

30th Anniversary Issue

WATERSHED

CSU, Chico's Literary Magazine



30th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

WATERSHED

CSU, CHICO'S LITERARY MAGAZINE

SPRING 2007

.....

WATERSHED Volume 30, Number 2
30th Anniversary Issue
Spring 2007

EDITORS

Mary Cook
Marissa Nunn
Kelly Reeve Smith

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Michelle Barber-Taylor

PUBLICATION DESIGN

Andrea Larsen

COVER DESIGN

James Pope

FACULTY ADVISOR

Casey Huff

FOUNDING FACULTY ADVISOR

Ellen L. Walker

The editors would like to thank Carole Montgomery and the students in Visual Communication Concepts, spring 2007, for their excellent cover design proposals.

Watershed is supported by Instructionally Related Activities funds awarded by the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, Sarah Blackstone, Dean.

Watershed was produced using Adobe InDesign CS2 with Adobe Garamond Pro 10 pt.

© 2007

CONGRATULATIONS, *WATERSHED*

I am very pleased to introduce this special issue of *Watershed* on the occasion of the magazine's thirtieth anniversary. Since spring 1977, more than 1,500 writers and visual artists and almost 500 student editors have collaborated to sustain one of the oldest, continuously published, student-edited literary magazines in the United States.

This issue celebrates that collaboration in two parts, beginning with a retrospective of *Watershed's* first thirty years, appropriately edited by Professor Emerita Ellen Walker, founder of the Literary Editing and Publishing Certificate Program at Chico State and advisor to *Watershed* for over two decades. The second part offers new work and highlights what has always defined *Watershed*—currency as a forum for creative expression and vibrancy as a learning experience for the magazine's student editors.

That learning has extended well beyond technical skills. It centers on understanding the important role that *Watershed* plays in the cultural life of our university and region and developing the ability to make the design and content choices to support that role. In many respects, the medium is the message and *Watershed* delivers a strong message about community connection and enrichment. Congratulations, *Watershed*, on reaching this milestone, and thank you for choosing to offer an issue of old and new delights to start the next thirty years.

Paul J. Zingg
President
California State University, Chico

CATHLEEN MICHEAELS	1	<i>Postcard: Stockholm 1919</i>
CHRIS BRISTOW	2	<i>Trinity</i>
MARK RODRIGUEZ	3	<i>Black Pollen</i>
ALBERT GARCIA	4	<i>A B C D...</i>
CRAIG GINGRICH- PHILBROOK	5	<i>Blooms the Wool</i>
DARREN MARSHALL	7	<i>Waves</i>
QUYNH LE	8	<i>TET</i>
BETSY MCNEIL	10	<i>Sharecropper</i>
LINDA SERRATO	11	<i>Baile</i>
PAUL TUMASON	12	<i>Return to the drum</i>
ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN	14	<i>Tree Fall</i>
BOB GARNER	16	<i>the dream</i>
MALAMA M.H. MACNEIL	17	<i>untitled</i>
MARK H. CLARKE	18	<i>Pantoum with Bats</i>
HEATHER BRITTAIN BERGSTROM	19	<i>Women Who Sleep in the Afternoon</i>
PAMELA GIULIANO	21	<i>Plum Island</i>
BARBARA L. CANEER	22	<i>Lot's Daughters</i>
GREG RAPPLEYE	24	<i>Letters to Yeltsin</i>
ELIZABYTH HISCOX	26	<i>Ginkgo, Maidenhair Tree</i>
DOUGLAS S. JONES	28	<i>Her Hands Touch Me Like Water</i>
BRYAN TSO JONES	30	<i>Mowing</i>

SARAH PAPE	32	<i>Zephyr</i>
PAUL HOOD	33	<i>Peter Principles</i>
DUSTIN R. ILER	37	<i>The Modern Mobius</i>
HEIDI WALLIS	42	<i>for gudrun boesen</i>
JOHN GREY	44	<i>Hopper's Nighthawks</i>
SUZAN JANTZ	45	<i>The Difference a Day Makes in the Definition of a Word</i>
JEFFREY ALFIER	47	<i>Drought in the Hinterland</i>
AMY JIRSA	48	<i>Poets I Have Known</i>
NANCY TALLEY	51	<i>The Hour of the Wolf</i>

CONTENTS: Spring 2007 ---

MARIANNE WERNER	55	<i>The Painter and His Father's Bones</i>
JOSH CEMPELLIN	57	<i>Fruit Trees in Winter</i>
SHARON DEMEYER	58	<i>Dusk Luster</i>
LAURA JEW	59	<i>Cento: Eve</i>
JEFF WHITNEY	60	<i>Barajas</i>
JOSH WHITTINGHILL	61	<i>the actor</i>
ANDREW CHRISTIAN	62	<i>Juke Joint</i>
LARA GULARTE	63	<i>Cleansing</i>
SEAN MELODY	64	<i>Statues at Night</i>
SARAH KNOWLTON	65	<i>Blameless Blooms</i>
CHRIS ELLIOTT	66	<i>What We Own</i>
WARREN S. TAYLOR	69	<i>Eiffel Tower, Las Vegas, NV</i>

KEVIN O'NEILL	70	<i>Roadsigns</i>
MARIANNE WERNER	71	<i>Memory</i>
JOSH WHITTINGHILL	72	<i>la puerta del final</i>
ROBERT MIRABEL-RAMOS	73	<i>Prelude and Fugue</i>
SARAH KNOWLTON	74	<i>The Settled Life</i>
JOSH WHITTINGHILL	75	<i>te perdono</i>
SARAH PAPE	76	<i>Now</i>
GEOFF BAKER	77	<i>Somnambulists</i>
BETH WATTENBERG	78	<i>Are You Ready?</i>
SUZAN JANTZ	79	<i>Working the Graveyard Shift with the Women at the Bakery</i>
JEFFREY ALFIER	80	<i>How We Dream of Stonewall Jackson</i>
LARA GULARTE	81	<i>The Crossing</i>
LAURA JEW	82	<i>When We Go</i>
NANCY TALLEY	83	<i>Follow the Lamé and Dreamy Goat</i>
BETH WATTENBERG	84	<i>In the Zone</i>
JOSH CEMPELLIN	85	<i>Old Crow before dinner</i>
SUZAN JANTZ	86	<i>Somewhere in a Field, Near a Village in Russia</i>
JEFFREY ALFIER	87	<i>Late Light in the Santa Cruz Valley</i>
	89	<i>Contributors' Notes</i>

THIRTY FROM THIRTY INTRODUCTION

A magazine does have this "life" to it (proper to it), does have streets, can show lights, movie houses, bars, and, occasionally

for those of us who do live our lives quite properly in print

as properly, say, as Gloucester people live in Gloucester

you do meet someone

as I met you

on a printed page.

— Charles Olson

"Thirty from Thirty" is an opportunity, a pleasure, and a celebration, but also a set of restrictions and a series of reluctant eliminations. It is the result of the kindest of invitations from faculty advisor Casey Huff and the editorial staff of *Watershed* to create a retrospective in celebration of its thirtieth anniversary. I thank them for the opportunity it affords me to make a contribution to the process of producing this issue.

It also imposes a necessary set of restrictions: the most difficult being the selection of only thirty pieces from thirty years of poems, stories, essays, and plays. Reluctantly, I also set some conditions on my choice. The selections that follow represent for me a kind of retrospective, a way of tracing the variety of styles, forms, interests, and passions of the writing community created by this literary magazine over the thirty years of its life. It does not, however, include the entire community. I excluded the members of the faculty and staff whose many excellent contributions I wish to salute here, and the writers who were solicited for contributions because they were invited guests to the campus. I have also chosen not to republish work chosen for "Best of *Watershed*" from the twentieth anniversary issue. The selections focus on the students, members of the local writing community, and writers who work outside those geographical limits and choose to send their work to *Watershed* and thus broaden its reach and grasp.

Re-reading thirty years of *Watershed* was a great, and in some ways unexpected, pleasure. I was delighted to be reminded of how much good, vibrant, and vital writing it has presented and how well the student editors have done their work to make each issue an integrated and attractive literary record. I was surprised at how much of it retains its freshness and vitality, while at the same time representing the changing styles and preoccupations of the writers and editors.

Finally, this selection represents a celebration: of thirty years of continuous publication; of the writers whose work is its reason for being; of all the student editors who are responsible for every issue and for what *Watershed* was, is, and will become; of Casey Huff and Beth Spencer in whose hands *Watershed* now rests; of the creative writing faculty whose students represent the largest part of the submissions to each issue; of the visual artists who have trusted us with their work; of Gregg Berryman and Carole Montgomery and their design students who create our covers; of the staff who have contributed to the production process; of Instructionally Related Activities and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts who fund *Watershed* and have done so since the third issue; of all the readers, whom these issues also serve; of literature in print, the news of whose death has been greatly exaggerated.

“Thirty from Thirty” joins this current issue of *Watershed* to represent past achievements, link them to the present, and presage a long and lively future. And to everyone who has been a part of this magazine over the years, thank you.

– Ellen Walker, Professor Emerita, founder of the Literary Editing and Publishing Certificate Program and *Watershed* magazine

THIRTY FROM THIRTY

Retrospective: 1977 to 2007

**Trial
Impression**

Vol. 1, No. 1, of *Trial Impression*, which became *Watershed* in 1981.

Cover design by Paul Vacca.

Postcard: Stockholm 1919

Sometimes I want to be that woman,
sitting: soft skin and loose braids.
Her shoulders, leaning. Her even

curves. On the cherrywood table
scatters pieces of paper and flowers,
garden flowers, in green glass.

A window. Because sometimes I want
to be that still. A portrait.
Nothing except the window open.

Trinity

In sunlight, brittle as glass
three horses wait
at the water trough
for the ice to be broken.

They have breathed
before them, the warm vapor
of three perfect souls.

Across the stubbled field,
cups of hoof prints
are webbed with frost
like fine white hair,

and still, they wait—
horses in an older time
just beneath the thin
ice of my years.

Black Pollen

I have spent
all day searching
for the perfect
word that says
I am lost
like a compass
walking in a field
of magnets
My father
before me
he too was lost
We were born
into a world
that pulls
gentle
at our foreheads
makes our shoulders
tip towards the moon
always sleep talking
giving bad advice
Like black pollen
we are covered
with night

A B C D...

I was *just* thinking.
When I write this
Or read this
(no, not *just* thinking)
The letters, even the rare
Letters make words
Each shape makes sound
And the combinations—
Puzzles, intricate puzzle pieces
Locking
Words, sentences, language
And to think
Atoms, molecules
The red rose
 $E=mc^2$
Imagination
The human body
Can be made again
Intricately
A B C D...

