

Watershed a literary magazine

Watershed

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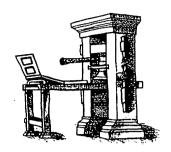
English Department CSUC Instructionally Related Activities

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The making of a literary magazine entails more than just the selection of manuscripts. The staff has to come to agreement on ink color, typeface, cover design, the sequence of selected manuscripts, layout and design, and meeting times to make these decisions. A magazine staff must solicit work, advertise the product, and finally sell it. This, and the affinity one develops for the literature, combine to make the magazine.

Watershed enables the student staff to involve themselves in every aspect; that is what makes this magazine so unique.

There was no central theme that we planned our selections around, the tone developed as the magazine began to form its own identity. The works in this issue, we think, branch out a bit from the traditional themes of poetry and prose. With close to five hundred submissions to choose from, coming to a final decision required long hours of passionate debate—we each began to form a particular attachment to pieces we felt strongly about. If space, time, and money permitted, we would publish a magazine twice this size to include everything worthy of publication.

Thank you to all who gave us the opportunity to read their manuscripts. And finally thank you to everyone who devoted time to this issue of *Watershed*.



•

Blue Sky Music, Indeed

"So . . . hawks and dancers then," asked the poet

"Certainly something there all right,"
replied the metaphor-maker

"Will it sing though?"

"As hawks do, or dancers?"

"Must I choose?"

the poet paled considerably

"But the sign . . . outside?"

the metaphor-maker lit his pipe "Says we are running a sale, and that on selected items. Says nothing of giving away our best stuff."

"What then?"

he put the match carefully in his pocket "For sixteen-fifty you may see:

ever the hawk dances quietly to blue sky music a soft pirouette

and that's really your best buy; the one about dancers soaring went out last week."

"Haiku?"

"You're welcome."

of course with that

the poet left,

muttering "blue sky music, indeed."

-Skylar Pace

Sitting Down

That's when you expect it. In those quiet minutes when the lights burn loudly, cats run across your roof, and you can't find the book you started reading yesterday. Then you tremble. Hands turn white, gripped to the arms of the rocking chair. With keen ears, you listen to the neighbors' low whispers. Looking for something to do, you get down on your knees and find all the crumbs you ever tried to hide under the couch. You eat them, one by one, watching the picture above the mantle—the leaves on the trees fall. Tears drip to the corners of your mouth and you remember how she held you when you were a little girl in summer shorts, brown thin legs, carrying the shovel from your sandbox your father had made.

-Pamela Giuliano

Having Outlived You Was Small

Father. I'm talking to myself again. I read somewhere that the Chinese poets lack our self-consciousness. They root the world into their body and it's the world they see. I think it has to do with becoming. But you never had any trouble with that: when you wanted sleep you became everything that wasn't human. You had to give that up. I'll tell you: after you slipped off, I couldn't go near the garage for weeks. But it was always there when I got back from school. And once it stood open when all the other doors were locked. It took ten minutes to get the nerve to run through it: you horrified me. Whatever was released in that last breath hung dark in there a long time. and watched me-shape that I feared too much to recognize—and wanted me as if you were too small, and I too huge for being alive.

-Ken O'Conner

Bloodwine

At the hand of the harvester They are knifed from the vine, Falling through the world Blue babies in the field

They sleep in wooden crates
Beneath cheesecloth canopies
Pulled about the fields behind tattered skirts,
While their little bodies
Speckle with heat rash
In the late summer.

Their fathers' hands worn
stiff and gnarled.
Their mothers' fair skin
brown with dust.
Their sisters' young faces
swollen from the sting of wasps
nesting in the vines.

They nurse on sour milk
Thinned with water to last the week
And nibble on grapes from their mothers' pockets.

Rivulets of sweat roll from the heart As overworked souls, thin and hungry, Toil in the hot day With desperation reaping at their side And death gleaning fast behind.

Row after row.
Crate after crate.
Day after day.
Waiting for the tired sun to collapse
behind the tar paper houses
So that the endless work-day might pause for the night.

Kerosene lamps glimmer light
On plastic crosses crucified on the walls.
And in dark corners
The flush faces of babies
Twist in the chilling heat of fever
Too weak to cry.

With rusty spade in hand
Their fathers will carry them into midnight fields
To bury them beneath the moon,
Giving their blue bodies to the earth
So that the vines may consume their souls
And grow.

