

# WATERSHED



# **WATERSHED**

A Literary Magazine

**Volume 14, Number 2**

## **Watershed**

### **Editors**

*Den'Al Damron*

*Zan Meyer*

*Rachel Plosser*

*David Quiray*

### **Advisor**

*Casey Huff*

### **Cover Design**

*Michael Bernal*

A special acknowledgement to Gregg Berryman and his CDES 23 class for assistance with the cover.

### **Sponsors**

English Department, CSUC

Instructionally Related Activities:

This magazine is funded by Student Activity Fees

Copyright © 1991 Department of English, CSUC

## **Editors' Note**

The United States waged war in the Persian Gulf this year, an event which made most of us consider conflict on a large scale. The pieces we accepted for publication reflect global conflict and personal struggles, provoking sadness, empathy, laughter, hope, and despair. These authors speak of survival—how their power was taken from them and how they empowered themselves, striving to become whole.

We thank everyone who responded to our call for manuscripts.

## Contents

<b>Illustration .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Raul Ramirez</i>	
<b>When I Blink .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Rachel T. Cannon</i>	
<b>Nasser in the IDF .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Connie Pratt</i>	
<b>Dirty Bill .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>J.C. Garvin</i>	
<b>The Cheater .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Rose Calvano</i>	
<b>To Janesville and Back .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Susan Shaw</i>	
<b>Cancer .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Kandie St. Germain-Fowler</i>	
<b>Illustration .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Ann Reesman</i>	
<b>Christmas on Road P .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Chance Bailey</i>	
<b>Chances .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Emily D. West</i>	
<b>Grandma's Sixty Mutated Cats .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Alana Williams</i>	

<b>Silent Night .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Emily D. West</i>	
<b>Illustration .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Ann Reesman</i>	
<b>Sorting Out .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Monica Reller</i>	
<b>When the Rain Comes .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Mary Bailey</i>	
<b>Tunnel-Moon .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Calie Jo Varnell</i>	
<b>Illustration .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Ann Reesman</i>	
<b>Kaedo .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Kamela Mariposa Day Purl</i>	
<b>Termites .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Katharine Morelli</i>	
<b>Reflections on the Start of Anti-War (1968) .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<i>Brad Brown</i>	
<b>New Tricks .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>Bob Garner</i>	
<b>Followed by the Moon .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Kandie St. Germain-Fowler</i>	



*Raul Ramirez*

## **When I Blink...**

When I blink my eyes I can see far away and inside for just a moment. In that split second thoughts I have tried to banish from my mind come back to haunt me: seeing the fear and exhaustion on the young, sunburned faces looking into the CNN cameras with battered smiles; seeing the terrified Iraqi soldier as he runs through the tired rubble of what used to be his home; seeing Ed's cheerful face in the picture on my dresser and trying not to imagine that same face grim in death as they hand his father a carefully folded flag.... But that might not happen. And I open my eyes and close my mind again; sometimes it's easier that way and I go on as before, and then I blink again.



## **Nasser in the IDF**

Palestine brought us together in friendship, and now, it seemed I was repulsed by the dearest friend I had. Nasser was dressed in the uniform of his mortal enemy, an Israeli Defense Force soldier. It was only a pre-arranged, staged event to show the brutal nature of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but to see him standing in that uniform....

I had missed the event. When Nasser finished speaking with the TV news reporter, he came to me with a smile that said the event had been successful. It made him more attractive than usual to see his excitement at having the opportunity to get his message across to the American audience. But, somehow, my natural desire to touch his hand in a show of friendship and solidarity with his cause was gone. He was dressed as his mortal enemy. I say enemy because the Israeli Defense Forces have no mercy in dealing with the Palestinian people. Not even the children. Not even when Nasser's grandmother died, and they wouldn't let her sons take her body to be buried for three days. The world won't tolerate overt genocide, so it happens one step at a time. One Palestinian at a time.

Nasser had the opportunity to see how it feels to be on the other side. The side with the guns. The gas. "How did it feel?" He looked at me and the smiles and joy of having been able to "possibly" help his people disappeared. The deep sadness and despair of twenty-two years of incremental understanding Nasser rarely allows to surface filled his eyes. "Ya nee, I don't know how they can do it. It felt so bad. I could barely do it."

Nasser is always laughing. He says he has to or die. He had no bullets, no beating stick. The people who participated as Palestinians had agreed to this staged raid. There was no humiliation such as riding the students like a donkey or making them bark like a dog, as so many Palestinians have suffered. There was Nasser, who could barely play the game...because he knows how it feels. He knows.

The next time he stops laughing, his eyes will fill with even deeper sadness from even deeper understanding, and as a gift for his twenty-second birthday, even deeper despair.

## **Dirty Bill**

Dirty Bill  
Standing on the sidewalk  
soiled clothes  
a torn back pack  
his life inside

He greeted me  
long unwashed hair  
yellow smile  
offered me a cigarette

He spoke deep,  
broken words  
A story  
sure to lead into  
his bitter life

He once had it all  
at least more than he had now  
"I drink too much"  
The smell was obvious

We stood together  
watching cars pass  
exchanging philosophies  
laughing occasionally  
into the cold night

We shook hands  
he smiled  
I went home  
Bill sat on his sidewalk sofa

*J.C. Garvin*

## **The Cheater**

You were gone  
on a long  
discovery cruise  
trying to find the inside of you  
And, you know,  
your leaving made me think  
and question  
why  
I'd never been intimate with a White guy  
Like a mustard seed  
the question grew inside of me  
until I couldn't choke it back  
It made me wonder what I lacked  
So I slipped, shaking, into the night  
to try to find somebody White  
And I brought home a blue-eyed man  
held him, laughed, and clasped his hand  
He never knew my desperate plight  
He entered me and made things right  
I could speak of guilt and lies  
but I always knew the reason why  
I became a cheater...

*Rose Calvano*

## **To Janesville and Back**

This is like sex without foreplay, I think to myself. I talked him into the trip. I made the reservations, had the car serviced, and now I am packing our clothes. Something to go out to dinner in, bathing suits for the spa, ski clothes, long underwear, and four pairs of jockey shorts. All he has to do is drag himself away from work, hop in the car, and turn the key.