Blooms the Wool

Early in our Century, floods
washed a thousand sheep
underground. They did not suffer long. They did not
drown so much as leave their bodies
by agreement. This is what

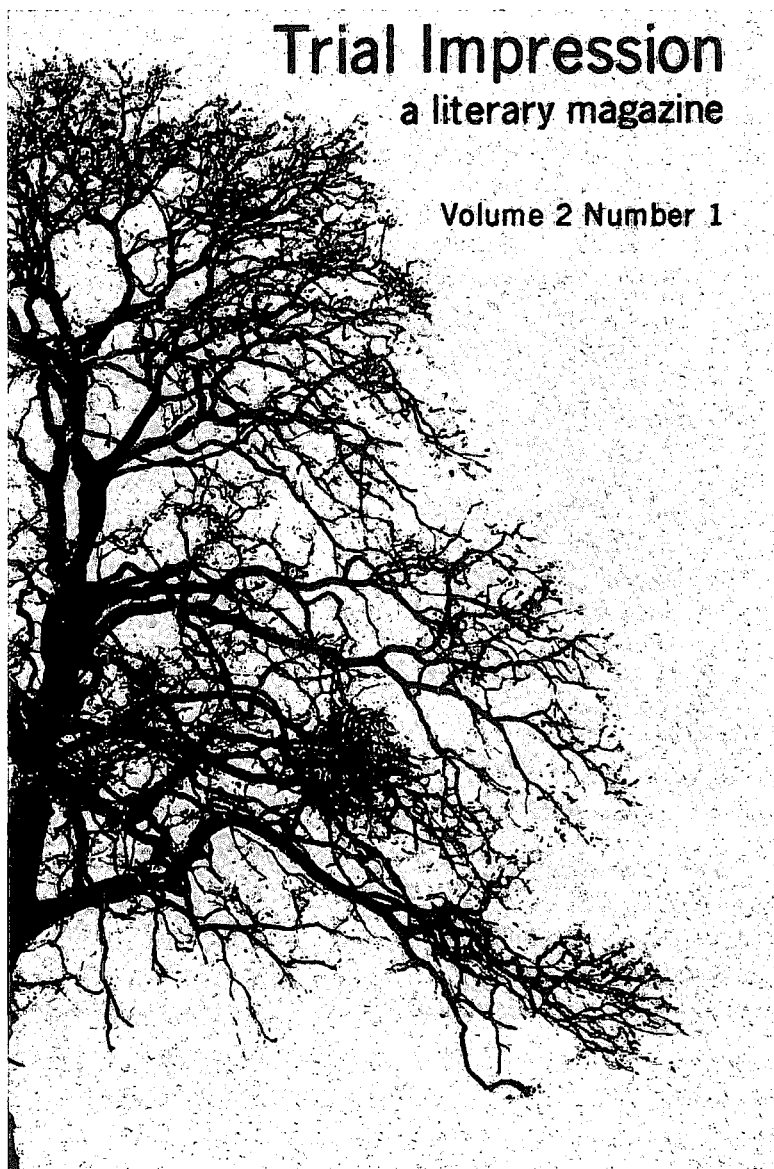
I tell myself, planting simple-roses named, strangely,
for Christ. They are the white
of illustrated-Bible lambs. They gesture, each bloom
a breaking of hands. The laying on
of water, to soak

the new roots,
takes a long time. I finish a novel. I heal myself out
of the crisis, stare from the back window, where
a thousand sheep, not symbols for anything,
honest

to God, crest the hill, flowing in a wave. I imagine
them crushing the roses,
the spattered
blooms, the wool
knit with thorns. Just a little

blood, comparatively, is to have
saved us all. Such magic
inside naming. I look out the front
to the roses, then back
to the advancing sheep, the tidal panic

of the herd, the bellwether
bleating, breasted
on the electric fence, honest to God, each
cry like a beat
too much from the knuckle-white heart.



Waves

As if confusing love and lust
could be fatal.

As though the buttons
on your blouse undid themselves
leaving you open to interpretation.

Remembering how my hands were waves
searching your secret beaches
for that perfect black agate.

At night the self grows small
this movement is absolute.

Leaving us nothing more
than what we give or take.

TET

The sixth of February is Tet

Somewhere, people are celebrating
Somewhere, peach blossoms are blooming
Somewhere, little kumquat trees are embellishing
a humble hut
Somewhere, children in their best clothes
are gathering for new year treats
Somewhere, firecrackers are crackling in merry noise

The sixth of February is Tet

Year of the mighty dragon

Somewhere, the dragon awakes and walks its dance
Somewhere, confetti showers the street
Somewhere, young ladies in their national dresses
glance at their young men whispering
secrets into their best friends' ears
Somewhere, people passing by each other stop
and exchange new year wishes
Somewhere, old ladies hold their grandkids' hands,
watch the parade go by with smiles

The sixth of February is Tet

Somewhere, a lonely room has gathered dust
Somewhere, an old, thin figure stands
 with lonesome shadow
 by a window full of silky cobwebs
Somewhere, the smell of incense wafts over
 a faded picture
Somewhere, old memories are being relived
Somewhere, a mother cries, a father weeps,
 and a lover bows—silently...

...And here I am thousands of miles away
wishing, wishing...and longing...
and sitting here writing, on the sixth of February

Sharecropper

In fields he turns air
dark with loam.
Dust of grandfathers
dry and thick on his boots,
thick as echos of child cries
in rafters of the cabin.
Framed by daylight, hoeing hip
leaned to one side, morning
brings in a doorful of memory.
Rows spread out wet before him
like the long legs, rich body
of his black woman.
Springtimes, he has seeded her.
Winters, she calls him
home. Says
furrow deeper,
stay.

Baile

The great mountain split open
bones of various ages
danced in the twilight
clicked like castanets
white castanets
baile, baile

Often I have dreamed
of jumping from peak to peak
shaking the bones
that only I have seen
dancing in the twilight
baile, baile

I lie in the grass
the sun kisses my freckles
at midday
My dreams are washed out
by brightness of bones
dancing in the twilight
beating the ground with hard toes
baile, baile

Return to the drum

They return to the drum
with all speed
like a river to its sea
a circular line, rock fire, burning spear, standing tree.
The children, young, carved of earth, soft
as a feather out of many on the chief's head
tan as the leathery hide of the buffalo.
The drums hum papoose to sleep
in the woman's lap.
The long, thick, black hair of the spirit costume
leaps at the fire, dances drunk, and falls.
All day long the river changes colors.
Mornings and evenings
the water runs blue and copper
with reflections
of sky and sandstone, light through jade.
A fish flies from a pool
met by a massive paw
then nailed to the stream bottom
the movement lost the color taken
driven from reach.
They were nailed
by the hammer of justice.
They cut their hair as they run from themselves
they maintain the medicine, rock, stone, fetish
releasing anger in solemn crowds of their own kind
talking to the bottle, a false friend that stays
the enemy.
They were all here before we came to their place.
We stayed, but made them leave.
In a rain shadow storm cloud
they return to the drum
with all speed
like a river to its sea
and pass beneath the clouds in earth spirit.
They know this place we call ours

they are part of this ground
part of these mountains
a circular line, rock fire, burning spear, standing tree.
They know this place we call ours
they were all here before we came
and now we must all return to the drum.

Tree Fall

A tree faller, weaponed
For warfare, clasps
The temple pillar
With urgent thighs,
Only 80 feet
Standing
Between him
And death.

An electric wizard,
Swiftly and brutally,
Peels off arms laden
With scented fingers.
Each limb parts
From its parent,

Resigned to free flight
Downward...down...down,
For however long it takes
To touch the Source
And complete
A circle
In time.

The trunk, tapestried
With many seasons,
Grieves alone...
A javelin
Defying
Eternity.

Buzzsaws, screeching triumph,
Sever...neck
And dorsal vertebrae.
The bereaved spine groans
From the deep core of being
And falls back to the
 Trembling ground
 Of memories.

 A funeral dirge
 Whines through
Sawtooth blades
And promises
From bulldozers
To city flight dwellers;
 While the forest mourns
 A lost God.

the dream

his thick brown fingers
melt away
from the porcelain cup,
his heavy whiskered cheeks
cave in.

she brings more tea,
but he
is deep
into the country of night.

she senses
the movement of other worlds
beneath his blue-veined lids,
the rush of recollection,
as the cup
falls for a thousand years
to the white pine floor

and shatters
for a thousand more.

untitled

If not redemption
to what will poems bring us?
If not the still point of poise
our hearts opened, our sacrificial grief
like incense rising,
our need for certainty
offered at the altar
in perpetual act
of atonement,
if in the moment of stark truth
spoken in words as sure as smoke
we burn away despair, and
incandescent, mark ourselves for mercy
to what, our chrysalis dreams being spent,
might we wake
but grace?

Pantoum with Bats

The dry sandstone cavern
above the field of poppies:
home of the velvet winged bats,
they flit, invisible in the purple night.

Above the field of poppies
in darkness dripping with orange stars,
they flit invisible in the purple night.
Wing beats pulse, or is it your own heart throbbing?

In darkness dripping with orange stars,
enter the cavern, breath held.
Wing beats pulse, or is it your own heart throbbing,
as furtive fingers feel the way?

Enter the cavern breath held.
Find its fullest depth,
with furtive fingers feel the way,
then strike the torch, reveal the gallery:

Ancient paintings of beast and bird,
home of the velvet winged bats,
hand prints the size of your own, on the walls of
the dry sandstone cavern.

Women Who Sleep in the Afternoon

In the womb of the day they tire,
sleeping instead of peeling, sewing, watching T.V.
Let their children cry for milk,
their lovers' hands fold into the envelopes of another.
They care only for sheets
like cool palms on their faces and back of their necks
and beds without the worn-out-from-work bodies of companions.
They are children alone for the first time in water.
Balls of their ankles like stones anchoring them in place,
they wake to the curtains stiff as the skirts of grandmothers
standing above them, lampshades dusty as back steps,
and corners that box them like jewels in their beds.
Rising, they welcome evening:
children's hands glowing like stars,
lovers' teeth that peek from red lips like square eyes.
Women who sleep in the afternoon
trace the outlines of their dreams on dinner tables,
the curve of their children's backs,
pillows that the hips of their lovers settle into.



Reproduction of a print by Patricia Babcock.

Plum Island

– for my father

It's the sharp smell of the salt marsh
that strikes first.

The white caps
on the Newburyport River
move unseasoned waters
to tall reed grass
punching out of gray sand.
A return trip for the water

and my father. *We took a ride to the Island.*
A distant voice drives me past the clam stand,
leaning red snow fences, and Bennet's Hill
towering over the summer island
like some ancient gargoyle.

He chased fish on this beach.
Striped Bass derbies.
I spent nights with a light strapped to my head
putting small sandy worms on hooks
cast after cast. Never a bite. Our low beach

chairs dug in the sand.
I wish I knew what we talked about
as the tide pulled away.
Nearly thirty years of midwest
dirt clouds my vision.
We took a ride to the Island.
He knows I will listen.

Lot's Daughters

*And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou
also destroy the righteous with the wicked?*

Genesis 18:23 (King James Version)

Mother died the night the angels came
with their obsidian eyes and cutglass faces.
Sister and I hid from them,
peering out from the pantry.
They were appallingly beautiful, cold
as ice sculptures, distant as the stars, awful
in their indifferent arrogance.
Even father feared them more than the drunken men
who came rowdy to our door,
demanding the elegant strangers for sport.
But mother was not afraid,
not until father begged the mob to take us
to rape instead of his honored guests.
Then she clutched us tight in bony hands,
wailed and moaned, sobbed so hard
we thought we would drown in her salty tears.
She had been growing thick
with crusted brine for years to no purpose
and it served no purpose then.
When at last the angels intervened
it was for father's sake,
not for mother's tears, not for our fear.

Later, when we fled,
she never looked back at our former home.
But she heard—we all heard—the screams, the shrieks,
the great outpouring of pain from thousands of voices.
And somewhere in that mass of suffering were
the women she gossiped with
at the well when she went for water,
the potter who mended for free the jar she broke
so father need not know and punish her,
the butcher who teased her

because he wanted to see her smile,
the hungry children she fed scraps to behind the house
when father was busy elsewhere.

For mother, this was, finally, too much sorrow.
She wept herself to death,
solidified into a pillar of salt,
leaving sister and me alone with that old lecher
who drinks and fornicates with us
and swears we make him do it.
The Lord loves this man.
What can we do?

Letters to Yeltsin

*Sources today described Russian President
Boris Yeltsin as suffering from a colossal
weariness.*

— National Public Radio

1

Word arrives in the steamy depths
of the American summer,
the torpor so general
I cannot rise from my couch.
I share your struggles, comrade.
My own weariness
is the prosecutor's vast *troika*,
the battleship *Potemkin*,
the weariness of Mandelstam,
the big *beluga*, it is,
shall we say, humongous,
a heavyweight, major-league, super-sized
forty ounce, an Arch Deluxe,
a Double Whopper,
a big mama kind of tired,
a hog-stomping, ass-thumping,
thunder-bumping lollopalooza.
It's the weariness of Jesus
watching Judas spill the salt,
the spent dime of Sonny Rollins
walking home at dawn,
the funky tired of James Brown,
sweet soul singer
of the Afro-American proletariat,
as he begins to moan,
it's the shot wad of Saddam,
heat-sought and laser-bombed
in the desert of his bunker,

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.

Ginkgo, Maidenhair Tree

*Ginkgo biloba was once believed extinct and is not found in the wild.
Preserved within the monastic temple gardens of China, she is found today
only as a result of that confinement.*

blessed with two gentle lobes loba
supple shape calls
for fingering,
lascivious frondling fondling
indulgent smooth.
my seeds are naked to this world.

yet touched only by the untouched:
Buddhist belly round,
Dao with homely bellied vowel.
celibate index and fore finger skin
comes
close and firm, feeling up my thin fragrance.

delicate sway of me deceives,
they mistake maidenhood.
virgin male palms, meditative smooth, don't know this wild strength.
I have thrown countless children to the wind
and swallow the sun.
unapologetic.

taken fresh, spilling
within walls of release,
flowing with the stream while mountain still.
cloistered away
I, perverse, defy this ebb of propagation,
spread wide my bare seeds.
Sink them deep,
sprout wet this sacred soil.

