

Trial Impression



Trial Impression

a literary magazine

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Trial Impression

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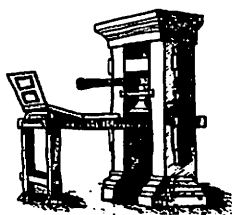
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With this sixth issue of *Trial Impression* we salute the Fine Arts Festival. Established in 1973 to be observed every other year, this celebration is already a cultural tradition at CSU Chico.

As members of Ellen Walker's Literary Editing class (296), we were privileged to sharpen our editorial skills in selecting from nearly 300 manuscripts. We are indebted to all those who entrusted us with their works. With so much poetry from which to choose, our large staff was compressed into a democracy. Dictatorships might be more efficient, but our learning experience was enriched as every one of our editors had a voice in all decisions.

All categories for which we solicited were not as fully represented in this semester's submissions as we had wished. *Trial Impression* serves not only as a teaching tool, but as a showcase for developing talent. Our hope is that in future issues more writers and artists from both the community and the university will take advantage of this opportunity to grow with us.

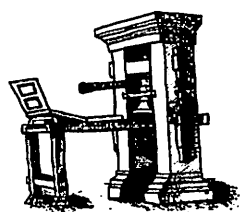
Olivia Wheatley
Editor

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Fine Arts Festival

Special Supplement

featuring

R. Buckminster Fuller

James Houston

Marge Piercy

UP THE FLU

Marge Piercy

My breath this morning could squash a puppy.
It would be instantly covered with mustard-
green scum and perish bleating like a pin
sized piccolo. So don't stand there staring.

All those well and ill used paper handkerchiefs
like shriveled corpses of white mice, I
drop them cunningly under your chair,
want to plant them in your soup.

The sick are irascible as boiling
lobsters. Everytime you walk out of my
room and I remain in the bed, I see you
putting the lid back on my pot.

My pains chorus like a swamp seething
with spring peepers. I know at last I am
improving because I have gone from waiting
to die to wanting to kill my nurse.

ETHICS

R. Buckminster Fuller

In the evolution of political-economics
Of the late twentieth century
There is an emerging pattern
In which yesterday's virtues
Become today's vices
And vice versa
Vices Virtues.

We hope this signals the demise
Of either dollar or gun manipulated
Political puppetry's
Overwhelment of humanity

Throughout the past state
Of innate ignorance of the many.
The informed few
Told the uninformed many
What to do
So that the many's coordinated efforts
Could produce most effectively
The objectives of the few.

An omniwell-informed humanity
Does not need to be told
What needs to be done
Nor how to cooperate synergetically
It does so spontaneously.

History demonstrates without exception
That successful sovereign power seizers
And successfully self-perpetuating,
Supreme physical power holders in general
Will always attempt to divide the opposition
In order to conquer them
And thereafter keep the conquered divided
To keep them conquered.

Controlling the sources
Of production and distribution
The self-advantaging power systems
Keep the conquered divided by their uncontestable fiat
That the individual's right to live
Must be earned

To the power structure's satisfaction
By performing one of the ruling system's
Myriad of specialized functions.

The top-gun, self-serving power structure
Also claims outright ownership
Of the lives of all those born
Within their sovereignly claimed
Geographical bounds
And can forfeit their citizens' lives
In their official warfaring,
Which of psychological necessity
Is always waged in terms
Of moral rectitude
While covertly protecting and fostering
Their special self-interests.

To keep the conquered
Controllably disintegrated
And fearfully dependent
"They" also foster perpetuation or increase
Of religious, ethnic, linguistic,
And skin-color differentiations
As obvious conditioned-reflex exploitabilities.

Special-interest sovereignty will always
Attempt to monopolize and control
All strategic information (intelligence),
Thus to keep the divided specializing world
Innocently controlled by its propaganda
And dependent exclusively upon its dictum.

Youth has discovered all this
And is countering with comprehensivity and synergy
Youth will win overwhelmingly
For truth
Is eternally regenerative
In youth
Youth's love
Embracingly integrates,
Successfully frustrates
And holds together
Often unwittingly
All that hate, fear, and selfishness
Attempt to disintegrate.

CHARLIE BATES is speeding down the boulevard in search of gasoline. He has forgotten why he needs it. He is like the diver who has stayed below too long, kicking for the surface with that urgency near panic. The diver doesn't think about what he uses air for. He only knows his lungs cry out for lots of it and soon. So it is with Charlie and his car. The tank is almost empty. Far to the left his needle flutters over the lonesome letter E.

