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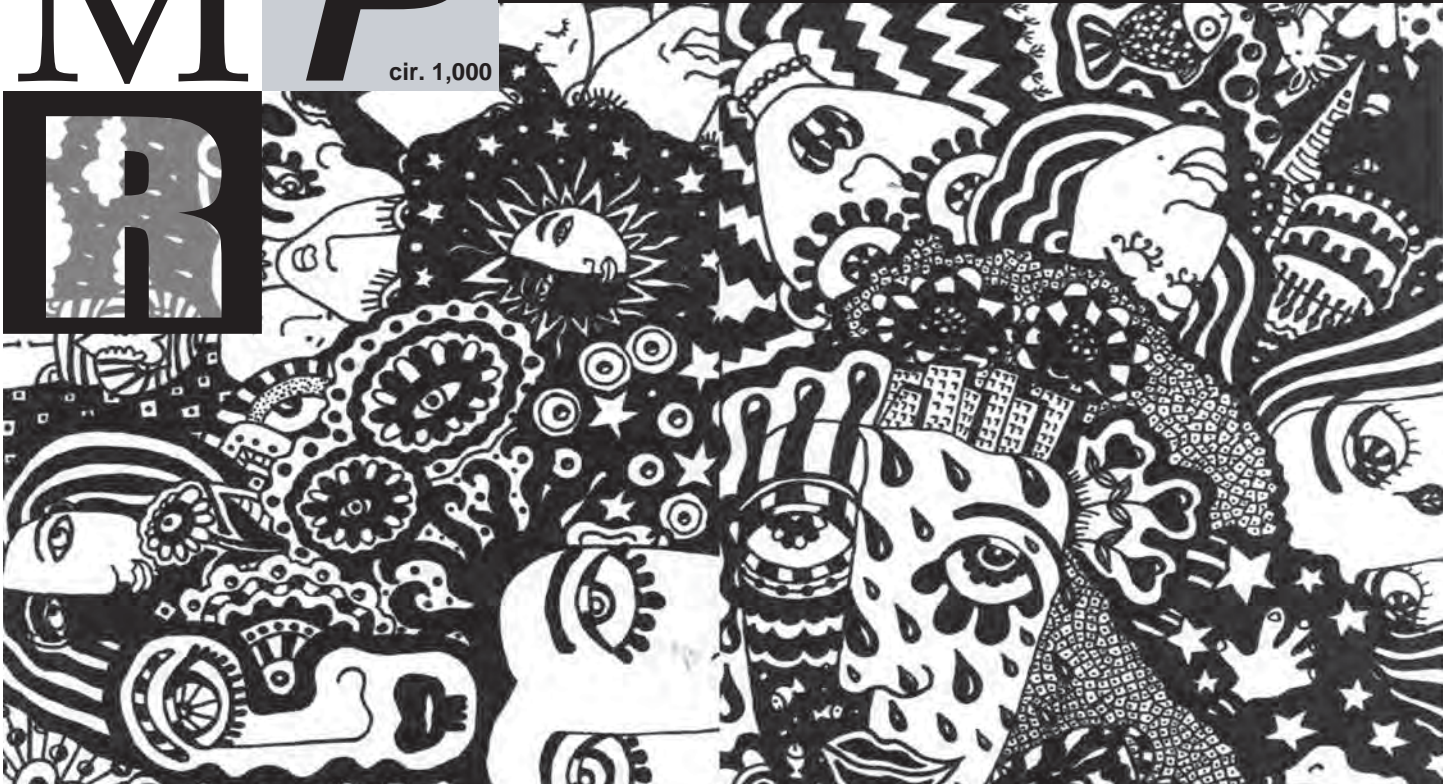
# monterey poetry review

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## Chora: Song of the Central Coast

featuring poets from the Monterey, Santa Cruz, and South Bay Counties





## monterey poetry review, Vol. 3 No. 3 Spring 2008

The mission of the *Monterey Poetry Review* is to make poetry accessible to everyone in the community. We publish poets who live in, or have strong ties to the counties of Monterey, Santa Clara and San Benito. It is a free publication, supported by donations and advertising. The MPR Organization is a fully tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity and registered California non-profit, to which all staff members donate their time and talents. The 1,000 copies of each issue are distributed free to the public in libraries, colleges, coffee shops, book stores, community centers and online at [www.montereypoetryreview.org](http://www.montereypoetryreview.org).

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Front Cover Art/ Artwork by Jill Fressinier  
Rear Cover Art/ Photopgraphy by Juleen Johnson  
Artwork by Kevin Miller

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### NEXT DEADLINE(S)

JULY 30<sup>th</sup>: TRIBUTE TO RIC MASTEN

AUGUST 30<sup>th</sup>: THE WAR AND THE CENTRAL COAST

Send up to 6 poems relevent to the next issues theme,  
compiled in one Word or text file, by email to  
[montereypoetryreview@gmail.com](mailto:montereypoetryreview@gmail.com).

### Monterey Poetry Review Staff

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## FROM THE EDITOR

NICOLE HENARES

Derrida, much like Thoreau, I find palatable and nutritious only in small doses. I keep a copy of *Walden* and an anthology of Derrida on my night-stand. Every so often I randomly will ponder passages from these texts. The tiniest of passages have proved useful, and for now, I am in no hurry. E.B. White endorses this methodology for digesting Thoreau. The same tactics can easily apply for Derrida, whose writings I have found- though some may disagree- equally as nutritious and containing as many “100 proof anchovies.”