The kids yell to me gaily from the backyard as I carry the suitcases and ski equipment to the car. It is a sparkling, crunchy-cold January day. But dark clouds are gathering off to the east, promising new snow.

I pack and re-pack the trunk, carefully using every inch of space (Walter doesn't like anything wasted, even trunk space). I almost forget the camera and binoculars. He would have been disappointed.

My mother watches this process offering little comment. Her eyes scan the gentle, sloping pastures that surround the house. She watches the breeze make the leaves dance in the trees that line the long driveway and surround the barn. Off to the left is a black-bottom swimming pool surrounded by natural stone. She can see the reflection of tall pines in the water. "This ranch is spectacular," she muses aloud. "More beautiful than anything I could ever have wished for you, Jane."

"Yes, I'm proud of it, too. The years of work and planning show, don't they?" The ranch is Walter's dream, but the expression of that dream is mine. He is never home.

"Are you feeling all set for us to leave?" I ask mother as we walk into the house.

"Yes, we'll be fine. I'm looking forward to some time away from your father. He's been like a stone around my neck ever since he retired."

"Well, things aren't so great here either," I say. "It's been a difficult year for Walter and me." I pour us some coffee and carry the steaming mugs into the dining room. I know that Walter will be late; he's always late. But this time I am grateful for the extra hour or so that I will have to talk to my mother. "Something is really wrong with Walter. He looks right through me." Imaginary hands grip my throat, throttling my windpipe as I search for words to describe the uninhab-

ited shell that our marriage has become. For a moment, we watch the clouds stealing swiftly by the window. "Lately, I have to press him for every moment he spends with the kids and me. He didn't even want to go skiing this time."

"What do you make of it?" she asks.

"I don't know for sure." As panic wells up from my abdomen, I tell her about Louise. "You know Walter's office nurse? Well, she's needed a lot of support ever since I hired her a year ago. Her husband is a used car salesman that's been black-balled by the car dealers in town. He took a kick back of some kind, and now he can't find work. Two months ago she suddenly became too busy for our weekly lunches, and she began acting like she could hardly wait to get me off of the phone. It seemed so strange.... I thought I must have said something to offend her. I called her yesterday to ask her when we could talk. She hemmed and hawed around with so much anger in her voice that I knew she would have hung up on me if I weren't her boss."

"What do you think is going on?" my mother asks quietly.

The words come tumbling out of my mouth now, crystalizing possibilities I hadn't allowed myself to consider. "Well, I think Walter has been telling her that I'm some sort of villain in this relationship or something. Or," I say haltingly, "maybe he's having an affair with her." I sink back in my chair with a loud sigh, and I realize that I have been holding my breath.

Ben and Jeremy come running up to the window to tell us that their daddy is home. They are bounding up and down like two puppies, anticipating a few moments of rough and tumble with their favorite fellow. The silence of the dining room is pierced by shrieks of laughter as Walter comes in the door. Jeremy is dangling precariously from Walter's shoulder and Ben is draped upside down over his left arm.

"Hi Shiela!" Walter says to my mother. "How's it going?" He is gathering up reading material for the trip, too busy to notice that she doesn't answer his question.

"Come on Jane, let's hit the road. We're getting a late start. I want to get some skiing in this afternoon."

As we walk outside, I bend down to gather Ben and Jeremy in my arms for kisses and hugs. As their maleness requires, they resist for the obligatory moment and then abandon themselves to my

affections. Walter calls "Let's go!" from the car. I carefully turn my back to the boys so they will not see the signal I give to Walter, reminding him to hug them good-bye.

The road speeds by as we head up into the foothills. Walter sinks back into his seat and snaps on the radio. He hums along with Linda Ronstadt. Walter loves to drive. He seems to lose himself in the execution of perfect turns on the convoluted road. A fine sprinkling of snow begins to fall, and the trees stand taller as they gratefully receive their new coats.

"Did you bring sandwiches?" he asks. "I'm hungry."

"Yes, do you want something to drink, too?" I reach into the cooler on the back seat and pull out a pastrami on rye.

"Don't you have tuna?" he asks, turning the sandwich over in his hand.

"No. Do you want a Coke?"

"Okay," he says.

Only an hour has passed since I first considered the possibility that Walter is having an affair, but now my head is filled with nothing else. I know the truth, and I am desperate to bring it out into the open. "Walter," I say, mustering every bit of courage that I have ever owned, "Louise has been acting funny lately. I talked with her yesterday and I've come to the conclusion that you have been making me out to be a bad guy to her, or...or, you're having an affair with her. Which is it?"

"What made you decide that?" he asks tensely. The muscles around his jaw are visibly tightening.

"It's complicated," I say. "Well, which is it?" The silence seems to last for miles. I am forgetting to breathe again.

Finally, he says, "I love her. I've been in love with her for over a year." Now, I am not breathing at all. My heart continues to beat, and the trees continue swiftly past. My feet press hard into the floorboard, and I grip the armrest as if it is a lifeline. I'm still sane, I think in wonderment. I'm not screaming. My composure feels strangely foreign. I wonder if people are calm like this when they die.

The wind is blowing harder now, driving the snow with a fury. How can this be? I'm the one that's always wanted more than this relationship had to offer; Walter's first love is work. "Well," I say finally, "I'm envious of you. I've been lonely for a long time, and you have somebody."

We drove on without talking. I had long since turned off the radio and now only the windshield wipers break the silence as they beat away the snow.

My life appears before me like a comic strip. How could I, a marriage counselor, be married to a man in love with another woman? I, knowing so much about relationships and communication and commitment. So many years volunteering at the kids' school. Ever vigilant to save them from the trauma of a non-supportive teacher. Years building the ranch, bringing flesh and beauty to Walter's dream. Thirteen years of effort exploding now like atoms in a chain reaction.

It is snowing so hard; I can barely see. Or, is the blinding whiteness in my mind's eye?

"How could you? How COULD you?" I ask accusingly between sobs that are wrenching themselves free of my control.

"I'm surprised that you care," he says sincerely. "I know I have always disappointed you."

