

WATERSHED

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Introduction

Chico's poetry community is thriving, and in many ways this issue of Watershed reflects that vigor. While we did not intend to produce a poetry-only number, the strength and variety of the poems submitted took control and seemed to demand it (that and the fact that most of the short fiction submitted wasn't short, but sort of "medium fiction", often striking but logistically difficult).

Many of our contributors have taken extra effort not only with their own work, but also with the general poetry climate in Chico as a city and northern California as a region. For example, Pamela Giuliano, a fine-printer (Plum Island Press), whose poem "Letting Go" appears here and who did our cover, was actually too busy with her press to do a broadside for us: a sad thing for Watershed but a great sign for fine-printing in Chico. Gary Will, who has two poems here, has worked dilligently to create a poetry section at Tower Books that eases the need to head for San Francisco or Berkeley quite so often. He and Tower deserve our thanks. We are also privileged to print a poem by Sheri Pritchard, a writer who's committed herself to the operation of a small press. Watch for her Golden Poppy Review. It's a shame that this diverse and talented group of writers in our city had no Fine Arts Week to attend. The canceling of this semi-annual event was clearly the low point of the semester.

Nonetheless, we go on. Extra thanks are due to Ellen Walker, our advisor; a citation on the masthead isn't personal enough to reflect her efforts above and beyond the call of duty. I'd also like to thank Chris Bristow for listening to me rant and rave when my favorite typeface was unavailable and during most other crises, major to minor. Finally, thanks are due as well to each writer who submitted work for consideration — they are the strength of Chico's writing community, committed and various, a group of voices it is a pleasure to hear.

Craig Philbrook, Editor

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Ride It Out

Last December,
A foot and a half of snow
On the road to Drakesbad,
Our truck fish-tailing and losing
Traction through the thick white
Afternoon, we looked for a tree to cut down
And bring home
To our living room.

Across the wide seat, you watched out your window At what?
That spring in Malaga? while I tried to keep from Drifting on the ice.
Just two months before, I had fished
The brown trout run in the canyon below,
Understood, then, its depths.

I remember, "Turn into the slide,"
And, on the edge of control, follow my
Own front wheels down the road.
My breath—fogging the windshield—
Is sharp when I catch sight
Of the cliff and the river
Down through the trees—this one not full enough,
That one too tall—and the
Snowflakes
Falling
Soft
As sleep.

You couldn't have known how
Afraid I was,
Though you do know how I court this brow.
Nor, over the softly rhythmic
Rolling of the tire chains,
Could you have heard me whisper,
Ride it out,
Ride this one out.

H.B.

Richard

I remember a long train of brightly dressed foreigners following you down the hall when we first met, eating whole grains and working on their Indian diction. I was a Rosh Nesh in my red sweat suit with no further faith than going to class each day. You and your loosely dressed beer belly, hovering over the crowd like moss in a cave breathing on me and passing first impressions all over my face and body. No, I was not blown through a straw. I can still see you writing intangible poetry during meetings and selling it as genius. "Get the music off the page!" you yelled over the violins, waving your arms and contorting your face. "Music lives off the beat," manuscript lands half wrinkled in my lap, violated by red ink marks. I never heard the macrorhythms in Bartok as you filtered music into an esoteric philosophy. All those hours in practice rooms lost to Gerry Mulligan. In the bar you were swarmed by flea-bitten men, doctors of politics educated by the local paper. They never bought, Mormon girlfriends waiting at home. I can still see you lying on the roof top; beer in hand, contemplating the northern lights. I can see your face, numb with surprise when you saw the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge. Your parties had cosmic food, black lady's soup to curry while Coltrane played from somewhere in the fifties. I remember explaining my mind to you, as if it could be done. Several times I could have killed youknocking you off your podium into the crowd and watching you pick up scattered scores at the audience's feet. Several times I could have held you. I remember every word from your hungover mouth; I can still smell your breath and imagine where you've been. "What can you say about me that isn't true and false at the same time?"

Nancy Boyles

No One Robs Banks

Four years have passed, there's still no free firewood in Wrightwood. The corners have stop signs, No one transports kilos from one side of town to the next. There has been no peyote since your exodus, The youth always wear clothes since Royal's flying weeny roast. No one remembers the cinnamon girl on sugar mountain.

