Introduction
We are proud to present the 16th edition of the Porter Gulch Review, which was started in 1985 and only had about twenty submissions—a far cry from today’s PGR. The 2001 Porter Gulch Review was put together by a collection of 28 hard working students in their English 1B class at Cabrillo College. The PGR gives novice and experienced writers, photographers, and artists in the Santa Cruz County area and beyond a chance to get their work published. It was a tough decision but we were able to anonymously pick 52 submissions out of over 330 submitted. We would like to thank all the artists, writers, and poets who submitted their work this year.

Submission Guidelines for Spring 2002 PGR
We invite submissions of short stories, poetry, excerpts from novels, screenplays, plays, photography and artwork for the 2002 issue by February 14th. All prose (two per writer, 5,000 word maximum), and poetry (four per writer), must be in triplicate, single sided, typed, single-spaced, in a 9X12 envelope with the title of the submissions, your name, address, e-mail address and telephone number on a cover page only. Do not staple or use paper clips on any of the pages. Please put your name and contact information on the back of each piece of artwork. Do not send originals, as we are unable to return submissions. All entries must include a computer disk which exactly duplicates the hard copies; use 10 point Palatino font, include your name, and save your files in Rich Text Format. Send to: Porter Gulch Review, Cabrillo College, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA 95003.

Staff Members for the 2001 Porter Gulch Review
Gabriel Anguiano, Lori Bravo, Vance Buckreus, Sara Cunningham-Farish, Shannon Drake, Brenna Dunn, Elinore Eaton, Rob Goldschmidt, Nigel Genthner, Sandy Hager, Gabe Houston, Hao Huang ( ), Imelda Jimenez, Kearstin Krehbiel, Angel Luna, Seth Magnuson, Christina Mardirosian, Donna Marinkovich, Emily McCarron, Susannah Moore, William Norteye, Laura Patterson, Leah Quinn, Julie Richardson, Ashley Smith, Janet Thelen, Jay Weber, and Maia Yepa. With help from Daniel James Howell and Michael Barnum. The instructor was David Sullivan.

Prose Award: For Susan Allison’s Mated Ones
Mary Lonnberg Smith Poetry Award: For Joan McMillan’s Ash, and for Julia Alter’s Ay Mama
Graphics Award: Jenny Angelacos for her photographs
Thanks to Tony Torres, Francine Van Meter, and David Warren for assistance with production using Photoshop and Pagemaker programs. Porter Gulch Review was printed by Sheridan Books. Special thanks to Cabrillo Community College for generously funding Porter Gulch Review.
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Janet Fine
The entire Porter Gulch Review, with book reviews as well as articles by the staff about some of the submissions, is online at www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/divisions/english/portergulch/pgrspr01

Kearstin Krehbiel
[does evil always bud from good, like]
Graham McGrew

does evil always bud from good, like
the crayonbox of colors which slides
over the skin of a soap bubble
cloudshadow across the plain,
, spins from the black acres of a record
lust and grotesquely full,
oak branches and their image
in the pebbledropped pond?

redwood needles the color of the rails’
twin horizons: lashes drawn
over sepia irises. Each act cracks
into two strangers. When they meet,
we go home.

Elizabeth Nissen
What I think of now are not the years of drinking, 
nights fractured to an obsidian edge, 
what I remember is the way she would leave a cigarette 
balanced on the edge of the bathroom sink 
as she scrubbed tile to a hospital shine. 
Like incense it would smolder on the white ceramic, 
the fissured print of her lips on the filter 
always a soft, deep vermilion that barely touched 
the line of menthol blue, thread-thin, 
and the embossed word, Salem, in Gothic script, 
this small emblem of her life, burning down its length each day, 
fragile, turning silently to ash, with all its bright stains visible.
Reliquary

Alanna Alter

Tears of chandeliers
a transparent trail through Spain
of cobblestones
and minarets
and storks

Sultry evenings of sudden humid showers
hasty slaps of thunder
grainy sky shedding tears
for civil wars
for blood of bulls
for cathedrals cold

Tall arching stones suspend
crimson bishop cadaver robes
mourning centuries of echoing lamentations

Cathedrals wintry with crystallized tears of widows
perpetual haggard ravens
grieving for their annoying husbands—
dead—no good for nagging

Bleached tears of Santa Teresa, pobrecita
I followed her broken bones
Avila to Madrid, Burgos to Salamanca
a fragment of her body in every cathedral

Scattered remnants of a life
of a woman
of sanctity
and ice cathedrals awash in hot tears
and tears in the shattered silk of a soul