I defy despair.
circular spin of time will find me
fallen fresh
beside the path, this sacrilege seclusion in future pasts.



Her Hands Touch Me Like Water

It is the inevitability of time
that turns from a tree its leaves;
the perfection of seasons that move,
with the slowness of the cycle of water,
heavy, overripe fruit
from its soft, bruising skin.

I know a woman whose palms—printless skin—
resist the withering of time
like pieces of wax fruit.
Her fingers spread like leaves
in a small wind and touch me like water
with one slow, smooth movement,

as a willow in a storm moves.
The slow twisting of life beneath skin
that, without the taste of water,
will dry like charisma in time,
leaves
only hope for the seasons when fruit
bends branches down to our hands; fruit
that drips juice from our chins, moving
like the thin veins of a leaf
down our skin,
because time
is slow and silent when she touches me like water.

I watch her hands under running water,
cleaning fruit
that, after giving it time
to dry, we will move
to our mouths. From its skin
she washes the dirt and leaves.

As I leave,
she pressed my hands, like water,
to the simple skin
of her soft cheek and the taste of fruit
rolls from her mouth in movements
that separate space and time.

And when the wind blows against my skin like leaves
moving on slow water,
I recall how her hands, unlike fruit, refuse to wither in time.

Mowing

Now the day lengthens,
the grass curls green over
the uncut graves of my lawn

it is the bushy countenance
of Shen Nung, wild one
who bit into roots

with his teeth to taste
their panacea;
before this blade starts

with a chug, churns insistent
gaggles into a whirl
that cuts his hair,

levels its unkempt appearance.
And where are you, Walt Whitman
your beard springing up

in tufts from the moundy earth,
these eagerly sought graves
of my mind?

Back and forth the red bull
drives and snorts, sputters
when it has tasted too much of grass

of so many leaves dumped and sifted
into the can, the green and browned ends
smell like Ginsburg peeing

in some street in Greenwich
before heading in hungry fatigue
to the supermarket in search of you.

Here under the pungent snap
of fresh-cut lawn,
you and he and Shen Nung are sharing
a joke, your beards by the lengthening
days growing wild as vines and ginseng;
dashing together naked in the sun but for the tufts
that stretch down to fondle jovial ankles.
Watching this boy curse and mutter,
struggle with the eyebrows of bushy men rooted deep.

Zephyr

Just as I became
resigned to the wounds
of being your child,
inspired through the ache,
sleeping fitfully in memory,
this wind may become
the only transport
of your words
to me.

How long can you
bear the weight of
a suffering body?
Long enough for reparations—
for me to relinquish
a reoccurring dream
with a wilted heart
and sagging spirit
in tow.

Across the rippling
jeweled creek
the tall grass is a waving,
iridescent sea;
When you are gone
can I imagine you there,
beneath that undefined shroud,
swaying, shifting,
alive—not yet gone?

Peter Principles

Peter Pan's sword doesn't stay sharp. You can't just go around drawing treasure maps on the ground with it because dirt is very abrasive. And all that clanging-banging with the pirates puts the deepest notches, takes forever to grind them out, even in Never-Neverland. And that really cool sound that it makes when you draw the blade, you know the sound: that singing "shling" as it clears the scabbard...takes the edge right off and pretty soon it won't cut a thing. All the newer swords are made of stainless steel so they will look pretty and shiny, notches or no, but what good is a blade that doesn't stain: no history, no character. If you've got an old one like Peter has, stained and damaged but strong and with a soul, hang onto it.

Listen, even Peter wouldn't carry a sword any more, it just isn't done. A knife is ok. You can get away with a fairly large one, if you want to be blue collar, the kind that hangs off your belt in a swordish sort of way, a folder with a worn tan leather sheath: a "Buck" or a "fake Buck." But realize you'll never earn more than thirty-six grand in a year, guaranteed; some images have a price tag attached. Leave the knife at home and substitute with a pen and you'll make more money. Pens are no fun but get a gold one anyway, just to have it on hand in case you need it, they're worth a lot more in the long run. Like a Boy Scout, be prepared. Boy Scouts carry knives too, and probably a pen. I don't know what Peter carries now. We aren't currently speaking.

Yes, you can hone a knife up every single night with the Arkansas stone that you ordered all the way from Arkansas, even if the knife sits at home all day on your dresser. If it could rust, it would. It yearns to rust, or to be dulled, as any good knife should yearn. So why hone it? Think of it as a substitute for the clanging-banging and drawing in the dirt. If you can't abuse it one way, abuse it another. Hone it to death, ready, always ready.

Does your job bore you? Then try this: hang a huge carbon steel Bowie on your belt, the kind that rusts red as Captain Hook's blood in your sweaty leather sheath, so big it slaps against your leg when you walk. Way beyond blue collar, we're talking mountain-man now. Arkansas mountain-man. Bring it to work, it's ok: it will stay sharp through the opening of countless payroll checks, want-ads, coupons, bills, notices from the IRS and letters from your ex-wife's lawyer. Hack down one of those wimpy parking lot trees when you think nobody is looking; the kind that needs a stick to hold it up anyway. I recommend it.

And find a reason, 'round the office, to have that auburn blade in your hand every five minutes. Get downright obsessed with it. Test the edge by shaving off four inches of arm-hair, just before a meeting while everyone is exchanging vapid

smiles, checking their fingernails and puckering up for the big brown kiss. When it gets very quiet, when they are all looking at you and the fresh bald spot on your arm, say, “yep.” Just “yep.” Don’t look up. Don’t laugh. Then put the knife away, at least for the next five minutes.

Never specifically discuss the knife, ever. If pressed hard enough by your boss however, you may launch into a pre-rehearsed speech about knives in general, how they are historically the oldest tool and so on, and how it inspires you to work harder, in an elemental kind of way. Make something up. Ignore the fact that you yourself carry a huge honkin’ one on your belt that you have absolutely no need for, yet, by all eyewitness reports, can’t leave it alone. If everything goes right, you should get fired eventually. Your co-workers will help that along. That’s not always so bad. You can even act surprised. I like surprises. Second star from the right, and so on...and why shouldn’t you hold your knife in your hand anyway? Often and long. You want to make sure you know where it is, right? Hate to lose the damn thing. I don’t know where Peter is but I’m sure he hasn’t lost his, whether he shows it off or not, he knows right where it is.

Wendy...to change the subject, never did carry a knife or sword. It wasn’t her style. She now sleeps with some blonde guy she brought back from France like a souvenir. Most people just buy a lamp or a throw-rug. On Christmas day, she rubs her cheek against the back of his hand, purring like a massive pussy cat while the children from two previous marriages open their presents. Used to darn my socks, she did, and Peter’s too, and make chocolate cakes for me and the lost boys. Seems like you run into her everywhere: jogging by on the beach, you think for a moment that you are hallucinating a six-foot-tall, European Barbie doll, but you’re not. It’s Wendy all right. She’s complete with all the accessories: leather jacket, short red hair. She’s caustic, cynical, semi-fluent in three languages and doing quite well in the world, unlike Peter who is now floating around out there somewhere, detached and disembodied. That’s the way they build Barbie dolls in Europe isn’t it? If they don’t, they should. Tell Mattel.

But no, you don’t want her back. Hard for you to believe I’m sure, that Wendy is actually one hell of a, well, you know, and the Euro-Ken, the blonde guy, will discover that soon enough. The chocolate cakes, the socks, the bedtime stories: lies, all lies. All of it. Euro-Ken doesn’t even have a sword, I think. But he will, one day, long after he knows he needs one, when it is way too late.

Besides the sword, and if you are Peter, long parted from Wendy and what you used to be, there are plenty of other things to do. Growing a beard and becoming a mad inventor is one. Or spend all your money on stereo equipment or cars or power tools. Eat out every night and flirt with the waitress. Drive too fast and drink

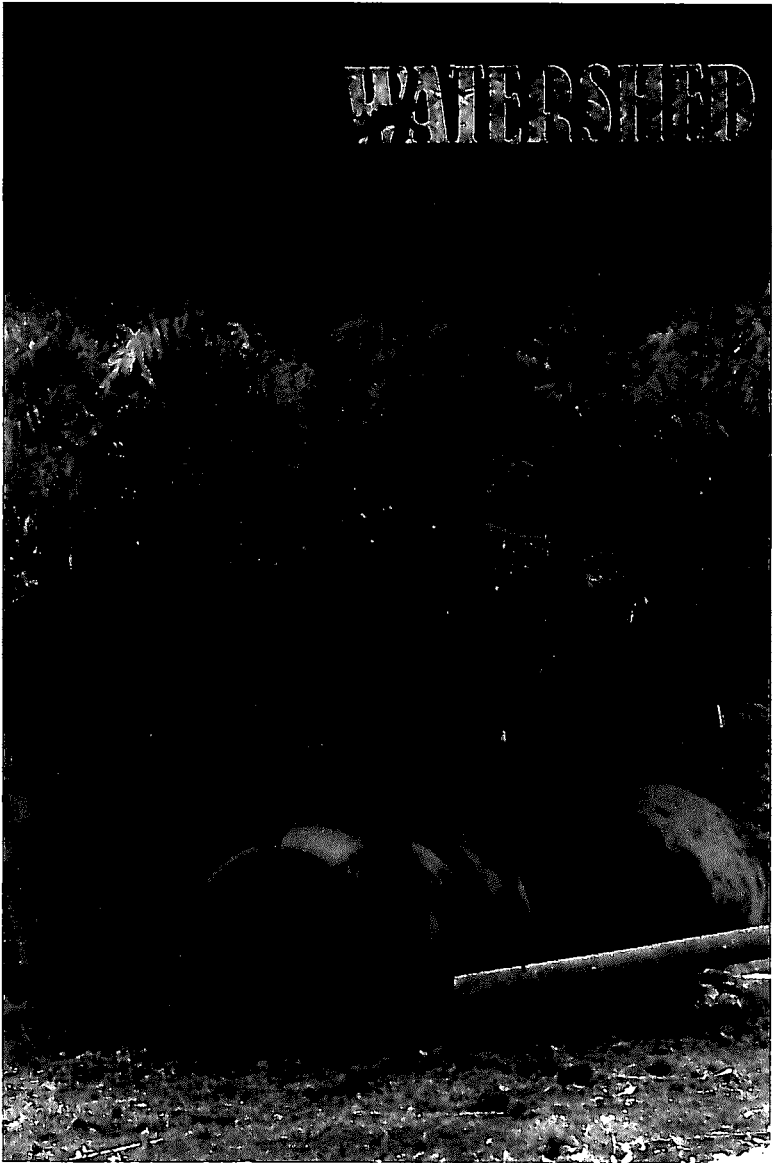
too much. Sleep in on the weekends and dream of flying as long as you can while no one yells at you to get up and help with the laundry or tells you “what a beautiful morning it is” at seven a.m. on a Saturday.

Then there is the ogling of nineteen-year-olds who would likely bore you silly even after four beers. You keep wishing one of them is Tinkerbell but she doesn’t run with that crowd: clap your hands, clap your hands if you believe in fairies all the way to the coffee house where you can tap your foot to eclectic jazz, write fuzzy ideas in a yellow notebook with caffeine-shaky hands and wonder why you have only one or two friends in the whole world.

Peter hasn’t come to this. Yet. I don’t think so. He still crows when he feels like it. Killing pirates is too easy and could get him arrested and besides, it’s good to keep them around for laughs: squinting and mugging and saying “Arrr!” the way that they do, it’s so cute, and after all, it is about all that they ever manage to do.

It might be good for you to know that Peter’s shadow is still holding on by himself, sewn to Peter’s feet so many years ago by Wendy, Wendy Darling (what a nice name) when it was nice and he remembers it as so very nice. Shadow of the boy, shadow of the boy. Did you know that when Peter flies, his shadow stays, somewhere on the earth until he lands again? Shadows like the earth, Peter likes the sky. And don’t ask me how those stitches work. I never understood that. I don’t think I mentioned before that this is who I am: I am Peter’s shadow. It’s me, but he hasn’t come down in so long that I barely remember who I am, who he is...I’m not myself anymore and I doubt that he is either. We need each other. This long separation has made us both mad, we used to just be angry; now we are mad.