He knows his needle well, knows its every habit. The fluttering means he still has a gallon, maybe a gallon and a half. In times past he might have toyed with this, pushed on down the road testing how many miles he could make after the fluttering stopped and the needle flopped over playing dead. It was a little flirt with destiny he used to love. Today he can't afford it. Such pastimes depend on stations at every corner, unflagging supplies of fuel at all hours of the day and night. Some say those days and nights are gone forever. On this long boulevard, at eleven o'clock on a Thursday morning, each station he passes is closed or not pumping. It makes Charlie's eyes itch. It is like waking up in the wrong country, or on the wrong planet.

For as long as he can remember, the stations have been there like the streets, like the sky. From the earliest days of his childhood the pumps have beckoned. Charlie can recall the time when managers gave you things, rewards for buying gasoline. Here take this plate, they would say, take this set of dishes, this quart of Pepsi, this teddy bear. My pumps runneth over, they would say. Now the pumps are drying up. And no one can explain it. Some say the world supply of fuel is running out. They wag their heads and say your next tankful could be your last. Charlie doesn't accept this. Others say that oil profiteers, perhaps the Arabs, are to blame. He isn't sure about the Arabs. He has never met one. But as he speeds along past the laundromats and taco bars, the drive-in car washes and the drive-in banks, the muffler shops and stereo warehouses and tire outlets, and as his anxious stomach begins to flutter like the needle on his gauge, it helps to have someone specific to point a finger at. It occurs to Charlie that Arabs might be lurking behind all our addictions. Coffee. Hashish. Horse racing. Sexual excess. Gasoline.

A gauzy layer of fumes and car heat hugs the boulevard. In the near distance a yellow pole emerges from

this layer, and atop the pole a large square sign says MARTY'S GAS AND GO. His heart leaps. Something tells him Marty's is open and pumping. Some vibration rises through the street fumes to charge the morning air around the sign. As he nears the corner and the station comes in view, Charlie's heart leaps again. He sees cars lined up beneath a metal canopy that shades the four pump islands. He sees the hoses that connect each car to a pump, and the drivers who stand holding hose nozzles shoved into their cars while they watch numbers change inside the little windows on the pumps. Charlie is astonished at how good this makes him feel. It is like arriving home after some exhausting journey.

A single line of waiting cars snakes outward from the pumps and down a cross street that meets the busy boulevard. From his vantage point it looks to be at most a line of thirty-five or forty. This doesn't bother him. Half an hour's wait is a small price to pay compared to lines he has heard of in other regions, or compared to no fuel at all. At this station it could be less than half an hour. They only pump gas. No one takes up precious time checking under the hood. There are no mechanics, no racks, no batteries for sale, no fan belts or road maps. Just the four islands of four pumps each, tied by computer to the tiny white office set back from the canopy, where the cashier sits watching lighted numbers come up on her console.

As Charlie eases past the waiting cars he removes his dark glasses so he can look directly into the eyes of his fellow motorists. He sees a sense of well-being there that seems to match his own. He thinks this is more than smug anticipation of the full tank now within reach. In the way these drivers willingly take their places, in the way they obey the blond attendant, he sees long-starved communal instincts rising to the occasion. It comes very close to patriotism, this sharing of small inconveniences to keep the larger show on the road. Charlie is touched, and reassured. An unexpected rush of comradeship makes his eyes water. His vision blurs. He has reached the next corner and swung wide, preparing to u-turn and pull up behind the final car, before he realizes the line doesn't end at the corner. It turns the corner, evidently to avoid blocking the intersection, and continues up a side street.

As he moves along the line Charlie sees a different look on the faces waiting. These folks don't have Marty's pumps to spur them. Trees and houses block their view of Marty's big sign catching sun-light. He sees boredom here,

edging up on anger. By the time he has passed a dozen cars there is fury in the eyes of certain people who try to stare him down as he rolls by. He slides the glasses back on, just as a woman about twenty sitting in a dune buggy with an exposed engine gives him the finger for no reason. Three cars later a man in a rusting white Mustang with spoke wheels backs up a foot and rams the next car in line, a perfectly restored 1961 Cadillac hearse with paisley drapes across the rear windows. The Cadillac driver leaps out. Charlie observes these two men in his rearview, toe to toe and ready to punch.

The houses now are a few years older and more expensive. The trees are higher, shading the sidewalks and the larger, greener lawns. This used to be a walnut grove. Full-grown walnut trees stand near each house, mingling with the acacia, the liquid amber, the date palms, and the spreading ivy. Someone has parked a roadster at the curb. It causes the line of waiting cars to bulge like a boa constrictor with undigested prey. There is a craziness about this maneuver. These drivers enjoy the opportunity to create some true congestion. As he inches past, Charlie enjoys being forced to the opposite curb. He laughs to himself. It keys him to the mood along this section of the line. These people are feeling reckless. The pumps are so far away, their plans for the morning have all been scrapped.