Four years to crystalize your plans, to remember conceiving your first born on mescaline in a camper home.

You smiled when she stretched her tan torso through a window in Baja — how spontaneous of you.

No spontaneity in four years, no burning down the house of a friend — no one lights the fireplace with gasoline anymore. Four years to think of an apology.

Vegan vegetarian means eating whole pies and burning the container. Poached eggs, oatmeal with raisins, a waitress chasing with your bill.

Did an angel visit in Texically with a sense of humor and Christian charity?
Were the stamps potent, the cider fermented?

We believed when you sang and played the harp — I kissed you backstage.

Four years hiding a pellet gun, money, lunch-box bomb. Four years escaping on a ten speed or a '57 International. Four years watching your boys grow.

I buried the money for you in a dirty milk carton under a log. I unburied it for her, for something more than 60's lyrics and a weekend high.

No one rides on your grill after pickled peyote, a hood ornament playing flute.
There's no one here named Panama Red and Royal finally burnt his balls.
No one robs banks anymore.

Nancy Boyles

Notes From the First Lecture

A measure of ash equals a measure of light. You have heart enough to rise and walk carrying the secret as though it were an impenetrable text the searing scripture of some oracular god—the silver-haired daddy of the kundalini perhaps. Everything he says makes mystery and you are in a hot way to answer while a dirty boy with his day-glo crayons scribbles across the twelve pages of meaningful dialogue you have left.

Candice Favilla

Incantation

In quiet morning a cherry blazes and light birds are slips of music. A swallow's special note begins to sound like "Muriel." Day is a woman rising from her bed. She stretches then flings the windows open on sweet grass. The town common rolls to the river and rolls back full of delicious song. Theodora in her tower would give her lovely name to have this hour.

The people leave their houses greet each other on the street make vows to meet and sup. Like gracious lovers who reel in celebration they toast the auspicious sun. Come. Dance in a circle. Dress in garlands of grapes. Break into gaiety and ease. Noon promises everything.

Candice Favilla

A Question For the Poet

for Chris

Note the language of inquiry, what at least one has called arrogance. Know that where a greed for explanation fails, the resolute blossoms thrive.

That is faith, my friend—
a kind of poetry, a certainty that the stars do not remove from their own mansions. Only the mansion remains unrecognized.

If it is only an appetite for change that rocks us, still the question is never complete, but grows and is organic.
Oh, see the potential petals...

Even the silvery grasses, in redolent May so ready for each wind, seem now implacable, frozen in their hard labor, splintered as our feet press earth. What is this local reticence? This hunger-flower?

Candice Favilla

Last Resort

Across the highway dented pickups turn and rattle fenders down Cone Grove Road. Boys tip farm-supply caps to sweating cattle. Girls tug halters, leaving just enough white.

One clear pool remains off the road, alone, behind dry, snaked grasses and cottonwoods drooping, knowing the state.

They swim hard, pair up, drain the bottle, themselves, passing news of a newsless county:
Man cracked his head upstream on the rocks, the mill laying off again, Molly from high school is messed-up for good.

Albert Garcia

Letting Go

It could be as easy as this:

Stand just this way hands open arms at ease

feet slightly more than twelve inches apart. Face the east.

With first light breathe deeply eyes closed.

Stretch and raise arms exhale silently wait for full light.

Think of nothing except blue water and colored sails

the sight of land only a memory like the book

you read last summer each page turned effortlessly.

Pamela Giuliano

North Sea Squall

Without warning it rides in on the hungry surf, tears at the frightened waves, beats them into submission.

It claws at the dunes, shakes them in its teeth. The red tiled village retreats, wraps itself in white mist, hides behind the startled rain.

On the shore, it batters my face, my hair, forces my lips into an unexpected grin, shrieks at the alien who dares.

It gallops past on echos of thunder: leaves the restless sea to gather its scattered waves, the village to peek from behind its veil, my mouth full of raw power.