"How can you do this to the kids?" I ask quickly, raising a shield to fend off his words.

"I don't love you," he said. "I never did. You pushed me into marrying you."

His words silence me as I know they were meant to do. He is trying to render himself blameless. Still, I HAD pursued him. He was so tall and he had such broad shoulders. He was going to be a doctor, too. My mother always said it was as easy to love a rich man as a poor one. I never doubted that he would learn to love me as other men had, and I never forgave him for the fact that he hadn't.

The road begins to straighten out as we approach Janesville. He swings the car into a gas station. To save six cents per gallon, Walter stands in the freezing weather to fill the gas tank. Completely without premeditation, I slide into the driver's seat as he leaves to pay the attendant. I rev up the engine and pull the car out onto the road.

I will always remember the look on his face in the rear view mirror as I start the long journey home.

## **Cancer**

The ribbed shell broods  
on the sandy floor  
pressing the sea  
within itself.

The oyster is clever.  
It merely surrounds grainy intruders  
with warm salt entrails and nacre,  
forming a cool lily knob.

Floating grains enter the woman  
through her footprints,  
not through her clenched skull.

They weave and whistle  
in her pumping blood—  
until truth can be  
rain and sleep.

Until truth  
can be pearls.

*Kandie St. Germain-Fowler*





*Ann Reesman*

## **Christmas on Road P**

Their first Christmas tree.  
The animals living near Road P,  
decided to celebrate December 25th.  
A tree was furnished by a careless truck driver  
that forgot to fasten his tree down.  
He was probably on the way home to his own family.

The animals worked during the night.  
Rabbits, snakes, dogs, cats, birds, sheep, and possums  
worked together.  
The tree was stood up in the center of Road P.  
Decorating began.

Maimed birds hung as ornaments.  
Snakes were used as tinsel.  
A mangled cat was placed under the tree.  
Rabbits were also placed under the tree,  
some with one leg,  
some with two,  
some with stomachs ripped open exposing the internal organs.  
A cow pushed a dog with a crushed skull under the tree.  
A few animals under the tree were just a mere tuft of hair.  
The tree stood unfinished.  
Two owls worked together,  
crowning the tree with a hawk that was pierced with  
shards of glass.  
Decorating ceased.  
The tree complete.  
A masterpiece concocted by animals for animals.

Sunrise.  
Animals scurried in all directions.  
A car approached,  
skidding to a halt.  
The driver observed the tree,  
astonished,  
confused,  
amazed by the morbid display of celebration.

Animals sat quietly,  
watching.  
A silent expression was passed among the animals.  
The human cringed.

This was their first Chirstmas on Road P.  
A gift is presented: from the animals,  
to us.

*Chance Bailey*

## Chances

In the field outside,  
crickets rattle,  
haphazard gamblers  
gathered in grass.  
Raucous reunion  
after the long dust  
and loneliness,  
the hours that stretch  
almost to breaking  
until evening stumbles back  
a little drunk  
and falls onto the trees.

I envy them  
their serious delight,  
their delicate, leaping  
conversation  
as they rub their wings  
together  
for luck.

*Emily D. West*

## **Grandma's Sixty Mutated Cats**

Grandma was crazy. She looked like a troll who, at sixty-five, dyed her hair pinkish red and wore copper bracelets in the hopes of warding off arthritis. Her arms were green to her elbows and pink from the antiseptic she'd put on each little cut. She cried one day when Grandpa loaded the cattle up for market. "Goodbye my children, goodbye," she whispered to each cow as it walked onto the trailer.

Grandpa scared me. He was tall with a full head of silver hair and no teeth, and he was still able to eat lettuce. My brother Mike and I would laugh and laugh when he made faces at us. Grandpa, Uncle John, Uncle Doc, and Dad would sit out in the drive watching the corn grow, talking about the thunderstorm moving in.

Uncle John also scared me. He didn't have any teeth or hair. He wore big overalls over his fat stomach and chewed Red Man. He always spat right next to me just to tease me. Sometimes he would say, "Alana, come here!" When I went to him, he would spread my little fingers out into the soft dirt and pull out his pocket knife. Being a girl, I was subject to a wide array of whimp jokes if I did not partake. The four men would laugh and laugh as Uncle John would drop the knife between my fingers.

Uncle Doc was six-foot five-inches and thin. He would pick me up and talk to my face because he thought that was fair. His breath smelled like the Pall Malls he smoked, and he only had three teeth on his bottom jaw. When I asked him why he only had three teeth, he said, "Better to hold my cigarette with, my dear."

This was a typical summer day in southern Illinois.

The farm was huge, larger than anything I could fathom when I was a child. Grandpa said it was 500 acres. Sometimes, if I had been good, I'd get to wake up "before the cows," as Grandpa said, to walk the fences with him. The fences were electrified to scare off the cows; once Grandpa told me to touch it so I'd never want to do so again. The resulting pain in my arm took a long time to go away. I never touched the fence again.

Grandpa said the most beautiful thing was the red sunrises. "When I look across the corn," he'd say, "over the fields and into the countryside, the red sky of morning is the most beautiful thing."

Outside was where Grandpa lived.

Outside was also where Grandma's sixty cats lived. Some of them were relatively normal, but most of them were very dirty. It wasn't just that, though; some were blind, some had only three legs, some had no tail, and others had no ears. Many of them were covered in their own poop. Then there were the ones that would swat at things that weren't there, and the ones that could only run around in circles, either to the right or to the left. They would hiss and fight at nothing.

These cats could be found everywhere. Hanging from the trees, sitting up high in the sheds, running around in circles going nowhere, or simply sleeping in the drive. They must have been reasonably intelligent, though, because they knew better than to go near my Grandpa or Uncle John. Once, I saw one stagger too close to Uncle John, and he kicked it hard.

My father explained to me that once Grandma had had eight cats which had all had babies with each other, then the babies had babies, and because they were all in the same family, they didn't turn out right. Grandma refused to hurt any of them. That was why she had sixty mutated cats.

The sixty mutated cats were everywhere, blotches of orange and white all over the farm, running in circles and swatting at things. The normal ones wouldn't let me play with them. Uncle John always said, "That's because they're smart."