A few cars ahead he sees a motorbike rigged like a vendor's wagon. It is parked in the street near a Plymouth Horizon, and the woman straddling the seat holds a white styrofoam cup under the spigot of a five-gallon thermos. Charlie slows down. He opens his window. The aroma of fresh coffee pours through. For hours he has smelled the rubbery false air coming through his vents, and the false leather mustiness his naugahyde upholstery gives off when the sun hits it. This coffee happens to be French roast, pungent with chicory. The aroma is an aphrodisiac, filling him with affection for whoever brewed it and thought to bring it clear out here. Nearing the motorbike all he can see are sandals, jeans, flaming copper hair. As he stops he pulls the glasses off again. He has been told dark glasses look dramatic in some sinister and compelling way. He has a hunch that this time eye contact might be more effective. He gets them off just as she turns. Her eyes gaze directly into his, blue and confident, so confident he almost looks away. He is captivated. He wants to say something memorable.

He says, "How much is the coffee?"

"Thirty cents a cup. No refills." Her voice is soft, her eyes brim with merriment.

"For French roast," he says, gaining control of himself, "that's a pretty fair price."

"I make my money on the baklava."

He glances at the wide shelf above her handle bars where the gleaming pastry squares are stacked in a white carton, their layers of translucent crust thickened with honey and grated nuts. He inhales. The holiday sweetness blending with chicory stirs all his appetites to life.

It makes him bold. He says, "What else do you do?"

"I sometimes read cars."

"You mean, professionally?"

"Your radiator, for instance, it is on the verge."

"Of what?"

"And you yourself," she says.

"On the verge?"

Her words start warm light rising through his body. Charlie lives alone at the moment. He has been married, divorced. The job he works at pays the bills, but it means less and less to him. For months now, years perhaps, something inside, elusive yet urgent, has been pushing toward the surface. He has felt himself ever nearer to some momentous threshold.

A horn beeps. He looks in the rearview. Cars and trucks are stacking up behind him. "Sonofabitch," he mutters.

"Catch you later." She seems ready to burst out laughing, not at Charlie, but at the very way life unfolds.

As he stomps the accelerator, roaring ahead, his first thought is to park quickly, walk back and find out what she meant. A glance at his gas gauge reminds him there isn't time. It feels immoral to drive away from such a woman. Yet any delay now would be too costly. A gallon left, and Marty's is the only station open. He squints hard to quell the fierce itching in his eyes. Something solid is slipping out from under him, something as firm and as fixed as the asphalt. In the old days if you were interested in a female, a car was an advantage, your strongest ally. Maybe those days too are gone, like the free dishes, and the ever pumping pumps.

RURAL

Imagine walking out
In the light summer rain,
Dreaming of dark
Irish peasant-girls.

They are clearing away
a swatch of ground
And weaving the tangled branches
Into a canopy.

Coarse, black braids
Swing freely while they work
In a motion
You can trust.

—*Gary R. Will*

ENVELOPE

Thanksgiving
not the one my stepdad got so sick
the last one
I found the envelope
while sorting through Mom's
saved-up memories

I don't remember
when Dad, whaling for weeks on end
was home
I remember Mom crying and coming
back with my brothers
drunk

In the evening
through tears and torn hearts
She died
Inside, where cigarettes
and store-cheap wine can't soothe

All my life
I hoped I hated him
but even then I didn't understand
Until Thanksgiving
inside the envelope

One long poem
written the month of my conception
she poured her life
-even though she loved her children-
Into him.

—*Meg Walkley*

THE SHADOW REMAINS ELUSIVE

Wrapped in white
your dark body lithely dances.
I want to embrace you,
pin you to my skin like a child
wearing the black paper cut-out
she so carefully traced
of her shadow in the sun.

In the darkness of dreams
you appear before me beckoning
with outstretched arms
and the unspoken promise
that you will teach me to dance.

All day long I stand in the sun.
In vain I lift each toe
one by one pulling the threads
that connect me to the dark
limp figure lying on the ground.

—*Sharon Paquin-Staple*

PEACHES NOW SEEM TOO FAMILIAR

Peaches now seem somehow too familiar
To eat. They watch us from across the room
In similar sport
And laugh when you jump me or make me king you.

So we move out to the porch (men slide, one falls),
A nice place to die, if any.
But I've forgotten whose move it was
(It was either yours or mine),
So I let you go.

And as you try to master your spasmic spotted peach
Of a hand, cold like a Minnesota highway, long enough
To move, I leave again, wondering if there's
Really any difference between
The road,
The porch,
And the bed.

Then your hands become Loretta's, slicing peaches,
And you're calling for the kids.

"Come on. It's your move, Jim."

