against the rain,
because you are aging and alone

and because you know
(damn all conspiracies of mirror and sky!)
that the last moment of silence
will swell near enough to burst.

Lynn Marie Houston

On the Rocks

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Sean Melody

She Swims in Her Sleep

Something she loved to do
When she was young; move far
Beyond the breakers at Javila beach,
Try for the horizon. Now at night
She does the breast stroke,
Her arms leading her naked body,
Capable, through cool ocean water.
At Guadalajara beach,
A spur-of-the-moment lover
Is behind her, still lying on the sand;
Fireworks light the skin of water
She moves through easily.
She dives into the swell of a wave
Where a long arm of seaweed
Briefly catches in her hand
Until she shakes it loose.
When she turns to look back and below her,
The bare arm of her husband
Is sinking into the dark. She panics,
Thrashes back towards shore,
Reaching the sand only to find
His red life jacket lying there alone.
But this is her dream. The truth is
She was drunk that night.
New Year's Eve, 1972.
They never found his body.
Maybe they argued earlier in the day.
Maybe that's why she refused
To go out fishing with him that night,
Insisted he go on alone.
She stayed on the shore,
Tucked behind a sand dune
With his best friend, Larry.
She told me this when we first met
Ten years ago, said she wondered why
She stayed on shore, wondered

If she might have saved him.
When she wakes now,
She moves slowly to the kitchen
For a cup of coffee, carries
The night with her.

Suzan Jantz

For Love of Dandelions

It's a sick-in-the-stomach sort of dream. At first, I thought I went so far and received so little. I can remember the long travel, watching the map on the screen as the little plane seemed to inch across, the Atlantic, Europe, Africa, the Mozambique Channel, the landing and eternal taxiing at the airport, visa lines, declaration, looking into the crowd of people waiting—me alone at the airport. I found this large bus depot station with buses webbing in every which direction and I figured out how to get where I wanted to be, to be with you. I thought about you the whole ride. The bus was empty—this was not a Malagasy bus, it was me and my thoughts riding this clean and perfect bus to see you. Perhaps I should have known that no such buses are clean, no route to togetherness arrives so easily, but mine did, and upon arrival, amongst the commotion of people moving to loved ones, I stared out in another crowd, waiting to see your smile, to see you run to me, and I held my baggage up, muscles excited and stomach nervous—I too was ready to run together and embrace you with all the stares of people lacking the ability to show public affection—and I did not care, but when I saw you, you waved, walked toward me while talking in Malagasy with others. You were cordial enough, polite and reserved in a third-world sort of awkwardness. It was a glad-to-see-you sort of welcome, and sorry-I-was-so-busy-and-had-some-things-to-do-and-could-not-make-it-to-the-airport, and this-way-I-have-my-bike-and-a-place-I-want-to-stop-at sort of welcome.