The farmhouse was built three generations ago. My mother was born in the living room. The living room was also the place where she shot her thumb off when she was three and where her mother died (my grandma was really my step-grandma). Once, when we were visiting Illinois for the summer, Mom found a snake in the attic. Grandpa told us to leave the house. Grandma ran out screaming and yelling. I heard a gunshot and Grandma balled. Grandpa came out carrying a bucket. Mike and I ran into the living room and saw the bullet holes in the ceiling, then we ran back out to see the dead snake. Grandma was still crying and screaming at Grandpa for killing it; it was obvious from the complacent expression on Grandpa's face that he couldn't have cared less about the snake.

The house was full of stuff. Grandma told me that she had over 400 cookie jars and 300 cake plates. Her biggest pride was the collection of dolls she had. There were over 10,000 dolls and they hung from every nook and cranny of the house. They would look

down on Mike and me as we slept with their big spooky eyes, and we would get scared every night. We had some terrible nightmares in Grandma's house.

My dad made jokes about having to turn sideways to get through the one trail that led through Grandma's entire house. That always made Uncle Doc laugh really hard. My mom, on the other hand, would get very angry, and when I'd ask her why Uncle Doc was laughing, she'd just say, "Because he's from Star City, Arkansas, that's why."

Grandma wouldn't let us play with anything inside her house with the logic that we'd break something. When she'd say that, I'd always respond that I really didn't think it would matter because she wouldn't notice anyway. My mother would just get angry and tell me to go outside.

Everyday at five o'clock Grandma fed her sixty cats. She called them "kiddies" (she never did talk right) and seemed to love them like they were her offspring. She'd pull out a huge cream and green colored tub, fill it full of cat food, and hobble to the back door with it. With a mighty pull, she'd open the back door, her troll body hardly able to carry the tub, then forcefully, she'd shake her entire body and the bucket back and forth, rattling the food to call the cats. When this process was done, she'd scream, "Here kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy! Here kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy!"

The cats would run in from every direction. Blind cats knew instinctively where to go, deaf cats saw all the other cats running toward the house, and cats that only walked in circles tried frantically to get to the cream and green colored tub. Cats with three legs, cats that only walked to the right, and the cats with no ears, would all run to the cream and green tub.

Grandma usually said something like, "Oh, my babies, my dear, sweet babies...how is everybody?" The cats never really paid attention to her because they were hungry. She would stand in the middle of them for a couple minutes, then go back inside.

The men hated this ritual.

On one of those summer days in southern Illinois, Mike and I were playing down at the creek when we heard the dinner bell ring. The sky was heavy and black, threatening a huge thunderstorm. The men were sitting in the drive when we ran up to the house from the creek. Mom told us that Grandpa wanted us to go into town with

Grandma to buy some things. Grandma wouldn't drive into town alone, so my mom, Mike and I went with her. When we returned, the men were still sitting in their usual positions. It was five o'clock.

Grandma loaded up the cream and green tub, lugged it to the door, shook her troll body, and screamed, "Here kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy! Here kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy!" None of the cats came. She glanced over at Grandpa and shouted again, "Here kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy kiddy!" Only three cats appeared.

The next thing I knew, she was screaming, "NICOLAS FREELAND, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH MY KIDDIES?!"

The four men looked at her, and my grandfather smiled, chuckled his usual chuckle, and said, "Why Marion, I don't know what you're talking about." His was the voice of a seasoned liar.

"You know good and well what I'm talking about, and if these kids weren't here, I'd...I'd...." Her sentence trailed off into tears. She started wailing and ran into the house. Mom was upset; the four men just looked out over the field and down the drive.

Inside was where Grandma lived.



## **Silent Night**

Out of sleep  
and into your face,  
staring big and bleak as moon,  
but smiling.

Who guides your laughing vigil?  
What voice leads you here,  
to stand in shadow  
and clasp your hands?

My waking startles.  
You snake to safety,  
first shaking my dreaming body  
hard,  
saying "Don't tell."

Nightmare of open mouth,  
no scream but air,  
is true.  
Language, too, abandons.  
But when it creeps back  
shame-faced,  
I'll swallow it whole  
and begin the telling.

*Emily D. West*



*Ann Reesman*

## Sorting Out

My mother doesn't speak English  
She's here thirty years  
She still doesn't speak English  
I take her to the bank  
She is my mother  
She watches soap operas in Spanish

She's Catholic  
She thinks we are here  
To suffer  
Her suffering gives me  
The opportunity  
To be a good daughter  
And help her

My sisters don't help her  
Do I have to be a good daughter?  
I have to do my duty  
If I don't help her  
Who will help her

I'm thinking  
Maybe I won't take her to the bank  
Anymore  
If I don't take her to the bank  
She will have to learn to speak English

I'll still go to visit her  
Sometimes  
But I won't take her to the bank  
Anymore

She is only fifty-three  
She will learn to speak English  
And I will still be  
A good daughter.

*Monica Reller*

## **When the Rain Comes**

March 3rd

It's been raining for days now, an endless streaming wetness that penetrates everything. It's hard to keep the wood dry—the wind keeps blowing the tarp off the woodpile. Logs spit and smolder in a sullen orange stupor. And the wind! It's like a frenzied band of harpies lashing out with knotted whips.

I went out today, covered in my tough yellow mackintosh, trussed-up tight against the storm. I had to fight the wind that tore and pulled at me until I was dragged along like a broken kite. I made it as close to the river as I dared go. It has washed away the bridge. All that remains is dark brown splinters of wood wedged against the muddy water. By tomorrow, even they will be gone.

There is no way out. I am alone with the storm.

March 5th

Still no relief, no end! I huddle damp and miserable before a pauper's fire while the storm thrashes itself against my walls. At least this is not a freezing rain. The fire is merely to try to stave off the damp. My canned goods are almost gone. I'm saving them for last. Until then, it's beans and damp crackers. Beans that take forever to soften and cook. Beans straight, simmered with a pinch of salt, no more than that. Beans bland, unpalatable, mealy and noxious. Will this rain ever end?