We spend our days like this (I turn for tea):
Wed to porch and bed,
Borne of dreams.

—*Cliff Murdock*

THE WATER DREAM POEM

I.

I once knew a candle who thought it had overcome darkness
Though it surrounded us both

II.

When the desert
Sits at night the moon
Opens a door and comes down

In a bed of sand
I fish until early hours
And throw the young fish back

When the door closes
And the moon turns away
I let the fish flap dead

Then I walk home waking
Without dreams
Without dreams

III.

I cannot hypnotize the fish
They roll their eyes and make duck calls
I begin to undress them
They howl

In the hallway I retreat
The onslaught is relentless
At night the fish are uncontrollable
They wander about the house
And I am exhausted

When the madness is over I brush my teeth
The sink is pathetic
I decide not to shave

The next night the fish return
This time they are women
We jump into bed like old times
I blow salt into their ears
And their eyelashes shrivel

In the morning I stay home from work
The coffee is scaly
My sleep is uncontrollable and my face
Is covered with false-eyelashes
Shaving is useless

IV.

As a child the darkness
Intrigued me
Night was a shadow

It was a doorway where I listened
Where the wind went farther
Told more

When the years followed they brought
The dreams, staring into me like open fields with rain
Where rivers are arms

And the fish
They followed me into death
Where the rivers groped

We were climbing
Possessed like the salmon we too
Were flying home

—Ken O'Connor

VOICES

a garden in which two frogs sing
a soft continuous rain
a moon

a circle of lamplight in which you sit
a paper you read
a cough

a doorway through which I see your hair
a sheet my knees tent
a book

a chair in which you shift your weight
a hand I lay across my mouth
a sigh

a paper you let fall to the floor
a step on the stair
a hall

a light I have put out
a shadow in the doorway
a touch

a moon
a soft continuous rain
a garden in which two frogs are silent

—*P. Boettcher*

SUNDAY RACES

I.

I saw you, feet beneath the curtains,
shadows in the hall, pushing me away.
Seven years on her lap,
you did not want to make room.
Grey haze filled the room
of childhood play, stale yellow
behind the door.
I smelled of dirt; you, paper dolls.
Rope burned my hands, every Sunday,
races on the lake, that deep voice
bouncing off the dining room table,
the crisp white jib, stinging my ears,
while you looked from afar.
Hadn't it always been that way?
Six o'clock dinner, racing the last
street light, you were sitting next
to him, year after year.

II.

Two weeks, cross-country,
still tasting apples and wood ash.
I cried at your wedding;
they watched from the second row.
You know, she always understood, like
a Gloucester fisherman mending nets,
eyeing the tides, my early migration.
Annually I return. He now
claims me. A long time miner
finding the good vein.

—*Pamela Giuliano*

from
FINDING STRUCTURE

I

- When Aunt Juanita left with the children
business for Uncle Larry went on as usual
he continued his experiments with tape recordings and
photography, keeping his chemicals in the bathtub
and his speakers in the kitchen
if time permitted he answered letters in the personal
columns, usually enclosing a self-portrait in the raw
when his garage burned down and all the carefully sorted
TV tubes, empty tool chests, copper wire, roofing nails,
and blue glass exploded or was scorched and buried
the insurance company offered him a settlement for five
thousand but he turned it down
and now each day he weighs and measures each screw and
catalogues each cast-off appliance
preparing for an appeal to get top dollar.

II

At sixty-three Dad retired
and began painting pictures of FDR, Irish Setters, and
unknown music conductors

he also touches up sea-scapes or frames old abstracts
when visitors come he lines the couch with canvases and
stands back, his arms folded, his tongue playing
with his dentures

it is a standing joke when he talks of pastel patterns
in the living room ceiling, that the fumes of thinner
and oils have affected his brain cells
but one day when we had a petty argument and I rebuked
him in a bit of pique for becoming narrow-minded
he told me he only painted because he could not believe
in suicide.

—*Steve Funk*

PAPA AND THE TURTLE

by *Dan Quinn*

The used car store glared from blocks away, its restless streamers disappointing: talk opening and closing doors my father smiling too much and covering his mouth with his hand.

But here was one we could ride in just the two, a handle on the dash. I hung on with both hands. And both hands hung on to each other, hanging on to each other and themselves and the inside of the shell the way I had carried myself into the world. I knew I was flying held from the screaming street lamps by a father trying to deny that he was born for dragging us both to our deaths: the muscles stood, driving fast.

"I think this is the right one Papa," looking at the space between my head and the dash.

A laugh through the muscles that stood.

"How do you know?"

Silent hoping to reach home safe. I could smell fresh adventure the car would later deliver: rides through forests with Mama giggling me, me not fearing the smashing of trees and sometimes forgetting the harsh driver.