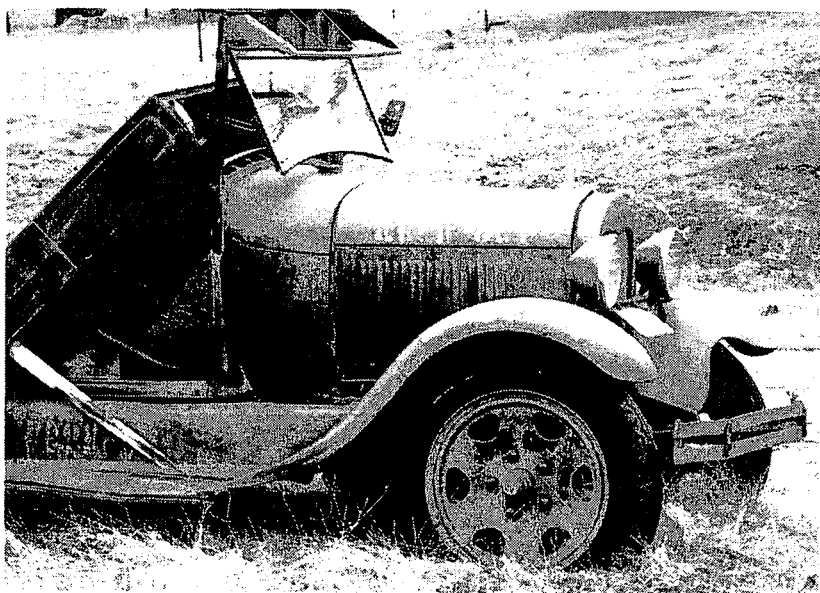
I walked behind you as you rode your bike around; you would pace a few houses ahead of me. We were in some neighborhood, going to a friend's house—familiar feelings in foreign lands. You would look over your shoulder at me, talk to me about the flight, talk about the trees, and you seemed so comfortable in your surroundings; all I could do was watch—my bags felt heavier, and I thought, maybe I over-packed, and I tried to look around me, but I stared at the spinning spokes of your back tire as you playfully weaved, your escaped hair tilting off your exposed neck, and the sun through the canopy of green-leafed trees above you—it speckled the ground with spots of light, the hope of where it might set down next—the sun, aloof as you.

We arrived at the house; you crashed your bike down in the grass out front and swung open the door and moved like a birdcage of chatter, awakened in the removal of blankets from the night. I dragged into the house behind you, perhaps in half expectation, in half disappointment, and still in love. You were moving through the house like wind in the afternoon and windows open, curtains swishing, and people welcoming. Some looked up at me, nodded their head, and people turned to a language I could only admire for musicality, for rhythms in movement, and the few words about what is good, what is better, and I imagined the conversation taking place in another world, where I replied so perfectly to you, to them, and they looked up at me, but this time I sat silent, perched on the bare limb, blushed and sadness. It went on this way for some time. I could feel my own name slipping away in the breeze, out the window. I stepped back outside, sat on the lawn and looked up through the leaves into the sun; I liked the way it spotted my vision, the way the traces of light remained. It didn't feel nice, it felt indifferent—as if I could be anywhere in the world and look up at the same thing—it never mattered much to the world from which hemisphere you looked at it, you loved it—it never changes—those stars in different constellations are too far away to be anything except stars.

When I heard your voice again, you were giving long goodbyes, still being invited to stay for dinner in that traditional way a stranger is welcomed at the table in the words of people walking by—it is never meant to happen, it is the way the past holds on in the present, but they speak these words with such contentment and desire, as if they would be honored to have you sit down, eat the last few grains of rice they have—this is the way legends were made when gods were among men. I did not need to look your way. I could see the edges of your feet; the skirt you wore highlighted the small portion of skin from your ankles to where your sandals exposed your cracked, blackened feet. I could hear the way you walk, the same steps, that same determination in movement forward, always wanting to move forward. You said, you will have to go right now, but you will be back, hopefully by tomorrow. In this world, a day is an hour, commuting takes months, and yet you still hurry off on your bike as if the nation to cross begins with these pedals, but as you make stride and find pace, you begin to

move lackadaisical in the wind—the way I picture dandelions dance. I see those words of mine, my own words, on the side of a scratched-up bus. I know they are my words on this bus that will take me home, though no one else will ever know...they become a slogan for the way the bus lifts people up, and people begin to think of dandelions moving with purpose and design, and it is the first time I understand the thing I write, because I see you as a dandelion in the wind, your love as lackadaisical, ready to sit down, grow roots, but first, you take to wind—again. I walked alone after that, remembering how you felt when you first moved to this country, moved in this country—perhaps the way you have always moved, looking back only to understand what is ahead. You don't walk that way anymore.

Nathaniel Miles Millard



Julia Martin

Sunday Drive

You can get to Mom and Dad's faster
on the new Interstate 5 freeway,
but I take the old river road
and meander south with the Sacramento
protected from the setting sun,
its unflinching glare filtered
through fields of September
sunflowers with their downcast
faces all focused as if in prayer.