Clerestory tears
glass stained
with the blood of martyrs
and Catholic Kings
and of Franco and vino
and broken knees
Serpentine mosaic baking under the northern sun  
undulating spirit of Spain  
tortured angst-spun spires

Gaudí tells his apprentice  
come again tomorrow  
and we will create beautiful things  
but tomorrow he breaks under a streetcar  
and Barcelona cries

And decades later  
I find the purloined cut glass tears

Jaimie Strickland
Bittersweet

Alanna Alter

You’ve given me babies
conceived in a strangle of ankle-bunched denim

Jalapeno babies conceived on hot tiles
conceived in a tin mirror, conceived in a hostile house

Daily I give birth to your angst-wrapped offspring
the only babies you’ll ever give me

I’m delivered of your babies in a hospital for the lovelocked
in an infirmary for loveworn poets

Your phantom newborns wail silently in the cavern of nightwind
I love your rainbabies born of missing-you tears

Babies under glass, babies under scrutiny
hurt-her babies, hurt-me babies

Haven’t-seen-you-for-days
do-you-love-me-just-a-little babies

Where-the-hell-are-you babies abrade me
with your absence

How-could-you how-could-I babies
will-you-be-here-tomorrow babies

Moonlight babies glow in my lonely shadow
while your midnight smile lights up Los Angeles

Your pouty babies bloom in the stillborn night
needy insomniac infants delivered in another lover’s bed

Beautiful infants swaddled in Mama’s stubborn lullabies
bittersweet babies shrouded in their father’s indifference

You and your babies steal my sleep, my peace
hard labor, birthing your babies

I carry your babies high, tucked up safe and sacred under my heart
as close to you as I’ll ever get
I just love those thangs
hangin’ from yer ‘lobes, baby
fresh from the mines of Santa Fe’s
Wanna be Native American
Women of Pallor factory
manufactured in the
traditional setting of
the plush wall to wall carpeted
living room of a two thousand
square foot adobe lookalike
sacred blood red tile roofed Anderson home.
I just love the way they sparkle in the
fluorescent
White light.
technicalities of motion  Katie Frey

driving,
it was a chance meeting,
on a hot summer day with the 
windows down 
in the backseat between backpacks 
air whipped violent convulsions 
leaving little to do but close our 
eyes 
and the wind spoke louder than 
voices—
it was the organic spontaneity of 
motion, 
that was travel; 
it was the double meaning of 
stepping through a doorway: 
into, out of.

on our left 
strawberry fields 
reflected the glimmer of Apollo: 
plump on tangled vines 
it was a sweetness that was found 
in the solitude of a confidant, 
pumpkin patches 
and green pastures 
disrupted only by the occasional 
creek 
marching its ravine to the ocean, 
a hidden footpath 
that led—us over there…

the ir-rational of temptation 
driving, 
the two-bit hamburger joint, 
mustard on fries 
and an outhouse with plumbing 
on the way to the coast,
as contradictory as the uneven grade—
new asphalt, 
the sketched outline of center 
reflectors 
that ended in late nights at 
Safeway 
with birthday shots of Citron 
where we sat talking;

the greatness of a new beginning 
is that it is potential. 
on a clear day we stole again to the 
sea, 
curved amid rolling grassland, 
a narrowing road 
that ended at the sooted stones 
and a remainder of crushed tin 
cans 
we sat on the rocks and watched 
the waves 
ticking an endless cycle, 
and you told me you didn’t 
believe, in needing 
forgiveness, 
or that regret would be the only 
catalyst for change;
and what did the ocean ever regret 
swallowing California into its 
abysmal depths.

pink remained on calm waters, 
a lasting promise of the day—
and a silhouette of tennis shoes, 
legs that leaned back from the 
vantage of the stony beach, 
a star 
that was most likely Venus 
extended arms to catch 
what gold crowned, 
purled the streaks 
of mussel shells, 
paused voices 
in hesitation,
bent coarse reeds westward on the sand dunes while pantomiming between rocks it was an inner compulsion or perhaps a pattern, lighting crimson tones on sea anemones staged between puddle and sand, motion sensored waiting for the tide.

the water came up slowly taking bits of California with it to pitch beneath the currents, rub smooth, and be found on a beach, put in a jar, unnamed, one of many, turning in and out along the steep cliff—we drove again, for hours sitting in the car, the unaccustomed feeling of contentment bounced off rear view mirrors, and wide-eyed awe refracted in the windshield here the air had a freshness that enacted deep breathing.

was it to move or be moved by— brown kelp littered the beach, grew in forests of an intertidal sanctuary: bound to the rocks buoyed by otters a strong fast root that held the shore against the endless continuum of braying water, defining the cold coastline

eelgrass rose as columns to the krill, swaying in the rips, mixing with the moss, and on the shore taciturn lichen aged stone.