The boy threw a plate of food at the wall, and Papa slapped his face. The boy softened: "I hate your guts." Papa walked away punishing with slumped shoulders, withdrawing into his slumped shoulders, closing his eyes to the boy from within his slumped shoulders. Both of us didn't make a sound when Papa got hit—"Thwack!"—on the shoulder by the baseball. For both of us, his muscles stood against the flood of raucous laughs and questions, for both of us the waving hand sent them all away. At home, lights off, in bed, soundless, we would turn to the darker colors of pain. We would hurtle a little closer to the wheel twisted, the screaming, the street lamps.

"I am still a young man!" He looks at his boy-ruined old knit cap silent a long time. "I rode through the South on a motorcycle alone." Shakes the cap. "I've still got years of my own."

Aunt Stella wants to buy the boy an orange jacket to match the one Papa wears so no one will shoot him. Papa is silent. "They'll look darling together! Big Woody and Little Woody!"

The boy runs clutched in the huge hand, arm aching slightly behind the striding legs. Papa does not wear his jacket now, even when it's raining.

Papa will change the wrinkles in Mama's face today, an occasional turtle brought home to her smile, brought from work. Soon, again, he won't be able to stand it, and the turtle will be set free. We will all watch him carry it, alone, the two great hands cracked and gentle, swallowed by the trees on the path to the creek.

Just me Papa. Take me one time to set the turtle free. You hold me and I'll hold him. First his nose will taste the water, and then you will whisper in my ear: I will let the turtle go. Hot breath on my neck, tears that sting the cracks. I will let the turtle go, the turtle will sink, we will never see the turtle alive again. My small hands, your small whisper, and the turtle, who squirms, both my hands wrapped around it the way I carried myself into the world. Urine drips from what are

huge hands to the turtle, and small claws beg with the water to come to them.

The turtle flies sinking in the water.

And we will walk home silent.

Just me Papa?

One night all the leaves fell. The kids brought them to the fire, but he warned us off.

The mother: "Don't shoo them away." He held his rake and didn't. Mama stood next to Papa by the fire. Mama wanted Papa to touch her. His hand showed gravity—formal slender dignity inside his blunt hand—on Mama's shoulder.

We all looked.

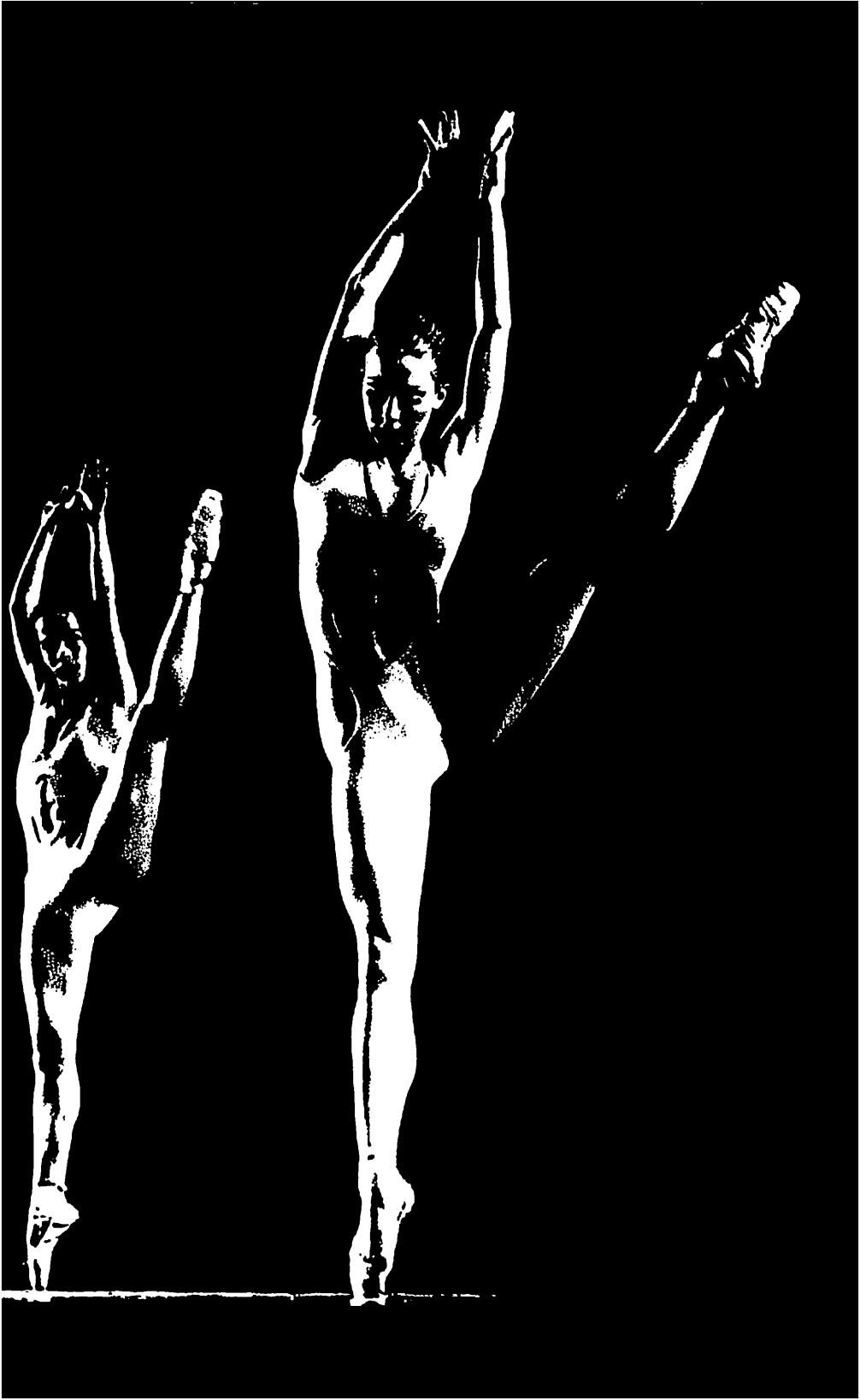
"Well she's my wife," he said to me.