March 6th

This morning when I awoke, there was water all around outside my cabin. And not the mucky, mired sludge from this relentless rain, but water rushing past madly, a dizzy, rolling mass that carried the broken bones of the woods on its back.

I am afraid.

March 7th

Last night the water began to seep into the cabin. I spent the remainder of a sleepless night in the storage loft, wedged in among old lamps, mildewed blankets, dented metal utensils, and whatever debris I have stored there. The wind has gone, chasing its own

nightmares across canyons hooded with storm clouds.

I sat in the loft until what I thought was midday, hoping the water would recede. It's hard to judge the time—the day wears the same unending shade of gray throughout.

The water is getting higher. The fire is out. My joints feel stiff and swollen, but before night comes, I must get out. Should the water reach my loft—there is only solid wood above me. I would be trapped.

March 8th

This journal is the only luxury I have allowed myself. Everything else I have brought is only for my survival.

Yesterday I dropped down into the cold water which by then came up to my waist. I loaded several plastic sacks with my canned goods, a few tins of crackers, some jerky, blankets, several flashlights, and spare batteries. I thought I had what I would need, then remembered at the last to take a can opener. I cinched the bags as tightly closed as I could, leaving some air in them so they wouldn't sink (as if it mattered—the water would have merely grabbed them as passengers on its mad journey). Using a rope to tether a bag to myself, I shimmied myself and my provisions, one bag at a time, up to the roof. That is where I am now, miserable, cold, and wet, hunched beneath my plastic raincoat and soggy blankets, writing this as I watch the waters rise.

March 9th

I was able to sleep for a few hours last night. I kept waking up, a horrible dream of rolling off the roof pursuing me through the night. The rain is slowing; perhaps the end is near. I ration out my canned goods which are seasoned with rain. But even if the rain stops....The water is still rising. And it will continue to rise even after the rain has stopped.

March 10th

Last night I was roused from a patchy sleep by a loud thump against the cabin. This was followed by an almost rhythmic bumping which persists still. When the day finally oozed its way in, I crawled along slippery moss to the edge of the roof, drawn by the bump... bump...bump,bump. The water had reached the eaves of the cabin.

And caught under those eaves was a bloated doe, her tongue swollen and protruding, legs cracked, bloodless gray wounds making a crazy quilt of her hide. She was tangled in the branches of some large tree limb. I crawled back to my sodden nest, thinking better she than me.

March 11th

The rain stopped last night. Today is still brooding, still overcast, but the clouds scuttle across the sky quickly now.

The water has reached the edge of the roof and is slowly creeping towards me. If I can just last awhile longer, this will all be over.

March 12th

Today I received a visitor, or rather a fellow refugee. A rat, soggy and limp, managed to gain purchase on the wood of the roof. I watched it painfully crawl out of the water, then lie flat, its sides heaving, small bubbles of water popping around its nose. It was on the other side of the roof from me; I don't think it knew, or cared, that I was there. A fellow creature seeking refuge from the flood. I will let it be.

March 13th

Where are they coming from? There must be dozens of them now. Rats, big, little, in-between, huddled together in a mass, them on their side, me on mine. I wonder at the irony that a creature such as the deer (who is still knocking at my door, causing quite a stink) succumbed to the flood, whereas these small beasts, however unfortunate, have managed to survive.

My food is almost gone. But the water is no longer rising. Soon this will all be over.

March 14th

I was awakened last night by a terrible cry. I thumbed on my flashlight, directing its beam towards the sound. One of the rats, weaker and with one front leg bent at an awkward angle, was being eaten. The other rats had converged upon it, a feeding frenzy building in intensity until I could hear their teeth click and grate upon snapping bones. Several looked up, their red eyes small and hateful. It did not take them long to dispatch the poor bloody carcass. I could watch no

longer. I turned off the light and spent the rest of the night awake, huddled beneath my blankets.

March 15th

I ate the last of my food this morning—half a can of peaches. The water is receding, but oh so slowly. I have been on short rations for so many days now, I keep returning my thoughts to the deer still lodged under the eaves. But I am not that hungry...yet.

The rats still keep to their side. Several more have provided scant meals for the rest. They sit there and watch me, malevolent little eyes that fasten on my every move. I think they fear me for my size.

March 16th

I spent last night awake. I don't dare sleep. I can feel them watching me, creeping closer if they sense I'm dozing. I remember the sound of teeth on bone and stay awake.

March 17th

One of them bit me last night! I must have dozed in my vigil but was abruptly roused by a sharp pain in my right calf. I awoke screaming, standing up so fast I nearly lost my footing to go tumbling into the water. My sudden movement sent the beast squealing away, back to the others. The moon was out, the clouds having dispersed early in the evening. I could see the rat's silvered mass fleeing from me. A large male, I thought. I must take care not to doze again.

The water is down now to about the tops of the windows. Another day or two to endure, and I'll be free from this nightmare.

My hunger gnaws at me like a cancer. I looked for the deer, but sometime in the night the limb was freed, and it is gone now. I feel my strength ebbing. I sit and toy with my knife and watch the rats as they watch me.

March 18th

The rain. My God, the rain. The sky has clouded again, and the rain is back. I don't know what to do. I am faint with hunger and lack of sleep. Last night only my fear kept me awake.

The rats are coming closer, their compact bodies growing dark and sleek with the rain. I can see their small eyes, round black puncture wounds, watching me. I do not think they fear me much



anymore.

I don't know that I can stay awake tonight—my thoughts are difficult and unfocused. Earlier today as I sat holding my knife, my hand seemed to forget. The knife was dropped; it slid to the edge of the roof and with a small splash, was gone.

It is growing dark. At least it seems to be. Again I huddle beneath sodden blankets, trying to hide from the rain. They're coming closer.

I think that soon this will all be over.