When I first sent out the call for submissions for “Chora: Song of the Central Coast” I received numerous emails questioning my use of the word “chora”. What did I mean? Didn’t I mean “choral”? After all, following the colon was the word “song”. According to Derrida, “chora” signifies place and the dimensions or signification therein. Derrida, borrowed the term from Plato, who defined chora as the countryside surrounding the polis.

The Central Coast is a chora of stunning landscapes and sociological ironies. It is a luxury to live here, a luxury that most work hard for, a luxury that has given inspiration to many a poem. Indeed the aesthetics of the Central Coast, nature’s infallible grandeur, are pristine comforts for man’s puny spirit; however, I wonder about the ways the landscape, the region, shapes our lives, in perhaps, more “mundane” ways? While there is nothing wrong with the beautiful bauble of the landscape, and the fascination therein- after all we depend on the tourism industry for our survival, some would believe even more than agriculture- what is it that shapes and thereby distinguishes us as a region and how can our poetry reflect this individuality?

For instance, I was raised in Carmel in a house my grandfather built. My father was born in New Monterey, when it was a ghetto with streets named after prostitutes, not multimillion dollar real-estate with streets whose names sound quaint now that their meaning has been forgotten. My grandparents worked in the canneries. Through poetry about the Monterey Peninsula, I find a way to explain myself and my family.

Thus, I ask how can the poets and artists of the Central Coast reflect the ways our region has shaped our identities? How do our industries, and land itself, shape the subconscious and consciousness of the people of the Central Coast, as a unique place and people, as well as a microcosm to the macrocosm of the United States and the macrocosms of the human experience? A global-localizing of poetry, so to speak, as opposed to globalizing.

The theme I selected for my first issue as editor of the *Monterey Poetry Review*, “Chora: Song Of The Central Coast”, I admit is mercenary. Whitman, as part of his effort to sound the barbaric yawps of America, and inspire poets to come to “honor and destroy” his example, tells us he hears “America Singing.” How does our work on the Central Coast affect our quality of life and identity?

In November, when I announced “Chora: Song Of The Central Coast”, gas prices had hit \$3.00 a gallon. In the months since, our crops have suffered a distressing season. Gas prices have now reached \$4.00 a gallon, making food more expensive. The Euro is 1.5 to the dollar. Most people in retail or restaurants say they look forward to the flush of summer’s tourist season to slough off the debts of winter. The salmon season has been cancelled. Schools have been closed, teachers have lost their jobs. The housing market is festering from a slogging economy and blight of ballooned mortgages. And homes on the Central Coast hover around half a million dollars, for those who can afford them.

“Song Of the Central Coast” features poems and visual art about the work we do on the Central Coast, poems written by or about fishermen, agricultural workers, secretaries, cannery workers, retirees, therapists, teachers, baristas, and strippers. Yet how many songs are left unsung by those too busy working to write?

## A SAN FRANCISCO HYPOCRITE IN MONTEREY

NICOLE HENARES

for two years a musician friend of mine  
has slept in closets or the bushes for her art.

last saturday night she featured with a band from big sur  
in downtown monterey.

i attended her concert in my finest weaponry  
of polka dots and marilyn monroe  
to protect myself against the neo-hipsters  
who usually flock to such events.

i ended up sitting next to a blonde  
who used her elbows as exclamation points  
in a drunken conversation with a guy next to her.

typical, i thought.

sorry, she offered, before asking me where I was from.

here, i said, but i live in san francisco.  
and i added, but i still call this place home.  
i'd live here but i have a good job in sf.

a good job, she said, eyeing my polka dots,  
so you can buy more things!

i teach high school,  
i said, like it was an excuse.

you teach? she said,  
and then told me she taught too  
in seaside, in a ghetto elementary,  
and lived month to month without savings,  
what was i doing in san francisco  
if this was really my home?  
flinging back at me all my scorn  
in one swoop.



## KINDER GARDEN

KATHLEEN FLOWERS

A breeze always blows through this grassy meadow of five year olds, arms waving, fingers poking, flower heads bending on slight stems. I sway above them, tell stories, try to name the butterflies that flutter from

their small mouths, upper and lower case letters winging across a white paper sky. It's my job to drop breadcrumbs, a path they can follow through the once dark forest of reading and writing. But, how swiftly

they shift and change—the least wind ruffles their leaves, turns them into riots of flight, rackets of laughter, a surfeit of squawking. To call this flock back, I scatter

the sounds of a poem's first syllables across the classroom air. By the second line, their voices lift with mine, a lilting rhythm flies out the door. Rising, we look down on school buildings like rows of blocks we've stacked on the alphabet rug.

We soar from stanza to stanza, a warm draft stealing us up and up. From this height, even the soccer field, with its lone ball, shrinks—a green and white puzzle piece adrift on an asphalt sea.

Listen to the hum of our sing-song rhymes and riddles. Watch nimble fingers mimic the climb and fall of itsy-bitsy spiders, how chubby hands hug big, fat pumpkins, and oh, how we make the raucous rain pour down in pails and buckets!

For the breath of a poem, we're all the world's flowers

## TEACHING

SAM SALERNO JR.

They shuffle in each morning,  
these children of the forest,  
with books, laptops, binders (the  
heavy oars of their labors)  
the sunlight of daybreak  
cresting over their faces.

When their eyes meet mine  
they smile and lower their glances  
as if I have caught them,  
immodestly hunched upon a thought  
a bit profane, perhaps,  
a bit too wild for the aging man in front of them.