Some royal vintner,
God of rolling vineyards,
Sat fat in the afternoon on his majestic veranda
Bound in a fine leather chair
Like some old volume layered in gray dust,
Looking out over his fields,
Smiling,
Swirling blood in a crystal goblet.

-Michael F. Jenkins

Distance

It's cold tonight. Damn cold. And the wind cuts right through every bundled layer of clothing I've got on, cuts my skin. And my knees shiver against the straddled gas tank and the fast road blurs darkly beneath my feet. My hair is stripped away from my face and two scowl lines damage the space between my eyes, and my mom and dad are still standing in the silent fucking kitchen wishing there was something to do besides fix popcorn balls cause Jeff isn't going to be here now cause he had to go home you know and his time here seemed so short and he never seems to stay too long or say too much and everytime he leaves we wish he'd stay longer and his plans seem to take so much of his time and there's a vague feeling that it's important and the wind keeps cutting him with its clear darkness and he goes faster and faster and quits looking back for headlights cause he can feel the distance.

-Jeff Goolsby

Leda

Leda beat white fists against wild majesty in pounding snowy wings;

silent calloused hands draw violet trails across my rounded bloodless thighs.

-Elizabeth Renfro

Watergap

Every summer we fix the watergap And each winter it washes out again.

The storms stay on in this country, Stay on, stay on.
Water rises past the banks
Nothing can hold
Cable and tin, wire and plywood
All go down
And in the spring
Nothing but gravel in the bed.
The neighbor's cattle stray in
And ours escape
And, the next year,
A herd of brindled calves.

Remember the years of drought.

For the livestock

We hauled water from the river

But the deer died along the drying creekbed,

Not from thirst

But from some disease

Carried by bugs bred in stagnant water.

We could smell them from the house,

The water and the deer,

Both dying.

The watergap stayed up two winters

And rearranged the rhythm of our winter chores

We even ceased checking it.

And so now each year
After the final rains
We fix the watergap
And pretend that it's permanent.
But we no longer complain
When we find it gone.
We adapt our labor to nature
As each ritual must be,
A momentary stop,
Rests among the seasons.
We build it back again.

-Dan Owens

Animaland Park, Muttonville Michigan August 1979

One of them cats will get me yet.
She'll tear into my arm and I'll spit in her eye yellow teeth flashing tearing the meat on weekdays two dollars, weekends three rides puppet shows llamas and camels horse flies big as quarters burn exalted then fall white wings flat together sacrificed to blue.

Mr. Jeffrey said "You feed those elephants good now sons of bitches had me up at four a.m." rocking huge grey wrinkled side to side to keep the heavy heart alive Butchie said "another goat died" and a goose I see in the fowl pond pink legs bobbing stiff scratching blue into the shallows.

After closing there were chores:
we three chase two hysterical
ponies into an aluminum trailer
I hose the lion shit into the crick
Bob cooks bacon in the presto burger machine
drips across the bathroom floor
and dumps it in the toilet
I take a shower in my shoes
Butchie hides a bucket
full of dead baby goat.

We are the last to eat dinner. In the barn we sit silent except for the swallows and the electric sputtering of the big fly trap. Finished by dark we'd ride the big wheel to the top and sit and share a pipe and talk and watch our chair struts sink into blue.

-Mario Phlemke

the desert #2

air bends and waves

over the rock, lost

and locked in dryness,

home of the lizard, the cactus wren

—spiders as big as this—

and wasps to hunt them, through

years that ripple over the rock

like so much hot air

-Jeff Everist

what clarence bison says: a brief essay

-charles fenton nielsen

there are two kinds of geeks: ordinary geeks and pencilnecked geeks. ordinary geeks usually die young because they eat without ceasing. supposedly they acquire some sort of spiritual wisdom from it. but ordinary geeks don't limit their dirvish-like inhalation to foodstuffs; they eat anything: lightbulbs, watches, transistor radios, electric razors. some even prefer nibbling on small kitchen appliances a bit at a time. in any case, ordinary geeks exhibit this uncommon passion for contacting the physical world through their stomach membranes.

pencil-necked geeks, on the other hand, seem to completely reject life altogether. they either abstain from eating anything at all, or they eat just so they can throw up afterword. while the ordinary geek seems to revel in the pleasantness of consuming mass quantities, the pencil-necked geek habitually enjoys the emptiness of a dietless existence. needless to say, it is a short one also.