eelgrass rose as columns to the krill, swaying in the rips, mixing with the moss, and on the shore taciturn lichen aged stone.

symbiotic, it was the touch, swept cloudless by the wind a wash of sea foam etched landscapes, erratic and quietly antagonistic: the war between Thanatos and Eros we sat on the rocks and watched the tide magnetic retraction off a set of waves, a negative pulsation, the completion of an episode, two hands slipping apart that fit better in their own pockets— driving home in silence the dim headlights catch the ripples of the water the ocean is still eating California.
Playing By The Rules
Amber Coverdale Sumrall

We haven’t spoken since we left the house three long hours ago. Resentment flares, a brushfire raging out of control, consuming oxygen, filling up the space our flammable words occupied. We are on our way to Yosemite, to fish the high mountain streams, surround ourselves with peace and quiet. Silence festers as we cross the San Joaquin, constricts our hearts. We both know the rules. The first one to utter a word is the loser.

Heat wraps itself around us like a snake, wrings water from our skin. We pass signs advertising freshly-picked peaches, plums, cherries. I left our lunch at home, brought only water, which is now tepid. Outside Oakdale the cherry-cider signs begin. Ice cold, they say. Refreshing! Sweet and delicious! Slow down now! You sneak a sideways look at me, trying to gauge my expression, detect some sign of life. Unblinking, I stare straight ahead. There is no saliva in my mouth.

You missed it! the sign says. Last Chance! Turn Around Now! You brake suddenly, make an illegal U-turn, park in the shade of a sycamore, slam the door, and disappear into the cool darkness of the fruit stand. Returning with two large clear plastic cups you lean into the truck like a carhop, smile into my eyes. Sweetness opens my throat. Clotted words begin to flow. Thank you, I say, gladly accepting defeat. Dark crimson stains our lips, mouths, tongues, kisses.
Cut-Rate Liquor

Jarret Keene

1
The sign says, NO CHECKS!
There’s no one to guide you.
Ask for the product by its name.
Don’t touch anything but your wallet.

Everything in this store is heavy.
Vodka squats in oversized jugs.
The beaujolais runs darker than blood.
Here even champagne is gravity’s slave.

In the adjacent lounge, drinks are named
After poisonous snakes. Cigarette smoke
Drifts across a gallery of ruined faces. Hours later,
The whiskey tastes like iced tea.

Blinds you.

The ditch digger crumples ones and fives.
The labor pooler jangles pocket change.
The toothless solicitor kneels,
Cups his drool in his hands.

The homeless always pay more.

Back outside, someone will confront you,
Some rotten, wing-clipped angel in thirdhand rags.
Give him a dollar, but do not let him speak.
Silence him with tales of baby Jesus.
Ask innocently if he accepts his own heart.

Lie and make him promise to steal.

2
This angel will mouth an incantation:
I was once a high school football star.
I was a helicopter pilot in Nam.
I play the harmonica, no, the bagpipes,
Your sister’s trombone. I was injured by a tractor.
My wife shot me three times in the back.
Jesus put me here to read the funnies.
Over 300 white women have consented to enjoy
Sexual experiences with me. In the summer,
I punch horses. As you can plainly see,
I’m half machine, half polar bear.
This is why my ass never freezes in Antarctica.

In your hand, the dollar hangs.
A strip of skin.

So follow his haunted stride
As the sun mocks the moon.
He leads you past dogshit,
Through a bottle-littered parking lot,
Under a devil’s streetlight.
He opens the door for you.
Enter a miserable dimension where
Everything is for sale and
Everything is an endless cure.
Ask for the product by its name.
Gather your crumbled bills.
The line for the broken

Starts here.

Stuart Presley
Ay, Mama

Julia Alter

Cross the bridge over Rio Sagrado, past the gypsy printed in roses with her crumpled hunger. Cross the bridge and look down into the grey water, see the new wings roll in your reflection.

Pass the peasant woman with her velvet moan, fraying the air around the edges. Walk into Cafe Rubia, hear the dust bellow, a sweet Cuban hum. Watch ice melting in the grey glass, sweat dripping down the side.

Watch how night enters the cafe slow, how darkness brings smoke and lovers, how the female figure by the jukebox begins to gyrate, blue globes of ass moving slow, then louder, drawing to eyes of village men:

Ay Mama, they sing to her hungry. Ay Mama. And the only thing she will bring home with her is the cigar smoke held hostage in her dress. She will cross the bridge over Rio Sagrado, think of pan dulce, of spicy white rice and platanos. She will go home hungry from dancing, leave in her wake a silhouette in front of the smoky jukebox, a female shadow caned from smoke, roiling her r’s and her hips. Ay Mama, the cantina boys will sing.