They sit for the day's work:  
parts of speech, parts of a paragraph,  
pieces of the hearts I try to pick up  
scattered on the floor.  
We're going places, I tell them.  
There's an ocean bigger than the one down the street.

Kind grins, rolling eyes—a distrust of the figurative.  
I tell them a story of youthful sailors who couldn't hear  
the enticing songs that the helmsman tied to a mast would.  
They want lines, compasses, lands in sight;  
The world should make perfect sense.  
How can I tell them there are no maps for this sea?

## THE FISHERMAN

SAM SALERNO JR.

When the line taps lightly on the surface  
sending the rings  
pulsating outward  
the fisherman has a prize in mind.

He reels it in with the most  
beautifully tragic hands  
thick and brown,  
streaks of white scars  
to mark his moments on the ocean.

The gulls there are vigilant  
waiting for the battered, bleeding  
contents of the day's catch.  
Scales cross his hands and cross his mind.  
He's heard the feeling before;  
This darkness has a face.

The silver acrobat below  
knows no such music;  
it can only feel  
the weight of the line on its  
astonished mouth  
pulling it earthward  
toward a grave of sky and human expanse.

## THE MAN WITH THE METAL DETECTOR

JOHN LAUE

A curious phenomenon,  
this man in stifling clothes  
holding a metal detector low,  
sweeping it back and forth  
like a top-heavy wand.  
Notice how his eyes  
avoid the bathers  
as he weaves among them  
focusing on pockmarked sand.  
He might, perhaps,  
be the saddest man  
on the beach right now  
if it weren't for beeps  
from his bulky earphones.  
Oblivious to the sky,  
the crashing of the waves,  
the ocean's flashing lights  
he wanders up and down  
like a lost soul  
searching for a resting place.  
But there's no rest for him:  
even the bodies in lewd poses,  
gleaming with oil,  
bare as the law will allow  
don't alter his pace.  
He's a man possessed,  
drawn here irresistibly and kept  
by the magnetic force of metal.  
Don't moralize or chide him  
if you want to know his name;  
speak to him on carelessness,  
of lost and precious gold!

## AFTER THE STORM

PETER NEIL CARROLL

The ocean's done its heavy lifting,  
brought in the lumber and bottles,  
a ripped sailboat rudder,  
bottom of a bikini, the pink torso  
of a doll. Now come the detectives,  
picking driftwood, seashells, pebbles, kelp.  
This labor I know because two sturdy-backed glaziers  
puttied weatherproof panes in a diner near Half Moon Bay,  
revealing multitudinous coastal Californians  
at work: gray-coated, the gulls trawl for lunch,  
a hundred wheeler humpback hauls cargo  
down the old Pacific highway, no stopping at lights;  
white capped scrubbers beat against sand,  
pound the rhythm of a tectonic tune. Not an eye  
muscle relaxes. Work, work, I watch all day.



## THE HOLY COOKS

BERNICE RENDRICK

Stirring flour into the batter  
of butter, sugar and ground almonds  
a halo swirls on a band of window light.  
White powder sifts down  
radiant as snow on this hot morning.

Is this what I'll be remembered for?  
My best moments bent  
over orange flames, peering  
into the belly of fire. An expert  
juggler of silver pans and sheets.

Old photographs of me will be  
crumpled and burned one by one  
as I destroyed the family faces,  
saints that faded, too many to revere.  
But I've kept their china cups  
occasionally sipping from  
the gold edge of the past.

I'll never part with their recipes,  
the smudges seals of royalty,  
fingerprints the touches of history.  
I'll cherish each woman's handwriting  
and laborious directions.

The knowledge that nourished  
our spirits and bodies flows  
like a sacred vein through my hands  
as they stand beside me,  
cheeks flushed, fingers singed,  
cinnamon streaked on chins,  
under a halo of flour.

KEVIN MILLER



## SHOULDER CONSIDERS RETIREMENT

BERNICE RENDRICK

It seemed foolish recently,  
I began putting shoulder to bed  
with special attention  
to the persistent pain.  
Warm in flannel, I didn't mind,  
tried left and right side, made promises.  
No more shouldering firewood.  
It could rest. No more babies hefted  
to thin padding over bone. No more  
kneading bread. Wax on floorboards  
could wear thin, go bare.  
I told shoulder to retire,  
it didn't have to dig huge clumps  
of lemon balm any more.  
Sometimes walking it is sore  
and I know without speaking --  
Aha! So this is arthritis.  
Shoulder is like a small animal  
when I curl up and put it to sleep,  
appreciative of the rest  
and not really too concerned  
about the projects elbow and hand  
insist on. But what else  
can shoulder do but say No!  
It was all balanced here.  
This sloping shoulder carried  
love light as feathers,  
sometimes heavy as stone.

## ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

NEAL WHITMAN

I grew up in Watsonville.  
After the winter rains  
the whole family--  
anyone who was able to walk and bend over--  
spent one Saturday  
outside  
cleaning, tidying up  
the farmyard.  
Dad would not tolerate clutter.  
"Get rid of all the junk," he drill sarged us.  
No wire, wood, or tools,  
No machinery parts or pieces.  
No litter of any kind just lying around.  
Then we raked  
the ground, combed dirt  
in long straight lines.  
One day is all it took.  
My father swore  
you could tell the quality  
of the farmer  
by the appearance  
of his property.  
He was a damn good farmer.

## ANOTHER POOR EXCUSE FOR BEING LATE TO WORK

GENE PARÉ

I woke up hundreds of years from now,  
stood outside in the acid rain and screamed.  
I tossed a kickstand at a monorail and missed.  
I trampled through a moonscape of plastic cacti  
and found an artificial leg  
in an abandoned phone booth.