But never mind then, I take it all back. Dull your sword on the ground drawing treasure maps and don’t worry about it. Peter does it all the time. Put another sword on the credit card if it gets completely ruined. But Peter, if you can hear me at all: Shave off the damn beard, stop drinking and lose a few pounds or Tink will never recognize you. Just be sure you recognize her. Don’t forget please, that you believe in magic, and fairies. Never-Neverland is a real place, and you have unfinished business there. The crocodile is still ticking and the lost boys are lonely without you. Go home, go home, go where you belong you bastard. How many times do I have to tell you this? Do come down. That’s all I have to say, rest now, dream of flying home or do it for real. Up to you. I hope you can hear me.



The Modern Mobius

I

Finished posing, he descended the funny stairs, fixing his hair. Taking them two at a time, building more momentum than he could control, he turned too soon. His side and hip hit the rail like a fist smashing against a brick wall, the pain of the impact was a revelation that never came, yet drowned out all other thoughts, all senses, never filling the void.

He grabbed the rail like a gladiator clutching the hilt of the sword freshly thrust into his sternum, knuckles white, tightly clenched.

The doors were swinging open; he could hear the heavy wood reinforced by steel clang shut with the momentum of its own weight as body after body clambered through the portals into the dark theater. He looked back at the stairs as he hobbled away. They were too steep he thought. Fifty-five, sixty-five degrees?

At the door he forced off his limp and entered the buzzing darkness, allowing his eyes to adjust to the lack of light, as his ears adjusted to the many voices, filtering them into individuals.

The screen flickered as he began to step down the aisle, then illuminated, white. He waited again for his eyes to adjust.

Before the class stood the squat man, a soldier commanding troops, arms akimbo, eyes glaring through light brown glasses, mustache silver and shaped like Stalin's.

"Quiet."

When sight returned, he saw that he was three rows from the screen. Three rows from Professor O'Shea. He quickly sat, a little to the middle, just out of the area of most probable sight, for Professor O'Shea thrilled at choosing students to answer questions asked only after calling their names.

"The roll sheet will circulate as the film starts," he foretold as if it were a prophecy. Nothing could ever be commonplace with the bright blank screen to his back. O'Shea looked like some chosen man of God, heaven behind him.

"This film you're going to see may seem much like the last five or six films, but believe me, it is different. You will enjoy it kids." O'Shea began to stride up the aisle, and he would have made it had a student in the front row not flailed his arms, straightened, his posture perfect, and began to speak, stopping him.

He couldn't clearly see the student. Dark hair, a beard in the shape of Satan's, or Satan's little brother's, on his chin. He wore sunglasses—Flavin. Flavin, the favored student, tattoos of some tribal design from some lost clan of Caucasia on him from forearm to shoulder. Flavin, the pet of Professor O'Shea. Flavin the artist. "Rick,"

he said, half whining, half shouting, “what about my presentation?”

Professor O’Shea stopped and turned to the class, gesturing widely, “Oh, yeah. Next class, Flavin will give his presentation of Disintegrating Man, with video of the event.”

He noticed the girl diagonal from him. She was shaking her head. She smirked and whispered to the man sitting rigidly beside her. He could see her profile in the dark, and from that dark outline he recognized her. She had just finished drawing him. Usually posing in the nude did not embarrass him, but for some reason, in the dark theater, with his professor passing him, he blushed and quickly looked away.

The screen had flickered, and when his eyes met the canvas, again there stood the glass of milk.

II

White and frothy, bubbles and foam, in a glass pint, clear as sky before a cloud, stood the milk. Resting on a dark green table, the cylindrical legs of which stretched from the oval wood and disappeared to the floor beyond the bottom of the screen, somewhere into the wall. The milk merely stands for what is forever, is a minute, then jerks back, as if hit by some invisible object, some unseen force. The white glass against the orange wallpaper contrasts blindingly, yet as the milk sloshes first over the right lip of the glass, then from the left, the screen seems to wave—the glass slings forward, and topples over. There is no sound. First, the milk pools out, collecting quickly like blood from a head wound. It runs thirty seconds and reaches the round edge of the oval table, erasing the green, and begins to pour off in a curtain of white; a fall that lasts ten seconds. Next, the dripping begins; the brain would be losing oxygen by this point. The milk has puddled and run back under the cup, has begun collecting in its maximum area. The drips fall for another minute, then stop. Finally, nothing seems to happen, and you cannot place where the change occurs, but a drop of milk, nonetheless, shoots up from the unseen floor, up the wall, and back to the edge of the table to the puddle, which has just grown imperceptibly larger. Over the course of the next minute the minute drops slowly rise onto the egg-shaped table’s edge, hold for a moment, then collect, until the white curtain has returned in reverse. The curtain is drawn, returns to the cup, which rights itself through some invisible force, swings back to a seventy-five degree angle, then rights itself to ninety and holds, white against the dark orange wallpaper.

This repeats for approximately an hour and a half.

III

The same movie, every time, he thought. She too was unhappy. He had seen, when the milk first sloshed over the lips, her sketchbook, the one that must hold an image of him. He imagined a perfect image of himself. Throughout the first fall of the film, he kept looking to the book. He could only see its shape, but it was not the book he was obsessed with, rather it was seeing himself through the eyes of other people that occupied his mind. She said something to the man next to her, and he laughed. The man wore glasses. He was in the figure drawing class as well. He knew this, for in his glasses he could catch, if the light was right, his own reflection. Whatever comment of hers the man in glasses was laughing at, she did not find funny. It was apparent that she wanted to leave. Moving back and forth in the chair, it seemed that she was rocked by some poltergeist, some chemical reaction could have been taking place within her body which was causing her to explode. You couldn't leave the class though. You never knew when he would be waiting, reclined in one of the forbidden seats, arms crossed over his chest. Even if his eyes were closed, the silver Stalin mustache would be watching. He would catch you, mock you, reprimand you, and send you back to the first four rows. He caught you every time.

That is why he was surprised, when she rose as the glass rose for the second time, the drops of milk returning to the glass like a whole nest of bees returning to the hive. For a moment, he left himself. He wanted to say something to this young woman that would save her, that would show her a secret exit, and this is why he reached out, not having the words, yet having to do something. His hand grabbed for her arm, yet caught the sketchbook, black leather, and pulled. From the open page fell an eraser shaped like a miniature potato. The page was open to the current date, seen in the corner. On it, he saw himself.

Lines, no more than five, and a circle for a head. He had no face, no genitals, no fingers. He closed his eyes, opened them, and looked again, feeling the shock of his reflection. This was worse than looking in a mirror to find no reverse self staring back, this image was an echo of him, mere lines on paper. On the next page, drawn in detail, was the mannequin that had rested across the room, out of the way, behind him. Large and white, inert and blank, the mannequin possessed more character in one elliptical hip than he had in his whole frame, it leaned with a life more subtle and more real than he could ever express through a shout, much less a pose. He saw this, and cringed, teeth raked across tongue as he tried to speak but rather than see himself again through her eyes, looked from her back to the screen. Before he blocked her from his senses, he heard a seat from the final row swing up, and

footsteps calling loudly down the aisle, closer with each beat to where she stood, as again the glass fell, spilling forth its contents.

IV

The class had just become required for all students. It was said to be required due to the budget cuts. Sixty-five people sat crowded silently in the first four rows. One never missed a class, although, in the sticky heat of one another's pressed bodies, one could taste the perspiration of the neighbors on either side. One watched the same film every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, although O'Shea swore it was different. And the times the two or three brave, or confused, students would call him on this, their hands raised, quivering from the wait he would make them endure for daring to address him, much less with a question. All he would reply was that F students ask questions that others already know the answer to. He would then humor them, smiling like the grate on a drainage pipe, by pointing out aspects of the film that they could not recall. O'Shea would chat with Flavin. Flavin. Flavin the artist. Flavin the A student. Flavin would present *Disintegrating Man*, the week long festival in the desert, a \$200 per ticket event for lashing out at Capitalism. Flavin would show his film: half-naked to naked women dancing in the desert, their boyfriends too distracted by videotaping the other dancing women, they too distracted by their boyfriends' infidelity via camera lens, to notice that they, too, were caught on film. Why live when you can trap and be trapped by memory? Flavin's video would hold the class in hypnotized delight. Flavin would tell them that any "serious artist" would most definitely attend *Disintegrating Man*. The film would not snap. This, beyond all interruptions, all other films and events on or off the syllabus would prove that the class did work. The students attended, and they watched, moved by the milk, by whatever was on the screen, relating to its inability to remain upright, unspilled.

V

The Old Lion was beside her, yet no eyes turned from the screen. No one wondered if he would bare gums, or fangs. No one but him. She knew already what was coming. O'Shea blocked his view of the screen. The milk was dripping to the floor. He could only see the dark outline of the man before him, and the hoarse whisper of his voice.

"Ms. K, where are you going so loudly?"

She did not answer. The white milk dripped between their faces, the light shone off her eyes, revealing blue. She sank beneath the drops of milk.

“Answer to me, Ms. K.” He was growing louder.

She rose, sketchbook in hand, eraser in the other. She leaned for a moment like the mannequin in her sketch, her figure white against the illumination of the milk rewinding back into the finally, never, upright glass.

“Answer me,” O’Shea hissed, his mustache seemed to bristle and tie in knots, his height seemed to decrease, yet the hiss grew louder, didn’t stop with “me,” only continued—“Answer me!” Sharp and cutting, and she didn’t flinch. The milk remained erect.

“I don’t know what this class is for,” she said, directly into his eyes, with a force he had not been addressed with in decades, “but I don’t have to be here.”

She said it as if she had a right to, as if it were perfect sense.

All eyes were on screen as O’Shea bared fangs: “No, you have to be here. You, you of all have to be here, so that this little emotional outburst, this little pawing of politics can be suppressed. You are here to be entertained, not politicized. Now sit down.”

The milk illuminated her face, and in it he saw some invisible force unleash like the shock wave of an artillery shell, so powerful it will leave all intact, limbs, clothes, even the freshly styled hair, but the heart stopped, the body dead.

She turned gently, an infant rolling for the first time, all of her, waist at the curve of her hips, her head, fully illumined by the milk. She faced the upright glass and flung the eraser, and it hit the glass of milk on the screen, which silently toppled over, spilling its creamy white contents down the length of the wall as if for the first time, three minutes from then doing so again, as it had three minutes before. The milk streamed and he cried it, like that Ivory Elephant, no that drank it, and I drank it too.

for gudrun boesen

her hands were wide,
her hands were ancient, graceful
and smooth. the hands of one who knows
steady motion, like wave touching wave,
and the delicate dance of butterflies
perched on milky dandelion.

i caught them in the field behind her house,
and she would name them for me—
queen monarch, red admiral—
in a heavy accent that sounded like marbles
on stairs, each syllable rolling delicately
to the edge, then dropping,
fast and polished
to the next.

when she taught me
to pull thread through stretched fabric,
spelling, in burgundy, my best friend's name
on a cream doily, when she taught me this
she was polished and proper
like a danish antique—timeless,
ageless, stern beauty of strength.

i was terrified when she would look at me,
paying much attention to the evenness of the lace
around the cuff of my sock;
retying the multitude of bows my mother
would attach to me each morning—
in frizzy pigtails, on shiny shoes
or the back of my dress.

she would fix me
like she was arranging flowers
in a vase, fidgeting for perfection
when, like the violets and daisies
that she kept on a sunny table,
i only wished to be returned to the field
where she found me, with the clover
and the monarchs.

Hopper's Nighthawks

Solitude has its back to the world
while fleeting company faces forward,
dark suit, red dress and hair,
and coffee cups spaced like thoughts.
He balances on his cigarette.
She addresses her nails.
Meanwhile, just a job,
grey-haired beneath white cap,
bends down behind the counter.
The diner's a fluorescent beacon
in a dark city.
But it's totally encased in seamless glass.
The door has vanished.
All who enter can never leave.
And spectators belly up
to their own drab countertop.

The Difference a Day Makes in the Definition of a Word

Desire: an abstract word; difficult
To understand. Understanding,
(relative to yesterday), defined *desire*
As *want* (i.e., wanting you).

Want: elemental craving
With underlying inference of promise
To be fulfilled
(that is, you said you *wanted* me).