And the river will open wide for her, like arms. And the river will open wide for her, like legs. And the river will open wide for her—split piñata pouring out the liquid voices of the village men, pouring out their longing in the voice of the river. Ay Mama.

And she will drift home on air, intoxicated by trumpets and satin dingo guitar and her dreams will be made of dust and red ribbons trailed over the eyes and her dream will be smoke and the voice of Rio Sagrado, opening its eyes at her in the moonlight, closing them again.

The voice crying, Ay Mama, spilling the moon down her scams, her dreams of dancing, will lick the air around her, puncture the night in stiletto clicks: Ay Mama Ay Mama
For Eden Jequinto

Woman, your power scares me.
While the audience stares into you
   as you stare into them,
the microphone
your only instrument of determination,
your youthful wildness
reaches far beyond your years—
The fire of art personified into something human,
the sharpness of a tongue
that releases the burning from within
and a spoken syllable of yours that
loosens the foundations that anchor
our flesh and bone to this domain.

You leave me spineless, crushed to the floor,
unable to bear your spirit or the words
you left ringing in my ear.

For each word that you exhale,
I look within myself
and cut a mental notch
to keep a count of how many times
you broke me.
These Women Sometimes Carry
Heath Havlick

I think about the women
who leave before dawn
with their babies and their empty buckets.
They walk for hours every day,
village to village, well to cistern to spigot.

These women sometimes carry
seventy percent of their body weight
balanced on their heads
with strong, practiced necks.

These women sometimes carry
wasted hours and despotism,
guerilla checkpoints
and the encroaching Sahara,
despair and duty and silence.

But these women sometimes carry
leisure in their mouths,
songs and histories and gossip,
laughter for themselves
and for their children,
laughter like helium
lifting away the heaviness
of limbs weary from
holding up the world.
Had my parents had any sense I would have been born on a smooth stained glass floor. I am in love with the raingold of doorways, the altars. Alter. To change and change again. Because I am really the milkman’s child I thought of changing the name. Because my father’s hands loom and squish the goblet. Because my father is too tall to enter the thousand foot cathedral.

If my parents had had any sense I would have been a ruby clean birth, kicking like a live red wire. I would have birthed out spattering prayer, mouth full of rosary beads, hailing mary. There were three mary alters in my family. The youngest one cried for wanting to look jesus in the eyes, the only cure for her rebel cells.

Had my parents had any sense I would have been the etching of mary born in the bark of elm on pinto lake in watsonville. Believers would congregate at the roots, dripping with prayer, heads draped in handmade doilies, tacking up photos of missing brothers with sap and sticky tears. Some would come packing pistols, low riding dragons, drink six packs of blue ribbon at the base of my shadow all sunday.

Oh had my parents had any sense I would be a chalk sidewalk painting of the madonna, fading unto mutes and blinds of blood colors, eye colors, elbow colors. But I want to be an ancient altar—not an installation—every sacred offering at my feet wrapped in a blessing of yes for the world. I want to make dinner for the world...or maybe I’ll just make bread. I love the sponge of dough, The live rising, its scent of yeast and semen fresh from the altar of ovens.
somewhere in the water, somewhere along the banks, somewhere walking under the autumn elms, she had let go of her dream, the one where she walked with that blue eyed man, down the whiteblue aisle, down the aisle of the stained glass church, bleached paper dress, wind spilling autumn through leaves, through the open topaz eaves. She breathed her dreams out along the river, watched them spin the surface, saw gargoyles diving with their tucked gray grimaces carving down the river, away with her dream, their feet soaked in cement, hands full of rocks, mouths choking back her unborn. And she took comfort in the wool shield around her shoulders, took comfort in her apartment with its garnet door, the gargoyle knocker glinting just below the peephole and she took comfort in the fact that dreams were born to spill, dreams were born in the echoes of other stained churches in the arms of monsters graying in the mossy distance, born again at the mouth of rivers

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 3
Litany
Carol A Housner

Sometimes it feels I’m always saying goodbye
the words tripping off my tongue like a mantra or dirge
sorrow rubbing against my heart like a thumb across
the reverent surface of rosary beads,
offering up loss as sacrifice, one by one.

I say goodbye to lovers and their mouths murmur penitence,
spill it onto my palm like shards of stained glass.

I say goodbye to friends and their eyes drape affection
across my shoulders like a prayer shawl my fingers pull close.

I say goodbye to a state of mind, a belief, a dream
and the world slides over to press against my arm,
whisper benedictions into the haloed silence.