Joan Baez is singing *Amazing Grace*
full volume on my FM radio as I witness
solemn Mennonites streaming with hands
resolutely clasped over black bound books.
I press the accelerator down harder
and wish for some reason to avoid
a right turn at the next stop sign
where I must pass the graveyard
gathering itself in mountain shadows.

Marcia Adams

Playing from the Heart

It is my father's heart, a cactus heart,
Thick with pale green pride,
Toughened by long simmering days
Under the coagulated half-day heat of time.
It rests at my feet in blood red dust.

From here, I see a long white spine,
Like the prick of experience,
Sprouting out of one dark spot
Where his mother died.
This is the oldest, longest spine of them all.

16 | They prickle the breeze
The way the breeze prickles memory,
And I can feel the same wind
That blew across his face
As he drove the Firebird to meet my mother
In an ocean-side town,
The top down, beach tunes rolling
Out the back like waves.

Last year, they drove the new sports car
Through a silver anniversary,
And remembered.
I got a postcard of Sedona's backdrop,
Jagged rock shadows piercing passionate sky.

He writes a song for her,
Knowing life and love will not pause in postcards,
Even for them. When it's finished
He will drive and never come back.

Late at night, she hears him play the guitar
From his cactus heart
As he pinches off a spine, and with it,
Picks at the strings of his memory,
To recall on chords the sound of the air
Blowing past them as it blows past me now,
Alone, standing by this dusty heart.

I want to pick it up, lying there in the dust.
I want to feel every point pierce
Into the thin skin of my fingertips,
Holding it close until the sun
Sinks back into its earthly body,
Love listening hard
For that single pause.

Kelly Smith



David D. Ferguson

At the Monastery

It was in the dining hall
at the abbey, one winter morning,
when I'd almost accidentally hit the round-faced priest
with the swinging kitchen door,
and he cheerily commented,
"I know I would have
gone to heaven!"

His words hit me like a boulder.
I peered closely
at his face
to see if implied in his remark
was something along the order of
"And if the door had swung back
and hit you instead,
I know you *wouldn't* have
gone to heaven!"

But apparently that was just
my guilty conscience
at work.

Shannon Rooney

Jake Can't Sleep When He's Hungry

The recurring smell of hard-boiled eggs
outstays its welcome.

I'm sick of hard-boiled eggs, Ma!

I'm sick of powdered milk!

She consoles me:

Eat it or you'll go to bed hungry,

and I know how you can't sleep when you're hungry.

I sleep in a room with Randy and Ned.

They're both younger and don't know any better.

Janet sleeps in Ma and Pa's room, 'cuz she's still a baby.

I envy her for the breast milk she gets

'cuz it's probably better than what us boys drink.

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I like to climb trees,

but a couple weeks ago I fell and broke my arm.

Now I gotta wear a cast for eight weeks,
that thing itches.

It smells like the pond, too,

'cuz me and Randy like to catch the frogs.

Ned thinks they're too slimy,

so we hide them in his boots every once in a while.

Pa works so hard that I don't ever see him.

He comes in and tucks us boys in before bedtime.

He smells of tobacco, of dirt and sweat,

and I listen to his deep voice speaking with Ma
as she warms his supper.

He eats while she gives him company and watches.

Sometimes they sit on the porch and share whiskey.

They hold each other and watch the dark.

And the only reason I know this is 'cuz I'm hungry.

I don't know what's so fascinating about the dark.

Josh Cembellin



Terrors for a Child

Eyes, ink-like tourmaline within crystals
Of quartz, expose everyday terrors
For this child. Once an innocent boy,
Now a veteran soldier, criminal,
Struggling to survive the incessant
Chaos of this civil war. Each morning

Unfiltered light of dawn
Ignites a heavy shower of bullets.
The first pop strikes the boy's mother,
Collapsing her into a pile of finely
Weathered sand—dead again. Taken
From the one place he thought
She was safe—in his dreams.