Yesterday, *desire* was ocean wind
Lifting my wings—
(see history of flight for further explanation)—
Aloft. Why, I actually flew
With the larks when I thought of you!
An exaltation of wings
(see flight of larks to verify this),
Unafraid of sun's burn,
The sky held no limits
(so to speak) as I danced
On air, dipped and soared
In *desire's* whirling whirlwind.

But, today you tell me you *need*
(at least that is the inference)
That same abstract *word*
(I cannot say it)
For someone else (specifically: Trish)
Whose wings are ready
In wait and want of you.

So, I ground myself
(lacking the Wright stuff after all),
Rip my wings out quick,
And realize (at least for today)
That I hate that starving *word*
Suddenly defined as *salt*
In a wound that won't bear healing.



Drought in the Hinterland

This drought scourges fields to wrench almanacs
of sweat from farmers. Wind frays down to rasps.
Hawks patrol the dearth to target parched mice.
You must be thistledown to love this day,
to ride stilled currents of a soundless air.
That birdsong's just a sparrow singed loony.

Weeds find ways to thrive. Austerity reigns
when farmers spare locks to prop barn doors shut
with crossies from abandoned railroad spurs.
Their wives pare down to halter tops. I'll stare
unrecanting if they parlay a smile;
cheers to the strong one bending for a rake.

In heat, my mind holds court for chimeras:
tractors in the distance appear so small
you swear they were toys in Wiesbaden once;
hay bales are ghosts of ice age ruminants,
huddling their calves in the shadowless light.

Men call our need a *regenlander* here—
squalls that whip dry earth to wild green again.
A sole white cloud won't intersect the sun.
We need gunmetal grays swollen with storms,
their winds slamming doors like cheated lovers,
rebirthing the uplands to lush harvests.

Nothing screams portent in these skies today.
July simmers in hard grace. But next year
rebuilt tractors will shudder back to life
in hands that will keep to the earth they know.
Already, dark sparrows find the bright seeds.

Erzenhausen, Germany

Poets I Have Known

I was born from the same swamp of genes
that created the infamous and lusciously notorious
Edna St. Vincent Millay.

(How could one not be a poet with that name—
a name that rolls like that—
like honey off of the end of a spoon
into the milky tea of your rainy afternoon?)

Since she was family, her poems were read with dinner
and at bedtime by a mother who,
when you compare their girlhood photos,
could be the poet's identical twin, one generation removed.

So there was that.

That was a lot to live up to.

Next came Coleridge and Frost, troubled men with whom I fell.
Head over heels.

There were a few after that but, surely,
none nearly so heartbreaking.

Then there was Ted Kooser,
a poet whose style lilts and soars
like a hang-gliding photographer
with a telescopic lens.

I sat next to him at a function.
A poetry function, no less.
A poetry function at which I read my poetry, no less.
I dreamed of a smile or a compliment from him,
but when he leaned my way, it was to ask if the host
had pronounced 'Jirsa' correctly, and was I of the Fremont Jirsas?
'Yes,' I replied. 'And no.'
And I smiled.

Finally, and most recently, there was Billy Collins.

Billy Collins.

The name a cowboy would own.

Or a baseball player, perhaps.

Not the name of a poet whose skill and ease

with something as simple

and as maddening

as the alphabet

is staggering—

is a hard wind in a midwestern summer,

the kind you have to lean into in order to stay standing,

the kind so strong and remarkable

that you wonder where it came from,

but the kind that feels so good against your skin

that you wouldn't even mind drowning in it.

WATERSHED



The Hour of the Wolf

When the wolf, nocturnal creature that she is,
comes at three-plus-some in the morning
to climb rough and up close into my bed
saying—Wake up!
I sigh.

Having grown accustomed to my sins,
finding the daylight twangs
of their reminders almost tolerable,
knowing how the beast will wake me
shake me from my slumber.
I wait.

The bedspread gains a half-life of its own.
The sheets will not lie straight.
They shift as if by alchemy,
change from soft flannel to harsh bark.
They knot, first to the left,
then to the right, before falling,
as forgiving sleep returns,
into some semblance of warm
and simple bodily disorder.

There is a late discovered blessing here.

I find I would not trade my sins
and what I've come to know;
their virtue lies in their familiarity.
I can anticipate the wince,
the old woe and its futility,
and am almost grateful.

I do not want, at three AM,
someone else's sins
warming their cold feet
on the backs of my fleshy knees.

SPRING 2007

Current Selections

The Painter and His Father's Bones

They have spoken to him lately,
with a kind of passionate florescence.
His father's bones could remain
in the cemetery for only five years.
Too many others needed the ground.

So he removed them, the painter.
They were to be taken to the casa de las monjas,
house of the nuns, for permanent care.
Instead, he has kept them upstairs
in a box, that he might bury them

one day, where his father would want them.
Thus, his father's bones have been speaking
to him, telling him, telling him:
*By that place in dark mountain soil,
near the huge old oak tree,*

*or, Deep on the underside of the abandoned
mine where the turquoise vein runs thick,*
*or, In the desert of tall cactus,
the saguaro, under the hot, hot sun.*
And the wild painter listens,

listens to the words of his father
as he paints strange, surreal
women with primitive faces
and thick box-like bodies.
Rich colors and visions stroke

up and down his canvas,
while the bones, barely audible, speak
softly to him. Usually it is at night
when the box slips across the floor
and thin ribbons of light try to escape.

They remind him, these remnants
of bone, these calcified bare splinters,
these seams of his own skin,
that he must inter them soon, that he must pause,
and then flourish beyond his own father.

Fruit Trees in Winter

He's on a ladder—
pruning shears in hands
stretched out above him.

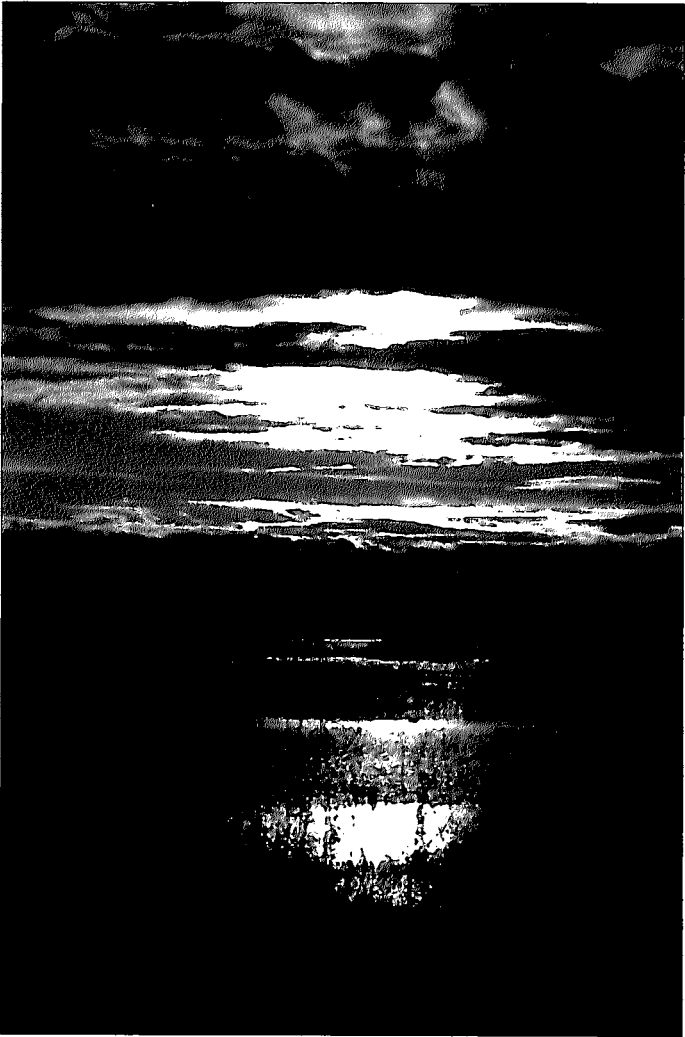
A cigarette dangles between
his lips twenty feet up.
This one's apricot, he says.

Dead limbs severed, tarred
spots without growth.
The tree's older than him.

He pictures fruit, not shape.
*You gotta look for the eye—
new growth. Now where do you think*

I should cut this one?
He doesn't cut where I say.
I'm still learning.

I see my breath amid barren
branches, and think about his hands—
cold for so many years.



Dusk Luster

Cento: Eve

*The word for love, habib, is written from right
to left, starting where we would end it
and ending where we might begin.*

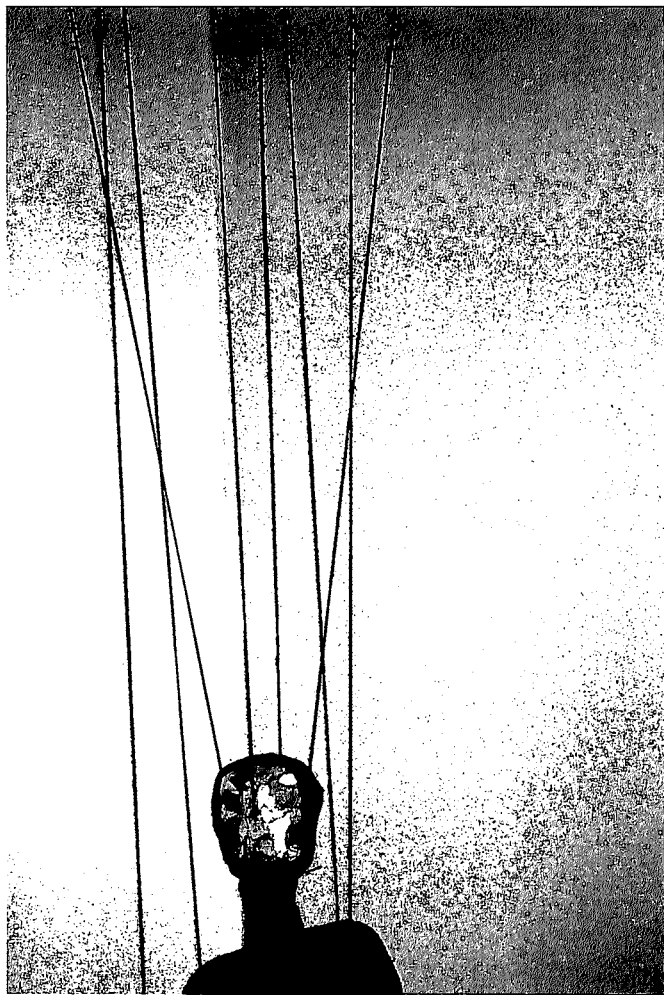
— Brian Turner,
from “A Soldier’s Arabic,” in *Here, Bullet*

They say the Garden of Eden blossomed here—
the word for love a woman in sparkling green.
I have watched her in a circle of light,
the curve of her hip shaping desire into being
like autumn leaves on my skin,
inside, like a musician
drumming a rhythm in the soil.
When she closes her eyes
in a burst of green, the earth
rises as music in unbanded light.

By noon, the world is reduced to heat,
and by sundown we are exhausted,
each star cluster, bursting above.
But I am stilled by her.

Barajas

Don Quijote must have closed his eyes
and dreamed of La Mancha more than once.
In all his chivalry and madness
he most likely saw the symbols of the sky
as a sign of home, a road map
leading straight to sun-ripe Castilla.
But maybe no such place exists,
and maybe the places I've been, I realize,
are the places of collision,
like the buoyant plates we colonize.
And once you've traipsed
enough blades of grass—heard the clash
of sword with culture—things cease to breathe,
like the hands of a windmill untouched invisibly.
Maybe I'm battling that fabled molino
myself, and the head-wind breath
of wind, unfortunately, is its infinite ammo.
But when I look to a mirror
and see the soft Dali construction of my image
grasping up at itself
while holding the rest down under foot,
it makes me believe I'm in some civil war.
Most ominous now, the sides
are more blurred, and I can't tell
if the Republicanos or the Nationalists
are winning. What's more,
I think it matters less and less.
Ascending,
the wrapped wind around my arm
feels like a blood pressure test
where the air never stops to exhale.
Makes me wonder if, when Quijote came home,
La Mancha felt different—the sound
of gravel under foot
crunched quiet-like—
and if the people all looked at him,
but never in the eyes.



the actor

Juke Joint

I'ma use my city-light, night strut
to navigate these broke-down
slim side alleys—too tight
for turnin' round.

Out here, meat gives off its scent,
burning on racks, like ashes, while
water drips through cracks in painted bricks.