We all looked at Papa and he stuck his fingers in his belt. He looked in the fire, shaking. Nobody said anything. Papa's face cracked, autos crashing.

Mama grabbed his hand. Mama looked at Papa, and he looked at her. They looked at each other.

We stood around the fire sweating in the dry dark. We chased leaves in the dark, and dropped the leaves flying into the pool of fire. Sometimes Papa thought we were funny autos screaming street lamps.

Opening *by Mark Thalman*



THERMOSTAT

You love, but in degrees—

hot,

warm,

cold.

I love in one degree—

I always will.

—*Beverly Tremayne*

DREAM RITUAL

In dreams my hands are covered
With sweet smelling earth
I dig and dig tossing
Black dirt into the earthen bed
Where your lifeless body
Wrapped in leaves lies.

Beside you I see a silver fishing pole
Shimmering in the darkness
Awakening silver fish
Leaping from crystalline waters
And you on the bank, smiling and serene
As if fulfilling an ancient prophecy.

I kneel beside your leaf-filled bed.
My dirt stained hands
Anoint your forehead.
I gently wipe away the lines of pain
Imprinted there for so long
And I sing.

My hands dig and dig
I toss the sweet smelling earth
On your earth bound body.

—Sharon Paquin-Staple

MORNING

wake up and stare at the ceiling
(you've felt it before,
a moment of absolute nothing)
then jump into air and somersault
yawning laugh and leapfrog vault
and:
rebound off four walls
carom through sunshine halls
and into the miracle day.
savoring golden glow feeling
I kick my way along
there's a silver wire in me
(notochord of harmony,
it's pulling strong, strong)
look at green trees, brown earth, blue sky
magic at work, they're real!
reach out and feel, feel
not paper phantoms but reality
absorbing the living
I kneel down and pray
god is the nugget from which I was wrung
a little of this purity in all
maybe spend life giving
or stand forever tall
and let wind-worn dust me
sift and scatter through eternity

—Dave Forwalter

ALSO WHITE

Some days
your miseries are seductive as sirens.
They draw you to the rocks
with the promise of comfort
and you can't see the lies
clenched in their smiles.
Your faults whistle around your head
like plates
in the kitchen of Alice's mad Duchess
and your children turn into pigs.
All day your ears shudder
with the sound of your best-fed hopes
slamming the door on their way out.
Thin ones escape without fanfare
through holes in your socks.

The nights leap like frightened fish.
Your dreams cruise through them
bright as sharks
and the night sky grinds stars
into your windows.
Your voice crouches under your own tongue.
It's fear that makes the long road
to your friends' homes
rise like a band of steel
and wrap itself around your throat—
fear sucks the breath
from the flowers you give
and censors the silent language
you share with a lover
until your two bodies speak
separate and alien tongues.

But there have been days
when the morning gets up
even before it's light,
when your house is struck by sunlight
and shivers like a bell,
each hour in the day
a clear tone in a chord
no longer too high to hear.
Those days the air can't say enough,
the sun remembers you,
hope lets you wear her hat
and you've never looked better.

You can't explain this sudden grace---
the mercy of a kind touch
to your forehead, the stubborn thrust
of new growth from an ancient woody rose
you thought dead but still tended---
and you wonder at the loosening of laces
bound tight in your chest for months,
you wonder whose hand?