Barbara L. Kimball

Diversion

The echo of our laughter lingers,

sadly,

like lipstick marks on cocktail glasses left by ladies, long since departed, gaily on the arms of men, or alone,

and drunk, crying black mascara tears, that fall,

like notes of a sad song, down their faces. as they stumble home on heels as high as my expectations, on darkened streets that reveal as much light as we do emotion, hiding out, like taxis after 2 a.m., behind jokes as bad as cheap wine.

Melissa Kintscher

Sobranie

dark blood flowing
black
black jesuit inflictions
isolated
gone
mirage jet black
veils over women
under men with french guns
black
boys covered
and nothing to smoke.

Dominic LeFave

Ode to the Lizard

It's only two pound test
And a Lubber
That lures you
From that cool crack.
I promise I won't keep you
Crated like a pear
For very long, you see
This ceiling of pine has slats.

When your tail broke
Leaving itself in my hand
I watched you stutter away.
In a minute you sat perched,
Preening atop a hot rock
Wrenching your neck like an owl.
Already a new tail growing.

Bobby Levin

Flood at Frank's Tract

Diablo squats Crowned red Like children's Winter cheeks.

Dusk dulls, The Delta's Veins slither Snaky black.

My back aches Four times its age. Ten slippery steps of bags Stacked like bricks not perfect.

Rain comes Again... Stinky seven mile slough Rises...nearing the third bag.

The earth in sacks, Their khaki color darkens.

Bobby Levin

Confessions of a Bat

I

You are walking on the beach at dusk hands stuffed in pockets I hunch behind a rock spying on you

You are walking closer I am watching you carefully You get as close as you can

Suddenly, I change into a bat and come flapping at your face You wave your hands wildly then, losing balance, fall My claws rip at your eyes

You lay in the sand weeping no tears I'm perched on your nose licking the blood

П

Maybe you'll bump into me sometime and we could go for coffee We could sit in some spooky cafe where everyone would try to be separate from us But we won't see them

The waitress will scare you when she pours the coffee because you do not see her We laugh at this in our blindness because we are in it together

Ш

I am a devious bat

Katrina Marie Madsen

Dog

The house stands in front of the dog. Sometimes beside it, but never behind unless the poor beast got loose.

She's behind the sink, behind the glass, behind the sheet rock, the camellias and the front walk. Never loose.

Five'll get you ten he's behind the paper, behind the longshot, behind the last tail of the last pony. Never behind the want ads.

The repairman is behind the television. Vertical hold is behind it all.

Lori Praisewater

Sometimes Leaving

Sometimes a woman removes her apron and leaves into something remote—a stranger maybe.

And when she is done she decides whether to return completely or in motions.

Or sometimes she doesn't decide and just does.

And if she returns too soon there will be a breaking —an analyst, perhaps some bottles. And if she returns too late she loses her reasons.

Or if she never leaves
—the worst risk—
she will break
or wither daily
and not notice aloud.
That's it.
If she never leaves
she loses her chance.

Lori Praisewater

The Crystal Vases

for Edna O'Brien

We are crystal vases to the lads, girls. We are but polluted glass, blown and shaped by the mouths of artists. We are the inherited or given symbol of what a man was born to see as woman. A thing standing astride a knic-knac shelf. dusted with dirty feathers, or not, grasped so as to press his fingers into the cool etches and cuts. And once, out of guilt, because he knows his mother expects to see it, stood prominently near a window, to catch the light, the sun, to use those cold and dust-choked cuts to suck the sun in and spit it out as spectrums. Precious spectrums spinning on the walls when mother turns the vase in her hands. She secretly wipes the dust free. And on a day of sickness, his or ours, he buys flowers. Girls, he fills us with the stems of buds promising to bloom, and greenery, and water, and an aspirin. And on a day of sickness, ours or his, he breaks it. The vase-the crystal heirloom vase. Smashes it with all of his force. We remember the hand deep inside the vase. gripping, hurtling it-us-and we meet the wall. We give up. Fairly beaten. Then some shite. some mother's son gathers the shards to him, saving,

"With some strings and wires and glue, I will make a mobile of you."

He listens to you play. He listens to the wind play with you.