Through these walls, voices yell over
dim-lit tables where music blends
like an old, rusty harmonica—moaning.

Tonight, under the moon and chords and smoke,
my shoe soles point almost every way.

Cleansing

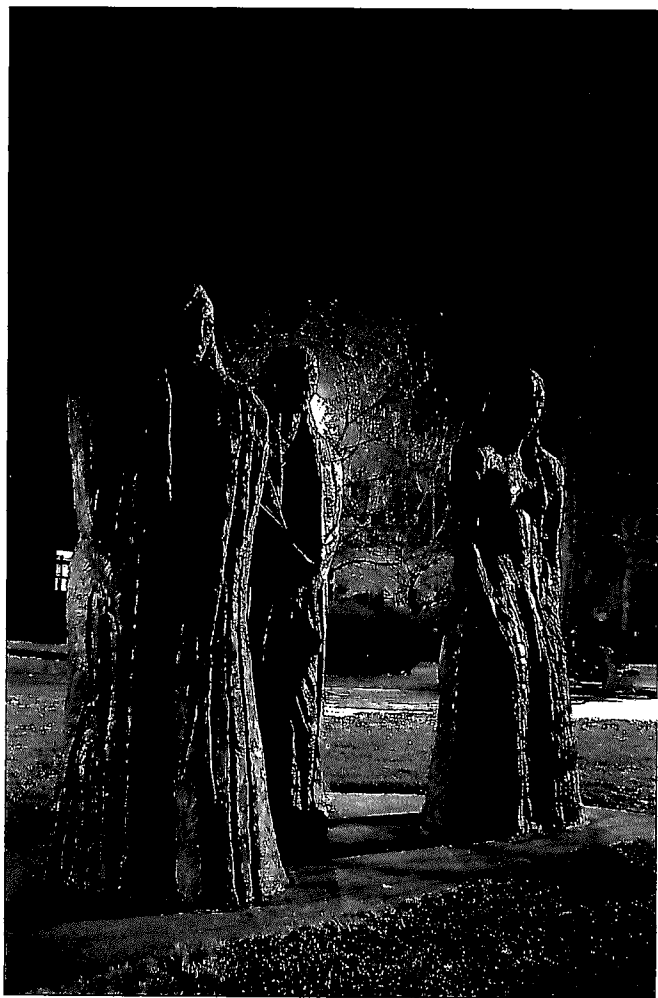
1

Monarchs do not fly here,
nor does the yellow mustard grow.
No trees for birds to nest,
only streets
where men in long cars push
through jammed avenues.
Officials inspect wind
trapped in pillars,
examine the river
thick with lead and sludge.

2

In my home with no ceiling
I find lacework, the smell of mothballs
in my hope chest.
My grandmother weeps down
from the sky.
Tears flood my house,
swim in my ribcage,
drum on my heart.

All night
I feel the slippery body of water.
Seeds fall from my eyes.
In the morning I rise
with liquid hands.
When I shake them out
they turn green.
Blackbirds perch on them.



Statues at Night

Blameless Blooms

Purple embroiders tuliptree branches
as early spring bursts buds—
trembling, fragilely facing coming frosts—
against February's absolved blue skies.

What We Own

No one says they grew up living down a gravel road. Our memories tend to limit themselves to that which is paved, and that which is dirt. My road was gravel though; I can remember the small rocks shifting beneath my feet as I walked to the bus in the early mornings. During the hot months of summer a tractor would come out and grate over the potholes, its sharp blade cutting into the gravel. The road was its most hospitable in the evenings, when the western setting sun would cast long shadows across the gravel, shadows which would travel up our driveway and just touch the base of our house.

I can remember one such evening when the November sun cast its shadows earlier than in the summer months. Thanksgiving was but a few days away. I had finished my share of stacking the firewood and was walking out to the back shed looking for my stepfather. The cool evening air moved through the scrub oaks of the sloping countryside in anticipation of night.

I found him behind the shed, putting gas into the wood splitter. The air carried the familiar smell of gasoline. His hands, lifting the gas can, were covered with dark stains and old scars, calloused over like the paws of a bear. His eyes squinted in concentration, showing a tired stubbornness which sought no sympathy and made no apologies. Though the sunlight was fading, outdoor electric lights were ready to sustain his work into the night. I stood silently, waiting for him to stare up at me. I was careful to gauge his mood so I would know how to talk to him.

"I'm finished," I said, after I sensed he wasn't going to look up.

He set the gas can down before directing his full attention to me. "You told your mother you didn't have time to do the firewood because you had to get ready for your dad's house?" he asked.

I knew this routine well; I had slipped up talking to my mom, and now I would pay for it. I didn't bother answering, knowing I had no answer which would please him. I did my best to stand neutrally, controlling my expression and my posture, already thinking of other things. I let my eyes rest on the red gas can by his feet.

"You'll stack firewood all god damn night if I want you to, you understand that?" His tone was already rising, anticipating any excuse to relieve the stress of his hard day at work. "I've got enough things to worry about without your mother coming out bitching about you not doing your chores." I met his gaze long enough to say that I understood. I would not make the mistake I had seen my brother make so many times before and provoke his anger. He said nothing more, and after I sensed it was okay to leave, I walked up toward the back door of the house,

thinking that if I returned later to say goodbye, it would only be at my mother's direction.

We always entered the house through the back door; the bent top half of the screen kept it from closing correctly. From afar it looked normal; it was only up close that one could see the mismatch between the door and the house. I pulled the screen door open as I stamped my shoes on the cold cement of our back porch.

Once inside I stepped on the backs of my shoes and placed them next to the door. I found my mother and stepsister working in the kitchen, the latter talking loudly about her classmates, oblivious to my presence. My mother was just closing the oven door when she looked up and saw me, her thin face calm and unreadable. I stood there stiffly, comfortable with the space of the room between us. I remember feeling the hard linoleum floor beneath my feet. That night she had no need to tell me to wash my hands or to put ice in the cups. I said nothing, and as I turned to go to my room I saw her pause for a moment before going back to her work, my stepsister still talking.

In my own room I closed the door and finished packing, finding comfort in the room's sparse furnishings. The four walls held only a bookshelf full of thick fantasy novels and a poster of a lone swordsman staring out from the chaos of a surrounding battle. The bookshelf had been a Christmas gift, made by my stepfather. Many of the books too had been gifts, collected over the years. How many evenings I had found comfort in those books I cannot remember, but my mother resented it. In the evenings, when her unhappiness compelled her to find fault in me, she would accuse me of hiding in my room. But by then such comments had rarely hurt me anymore; my anger had become a far-off pressure, distanced and outside myself.

My brother had already moved out by then, leaving the bedroom to me. Beneath the bed was completely clean, no wadded up clothing or sports equipment. We lived too far from the school to play soccer, as I did before the separation. The only other furniture was a clothes dresser, upon which I had placed a chess set. The fragile pieces forced me to softly open the drawers each morning. I used to debate with myself whether or not I should dust them. These were the thoughts I preoccupied myself with, thoughts on how to make my room a mirror image of myself.

I grabbed my bag and the keys to my truck before leaving my bedroom, stepping into the bathroom across the hall to get my toothbrush. As I passed through the living room I saw the light fading fast outside. My mother didn't look up this time as I stepped into the kitchen.

"I'm leaving now."

.....

“Alright,” she said quietly, putting down the knife she had been using to cut vegetables. My stepsister said goodbye, and I repeated it by rote without stopping to look at her. I walked through the dining room and slipped my feet back into my shoes and opened the back door. My hand was already on the screen door when I heard my mother behind me. I opened the door and stepped onto the back porch, forcing her to speak.

“I thought maybe you could eat with us tonight, and go to your dad’s house tomorrow.”

.....

I see myself plainly then, the youth that I was, turn on the concrete slab. I keenly feel the recognition of my mother cooking Thanksgiving dinner early. In a moment of swirled emotion matching the fading night sky, I understand why she waited until then to speak. She stands with one hand on that bent screen door, her dark hair illuminated by the dining room lights. I know what I say—what he says—but in my memory I linger on how she stood there, vulnerable and honest while looking at her youngest son. I look at him too, stubborn and cold, looking back at her through the screen door.

“I’d rather just go now,” he says, dropping his eyes from her face, awkward and embarrassed in his act of revenge.

I want to grab him, grab him before it’s too late, before that bedroom with its four walls and thick, heavy books stays with him his whole life. Tell him, whisper in his ear as I hold him closer and harder than anyone else could, whisper to him in the only voice that he could ever understand, force him to realize that all we can call our own in this life are our actions to each other.

But my memory plays back unchanged. My mom says, “Okay.” It’s all she allows herself to say, dropping her hand from the screen door. Both of them turn from one another, she back into her home, and he to the gravel road stretching into the night.



Eiffel Tower, Las Vegas, NV

Roadsigns

California's coastal highways
move us forward toward Monterey
with the sidwinding motion of a desert snake,
twisting and turning like my father's stories.
He says Native Americans once called this place home,
and that it might be haunted.
He tells of a notorious chief still seen, a ghost
resentful of the white man for proudly raping and pillaging native land.
He explains to a ten year old what raping and pillaging means,
and how it sparked a man's temper,
earned this Indian the name Falling Rocks, whose spirit
lurks under cliffs, behind trees,
is still blamed for murders in the area.

At the next winding turn, he points to a sign.
See. He says. Look.

The sign reads WATCH FOR FALLING ROCKS.

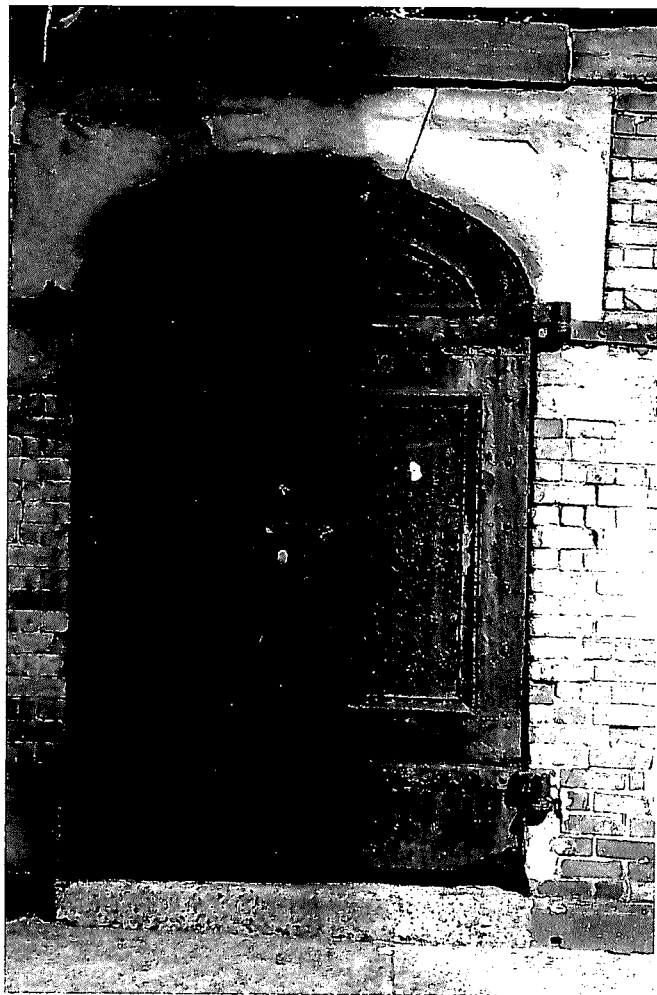
Memory

I was with my father
out for a walk
when I found blue racer eggs,
a dozen or so buried
in a shallow hole
near a soft brown log.

We swept the dirt away,
held back our black dogs
nosing after the vanilla eggs.
My father picked up six of them,
each the size of his last thumb joint.
“Watch,” he said with a smile.

My father juggled
those fragile eggs,
newly arriving snakes,
sleek racers that would
have turned on an inch,
the blue grace of their undulations
shifting with the ease
of rippling water,
their long thin bellies
ribboning with the blue
edge of new snow.

Instead, they opened
on a bed of cool earth,
darkening it with deep pink swirls
of blood that dampened
their soft broken shells,
while my father watched, careless,
the embryos stunned and moving.



la puerta del final

Prelude and Fugue

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
che la diritta via era smarrita.**

Mundane are we—In pleasures and in strife,
but verses sing, aggrandizing all life.