## **Tunnel Moon**

remembering the wind as it separated  
only once across my stomach,  
i forgot to look up  
at the moon. we lay  
between the lines  
of the shadow, careful  
not to move beyond the branches.  
i remember the frogs  
(you had to tell me  
about the frogs)  
and listening  
to voiceless, guttural songs  
distracting me enough  
until the moon—  
almost always a tunnel now—  
swelled up and poked  
the dark we'd crept into  
like a blanket

*Calie Jo Varnell*



*Ann Reesman*

## **Kaedo**

For Lorne Royal  
Aug. 25th, 1990

The cat at the  
blue house  
laughs just like you did

I'm not sure if Sarah  
blew out the candles on  
her birthday  
All I know is: she vacuumed  
the carpet after she heard  
you had  
died

It's always someone's birthday in my dreams

I haven't visited your grave  
because I can't get  
the cat into the  
Volkswagon  
and because I don't believe  
I'd feel  
you there  
in the graveyard

Instead I like to think you are  
in  
every  
tree  
that I walk by  
sitting on the highest branch

Lately I have been  
grinding my  
teeth  
trying to concentrate on that  
highest branch

Mostly in my dreams

In my last dream  
you  
jumped out of the  
tree  
and before I woke up  
you were coming down a  
waterslide  
backwards

The police pulled into the parking lot

You were sliding at top speed  
with your feet up in the  
air

I heard the sirens

You didn't because  
you were laughing  
                  laughing  
                          laughing

Kamela Mariposa Day Purl

## **Termites**

It's always the same dream. I'm sitting in the living room, on the sofa, waiting. And then he comes in. Not like he has been. He looks pretty good. He starts talking to me. While he's talking, I'm staring at this black mark on his cheek. Only it's not a mark. It's a hole. I can't say this any other way. Then there's this other hole by his chin. And another. This one under his right eye. And out of that one crawls this termite. I start to scream. But he keeps talking. I scream. But he keeps talking. I scream, and he just keeps talking and talking in this perfectly normal voice, as these termites pour out of his head. I can hear their jaws working—and then I'm awake in my room. But I can still hear those jaws.

I smell it the moment I enter the hospital. It's not the disinfectant, I think, or the cold, stale air blowing through the vents. No. It's something else. It's the smell of people dying.

But I go. Every weekend. I drive three-and-a-half hours to inhale the dying breaths of over a hundred strangers. As soon as I walk into the room my mother is all over me. They've been through hell, she says, but I'm already past her. Every visit she says that. Then she says, go kiss your father. So I walk over to the bed and kiss his cheek. The skin crumbles beneath my lips. I sit down beside him. The muscles in his face jerk spasmodically. I watch as he performs a series of these contortions. My mother says it's the medication. She says he's asked about me, and I should talk to him.

I look at him, but it's kind of hard to see him through all the tubes. He has one down his nose and into his stomach. It pumps everything out into this little pouch. I try not to look at the chunky fluid. He's got an I.V. in one arm and another tube up his penis to drain fluid. He's lost a lot of weight. He's looking at me now. But I don't think he really sees me.

How's it going, I say. How about these nurses? His eyes move upward to the TV. I wait it out. A minute later he looks at me expectantly. Did I say something? The chemotherapy might be making his hair fall out, but this medication makes him about as smart as cream cheese. Just look at all these plants, I say. It looks like a nursery in here. My mother says the flowers are from people at the office.

The man in the next bed has just urinated all over himself. It stinks,

but everyone pretends not to notice. My mother goes on about the promotion. The whole office is waiting for him to come back, she says. I don't think he's going back, but I don't say this to my mother.

I have to go. I look at him, but he's off somewhere again. He looks a lot older than fifty-one. I can't touch him. I think of this time when I was four and had the flu, and he caught my vomit in his hands to keep me from soiling myself. And I think of three years later, when he built our family room with his own two hands, and how he smiled at me when I'd bring him a Pepsi. This is all very real to me. The man on the bed is not. My father died on the day he was diagnosed. Or maybe that was me.

It's always the same dream....

And if it only were a dream. But it's not.

The summer comes. This summer is not like any other summer I have lived. This summer my father is dying.

Once more I am thrust upon him. As soon as I am home. My mother is sleep-deprived, and the people who are supposed to be helping her haven't shown. My brother has locked himself in his room. So once more, it's just me and my father.

He's lying in one of those hospital beds in the family room, groaning and trying to push my aunt away. He keeps trying to sit up, keeps pulling at the tubes.

Hi, Daddy, I say, and lean over the bed. I see a blink of recognition before he begins tugging at the tubes again. I ease behind the bed to the stereo, popping in a Linda Ronstadt CD he got for Christmas.

This seems to relax him enough where I can ease him back onto the bed. My aunt mentions an appointment and leaves. I sit on the edge of his bed and take his hand. It's very thin and very white—I can see the blood running through the veins. You gotta hurry up and get better, I say. I need the bookcase you've been promising for the last ten years. We have to build one before my room explodes. And Brian and I can't get married without you. I release his hand. He immediately clasps it to his right and begins to wring them. He hasn't said a word.

The days are passing in a blur. He is not eating. He is not sleeping. I am not sleeping. I feed him ice chips and monitor his medications and coat his cracking lips with Chapstick. He keeps wringing his hands and bucking his hips from the bed. The doctor says

the tumor is pressing on his spine. He is up and down. He wants to stand, but he is weak, and the nurse is afraid he'll fall. It is too much trouble for her to stand with him. He screams each time his back touches the mattress. The nurse says if he keeps this up he'll have to be taken to the hospital and tied down.

I tell the nurse I'll sit with him for awhile. The moment she releases him he is up like a spring. I walk over and help him stand. He is not screaming now, and his expression is somewhat relieved. I put my arms around him, careful not to irritate his colostomy. He is only wearing a diaper, and his legs bow like great, spindly sticks. You're my special Daddy, huh? I say. Uh-huh, he says. It is the first and last thing he says while I'm at home.

He's in pain, I say. Can't you up the morphine?

The nurse shrugs. We can run it through the I.V..

So they do. However, it is only a matter of hours before his body adjusts to the dosage, and then the pain returns, greater than before. I sit in a chair beside him, coffee invigorated, and flip through the pages of a journal book. It is a book of letters I wrote to him and gave him last Christmas. There are lots of pictures of me and him, and I point to them and talk about what we were doing at the time. His eyes are on the book, but unfocused. He is moaning constantly now, his breath released in a drone of uh, uh, uh, uh. I can hear him in even the very back of the house. Even when I get the chance to sleep.