I soared weightless in the metallic air,  
noticing a crack in the sky's black Tupperware lid.  
I laughed at my reflection in a chromium wall  
engraved with the names  
of two reputedly honest presidents;  
I didn't recognize either of them.

I stared back at some rotund creatures staring at me,  
unzipped my limp flag and waved it as a gesture of peace.  
I asked them who they were, no response,  
asked them to loan me a few bucks, no response,  
asked if they like it from the rear,  
several of them made a high-pitched noise.

I bet one of them it couldn't touch its toes.  
I struck a match to get a better look;  
it touched all fifty of them.  
A smoke alarm went off somewhere,  
and the creatures disappeared like pool balls  
into fallout shelters.

My ears began to ring.  
An orange shuttle hovered overhead  
and caught me in an ultraviolet strobe.  
I gyrated for a moment, then passed out.  
When I woke again,  
it was Monday morning.

## MAN WITH LEAFBLOWER

GENE PARÉ

He stands still for a moment,  
assessing the lay of the leaves in the yard,  
then yanks the cord---veins jump  
in his brown forearms.  
He leans forward,  
twists his trunk side to side  
and strides across the lawn in ear muffs  
with all the confidence of Aeolus,  
wielding the unruly contraption  
as if playing the bagpipes.

A warm jet of air lifts and upends the leaves,  
stirs and scatters them into new piles  
to be blown into the street  
where passing cars  
or even the faintest of winds  
whisk them along like missed notes  
into some unknown neighbor's yard.

KEVIN MILLER



## BARB

GENE PARÉ

Barb's a stripper at AJ's now.  
Two breast enlargements ago,  
we worked together at an electronics firm  
over in Sunnyvale.  
She looked just fine back then.  
I dropped by AJ's the other night  
and got an eyeful,  
gave up my five bucks  
to have her turn around and bend over  
a few inches from my nose.

I had never thought of Barb  
like that before.  
Well, yes I had.  
But not so vividly.  
It's amazing, the distance  
a couple of years can put  
between friends.



KEVIN MILLER

## OFFICE HOMICIDE

JOSE TORRES

I ended the life  
of a mosquito, who aimlessly  
hovered above the landscape  
of an invoice on  
Lynette's desk.

I didn't think. Just  
instinctively thrust my  
palm over it, a tiny  
black mess of a speck  
on my lifeline,

but no blood. Bloodless  
little thing.

## BARISTA for nick arthur JOSE TORRES

behind counter coffee shop bak-  
ery cappuccino he stands red  
bearded and focused procedur-  
al. this is why they train you to  
leave the wandering street urchin  
san Francisco life Oregon man.  
wooded eyes roadless thumb  
hitch all the way to los angeles  
where you found no angels all in  
Sweden not santa cruz biblical  
ripped jeans adventurer more red  
each time growing spiritual less  
Bukowski or strand-ed on geary  
in this shop coffee bean paradise  
for homeless orthodox religious  
Russians and 26th "no one lis-  
tens" here do you hear. there is  
no place left west of coastal cliff  
highway one for ocean crash! ker-  
plunk! swish! woosh! all wander-  
ers carry Kerouac whether they  
know it or not in their caffeine  
souls.

## OFFICE

JEANNE LUPTON

Twelve-hour days  
seven-day weeks  
in a cubicle  
at a computer  
wearing headphones  
transcribing tapes  
open box of sugar wafers  
close at hand,  
cup of black coffee,  
lit cigarette between my lips.  
One time I walked by  
the copier and the delivery guy  
pinched my nipple  
right through my sweater.  
Another time when I had done  
8 hours' work the boss  
brought me 5 more tapes -  
5 hours' more work.  
I said, I'm done for the day.  
She said, Not if you want  
to work here.  
There were all-nighters,  
weekends sharing hotel  
rooms so we could work

even when a blizzard  
closed the city down.  
Spring of '86 I quit  
nicotine and caffeine.  
Suddenly my typing  
slowed way down.  
I was no longer typing  
a recognizable language.  
Burn-out after 17 years.  
Not a minute too soon.  
I had to find new work.  
I became a legal secretary  
with vacation time,  
sick leave, holidays.  
Steve the boss was kind to  
Hannah, a street person, let her  
use the computer, the fax,  
the copier. Hannah always  
asked me for help.  
Hannah liked to say she was  
far too creative to be  
a secretary. Steve's wife  
called me when it snowed  
to complain that her children  
were home from school so  
she couldn't go to the gym.  
The female attorney talked  
on the phone all day to her

friends and needed me to stay late  
to help her meet her deadlines.  
The other secretary got a call  
while she was out shopping.  
When she got back I told her,  
You had a call from Mike Hunt.  
She fell down laughing.  
Steve promoted me to office manager.  
I was that valuable.  
The New York manager  
got wind of it. I was  
demoted the same day.  
The lawyer down the hall  
had his own secretary,  
his own law firm,  
but he brought me work.  
After 18 years in law offices,  
on a Tuesday, at quitting time  
I quit  
Now I'm on Social Security,  
don't have a mortgage,  
don't need Jim Beam or sex  
or shopping or TV  
to help me forget  
my day at the office.