Accompany me in my solitude
 you Nine, for Fates know when I flee this Earth
 not I, nor you. The promise of my birth
is death. If I, one day, 'fore Judgement stood
still young, still fresh, though no seed left behind,
 with mind so full of verses uncomposed—
 But no, fair Muse, for true death is my foe:
To breathe—just breathe—and vanish into Time.
So hasten, Muse, haste! Sing and I will write,
 for what if under Venus' spell I die,
 bones crumbled into dust? Gods so afflict—
If I should fall to Ares' warlike spite,
 first I, your slave, will heed Parnassus high
 and write—then on me death may not inflict.

*Dante: *Inferno*, Canto I

The Settled Life

What was it like for you back in 1943?
Just married, moved to New York City
from Minnesota. New husband enlisted
in the Navy before he was drafted. You

alone in your one-room walk-up, waiting.
But you had Jesus and your looks. Rode
the subway by yourself. You were a strong
woman. Did you miss your family? You

missed the lakes being stuck in the city.
A city of new experience. Of music, art
and all those streets filled with new people.
How did you entertain yourself? You

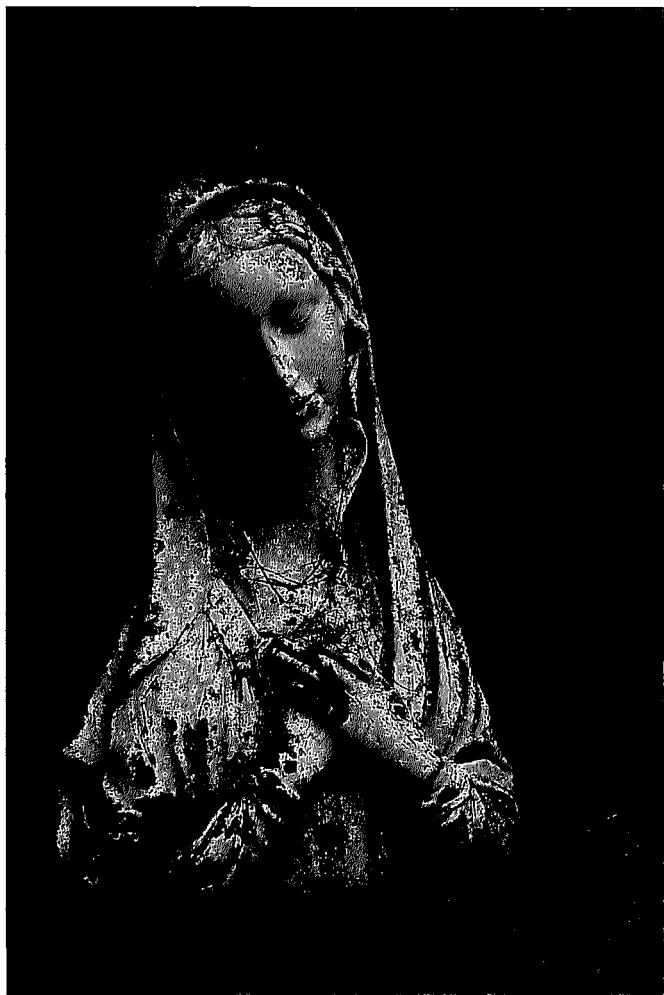
drank some, and you certainly smoked.
You told me you taught yourself to smoke
when you were on the road, so people thought
you older and would take you seriously. You

might have seen the sights. Made friends
with other Navy wives. Maybe the girls
went out for a little fun, had a drink or two
with a sailor who was not their husband. You

posed like a model in New York City
when Claude came home. He liked to take
glamour pictures of you, so far from the farm girl
who sold beauty to ladies in drug stores. You

both went back to Minnesota after the war. Built
the dream home, but lost the dream baby boy.
So you adopted the girls. Did you ever wonder
where the NYC glamour was changing diapers? You

might have settled for this quiet life of wife,
mother, grandmother, but you seemed
to be happy. And if you ever thought of those boys
who were not your husband, no one knew but you.



te perdono

Now

Squatting to sort wire, bolts and random photos,
you assemble a collection of bastard items, then
place them into your white pickup, the one that will
be impounded tomorrow night, after the arrests, confiscation.
But, that's tomorrow. Now you are here, roaming around
the possessions that are left, like a lion who is
perplexed at the carcasses, hauled away in the night,
the cubs, slain; the pride of females, on the hunt,
have caught a scent of something bigger than this.

Yes, the porn is gone too, and the only shoes
left are one oxford, and one boot. You
walk into the kitchen in two shoes, cut the brownies
I've baked without asking, whisper, *How are you doing?*
With great posture, I say, *Fine*. I will be.
This week, you are hollowing out, an apparition
of a dear animal I once gave everything to.

Somnambulists

I

So this is what it's come to: now we're blind
beyond ten feet and inching forward up
the mountain to its point, in baby steps,
hunched over, straining eyes, with all the speed

and confidence of someone shuffling down
a midnight hallway, fearing nothing more
than unforeshadowed contact in the dark.
The sky collapses gracelessly, in sheets

of powdered coldness. Every Utah storm
comes fast and clean, like this; tonight is all
December, heavy winds that lean against
my car, more felt than seen, more feared than felt.

II

No thoughts on getting home. Instead, I read
the strobing brake lights of the car ahead.
Remember that a gust of night can sweep
whole clouds of powder up across the lanes

until the highway gives beneath them, drops
them in a buckshot scatter down the slope
beyond the western shoulder. Or they rise
and disappear into the black above

South Jordan. Or they drift back to the road,
shine briefly in a wash of headlights, fade
like dying constellations years from Earth,
and slip without a word beneath my wheels.



Are You Ready?

Working the Graveyard Shift with the Women at the Bakery

These women speak a language
I do not know. Quick tongues,
Clicking syllabic rhythm
Against the roof of their mouths,
A mastered mechanical symphony
While sweet pastries move down the line
Toward their working hands.

Their muscled bodies slant
As they toss bear claws—
Staccato!
Four, five, six at a time
Into white plastic trays that glide
On a rubber belt, suspended
Under low-hanging halogen bulbs.

Awkward, my own foreign body freezes
As packages begin to collide
In front of me, rear-end each other
Like speeding cars stacking up
Blindly on the freeway in fog.

Almond slivers slide
Across greasy concrete
Where the accidents hit the floor.

Laughter. Then whispers, scowls;
Their faces etch the words:

My dough-white skin,
My clumsy hands,
My ill-assigned job: conductor
Of controls meant to shrink wrap their work.

When break time comes, their tongues
Fall silent. Graveyard lunch—not a word.

Still, *I need the money*,
I tell their turned backs
In the only language I know.

How We Dream of Stonewall Jackson

Warming both hands now
around her coffee cup,

she elides second-guesses
over her son's body armor

and waits for the dark flag
of the insurgency to collapse

upon its last legs,
like a black widow

she imagines trapped
in a prairie wildfire.

At Gettysburg, we queue-up
for tour guides who sell out

the allotment of their voices
by 9 a.m. Through the hours

of their trancing lectures
they untangle the fabled Charge

for field trip students who almost
envy the regiments of lost chance,

or a breeze arriving to sift
the muffled odor of grass.

The Crossing

No one walks the cattle path now, no one but the cows.
I follow tracks deep in the ground, sink into spring ooze
where several layers down
lie those who cultivated this land.
In the soft ticking of weeds
I hear singing,
harmonies I do not understand.
The wind hisses the names of the dead,
and from a clover bed, with no wings or halos,
they rise up to walk the pasture.

When a hawk drifts down, hooked claws extended,
my feet crush lupines and buttercups.
I run towards the highway.
From an oak a shadow of birds explodes,
and the air hums with souls.
With lost breath
I reach paved road and walk towards town.
Ranchers wave when I pass
as though I have forgotten something,
as though I should turn back.

When We Go

Do you believe in the afterlife?

I ask, shrouded in cotton violet,
worn and cuddled comforters.

You rub your cheek
further into the pillow as you blink
slowly, look back at me.

Do you believe? And me,

I watch your face for an answer,
your unwavering eyes
of clouded forests,
of truth, sea-bound.

Soft shadows
hollow your cheeks,
line your eyes.

You shift off
an aching shoulder.

You're not sure, you say,
organized religion lies
about a lot of things.

You say,

No, I don't think so.

I worry for you,
the way time sneaks into us
like a love note unexpected, anonymous,
unsure of its welcome.

I worry for this inevitability,
the limit on your presence
and your whispered breath.

Don't give in—

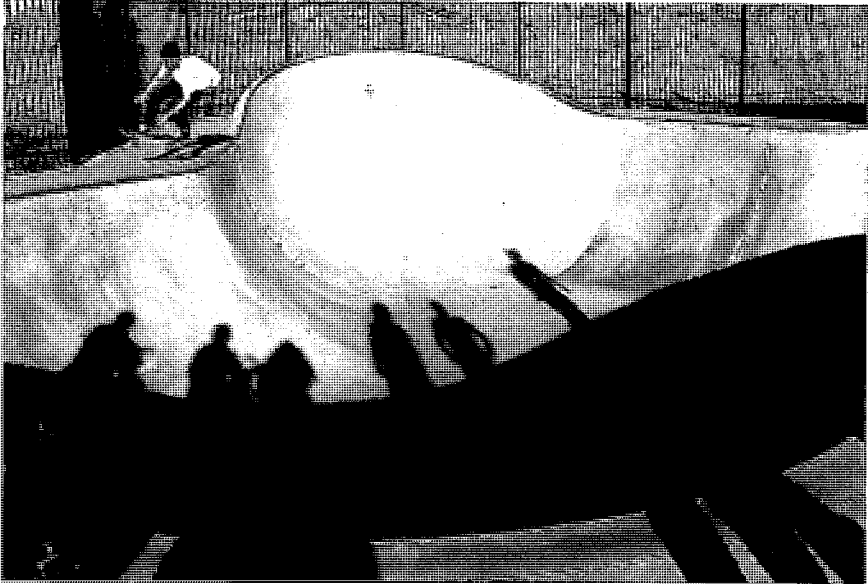
don't let this be buried in darkness
and earth.

I tell you,
*burn my body when I die,
so that my ashes may scatter,
and for you, be searching.*

"Follow the Lame and Dreamy Goat"

— from Rumi

I am tired of the long line
standing agitated
behind achievement and success.
I choose another path:
the path, as Rumi says, behind
the lame and dreamy goat,
that straggler who turned around
and led, by no intent, the herd
back, from whence they came.
I turn the corner round
away from hurry and get-more,
toward some of yesterday
and much more of perhaps...



In the Zone

Old Crow before dinner

there is alcohol
 yelling
 a full plate of dinner
sitting on the table
covered with a paper towel
 screaming voices of family
 fists against sheetrock
 scampering paws of pets
 slamming doors
 drunken self talk

there is her
 rolling eyes
 saddened face
expressing lost efforts
of another hot meal
 consoling children
old enough to understand
 embarrassed to look
her in the eye after what he
screamed at her

there are soft sounds
coming from the television
 deadbolt clicks from
the back door
 drunken self talk
 lighters lighting smokes
 calls for the cats
 deadbolt clicks from
the back door
 creaking sounds up the stairs

Somewhere in a Field, Near a Village in Russia

*People drink, and they drink a lot, and they drink for a long time,
because they can't help but drink.*

— Yuliya Kovgan, potato farmer

A potato field on the edge
Of Ryazanovshchina,
Siberian village northeast of Irkutsk,
Is nearly sterile—
Overworked—and feels nothing
For Yuliya. Yuliya falls
In slow motion, stumbling
A little at first. It is almost a dance
As her calloused feet
Familiar with the ways of dirt
Take one step, two steps
Forward, back—
Her arms swing up and out
To an absent partner waiting
To catch her. The men are all gone
Now. Larisa, her old mother, watches
As Yuliya falls. *This is our life,*
She says, picking up the spilled seed
Potatoes. *We plant potatoes;*
We dig them out,
And that is it.

Late Light in the Santa Cruz Valley

If you can dismiss the moon's pale ascent
you might hear wingbeats in the fading light,
dusk calling hawks to perch in cottonwoods
and toll a deadpan vigilance eastward
toward sierras that ruddle to shadows.