He is alone, surrounded like a fox
Among hounds. Stretched out, supine
On the soiled cement floor, bones
Rattle as he shivers with fear. He knows
He must join the fury of yells and gunshots
Outside, before he too falls prey
To the madness of war.

Broken skeletons of buildings line
The streets, eroded by the endless
Flood of violence. As he wades through
This cruel reminder of his own mortality,
A turbulent current of frantic faces,
Rushing a market of food, swallows him.

Every moment inside the market surges
As he struggles to draw in air. His heart
Beats against his hollow chest,
Reverberating into each ear as his brain
Pulsates in accompaniment.
Riding the water's tide he grabs
Onto a piece of bread, freeing his first
Breath in minutes. Today he has survived.

Dresden Holden

Still Life with Sundial

A gull on the starched taupe cloth of beach.
Splayed, almost motionless, almost like
a Dominican monk meditating,
its life strategy reduced now to breath.
There's an arc of lines on the sand in front
of it, and each time it raises its neck to clutch
at one more (exactly, a sailor mending sails)
it fails, its head like a falling leaf wavers
to the sand, registering another sundial line.

An hour later it's dead, a refuse thing of brine-
streaked feathers. Neck flat, dissonant to the other
lines. Empty vessel exiting sacred time.

The leaves without reason

know—cherry, crabapple, persimmon—
when to let go. All night
the temperature crawls down
the thermometer: red disappearing
as it will. All night
leaves hold,
and through the frozen day.
Silence holds,
while I curl in my down
comforter. Naked,
the leaves do not shiver.
Slowly, the sun,
like another lover,
arrives, and with the slightest touch
leaves will float,
even as they begin to fall.

Suzan Jantz

Summer, 1992

Chalk dust settles on a sunny sidewalk.

Bare feet pitter-patter down the gutter
in a rush of summer car wash suds from up the street.

Kool-Aid lips suck the last juicy drips of neon life out of Jerry Green,
Everyone's favorite Otter-Pop pal.

Sunburned little bodies simmer on bright beach towels
blanketing the itchy lawn of our neighborhood oasis.

The scent of suntan lotion lingers
over sticky blue vinyl bench seats
in an old Dodge van diehard.

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Black bubbled hot dogs
shrivel in a sandy bun.

Voices tremble through
persistent blades of a floor fan,
"L-u-k-e, I a-m y-o-u-r f-a-t-h-e-r!"

Sprinkler heads
spew upside-down raindrops.

Thrifty drugstore flip-flops
and seventy-nine cent ice cream cones—
One scoop, rainbow sherbet,
Second scoop, chocolate malted crunch—

Drip sweet rivers
and sun-drunk daydreams
around tiny wrists.

Endless hugs of heat
in the arms of each drowsy night,

As oceans swallow sunsets
in a moment of melting youth,

And the season of memories sleeps
warm under moonlight.

Kelly Smith

Dance with Me, Baby

28 |



David D. Ferguson

Barbie, Reinvented

*I'm getting that familiar empty feeling,
Barbie sighed.*

She shifted her smooth legs that
rested on the long velvet couch.

Her therapist almost choked.

*Um, he coughed, you might try
changing something about your lifestyle.*

Do something drastic—

Let's see where that gets you.

Barbie went home and tore
through her closet.

She made a giant burn pile
of cashmere, chenille, and silk.

Ghosts of Gucci and Louis Vuitton
rose with the smoke.

All she had left was some tie dye
and a pair of Birkenstocks
left from her hippie days.
She found a jar of honey
and ratted her hair into
dreadlocks.

Ken drove up in his Porsche
with the music blaring
and turned pale at the sight of his girlfriend.

What have you done to yourself?

he shouted.

He grabbed her by the hair and shook.

She screamed at the top of her lungs:

I'm here.

I'm woman.

I'm proud.

Don't mess with me!