Sheri L. Prichard

This is Enough

My mother closes the back screen door, her eyes glistened to the evening.

The rainbird tak-taks over the Ortho family grass, and the white lawn chairs circle the barbecue.

The cars search for evening coolness, whishing by the highway, their headlights blinding the movie screen.

The sheets stick, twist and the hallway light finds shadows beneath the bedspread.

Mrs. Eleanor coughs, her Maytag's final spin shaking its white body box.

The tiki torch burning oil, a circle of orange branding her patio.

The summer never set but left the night dark beige, the jasmine's thick poison seeping on the window.

My mother murmur talks to my father, hear the s's, the m's. The rosary beads click and the breeze blows the swings outside, up for Hail, back for Mary.

Susan Quesada

to e.e. cummings

how evenly my farthest pain believes in

you

how in your parting of eyes a pronouncing of snow

mourns purely a host of full swans pulling away the last black curtain

of our "touch"

"poet"

by your most unearthly dance i have eclipsed the forest

of my scarleted youth and dawned One queen warriour of dreams,

always i have wished to sing of you have gloomed for the sound of your voice ringing through my death for you'

and o, if on the beauty of mountains i have cried a beautiful pain it was just saying,

"together
we shall blend
somewhere the happiness
that windows
the gold light of the sky
with

the green night of the seas,
it was just saying,
now'
somehow, far,
in our sometime' desert lake
a small angel
conceives
four blue wings around our eyes
and o,
announces, (in your eyes are a spray
of cool herons

prophesying how evenly my farthest pain believes in you)

Mayo Garcia Reyes

Prayer at 3:00 A.M.

Beyond the darkening pane, steel beaks cast lace into the purple walled night.

I am tucked between rainbird sheets, and shift again to the cold spots.

The clock's luminous hands fly over blue snow sierras, through terra-cotta canyon lands, towards long silent volcanoes that surround your sleep with obsidian.

An orange sun seeps into your desert sky. While I, more than miles away, rake darkness and memory.

Today is your birthday, just three hours new, and I can't remember the sound of your voice. If I could hear the voice I'd know.

But there is only the sound of a heart beating darkness. And the heater pilot fluttering a blue-green butterfly caught in a box of fire.

Peter J. Salas

Gathering Apples, Maine, c. 1880

A branch burns blue behind my father, frozen stoically with his basket angled half toward the sun, with half his wits gone. He complains they're falling too early this year, and waves a fistful of apples.

The wind grips the rippling grass so hard I'd kiss the dirt I kneel on, as a dazed starling bolts at my rising shadow.

Then I blame my father's animals for his unfashionable ways and curse the waking of a beard; though perhaps I've spied a snake, or dropped the coin my grandmother left for me this morning.

Even hurt, affecting a cramp, I'd look for anything but one more apple.

Gary Will

Shelling Corn, New England, c. 1900

The light that spills from the window to the edge of everything lights the man's face like the edge of the moon in early evening.

Though the girl turns her face away from the glass, the sun on its twelve equal panes reminds her of the furnace in a picture from her Sunday lesson book. The same fire warms the baskets in a room, the floor is warm against her feet, and so she thinks the fire is fine.

The man sits with his hands held together, dividing good from bad, the useful from waste. His back strays straight in his chair, his work is exact as the joining of rough-cut wood. What's left is given over to her pleasure.

Outside, the late light spills and covers the world like a sheet of snow. The sacks are full, the squash rest firmly on the sill, and inside she is happy in a room washed clean with light.

La Vieja Luz La Otra Locura

La luna vieja se murió hace años, pero aún hay luz sobre los campos; otra luz menos fuerte v más negra que inocente. Los carros y las naves espaciales derribaron el irreal sueño de los viejos (la vieja luz, la otra locura) Oué ha pasado? Yo aún me como las uñas en la desesperación, bostezo y erupto en los bares elegantes, veo espejos en todos los ojos y quiero ser sencillo como los árboles. La luna vieja se murió, v con ella la apparente dulzura de los astros. Pero ese no es el problema; si no te emocionas para qué diablos lees el poema o besas un labio caliente en la noche. La locura persiste y persistirá la depresión lo sé. Abandónate entonces deja que te lleve el mar y los barcos viejos y sus, sombras, y no busques más