This is not sorcery:
The black cat that crosses your path
is on its way to a bowl
in which you empty half a can
of tuna each evening,
and its eyes are chips of sun.
A mockingbird is a shadow
hurtling from fence to tree
until its wings burst open,
white on black like lightning,
and you can read it plain as print---
the glint on black water,
the spit and singing of speech,
the trip and catch of walking---the grey
that overcasts some days is black
and white. Also white.

—*P. Boettcher*

ICE-AGE

An Indian woman tells me
How the timberline is down.

With the oceans on her back
She is running far away
From the gathering of knives.

I follow her to a clearing
Where we stand tall as trees
Livid with bristling wood.

When the sun strikes meridian
Our blue feet begin to dance.

—*Gary R. Will*

small burst

in the emptiness of mind
i sit.
the blackness does not bother me.
i have waited for this darkness.
often
have i paced the length of mind
as it flashed mirages in my face.
i prefer the dark.
silence blending with black expands
settles on my shoulders.
in such stillness a small burst --
out of the heart's cleft
a white swan flying
high, quiet, and unafraid.

—*Insu Justesen*

VACANT FARM WITH RELICS

in the grim barn
all space and no walls
where the hay had lain high for winter
it was only shadow
dusty dark
heavy with dusk

here and there light was visible
by what hung in the air
the cracked surfaces let some day

I crossed the quiet
left a track in the dirt thick cushion
the silence healed itself
by steps too were covered in time

I remembered there had been a door
spring hoop games on the swept oak floor
when fields fed their own
yielding this place to play

below water had been pumped
to a stone sink in the floor
cans dense with metal and milk rested there
and made that cold their own

once this floor had been earth
then one frantic summer
the barn was stripped jacked high
and the floor poured

released the wood was wild in the heat
rebelled against recovering the shell
but time demanded completion
only the spiral nails and persuasion
of the carpenter
restored the barn before summer ended
in a flash of winded days and orange red trees

that same summer
the basement was dug
and the house settled on its new foundation

in this place you cross my memory
break thought speak as gesture
the more seminal sound of wordless parents

love begins as hands
our fingers intertwined are a prelude
their motion is the substance of a world

the barn gives its shape to silence
and we live the barn
toss the hay to the cows below
when the loft is empty

I trace your shape
my hands take on a face's features
I am the curve of your thigh

spent in husky half sleep I watch
recall the door and what came through
arms or head above the crush
you vanish in the flood

are they mine my hands torn bare
did I hold you
with your arms alone or
could we make words so loud
they lull their sound and let us be?

—Rick Feero

THERE IS NO DYING, JUST LIVING AS THOUGH DEAD

In his dream he wakes up in another city
after his doctor had sucked sea-blue cells
from his chest and seen them split and dance
under high power. He drives past the house
where he was born. It lies against the sky,
smoke-hued after a night of falling stars,
at the top of a small rise. The trees are bare
after the efflorescence of fall. Things have otherwise changed
only a little, but now, under cold glass, they are
transparent like the wings of a dragon fly.
Little dogs start to yap. By a log
shredded near a windowless mill a tangle of daffodils
push through crystal-snow in the shadows of late afternoon.
The first person he sees he soon forgets; she disappears
into a monochromatic landscape
where mountains are neither black or green.
He drives to a silver diner at the four-corners
of routes 66 and 41. Bleating cars break
the day's raw silence. The waitress
as colorless as the day.

He lights a cigarette and sits like a bird, motionless,
filling his lungs with warming smoke.

He reads a pack of mail over black coffee.

A women dries the same glass over and over.

—*J. A. Sours*

THE TEARS OF THINGS

The Eskimos call it "laughing together."
I call it good. I call it the opposite
of dying.

As a woman walks down a street,
her legs in silk brush together and make
the sound of wind-filled leaves.

A man lights his pipe
and the room disappears
in the branching perfume of cherry trees.

When I look out the window
and the air is pierced
by steel arrows of rain.

and the low hills murmur
blue words, slipping on
their nightclothes of shadow,

I am sad
because I love the world,
and it is a beautiful illusion.

One afternoon when the sun emptied
its last pail of gold over the orchard's long rows,
my body turned into your body, turned into a river,

jade skin of water against white stone,
and ran beside a blazing field of corn
where two crows circled and called.

We were laughing together,
and the sides of my eyes were wet,
and the sides of my heart split open.

—*Susan Marie Brown*

LATE NIGHTS

Should I sing you a love song?

No, it's too late and the
coffee has taken its toll.

I'm tired, yet too awake
to rest or return to the
passive chair next to you.