He shrank back.
His brawn didn't protect him
from the sharpness
of her calculated words.

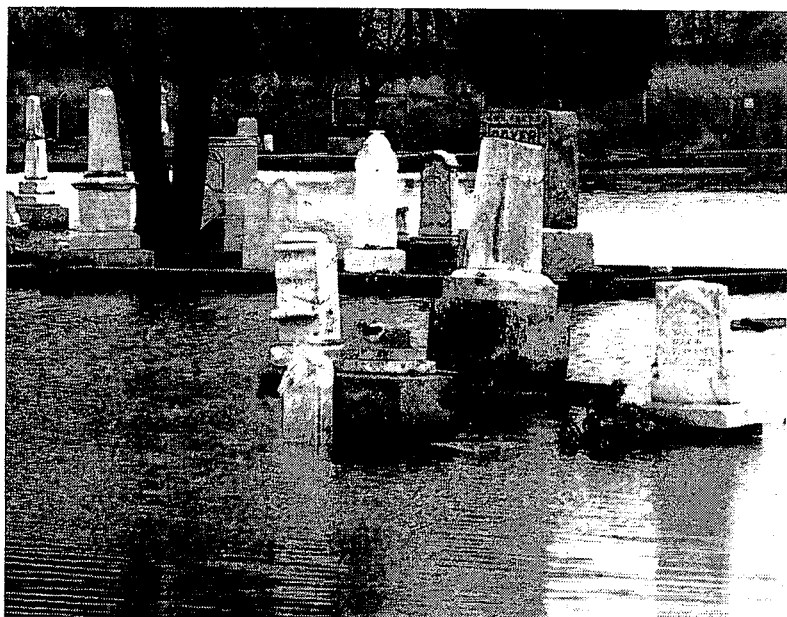
She sauntered out
with her new girlfriend.
They headed up to Northern California
to get high.

Kristin Colwell

The Price?

puff rancid
 clouds encircle
 dreams broken
 mirrors five
 per room memory
 lost go
 home think
 eat
 be
 Living off the cheapest noodles and rice,
 When did your life become substance or vice?

Chris Bertucci



Julia Martin

Fillings

To put it romantically, she has danced *en pointe*.

But to put it realistically, her feet were layered with sticky tape and pressed into tight synthetic coffins.

To put it poetically, she has *grande jetéd, pirouetted, and pas de bourréed*.

But to put it plainly, she has jumped, spun, and paraded on toe tops. Forcing pinioned appendages further into the plastic caskets that hold her feet.

They come out bloody.

To put it nicely, she has obtained the dancer's figure.

But to put it medically, she has chewed her small bites 40 monotonous times and hidden the rest down sink disposals.

To put it matter-of-factly, her body drank the calcium out of her teeth to sustain itself.

But to put it realistically, she went on hormones in order to grow up like one should.

To put it historically, I remember her crying a lot.

But to put it romantically, she accomplished her dream.

Janae Lloyd

The Bridge

There was a moment, a bright summer day two years ago, when life in the real world gave in to life in the spiritual world, and I had a moment of serendipity. I had just begun my career at Chico State, and was doing a walkabout to try and find everything I needed. I approached the Big Chico Creek bridge on campus for the first time.

The bridge is structured so that heavy vehicles can cross it safely. None did at this moment. The sun cascaded light on emptiness. My destination was Tehama Hall, a four-story building of modern architecture, tan with brown trim.

As I strolled into the beginning of my university career, it had been two decades since I had pursued journalism classes. My wife was dead, I had no job, and 17 years in customer service had done nothing to get me off the bottom of the pyramid. In that time I had driven taxis and flower delivery trucks, sold books, wood, and small computer parts, and had monitored people's alarm systems.

I had built my own computer as well as most of the furniture in my house. A good letter I could write, but without a future in front of me, that was a useless skill. It was only after getting fired from my job at a hardware store that I took stock of the situation, and decided to finish what I had started so long before, because the good jobs require Bachelor's degrees.

