

## 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.