I stare at my desk for
new streams. I'd rather
sing to you. Sit with
you and smile in
comfortable silence.

I'd sing you a song about
the bird in the tree,
or the rose on my desk.
Or maybe the mug with the
coffee stains in it.

—*Beverly Tremayne*

THE SECRET LETTER

In the cool of the Pepperwood trees
we vowed,

In the dampness of the cellar

Papa canned the honey in late July,

Hot afternoon

we sat on the back steps

licking the sticky combs

until only wax remained,

In the garden behind the dog pen

we danced in secret,

Dusk now

The smoke from the chimney smelled like Christmas,

Bundled in wool

we sat beneath the rose arbor,

Fog filled the Valley

like a slow gray tide,

She smiled,

as the cats hunted beetles and white moths

caught in the blackberry thicket,

knowing

there would be no surrender.

—*Matthew Lernhart*

CURTAIN CALL

Snow falls lightly,
ice crusts along the shore,
capturing gum wrappers, sea shells,
driftwood. Cottages, silhouetted
like the backdrop of a high school play,
sit vacant. Fog sets with the sun,
seeping under doors and windows.

That first summer I was eleven:
ghosts stories, blankets on the beach,
faces half-lit by twilight fires.
Nana in the kitchen, nylons
rolled down around her ankles
and those black shoes.
First fall storm,
foam surrounded our hill.

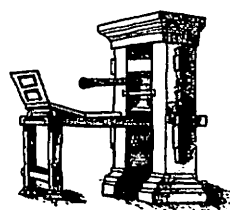
Almost sixteen; you, twenty-two,
the family gathered, another summer.
Alone, running the beach
water rushed to my waist,
over my head, crystals in my hair.
While you, under fluorescent lights,
turned a lighter shade of white.

Do you remember that red house on the hill?
Weathered shutters conceal windows,
sand accumulates by the door.
September again.
I will be twenty-six; you, always, twenty-two.
Rhythmic waves erode sand, scratching my feet
in transcontinental night dreams.
I see you, again, waving good-bye on the white screen.

—*Pamela Giuliano*

Duet by *Mark Thalman*





Contributors' Notes

Sharon Paquin-Staple was born in upstate New York. She received her bachelor's degree in American Studies at CSUC in 1968, and is now enrolled in the English master's program. She has taught on the Navajo Indian Reservation and lived in New Mexico. Currently she lives in Manton, at the base of Mount Lassen, with her husband and son.

Dan Quinn will soon complete B.A.s in English and Drama at Chico State. He has been a drama critic for the *Chico News and Review*, but has primarily worked in theatre around Chico for the last couple of years. After graduating in June, he will pursue a career in professional theatre.

Beverly Tremayne says about herself, ". . . at the risk of sounding cliché, these poems are an extension of me. They are like extra toes, so to speak, just added benefits that I am now discovering about myself." She is an English major at Chico State.

Meg A. Walkley is a senior in Child Development at CSUC, and she has recently considered adding an English minor. She hopes to combine her interests in children and writing in the future.

Gary R. Will was born and raised in western Michigan, received his B.S. degree in Anthropology from Grand Valley State College in Allendale, and is currently working on his M.A. in English at CSUC.

Peggy Boettcher is a Chico State graduate in Art. She recently returned to Chico after several years in the Bay area. Some of her poems have appeared in *Toyon*, *Reed*, and the old Chico *Wildcat*.

Susan Marie Brown received her master's degree in English from CSUC last spring. She gathered together a collection of poems entitled the "The Novitiate" in "partial fulfillment of that degree," and now lives and works in Chico.

Dave Forwalter was born in Ohio and moved to California at age six. He is a geology major, loves to play tennis, and has had heart surgery and "yes, my share of the fears and tears that we all seem to share."

Steve Funk has "just discovered all his emotional stepping stones were partially right, it is the peculiar arc in his neck which causes the howling . . . that, but also the moon."

Pamela Giuliano was born and raised in Massachusetts, and has been living on the West Coast for five years, three in Chico. She is an English major.

Insu S. Justesen says, "I am a Eurasian, a first-generation Californian, and an American. . . . I'll know I'm a poet when I've written a good poem on the birth of my five-year-old son. If I detest anything, it's snobbery; so naturally I prefer Chico to Palo Alto."

Matthew Lernhart is an English major at CSUC. A second-year transfer student from the University of San Francisco, he originally hails from the Napa Valley. Upon graduation he hopes to attend law school and write children's books.

Clifford Murdoch is currently on an alphabetical tour of the United States. He came to Chico, refusing to pass through any cities or towns on the way. "I like to read a wide variety of things, and I have a hunch there may be a link between that and the fact that I like to write." Cliff also enjoys music and hopes to someday ghost write for Phil Spector.

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