## RETAIL

FLAME

Ten an hour, selling ten an inch  
in Haute Couture and feeling the pinch  
of achy feet and The Servile Blues  
checking out pedicures, Jimmy Choos  
New fannies, face lifts, boobage and beaks  
cash throwing dilettantes, gossip leaks.  
She homes to four roommates  
A Pizza arrives  
Disparity Gulch  
Between her and those lives

## REAL LIFE IN A PROM BOUTIQUE, THE RETAIL WARS.

FLAME

I brought her 40 dresses  
“Hate em all she whined  
Her lovely, long dark tresses  
Went down to her behind  
Her mother was exhausted  
Slumped sideways in a chair  
We both almost just lost it  
When she wanted that one there  
She pointed to the ceiling  
It went up 30 feet  
I climbed a ladder, reeling  
Grabbed a ball gown by it's feet  
She tried it on an scorned it  
Then left it on the floor  
And that is when I threw a fit  
And kicked her out the door

## JUSTICE IS NOT BLIND

DANE CERVINE

The proud girl from Oakland  
sits on-stage at the conference,  
describes her normal day—  
boyfriends shot at, one killed,  
purse stolen, cell phone stomped,  
avoiding drugs at the party. It is  
the only life she has known.  
It is why all the therapists are here.  
Her life, a light flickering  
across the bay, a golden gate, a bridge  
America must cross to find  
its blind heart.

## THE CHAPEL IN THE HEART'S BUREAUCRACY

DANE CERVINE

At Asilomar, sand-swept Monterey pine retreat,  
I enter the conference hall as I've done the past two mornings,  
sit in my chair to hear a judge, or state official, or professor  
discuss the despair of families, the toll of poverty,  
the statistics of decay. By the second sip of coffee, I notice  
that I recognize no-one around me, that the speaker is dressed  
in robes with a purple sash, a black preacher  
just warming up his sermon—the power of love, the way of sin—  
and I sheepishly look at my program to locate  
my own plenary. But really, I don't want to leave,  
don't want to hear legislative analysts discuss  
the latest school funding crisis, or suicide's stain,  
or how prison's gobble up disaffected youth  
as the only university we afford them.  
I want to feel the word sin seep across every budget cut,  
the word love lilt its way into the vocabulary  
of every director, every politician, each voting citizen.  
So when at last I find my own conference  
in Asilomar's original chapel, hear a state director  
say his own son was denied health insurance  
because of depression, I wonder about the heart  
of this country, if it is the wrong liturgy we chant—  
one of policy and politics rather than love's bare sound.  
Hear the bell ringing twelve tones in the chapel's steeple  
as it ushers us out as secret missionaries  
to a world weary of love's absence,  
of sin's bureaucracy, a world waiting  
as a lover once abandoned listens  
for the door to open.

JULEEN JOHNSON





## RAW TALK FROM THE SALAD BOWL

TAD WOJNICKI

At dawn I wake up. My papers fly.  
Sheets wing, galleys glide, files flee.  
The page caught in my printer flips  
like a fish tail. Salty ocean breeze  
blows down the Salinas Valley--  
sweetening seeds, dusting vines,  
greening veggies, digging earthy  
smells--and then, it barges into my  
room through the open window--  
burdened with fresh dirt. I find dirt  
in Leaves of Grass, Flowers of Evil,  
The Grapes of Wrath--anything I  
love.

Writing in the Salad Bowl of  
America, I scratch the dirt from the  
bottom of my wallet, digging for  
copper. I shouldn't bitch, though.  
Writers dish dirt.

sharp blows  
bloody leaves  
hit the dirt

## ARTICHOKE FIELDS

ROSALIE NELSON

Stately row upon row gray-green  
artichokes grow; leafy plants,

perennial member of thistle family,  
these — variety 'Green Globe.'

Coastal foggy climate ideal, locals say:  
they'd sprout on a telephone pole!"

Harvest time, and workers walk the rows  
buckets on backs, knife in each hand.

Choosing, cutting, a rhythm of work—  
filling the basket to 80 pounds.

Unloading for packers in the field,  
back again with another empty basket.

Tourists drive by, stop at sales stand  
at roadside, buy a few, wonder how to eat them.

"mighty little food for so much work"  
my father said on first taste experience.

A mighty lot of work for those guys in the field.

KEVIN MILLER





## GONZALES

SUSAN FREEMAN

The wind bites hard down the long valley,  
grey barns weathered by it; the gullied mountains scored.  
It rises each afternoon, a whip in a hidden hand, inescapable,  
bending the hedgerow eucalyptus, tearing  
at the shirts on the farmworkers' backs and in the hair  
of children playing in the field behind the school.

Hunkering down on the animate highway,  
the town feels grievously sad in its squat, tan buildings.  
Shop windows stare blankly at the black ribbon of cars zooming south.  
The heat builds. Old men shuffle past Jim's Liquor,  
past Váldez Produce and the Tru-Value Hardware  
to a lunch of quesadilla y cerveza at El Famoso Café.

The straight-arrow highway splits the land and who lives here,  
the bungalow town from the gated wineries in the hills.  
Passing through a thousand times on their way to L.A.  
who ever sees the old men or the flapping sheets flash-drying  
in the heat of small backyards; the women with strong hands  
hanging their family's colors out in the wind?  
Across that road, at the flat bridge, the Salinas River sinks  
under its sand. To the eye it's bone-dry til the rains come,  
lost to the summer, invisible, surfacing miles away near the sea.  
What runs strong runs hidden from the eye.  
The subtle lines drawn in a town with many histories:  
who leads and who follows, and whose words make the rules.