Each time I say goodbye, a door closes
and I kneel in the dark again, breathing in
the pungent incense of memories, absorbing
their dense weight into my skin.

Each time, I climb onto the altar,
anticipate flame.

Each time, I wait for salvation

Sometimes it feels I’m always saying goodbye
the words slipping into the air to gather like ghosts,
line up in a diaphanous procession of mourners
to chant long images into the past, create
covenants of beginnings
into the now.
I don’t know exactly what a prayer is, something like the gargoyle waiting
grin slashed across his face. Something like the cloud of a geranium exploded against green. Something like the sound of the red cathedral door gashing open. Something like smoke hieroglyphing air when the
flame disappears. Something like the scent of my lover’s neck.

A prayer is something like laughter. Something backboned, even fragile, a bridge. Something like the glaze that shines banana bread. Something like new carpet. Something like old carpet and the trails worn between
habits.
I don’t know. And that not knowing may be exactly what a prayer is, the letting go of the need, the begging for openness, the thanking and the wishing.

I know what a prayer is—the red-orange sun bulbing through smog, the horizon waving its capes over the Seine. A prayer is rising past four thousand feet in elevation, five thousand, until clouds bow, showing you the tops of their heads, their white wigs, their grey wings covering what used to be the valley below.
Being on top of and next to clouds is a prayer. I know.

The sound of my mother’s laugh, how inside of it is begging, the splitting open of brain, slipping open of thigh, the birthing and pleading that her children outlive her, that her oldest son is not swallowed whole by a volcano, that the red mouth of the sun, the garnet gash of mountaintop once active with molten tongue is not hungry, that the world is not ready for her son to go. This is prayer

the begging inside of laughter. And time is a prayer, each second licking the back of the next, the way we live each moment without falling down, exchanging our knees for earth. The way we hold ourselves up, the way we ask the sky each day what it holds out for us. The way we accept the morning, the way
The world gashes open its mouth. The way we wait and wait.
Fog lifts off the sea like dry ice, veils the forest. Trees disappear, and the narrow, snaking road.

Wisps of cool grey stream past my trailer window. I light candles, steep black tea with milk.

The foxes are never in the meadow when I look for them; I catch them out of the corner of my eye when I have forgotten.

If you search for what is lost in the mind’s clutter something unexpected dislodges to take its place.

When I call in its own voice, the redtail stops circling, lands in the Monterey Pine to see if I am a match.

Your friend thinks all the birds are leaving. Could this be what it’s like to lose one’s prayer?

That thought came out of nowhere, I said. No, you said, it came out of everywhere.
In the pottery studio you throw rice bowls; I read the *Art of Disappearing*.
The children we once were knock at the door.

When you were a boy you leapt off the roof
with an umbrella, landed on the lawn.

You have to stop this trying to fly, your mother told you.
You don’t understand, you replied. *I was* flying.

Raised on miracles, apparitions, we looked outside ourselves,
outside creation. But simply to walk on the earth is a miracle.

Wild morning glories climb the porch stairs.
Hidden inside each one is an ivory star, which opens in sunlight.

I am always in a state of longing.
Even my desire not to want is a yearning.

I ring Tibetan bells to clear the air.
Dragonflies hover, thin bolts of blue lightning.

A swallowtail flits from coyote mint to thistleflower.
There is nothing to be done, you tell me, wanting is enough.

The hummingbird blends into the bottlebrush plant,
one brilliance next to another, stillness on the branch.
Ollalie
Jeff Tagami

One morning
In the year my father
Gave up sharecropping
For good, he led
My two brothers and me
Outside to the long gangway.
There, lying on their sides.
On the wooden planks
Were three coffee cans.
With a hammer and nail
He punctured two holes in each,
Threaded a long loop of string,
Through the holes
Until they became small buckets
To hang from our necks.

We drove away from our farm
That did not belong to us
Past the unplanted fields,
Drove past town
To where the mountains rose
High from the flat land
Of someone else’s farm.
There was row
After row of neat hedges,
But they were not hedges.
They were vines,
And inside, blackberries
Called Ollalie.

After my father left,
It was an afternoon
Of green gnats that swarmed
Our faces whenever we stirred
The leaves, red juice
That tattooed each finger
For every berry we touched,
The sound of blackberries
Dropping into our coffee cans,
The tartness of blackberries

On our tongues.
It was the first time
We did not work
For our father.

Jaimie Strickland
I am the loser who never gets anything right
I am the wimp who gets picked on in gym class
I am the little girl with the fear of heights and spiders
and planes and the dark and death and boogie-monsters...I still sleep with stuffed animals.

KOAK