At this moment I was alone. No students were around, and there was nobody, either family or otherwise, pushing me, just the hunger in the pit of my stomach and a wallet full of moths instead of money. As I walked towards the bridge, a song that my mother used to play over and over on the record player when I was a wee lad passed through my mind. The original "El Paso" by Marty Robbins told the tale of a cowboy looking for Rosa's Cantina and the woman he loved.

It had been a long day, and I had taken only an hour's sleep in the last two days. Just before I made it to the bridge, that wooden bench looked most inviting, suggesting that I sit down for just a few minutes. The slats of pine felt warm to my behind, and I closed my eyes...

...Something was odd about the moment. Ahead of me, on the other side of the creek, were five mounted cowboys. They were dressed in white and rode white horses. They paused before crossing, the ivory handles of their pistols glinted in the sun.

"We are your future, young man," the oldest rider said with a self-assured voice. His face was chiseled by time and conflict and he seemed to be the leader. He was well-dressed, wearing a flat-crown Stetson hat that peaked his linen outfit.

Two older men wore blue hats with American Legion insignias with gold braiding draped on their brims. They looked as though they were the cavalry and their horses moved as spirited steeds. The other pair of white riders looked as though they were railroad tycoons. Theirs were calm horses, and their pistols were covered by their long dress coats.

The creek was lined with tall trees, which tried to provide shade as I approached. Thunder erupted behind me. I turned around, and a dozen riders dressed in dark clothing and riding dark horses approached, shouting and shooting. A few of them called my name, and I knew that they could not catch up to me.

There were the twins wearing matching outfits. I knew them as Doom and Gloom. Another group of men joined them, called the Dog Runners. Their charges, the Hounds from Hell, had nipped at my heels a lot over the years. Then there was the rider in a pressed black suit, whom the others gave a wide berth. He was known to me as Doc.

I had seen Doc before. He was an expert marksman, and had fired the bullets that gave my father and wife the heart attacks that killed them, and had made my mother's heart fail. Because of him, I had gone to more funerals than almost any other event. I saw the sunshine glittering off of his pistols, and my spine turned cold.

The riders in white also shouted. Not only did they encourage me to cross the bridge, they shot at the other riders, sending rounds in front of the other horses' hooves. I started to cross the concrete bridge and headed to the rail when a fusillade of bullets flashed over the creek.

Doc did not miss, firing a stroke into the nerves of my right side. I could not walk straight afterwards, so I hobbled over to the wooden side rail. Bullets from the twins' barrage zipped by my hat and burrowed into the nearby tree limbs. I stepped across at the fastest pace possible. Some of their bullets sank into the grey cement at my feet, but the white riders fought back. As though carried on the warm, dry air, a loud whinnie drifted to my ears.

A riderless white horse came up to the edge of the bridge, and waited while I tried to get on. Using the saddle horn, I pulled myself erect. I pulled, with every sinew in my arms engaged, but could not get into the saddle.

"You're not strong enough yet," the old man said, after holstering his pistols. The horse backed away as I released him to rest a moment. "When you are strong enough, he'll be here."

The fusillade from the white riders drove the dozen dark riders into retreat for the moment. Out of a glass-walled building, a small woman with long jet-black hair walked onto the path. "Come with me. I will help you to safety," she said with a disarming smile...