Here, the river has a salty name, the taste of hard labor,  
given by invaders who wondered at the wetland slough,  
the far tidal flats pulsing into the land. Outsiders,  
they made this their place, a land grant, a ranchero,  
usurped when new strangers came, English in their mouths,  
looking for ground to pleasure their ploughs.

Once named, a place is learned, known beyond itself,  
nostalgically held in the mouth of its children  
or forgotten by those who chose to run away.  
No one can write it like it really is, say the hills.  
The town and the valley agree, singing in the dry sun.  
And the river. The river that quenches no thirst.

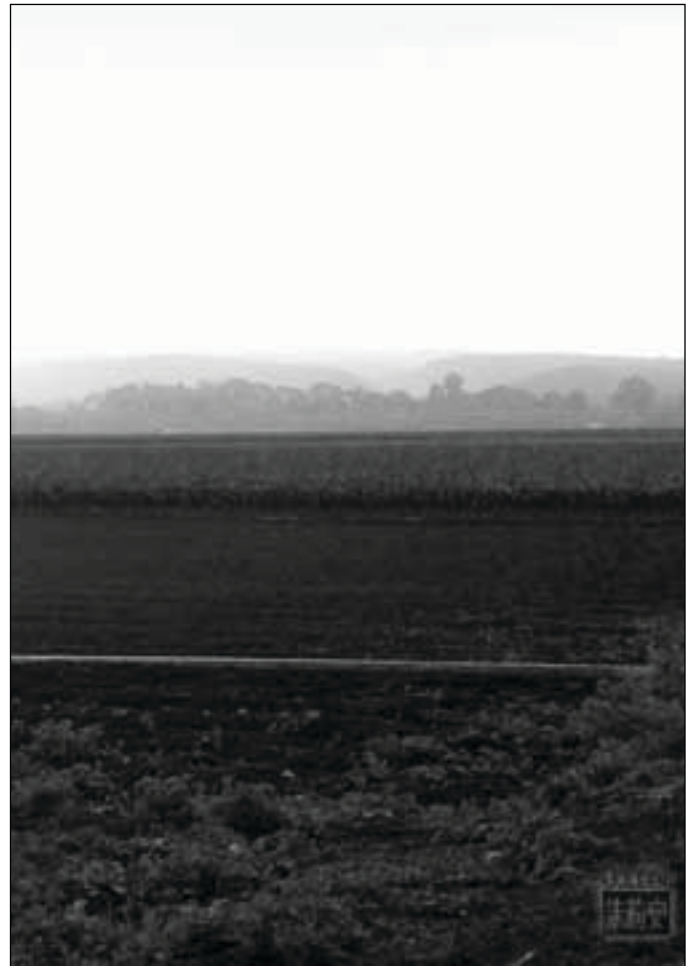
## ANCHOVIES

SUSAN FREEMAN

Once a year they crowd the harbor,  
wash its sandbar mouth with silver,  
and the old men, nostrils flared,  
elbow the rough railings on Aldo's pier  
and remember  
full holds and nights of fog,  
the flashing gifts of the sea.

The bay is full of anchovy  
and the last of the hot days  
are teasing the life out of summer.  
Ten years ago fish arrived so thick  
the harbor master called out the dredge

JULEEN JOHNSON



to clear the stinking harvest  
so the rich could sail their yachts beyond the jetty  
and the tuna boats could shelter for the night.  
All September the town reeked.  
The beaches were deserted,  
the wharf cafés emptied of tourists,  
and the seaside was ours once more.  
For that short while, dusk  
smelled like Riva Trigoso on the Ligurian coast,  
and the old Italian sailors,  
Genovese still on their tongues,  
curled around their coffee mugs at Gilda's  
and dreamed of the steep cliffs of home.

All that before and their world.  
But tonight, moon round and rising,  
and I hashing out words,  
the cat caught it on the wind  
and called me to the open door.  
We stood out on the front porch a mile from the sea,  
sniffing the evening air as the sun slid to sleep.  
I thought I heard accordion music, dolce canzone,  
and the sound of winches hauling in line.  
Eyes closed, the sea was where the street had been,  
the porch our timbered wharf,  
and we were fishermen riding  
on a darkening ocean of sky.

## WHERE NO CHILD SHOULD LIVE

DIANA GARCIA

Not like Tomas at the edge of the flower fields  
his patched home huddled beneath the bluff:  
corrugated sheet for roof, the ping of rain,  
howl of wind buffeting upright cardboard,  
reclaimed bender board, scraps of drop cloth,  
burlap sewn together to reinforce walls.  
Surrounded by scented air, eucalyptus  
above, sea mist to the west, he rests  
against a thin pad laid on bare earth.

When his mother dips a cloth into a bucket  
placed beneath a pipe. metal lip flaked,  
Tomas cringes against the soggy towel.  
His mother blots dirt from his face,  
throat, arms, hands. She runs  
the cloth around each knuckle, feels  
for the dimples below the joints, smooth  
tip of nail--bird beak, kitten claw--nail  
to use as weapon, as tool, poor blade  
against a hard-scrabble life.

JULEEN JOHNSON



## A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

*for Maria Corralejo*

JENNIFER LAGIER

First I see the  
women cannery workers on strike  
whose only bargaining tools  
consist of eight days  
of prayer and self-imposed hunger.

Today, Sureño gang members  
carry management-provided weapons,  
patrol concertina wire corridors  
between busloads of scabs  
and picket-line labor.

My friend,  
the tenth child  
of immigrant field hands,  
describes 400 women and children  
falling to their knees,  
dragging themselves slowly  
in protest  
toward a church  
down the Watsonville highway.