I begin boosting his morphine every twenty minutes. It does not help. He wants to stand. When I come near he tries to use me to climb to his feet. My mother calls for a nurse to come out and up the dosage. The nurse says she will be there in fifteen minutes.

Fifteen minutes pass.

A half hour.

An hour.

It's okay, I say to him, checking my watch to see when the machine will allow me to boost his morphine. And then I see it in his eyes. He knows I am lying.

I get up and pour some morphine into a shot-glass. I put a straw in it and put it to his mouth. Suck, I say. It'll help the pain. After a few attempts, he manages to swallow most of it. Good for him, I think.

Eventually the nurse gets there. She ups the morphine but forgets to hook the I.V. back up. My mother runs after her and asks her where she thinks she's going. Then his urine bag breaks. He's wet, the floor



is wet, and my mother and I are exhausted. But it just goes on and on.

Two days pass. I am still sitting with my father. I have caught four hours sleep, but I am still dragging. But I talk anyway. I talk and talk until my voice grows hoarse. And then I talk some more. I am the only one he finds soothing, my mother says. He gets agitated when she's in there. True, I think. But only because she says, Johnny? Johnny? Like she thinks he can answer. He can't, and it frustrates him. He gets excited, she runs off crying.

I fluff his pillows some. Then I notice something brownish on his sheet. I lift it. One of the nurses has forgotten to put the bag back on his colostomy, and there is shit all over him. I yell for the present nurse. She gets up from the sofa and starts to undress him. She needs help, but my mother is in the other room talking to a neighbor. I go get a cloth and then help steady him as she cleans. Naked, he tries to stagger away, his flaccid penis flapping like some sickly bird. It is the only part of his body that has retained the flesh. I can see right through his skin. The nurse and I catch him and put a new diaper on him. Meanwhile, he is busy trying to tear the tubes from his arms. It's okay, I say, as I take his hands. Trust me. It'll be okay.

I hear bits of conversation from the other room.

Could go on for weeks—I don't understand how he can still stand. He shouldn't be able to do that—he's holding on, but I don't know how.

I can tell them how. He doesn't want to die. He is afraid. And he isn't about to voluntarily let go. I can tell from the way he forces the air in and out of his lungs. I sit beside him through the evening, listening. I think of how Brian breaths at night and how I adapt to his rhythm. Then I put my face next to my father's. I draw my breaths in loudly, hoping that the sound might regulate his breathing. This works to some extent. Good, I say. That's good. In and out. Nothing more. Nothing less. I realize that we'd decided to take him off the vitamin supplements, but I want to hear him breathe.

There are people over the next night. They talk about him, though not to him, and in another room. Later, my mother comes in. My father becomes agitated, but this time she stays. Cover his feet, she tells me. I go to move the blanket over his protruding feet. They are turning grey. I quickly draw the blanket over them and watch my mother. Johnny? she says. Johnny, I love you....He says nothing. Her face crumples and once more she is crying. Go get some sleep, I say.

I'll stay for a few more hours.

His breathing has been the same the last two days, and around four in the morning I decide to catch a few hours. I wake my mother and leave her and the nurse on night watch. I pass my room and go to sleep in my parents'. I am out as soon as I hit the mattress.

My eyes shoot open. My father's clock reads 8:30 A.M. I am suddenly filled with dread. I stumble down the hallway through the living room. My mother is sleeping on the sofa. I cross the kitchen and enter the family room, feeling stupid. He is still breathing. The same as when I had left. I had heard him all the way through the house. Hi, I say to the nurse, collapsing into a chair. I listen for a minute, then realize the breathing has abruptly stopped. It is 8:32. I look at the nurse.

He's gone, she says, calling for my mother.

He can't be, I say, not sure how I have arrived at the bedside. His mouth is still twitching.

My mother runs in. Johnny? she says. Johnny? I love you. Can you hear me? She puts her head on his chest and sobs. I wait until all movement stops, then go to wake my brother. My grandmother is suddenly on the doorstep, wanting to see her son. She has missed him by less than two minutes. She immediately joins my mother in throwing herself across the body. They are both wailing and howling, and it looks like a bad mafia movie. Instead of laughing, I leave the room. My brother and I make phone calls.

An hour-and-a-half later, my father is completely grey. It consumes all this time to convince my mother that she has to give my father to the men in black suits. She goes into the other room while the nurse and I draw the tubes from his body. Then I stand back as I watch the men in black lift him onto the cart. By now he is so stiff that his head won't touch the metal. He is still only in a diaper, and they cover him before they cart him into the white hearse and disappear.

Hours later, my mother is surrounded by friends and relatives. One of my friends has come over and is cracking jokes. We are both laughing, and people are staring. But fuck them anyway.

The memorial service is filled with people; the reception, more of a party. My grandmother and the great-aunts are drunk. They can't distinguish between the grandchildren anymore. My grandmother tries to find the bathroom and crashes into the washroom door. Jane, she bellows, where'd they move the bathroom? My great-aunt teeters

over and falls into my lap. I help her to her feet and direct her to the john. I stare at everyone, people I haven't seen in the last year-and-a-half. I can hear their voices over the general roar.

Isn't it too bad? Never would have got that job without him—One of my best friends—We were really close.

Then it sweeps over me, as if from far away, and I drop back into the sofa. I know I'm not dreaming. Or am I? I must be, with the roaring in my ears. The jaws are working louder than ever.

## **Reflections on the Start of Anti-War (1968)**

Century City was a start,  
talkers full of heartless heart.  
A generation of broken heads,  
turned on—struck dead.  
Friends of the family (they say).  
A nation free (we pray).  
One people under one...  
a thumb half undone.  
Evolution.

Could we believe what follows?  
We lost our youngness as we played.  
Queen of Hearts  
does not beat  
Police of Clubs.  
—some died on asphalt lawns!  
—numbers dropped/increased...  
We had friends now long deceased.  
The country was on its way.  
Resolutions.