The Old Light The Other Madness

The old moon died years ago yet there is light over the fields, another, weaker light. more sad than innocent. The cars and spaceships have destroyed the unreal dream of the old ones (the old light, the other madness.) What has happened? Even I am biting my nails in desperation. I yawn and belch in elegant bars; I see mirrors in all eyes and I want only to be as unaffected as the trees. The old moon died and with her the apparent sweetness of the stars. But this is not the problem; if you are not moved why the hell read poems or kiss warm lips in the night? The madness persists and the depression will go on, I know. Abandon yourself then, give up until the sea carries you away with the old boats and their shadows. Seek no more that line along the horizon.

aquella raya en el horizonte, porque ya pasó el ocaso, el más alla que no, existe, ni existió.

Miguel Angel Zapata

The sunset has already passed to that other side which does not exist and never did.

Miguel Angel Zapata Translated by Phillip Hemenway

Contributor's Notes

Nancy Boyles is a musician, poet and teacher. "Richard" is dedicated to four years of intensity at Cal. State, San Bernardino.

Melissa Kintscher is a senior at Chico State, majoring in Public Relations with a minor in English. She grew up in the Bay Area, and has always enjoyed creative writing.

Dominic Le Fave is now in his third year at CSUC where he studies madness, expressionism, and latent intertextuality.

Katrina Marie Madsen was born March 4, 1963 in the city of Mountainview, California, and has lived in Chico since September 1981.

Lori Praisewater knows the way to San Jose. She explains that there is too much orange there and promises to come back to Chico as soon as possible.

Sheri L. Pritchard explains: "I'm very happy to have the chance to submit once more to Watershed. This is my last semester here and I've never had such a good time or known such terrific people as I have here in Chico. As for a biography, I'm happy to say that coming back to my birthplace was the best decision I ever made. Chico has healed me, and now it's time to move on. My sincere thanks to everyone."

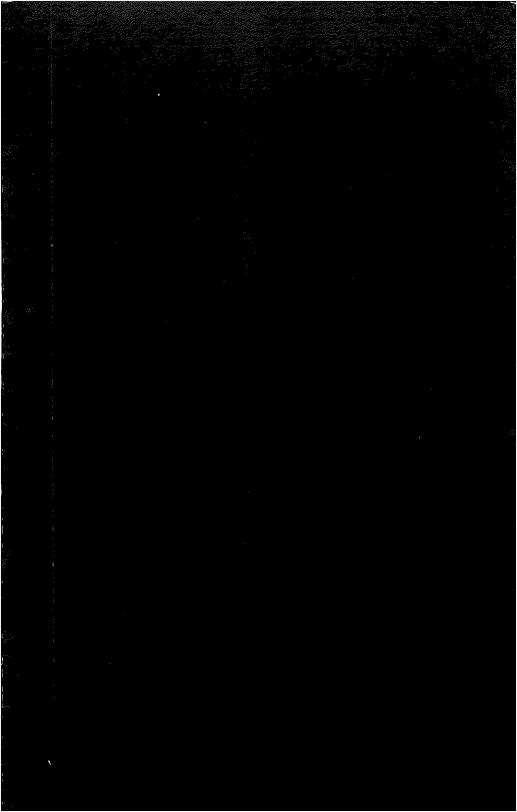
Susan Quesada is a senior majoring in English and Technical Writing. She enjoys water and snow skiing and eating animal crackers.

Mayo Garcia Reyes tells us: "I am a native of California. Both my parents are of Mexican descent, this explains the tone and style of my poetry. I read the poetry of every age and time, and consider the poetic process a natural faculty inherent in all races. It could not be otherwise."

Gary Will moved to Chico from western Michigan in 1980, and now works at a local bookstore.



Watershed was set by Type-Art in Tiffany, printed by CSUC Print Shop. The cover was printed by Plum Island Press on 80 lb. Forest Legendary Text. Perfect binding was done by Inland Binding in Sacramento, California.



Country Warth Wingspanner Hart Reply-Charles (li)