Sometimes, she tells me,  
there is nothing left  
to place between greed  
and the poor  
except our own bodies.

## EARTHQUAKE WEATHER

JENNIFER LAGIER

Silver artichokes wither against  
the Salinas valley's hardening earth.  
September unleashes its barrage  
of no-hostage heat.

Offshore breezes lack energy  
to carry coolness inland  
or push hovering fog  
past sterile dune walls.

In far broccoli fields,  
workers on strike  
form picket lines,  
unfurl red union flags.

Scabs and sheriff's deputies  
arrive in unison,  
perform capitalism's  
tired choreography.

This roadside demonstration  
invokes a tense parade of  
white men in uniforms  
with shiny guns, panting dogs.

Passing continents grate.



# THE BIG BURN

JENNIFER LAGIER

She is a housing advocate  
forever trying to fit  
single mothers  
and more kids than allowed  
by the rules  
into decent apartments.

Places where deposits  
can be paid in installments  
and the landlord  
doesn't expect sex on demand  
as a portion of rent.

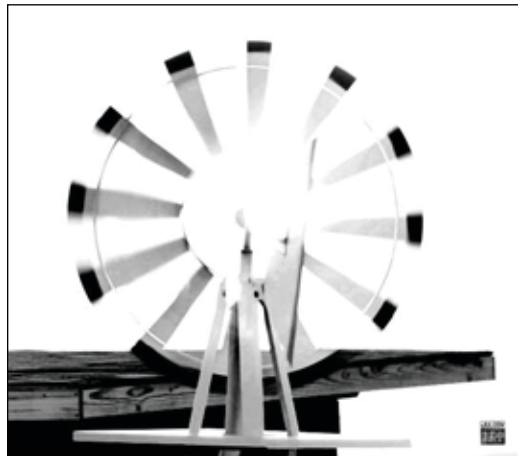
Her clients, a family of five,  
live in wet caves  
carved from the Monterey mud,  
pay \$20 a night.

Later, at the labor camp,  
a contractor  
collects once a week  
but never pays P.G. & E.  
so they do without power.

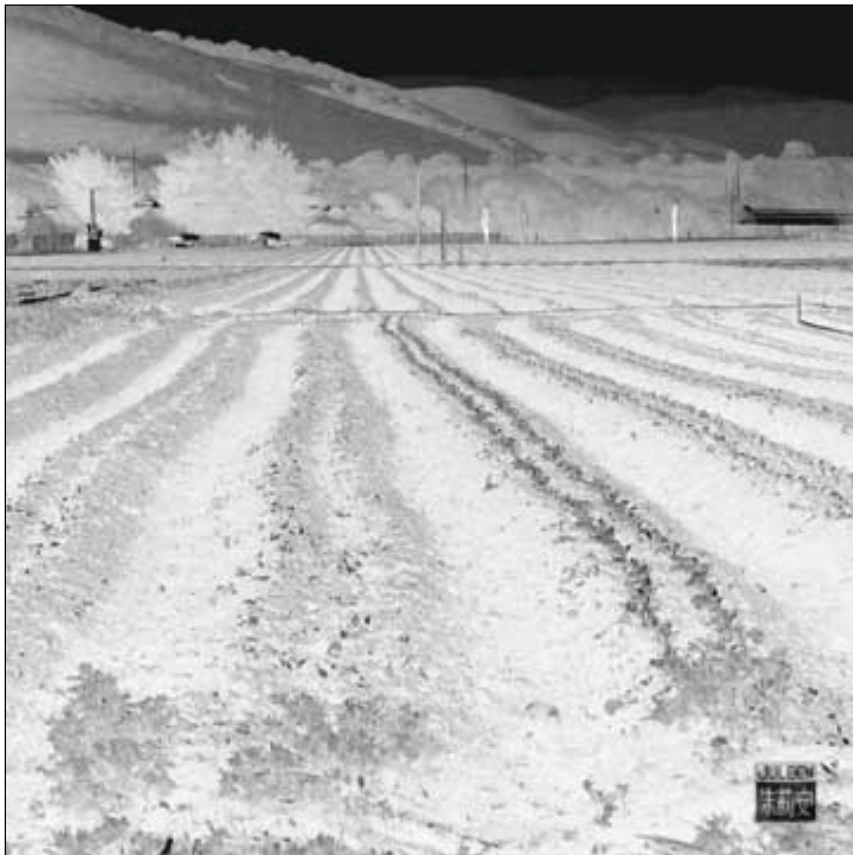
They relocate to a barn  
with blankets on lettuce crates,  
no running water.  
An eight year old boy  
reads to his little sister  
in a cow stall with candles.

At the inquest, survivors tell  
of finding melted baby-doll limbs  
among blackened bones,  
the charred commas of children  
turned into ashes.

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## WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD WE LIVE IN

KEN CUNEO

The morning sun at Lover's Point clears away the fog exposing an opening rose.  
The evening news said that the mother hung her kids and burned their clothes.  
Oh what a joy for those with cash as the Dow Jones, NASDAQ, and hedge funds  
soar.

They were just trying to correct bad behavior; so the kids were placed in cages on  
the floor.

An evening stroll at Asilomar pets naturally along for the ride.

The jealous ex poured gasoline into the East Alisal trailer, "I'll burn her hide!"

The bride and groom at Bernardus toasted one another, such visions of bliss.  
Thousands of miles away in Iraq, artillery shells smash a house; something is  
amiss!

The Carmel CEO turned the keys on his new Mercedes; along with his fourth  
trophy wife.