EXPLOSION!  
"They all went Berzerkeley, I tell ya."  
The damn fool kids  
long abused  
came to court  
knowingly  
mocking  
the cock mockery  
below  
those blah-blah-blah robes

one nation under guards  
shot  
death talks  
shot  
dead  
and one more push turned to one more rush  
revolution

welcoming home our weary dead  
welcoming home  
to home  
to homes  
grimey guns and blighted boots  
captives shot with hollers and hoots

buildings go down  
start go round  
fighters in their goldfish bowl  
the people grow old  
grow old  
the heroes are bold  
are cold  
domination

EXECUTION! EXECUTION!  
came the cry  
body pyres fill the sky  
human waste  
wasted land  
mighty soldiers  
praying hands

on the flats arose  
the hording parties no one knows  
tear apart  
few things stand  
the skeleton remains  
of the place they deride.  
and i ask why.  
ask why.  
demolition

Evil May Day  
though it seems to succeed  
doesn't  
for in our winning  
we hold our prize in hand  
what  
have we gained  
what  
a meager insistance  
on our superior blindness  
and  
the beauty in our hearts  
are the empty boats at dock  
air-fresh sea-birds  
slower  
than ripples in field flowers

Evadne  
a land  
fire-ice  
self-sacrifice  
deed  
creed  
though you need  
be only  
the lonely dying remnants  
of a monster  
who was kind.  
Aeneas  
carry your dead America.  
No druid egg have we.  
gates of dreams—ivory and horn  
slow buggery  
fasting ancients  
mourn  
a land of plenty  
with a monster  
who was kind

So, slowly did we salt the hearts of men.  
As we, conquistadors, marched to the sea.  
A bounty full of land and feast,  
We feed—kill to protect—and feed again.  
Then someone shouts something about our men,  
And country. He's twice blessed. A litany.  
Our sacred war, our canon dead—does not cost thee.  
But whisper peace or mercy—die scorned death.  
So we will not go follow you to our  
Destruction like some wax-winged Icarus,  
For after, there's no looking back for us,  
And if some Dindenault does come to sell,  
You drive him down! Your courage meld  
As ace in hand. My brother, times are sour.

*Brad Brown*

## **New Tricks**

i came across the black fedora  
bits of rabbit fur  
a rusty wand  
with clawmarks  
and i broke my bones

and tried to reconstruct my frame  
closer to the ground  
closer to the fire  
in the ground

and though i felt  
the fire burn  
and saw the endless chain  
each link diminishing  
into the trees

i knew that i was shining  
silver in the sun  
and all my teeth  
were made of steel

*Bob Garner*



## **Followed by the Moon**

My hand glowing from the amber speedometer  
dangles on the steering wheel;  
no service for 75 miles.  
White noise from AM radio bides time  
as you drip in my ear,  
a Chinese torture,  
along with a crowded past  
of softer men  
who now live under asphalt,  
between yellow lines,  
some I would like to love.

But driving on I see me  
wrapping my skin  
around your sleep  
and slowly carving details  
in the stones that remain solid.

The radio blares  
and I sing to stay awake;  
the cold air rushing like color.  
And I wonder, did we travel by night  
to reach the place we are now.

*Kandie St. Germain-Fowler*

## Contributors' Notes

**Chance Bailey** is "twenty winters old, drives a 1965 VW Bug, and wears jeans with tan leather cowboy boots." He "likes Fig Newtons and isolation."

**Mary Bailey** is working toward a Master's Degree in Biology and a Cultural Resource Management Certificate. She's been married 20 years, and has "three cats and three silly geese who think" she's their mother.

**Rose Calvano** has had her poetry published in three issues of *Watershed*.

**Rachel T. Cannon** studies English at CSUC and will graduate in May, 1991. She thinks "a good piece of writing is like a gift: if it comes to you, thank the muse who gave it to you and hope for more!"

**Bob Garner** is "an artist and songwriter caught in the square peg syndrome;" he "believes in magic, fears the dark powers of technology, and struggles against the desire for symmetry." He is attending school at CSUC because he "always wanted to get a degree in something."

**J.C. Garvin** is "working on two novels right now and really hates it when other people make decisions for him."

**Kandie St. Germain-Fowler** "enjoys hanging out with her son Buz and is hooked on poetry, rain and the blues." *Watershed* has published her poetry before.

**Katharine Morelli** "could not have written her piece 'Termites' without the inspiration of her father, and many others like him who so courageously battled cancer."

**Connie Pratt** "is a single mother, full time student, and heads the Chico chapter of the Palestine Solidarity Committee."

**Kamala Mariposa Day Purl** has lived in Chico for seventeen years. She "loves to write and spend time with her two little brothers and her cat, Karl."

**Raul Ramirez** and his wife, Lisa, are expecting their first child in September, 1991. Raul has been drawing all of his life; the illustration published in *Watershed* was "just a doodle." Raul has served with the United States Marine Corps., and is certain that his wife has "the most beautiful green eyes on earth."

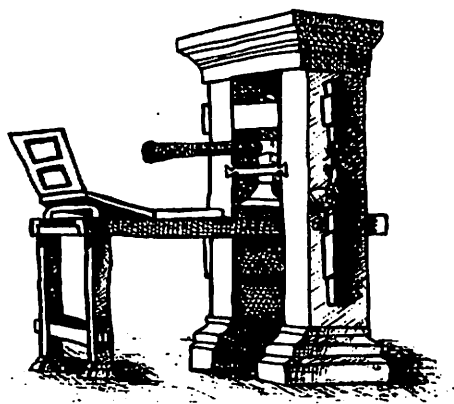
**Ann Reesman** has "finally achieved the typical American status: she has two great kids, has just finished a divorce, is an Honors student at CSUC, and is a veteran of the United States Air Force."

**Monica Reller** writes in three languages, and teaches Spanish, voice, and piano; she is a reflexologist and teaches natural vision training.

**Susan Shaw** is a part time re-entry student at CSUC. She wants "to learn to tell stories about the passions and joys and pains we all share as part of the human condition."

**Emily D. West** is an English major from Santa Cruz.

**Alana Williams** "graduated by the skin of her teeth, and is now working in a psychiatric clinic, reading mysticism, digging crazies, and trying to figure out what God's cryptic symbols mean."



**\$3.00**