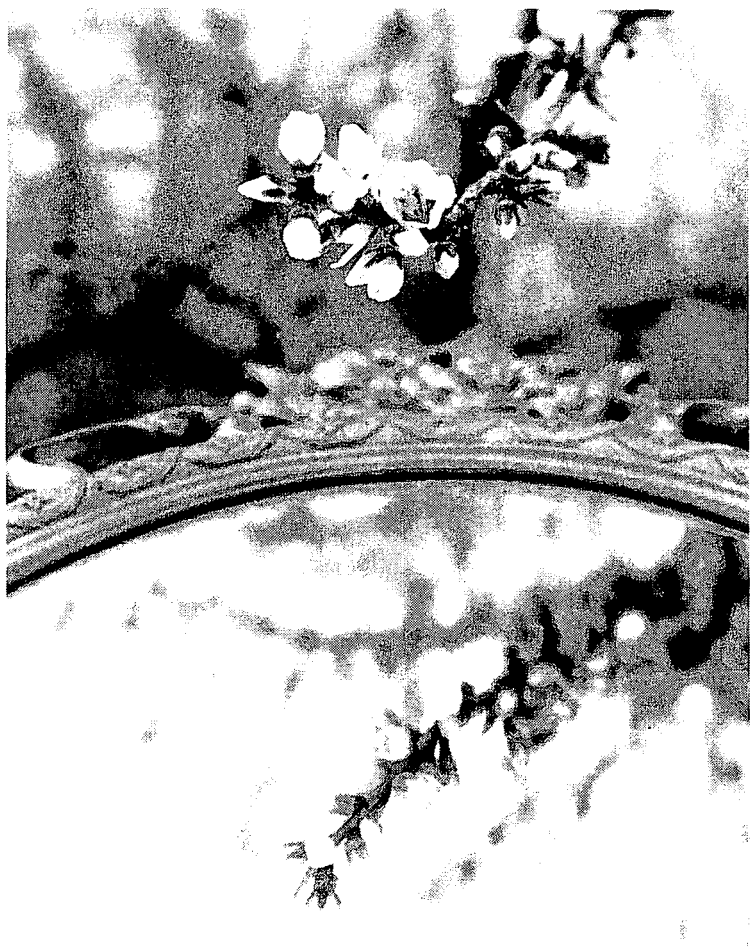
...Nobody stood outside Tehama as I approached. Only the wind howled around the building as I opened the glass door. A woman on the other side saw the curiosity in my face and said, "Can I help you find something?"

"I lost my future, and am here to find it."

She gently took my hand and led me to the elevators.

"Let's see if we can find it. Relax. My name is Rosa."

Gary Brune



Jessica Brouwer

From Here to There

Going from here to there
requires the courage of Joan of Arc
as she leads her soldiers
into battle, or maybe the bravery of Gandhi
as he leads his followers
to the sea.

The journey from here to there
is the sum of two homemade loaves of bread
and a sunny rose garden outside the broad window
of a living room

where two cats snooze in peaceful slumber
and a guitarist sings a haunting ballad.

Turquoise fractals and lavender quarks
make up the formula

for moving from the here
to the there,

and jasmine-scented illusions

wait to intoxicate us

when we reach

the end of the trail.

From here to there is not so far,

only so far as a soothing purple dusk

settling onto deep blue mountains,

and the call of a lone coyote

as night wraps shawls of darkness

over the stark geographies

that assault us now.

We can play along the path

that will take us from here

to there—games of hiding and of seeking,

of old bridges that must come down.
And we can play instruments we craft
with our own hands—
hollow reeds we cut with holes
so we can be the pied pipers
we follow.

Shannon Rooney

Contributors

Marcia Adams' poems have appeared in *The Anthology of Monterey Bay Poets*, *Manzanita*, *The Montserrat Review*, *Porter Gulch Review*, *Caesura*, *Bristlecone*, and several chapbook anthologies. Marcia, a third generation Californian, with roots in the Sacramento Valley and Sierra Nevada, has been happily transplanted in the cool atmosphere of Santa Cruz. Her writing is often an homage to her family, although some of them might differ on that assessment.

Chris Bertucci, after serving four years in the U.S. Air Force, attended Lassen College. A year later he transferred to CSU, Chico, where he met his future wife, Analia, and received a BA in Communication Design. After two years as a Web designer, Chris returned to CSU, Chico, to pursue an MA in English.