The poor bastard who cleans the CEO's store can't even pay his basic living  
expenses, will he take his life?

The wealthy family used their connections to get their oh so ordinary child to go  
Ivy League.

The Marine Corps Lance Corporal from Seaside, trying to earn enough money  
for college, now blinded will he ever again read?

The beautiful Pebble Beach maven is going for a seaweed wrap at the spa.

While the waitress from Marina was fired for not giving favors to her boss; she  
sure won't go far!

The old saying about either the glass half full or empty

Does not work with me for I see people with nothing or plenty.

Can you still say it is a wonderful and fair world we live in?

# THE INDIAN IS PICKING BLACKBERRIES

ISAI AMBROSIO

He arrives early, four tacos wrapped in a plastic bag.  
Two white picking buckets fixed to the belt,  
he can't save his boots from getting caked with red clay.  
In spite of the of the brain-freezing cold,

his chest is as hot as a burning charcoal.  
There is no way back. His arms cross.  
The small black fruit makes a hiccup sound  
bouncing against the bottom of the empty bucket.

In front of him, another worker's hands move  
as fast as a harvesting machine, but Javier  
can't do that on his first day. He can't stop thinking  
of his loved one, his wife, who at this moment

cooks black beans and hand-made  
tortillas, but for whom,  
if there is no one at the top of that hill pasturing  
their five goats or gathering firewood to sell.

She walks along the clear-water creek,  
and when she gets to the hill, she remembers  
her husband who left for the north. She sits  
under the shade of that stout pirul tree and eats  
the tacos, so her children won't ask for their dad.

When she sees herself in the mirror, braiding her long black hair  
he is behind her. Her eyes shine, his dark body is transparent.  
He reaches out, almost tenderly caressing her tanned bare shoulder,  
but it is just another small blackberry he pulls

off the vine and gently drops in the white bucket.  
She turns around; he is not there. Gently laid out  
on bed is the striped white and blue shirt he forgot  
to take and she does not want to put away.

KEVIN MILLER



KEVIN MILLER



## FEBRUARY

ISAI AMBROSIO

The twenty-acre field was a dirty mirror of unplanned waterways.  
News told "el niño" had hit hard on Watsonville,  
Our job was to drain the liquid into nearby roads.  
Too much water was no good for the blackberry plants

but it refused to flow out of the rows making my toes  
suffocate inside my brown work boots.  
The berry plants were not as green as I saw  
them in the summer. They were static and dead

as a forgotten black and white photograph.  
I didn't see any tender buds, flowers,  
or thorny branches and leaves. There wasn't pollen  
to harvest or hard-working bees. I thought

I would never see these old plants bloom again,  
but that morning there was an orange-colored dawn  
in the horizon, no clouds, no birds, just radiation that made  
the sky look empty, I had seen that picture before,  
the sign that a long season was ahead of us.



# EULOGY FOR THE MONTEREY SARDINE

Gone:  
Silver scaled  
Pesce di mare-  
La Sardinda  
Shiny as the key-top  
Roll-back tin cans  
They vacated  
The Monterey Sardine --  
Cheap protein for depression years  
Feeding front lines  
World War II  
At our home, a favored food  
On slabs of crusty sour dough  
Gone:  
Slippery fish  
Leaving behind  
Hundreds of pairs  
Rubber gloves,  
Black high top water- proof boots  
Worn by uniformed women  
In wide white hats  
Standing at conveyor belts  
Gone:  
Noisy Machinery  
Dexterous Sicilians  
Grandmothers, daughters, and teens  
In oil skin aprons  
On 12 hour shifts  
At thirty three and a half cents an hour

Gone:  
Robust Italians  
Dads and sons  
Pescatores  
Manning Purse Seine Trawlers  
Essential to the war effort  
Calloused-hands idle  
Fish nets no longer  
In need of mending  
Gone:  
Shrill whistle  
Blasts cutting  
Through dark or fog  
From shore-line canneries  
To forest ridges  
Giving workers 45 minutes-  
Arriving mostly by foot-  
To punch the time clock  
As boats  
Low in the water  
Unload heavy hulls  
At cannery docks  
Gone:  
Grown and old  
Children like me  
In the school yards  
Colton or Pine Street schools  
Stepping out for recess  
To a wall of stench  
Soon after siren blasts  
Meant our mothers, aunts, or sisters  
Would not be home 'til late  
No, not until  
The last fish was packed  
At 5,000 tins an hour  
Loaded on waiting box cars

Gone:  
Steinbeck's neighbors  
Doc Watson's Lab  
Flora's girls, Wing Chong's abacus  
Good natured winos  
Starving artists living in  
Old fish shacks for little rent  
The steamy Chinese restaurant on pilings  
Warn tables lit by low wattage bulbs  
We peered through grimy windows  
To catch sight at sunset  
The fleet headed to the wharf  
Gone:  
In the 50's  
Fickle Sardines  
Replaced by streaming tourists  
Upscale boutiques, tee shirt shops  
Pricey eateries, \$300 a night hotels  
Huge parking lots where  
Corked nets were spread to dry  
The Hovden Cannery morphed  
Into the Monterey Bay Aquarium  
Hosting incarcerated sardines  
On view as atonement  
Arrivederci  
Monterey Sardines  
Leaving old timers to swap tales  
Scholars to write books  
Scientists to ponder  
The vagaries of fish migration  
And me to write this poem  
And remember. Remember.

JULEEN JOHNSON



This issue is dedicated to the  
memory of Ric Masten, who  
said Let It Always Be A Dance.