These hawks are connoisseurs of what it takes
to die when small prey barter noontime sun
for nightfall's cooling of dry riverbeds,
waiting out the heat under my trailer.
Canted on one wheel, it tilts back to earth.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

JEFFREY ALFIER is from Arizona and currently lives in Germany. He recently received an honorable mention for the Rachel Sherwood Poetry Prize. His publication credits include *Crab Orchard Review*, *Georgetown Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Watershed*, and *Xavier Review*. He is author of a chapbook, *Strangers within the Gate* (The Moon Publishing, 2005).

GEOFF BAKER is originally from southern California. He teaches literature in the English Department at CSU, Chico. In his spare time he plays guitar and travels.

HEATHER BRITTAIN BERGSTROM'S fiction has been published in *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Greensboro Review*, and in the anthology *Falling Backwards: Stories of Fathers and Daughters*. She was one of three finalists last year for the Nelson Algren Award. She won the Willard R. Espy Award in Fiction from the University of Washington and received Honorable Mention in *The Atlantic Monthly's* Student Writing Contest. She recently won a Fishtrap Fellowship.

ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN, born in England, has lived in Zimbabwe and Iceland. Her grandfather fought in the American Civil War. She is retired and does domestic duties, gardens, and writes. (Note from volume 16, number 1, fall 1992.)

CHRIS BRISTOW lives and works in Chico and is an occasional student. (Note from volume 6, number 2, spring 1983.)

BARBARA L. CANEER is a re-entry student at CSU, Chico, with an English major and creative writing minor. Her poetry has been published in various magazines, including *Suisun Valley Review*, *Nota Bene*, and *The Eagles Cry*. (Note from volume 22, number 1, fall 1998.)

JOSH CEMPELLIN is a graduating senior at CSU, Chico, pursuing a BA in general English and a minor in creative writing. He plans to attend graduate school in the fall of 2007. He gives thanks to his family, friends, girlfriend, and teachers for all the support they have given him in his writing, especially Jeanne E. Clark.

ANDREW CHRISTIAN was born in San Jose, California, and moved to Chico in 2004. The area has been a great influence on his writing. He is currently an undergraduate in the English department and is working towards his degree in general English and a minor in creative writing.

MARK H. CLARKE is a happy man. His wife still loves him after thirty years, and the kids are grown so he doesn't have to share the Legos.

SHARON DEMEYER graduated from CSU, Chico, with a BA in English in 1996 and is currently pursuing a graduate degree.

CHRIS ELLIOTT is a graduating English major and his story, "What We Own," represents his first stab at creative writing. He is currently working within the English 30 program as a weekly facilitator and plans to teach overseas before continuing with his master's.

ALBERT GARCIA is the author of two books of poems, *Rainshadow* (Copper Beech Press) and *Skunk Talk* (Bear Star Press), and of *Digging In: Literature for Developing Writers* (Prentice Hall). His poems have appeared in numerous national literary journals and been featured in Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac* and Poet Laureate Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*. He lives in Wilton, California, and is dean of the Language and Literature Division at Sacramento City College.

BOB GARNER is a local writer and artist, and his prose and poems have been published in a variety of journals/mags/newspapers including *The Painted Hills Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Brevities*, *CNR*, and *Chico Beat*. He has been a regular contributor to *Watershed* since 1991. He now resides near the outskirts of Chico, clinging tenaciously to a 175-year-old oak tree.

CRAIG GINGRICH-PHILBROOK lives and works in Chico, even though he knows that is only an expression. (Note from volume 9, number 2, spring 1986.)

PAMELA GIULIANO is a 6th grade teacher in Colusa, California. Inspired by *Watershed*, she publishes a literary magazine of children's writing each year with her students.

JOHN GREY'S latest book is *What Else Is There*, from Main Street Rag. He has recently been published in *Agni*, *Hubbub*, *South Carolina Review*, and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. (Note from volume 29, number 1, fall 2005.)

LARA GULARTE, the editor of the online journal, *Convergence*, has been published by the *Santa Clara Review* and others. Gualarte's poems have been translated into Portuguese by the University of the Acores. Her work was presented at an international conference on storytelling and cultural identity in June of 2005.

ELIZABYTH HISCOX is a crisp candy made of pecan, almond, etc., and browned in boiling sugar...oh wait, that's praline. Shoot. (Note from volume 25, number 2, spring 2002.)

PAUL HOOD is a senior at CSU, Chico, and is majoring in religious studies. He has previously been published in *Watershed* and *Porter Gulch Review*, and was editor of the *Real World Press*. (Note from volume 27, number 1, fall 2003.)

DUSTIN R. ILER graduated from California State University, Chico, in 2006 and is currently studying post-war American literature and the encyclopedic novel as a Ph.D. student in the department of English at Washington University in St. Louis.

SUZAN JANTZ recently established Yarroway Mountain Press (Yarrowaymountainpress@hotmail.com). Its debut publication is the forthcoming poetry anthology *Cadence of Hooves: A Celebration of Horses*, featuring the work of many contemporary poets. Suzan's own poetry was a recent finalist in *Inkwell's* annual poetry competition.

LAURA JEW is an English major at CSU, Chico, and is addicted to creative writing courses. She dyes her hair occasionally and "forgets" to use latex gloves so she can enjoy the colorful stains on her hands afterwards.

AMY JIRSA'S mother used to read poems to her every night before bed and often regaled her with tantalizing tales of her grandfather's cousin, Edna St. Vincent Millay. (When a poet's life sounds that exciting, what else is a girl to do?) She's been writing poems since the ripe old age of eight and hopes that her work has gained in artistry, though perhaps not in purity. (Note from volume 30, number 1, fall 2006.)

BRYAN TSO JONES is a first-year MFA student who resides in Chico, and, like a mad scientist, he attempts to bend the sounds of words to his will. (Note from volume 26, number 1, fall 2002.)

DOUGLAS S. JONES enjoys fish tacos, getting naked in orchards, midnight runs to the coast, and is a firm believer in two things: rock 'n' roll and hoochie koo. (Note from volume 25, number 2, spring 2002.)

SARAH KNOWLTON is currently a graduate student at CSU, Chico, studying creative writing. She hopes to one day make a living putting pen to paper, or at least fingers to keyboard.

QUYNH LE was born in Vietnam and lived there for half of her life. The other half she spent in Orange County. Since she came to Chico, she has learned to love walking bare-headed in the rain while listening to the trains going by. (Note from volume 12, number 2, spring 1989.)

MALAMA M.H. MACNEIL is a native Californian, though she lived five years in rural Virginia, and four years on the windward side of Oahu, Hawaii. She has been married nearly thirty-seven years to Hasan and they have five adult children and five grandchildren. They live in Chico, where she cares for their middle daughter, does hands-on healing work, practices taijiquan, and dance. Formerly called Miftah, she was given the spiritual name, Malama (Hawaiian for caring) ten years ago.

DARREN MARSHALL lives in Susanville, California. (Note from volume 10, number 1, fall 1986.)

BETSY MCNEIL writes, "The most important experiences of my life center around my children, who are of 'mixed' parentage. As a white woman involved in the cultures of people of color, 'Breaking silences' is one of the major things I am

concerned with in my writing. The silences around the 'isms,' such as racism, sexism, classism, and agism must be broken now, before we are all silenced by them." (Note from volume 12, number 2, spring 1989.)

SEAN MELODY is currently a senior at CSU, Chico, where he is both majoring in photography and the art of being very poor.

CATHLEEN MICHEAELS is co-founder of The Teachers' Workshop, which offers resources and professional development in the arts to support teaching and learning across the whole school community through poetry writing and bookmaking. Her poems have been published in *Heliotrope*, *Swamp Root*, *Southern Poetry Review*, the *Iowa Journal of Literary Studies*, and in the chapbook *Before the Frost*, published by Plum Island Press. Her recent collections include *The Idea of A Perfect Angel Cake*, *Happiness*, and the portfolio of broadsides, *Home*, all published by Mt. Ararat Press.

ROBERT MIRABEL-RAMOS is a third-year English major at CSU, Chico, and has previously been published only once at fourteen years old. Now twenty-one, his interest in writing includes mainly prose, although the challenge of writing poetry attracts him at times. Of late, he has explored a few forms, finally choosing the sonnet form as a comfortable mode to express ideas.

KEVIN O'NEILL is graduating from CSU, Chico, in May 2007 with a degree in English and a minor in creative writing. He then hopes to enroll in graduate school and to continue studying writing and literature.

SARAH PAPE is a recent graduate of the master's program in English at CSU, Chico. Her work is forthcoming in the current issue of *The Southeast Review*. She lives and teaches in the Chico community.

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. (Note from volume 22, number 2, spring 1999.)

MARK RODRIGUEZ is an angry young man whose influences are his mother and Rimbaud. (Note from volume 8, number 1, fall 1984.)

LINDA SERRATO is a student at CSU, Chico, majoring in liberal studies with an emphasis on bilingual education. She has lived in various parts of the Pacific Northwest, and is now living in Chico with her husband and two children. (Note from volume 12, number 2, spring 1989.)

NANCY TALLEY at 75 took second place in the Pacific Northwest Writers Association poetry competition. She has published three chapbooks, *Psalms for the City* (published with a grant from the Seattle Allied Arts Foundation), *Crone's Notebook* (2nd edition), and *Folding the Morning Light*. She is also editing her first novel.

WARREN S. TAYLOR enjoys competitive mud wrestling, herding mountain goats on the cliffs of the Andes, lying, and speaking of Warren S. Taylor in the third person. Warren S. Taylor currently dreams of leaving Chico with wife Michelle and housecat, Toonces, who is currently training for the Iditarod.

PAUL TUMASON pays his taxes, wears a Timex, hates wearing pants, but loves to skip and jump, bike, crawl, run, walk, and hop through the woods. Currently he is studying English at CSU, Chico. (Note from volume 16, number 1, fall 1992.)

HEIDI WALLIS lives in San Francisco and works as a copy editor/writer for a company in Emeryville that builds websites for a broad range of clients. Her job: She does the best she can to ensure that plumbers, lawyers, dentists, tree trimmers, and roofers across the country have nicely written websites, with all punctuation in place and maybe even a brilliantly embedded lit. reference here and there. It's work but it pays the bills and keeps her grammar skills well-polished so she won't complain.

BETH WATTENBERG decided that instead of retiring, she would continue working in the area of preschool education and obtain a master's in curriculum development. She loves photography and incorporates it in her work and pleasure.

MARIANNE WERNER teaches English at Butte College. She has lived in Chico for twenty years. She has a master's in creative writing from Syracuse University. She is a walker, a lover of the outdoors, and an avid traveler.

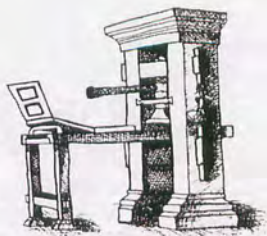
JEFF WHITNEY is a fourth year student at CSU, Chico, majoring in international relations and Spanish. He was born in Texas but grew up in Rocklin, California. He also studied for a year in Alicante, on the coast of Spain.

JOSH WHITTINGHILL recently came to discover that turning eleven may have been the most cathartic experience of his life. That was the year his dad and Grandpa Wally excitedly introduced photography and poetry, respectively, to his world. Ever since then, he has been attempting to feverishly embrace the calming serenity inherent in both. He says that thanks to publications like *Watershed*, he can share this embrace.

30th Anniversary Issue

Jeffrey Alfier
Geoff Baker
Heather Brittain Bergstrom
Elizabeth Bernstein
Chris Bristow
Barbara L. Caneer
Josh Cembellin
Andrew Christian
Mark H. Clarke
Sharon DeMeyer
Chris Elliott
Albert Garcia
Bob Garner
Craig Gingrich-Philbrook
Pamela Giuliano
John Grey
Lara Gulate
Elizabyth Hiscox
Paul Hood
Dustin R. Iler
Suzan Jantz
Laura Jew
Amy Jirsa

Douglas S. Jones
Bryan Tso Jones
Sarah Knowlton
Quynh Le
Malama M.H. MacNeil
Darren Marshall
Betsy McNeil
Sean Melody
Cathleen Micheaels
Robert Mirabel-Ramos
Kevin O'Neill
Sarah Pape
Greg Rappleye
Mark Rodriguez
Linda Serrato
Nancy Talley
Warren S. Taylor
Paul Tumason
Heidi Wallis
Beth Wattenberg
Marianne Werner
Jeff Whitney
Josh Whittinghill



The original logo for *Trial Impression* magazine (1977-1980),
the precursor to *Watershed*.