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Jessica Brouwer is majoring in journalism and will receive a minor in art. She would be happy if she only had to take photography classes for the rest of her college career. She says it's too bad that won't work for her. Jessica believes that people must take the mistakes from where they have been to change where they are going.

Gary Brune is a re-entry student at CSU, Chico, and is now a junior. His hometown is Hayward, California. Gary was first published in *Hayward High Haypress*, in 1969, and has been published every decade since. He has had close to 30 of his sonnets printed in other literary magazines, won the Frederic C. Fallon Award for Poetry at Chabot College in 1989, and has penned other award-winning verses. Gary was published in *Watershed* last fall as well.

Josh Cembellin was born and raised in San Jose, California. This is his junior year at CSU, Chico, and he is an English

major pursuing a minor in creative writing, along with a certificate in literary editing and publishing. Josh and his friend have recently written a film titled *Friday Harbor* and had it copyrighted. Filming will begin in the summer.

Kristin Colwell is the youngest of five in a very sarcastic family. Needless to say, she knows how to take a joke. Her favorite thing to do is to have impromptu dance parties in her room. Kristin has a hippie boyfriend attending UC Santa Cruz, whom she regrets not getting to see often enough. Her life is superb.

Sanford Dorbin lives in Chico, and has had work printed in previous issues of *Watershed*.

42 | *David D. Ferguson* says art, words, and work are not such different concepts to him; they are all expressions of who he is. David has taught English, photography, and graphic arts for a living. Now, David writes, photographs, paints, and sculpts for fun. He likes to think that his passion for creativity now goes into his Upward Bound work, helping young people fulfill their college dreams.

Dresden Holden is originally from Santa Barbara, California. This is his second semester at CSU, Chico, where he is studying English.

Lynn Marie Houston is an assistant professor of American literature in the English department at CSU, Chico. Her research interests are primarily in the areas of food studies and literature. She moved to Chico in August of 2005, and bought a new house. After that, Lynn discovered her first gray hair.

Suzan Jantz will graduate from CSU, Chico, in May, with a BA in English, a minor in creative writing, and a certificate in

literary editing and publishing. She is especially grateful to her wise and kind mentors and writing soul mates: Professor Jeanne E. Clark, Professor Rob Davidson, Professor Carole Simmons Oles, Erik Armstrong, Mark Haunschild, Nathaniel Miles Millard, and Sarah Pape for their enduring love and support.

Janae Lloyd grew up in Etna, California, and is now an English major at CSU, Chico. She hopes to go on to receive her MA in creative writing. Her goals are to teach at a university and to write a long book.

Julia Martin is a senior at CSU, Chico, studying media arts and political science. She enjoys art that doesn't embody the typical idea of "beauty." She says that, given the right emotion, even the most decrepit objects are beautiful.

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Sean Melody is currently a junior at CSU, Chico, majoring in art, and enjoys doing both digital and traditional darkroom photography while listening to loud music.

Nathaniel Miles Millard is a graduate student of English at CSU, Chico, finishing his thesis project in poetry this spring. He teaches creative writing as well as leads trips out into the wilderness. "Love is connection, connection takes communication, we communicate through language, language is metaphoric, and metaphors come from connection to the natural world around us."

Philip Morris is an English major learning how to write. So far, so good. Writing is his passion, his purpose, and, of course, enjoyable.

Elliott Park cannot wait to go to Japan, but he won't be leaving for about a year. At present, he cannot wait to have a sandwich—they're very good.

Shannon Rooney graduated from CSU, Chico, in 2003, with an MA in Interdisciplinary Studies (English/Education). She likes what Pema Chodon says in *When Things Fall Apart*: “Nothing ever sums itself up in the way that we like to dream about. The off-center, in-between state is an ideal situation, a situation in which we don’t get caught, and in which we can open our hearts and minds beyond limit.”

Kelly Smith is a senior at CSU, Chico, majoring in English with an option in education and a minor in creative writing. She has been published in *Watershed* in the past and has previously worked on the *Watershed* editing team.