my grandfather was a geek. born to mr. and mrs. benton fenton of madison, connecticut in 1920, she a 100% pure ordinary geek, he a postman, charles andrew fenton divided his time between eating and reading the classics. first he would read them and then he would eat them. as a teenager he devoured hemingway.

in 1950, charles married my grandmother, gwendolyn ross grant, who now sells real estate. ms. grant, recently divorced from richard degolier grant, had two children when she met charles: gwendolyn elise, my mother, and richard jr., my uncle. technically, charles is not my grandfather, not by blood anyway; richard d. grant is. but, since my mother was three years old at the time of her mother's remarriage, she considers charles her natural father. consequently, i have three grandfathers: charles, richard, and walter, my father's father. enough digression: charles committed suicide in 1960, just months before i was born. i never met him, but i was named after him. i am not a geek, pencil-necked or otherwise, but i feel something strange in

my stomach every time i think about him. . .

in discussing charles with my grandmother, i have learned that he was a quiet, private man who loved to sit and pick out the 'e's from the scrabble game with his son, charles jr., my other uncle. (incidentally, charles jr. has never exhibited any geekish tendencies; he is a paratrooper in the army.) before charles died, he managed to earn professorships at both yale and duke universities, where he taught english, bred scottish terriors that claimed many a blue ribbon, and wrote several books, the most notable of which is the apprenticeship of ernest hemingway (yale university press. 195?), copies of this book, however, are extremely rare, as charles is rumored to have eaten them all as soon as they were printed. in the book, he reveals that hemingway, a notorious pencil-necked geek, once barfed on manoletti's silk cape at gertrude stein's madrid villa after a bullfight.

the feelings i have about the link between charles and myself confuse me, while i admire and respect the man, i frequently feel repulsion at the thought of eating unopened canned goods, even though i lack the maturity to liberate myself from the security of my family, i occasionally regret the times my mother showed me photographs of charles, his cheeks bulging with bottles of correction fluid, and said, "this was a great man, this man did great things, this man was my father, you are my son, you will do great things, too." sometimes i wish i'd never been told. like charles, i want to teach english, but i would rather write about j.d. salinger, also like my grandfather, i depend on my individualism; i am self-sufficient, this scares me, i seek amusement rather than enlightenment, i want to follow in his footsteps but i want to be totally different, which is what he wanted, paradoxically, the only way to be like him is to not be like him, (or anyone else) and the only way to not be like him is to be like myself, which is exactly what he did.

he devoted his life to the only things he knew and understood: english, hemingway, and his family. i will end up the same as charles fenton: reading, writing, loving and dying.

"geeks of a feather flock together."

Across the Street

Judy's kids are out of hand again today
I saw one spitting at the sun streaks
in his distorted bedroom window
Another wrestling the same streaks
on the synthetic quarter-inch lawn
of the aluminum front porch
And Judy stormed in the side door with a slam
And I saw all the shades jerk down
And the house with a sigh
Settle two inches deeper into the earth

-Jeff Goolsby



Cherry Trees

For years I watched crows perch on the few living top limbs. In spring, blighted blossoms flew at the slightest breeze. Snow-like, they caught in my hair as I stepped over the stone wall to find the best view of the sunset over the reservoir.

Skeletal sculptures stood against the changing sky—monuments to persistence in that time of irresolution.

He cut them down one limb at a time. Cherry wood in a pot belly stove. (It was the coldest winter) "The trees are dead. We need the heat."

We needed warmth.

I needed permanence. Christ! The crows knew that. They would not have cawed down to me from an uncertain tree.

-Kate Hulbert

Home Movies

Anger
And voices of blood
Cut through the walls
With rage and black scream
Shattering little dreams
That shiver in the dark
Beneath the covers

Malice and random words Are hurled about the room Flickering on heavy breath

And frightened eyes
Peer from the hall
To watch him strike her face

She slams the door Leaving the house to swollen silence He sits running big hands through his hair Shaking his tired head Piercing his heart with penance Bleeding tears on the carpet

-Michael F. Jenkins

Halina: A play in one act

-Frank Boschan

Halina Birenbaum is a real person. She spent her early life in the Warsaw ghetto, and was transported, along with her family, to various concentration camps during the second World War. She survived internment at the Majdanek, Auschwitz, Ravensbruck and Neustadt-Glewe camps.

After the War she moved to Israel, where she lives in the town of Hertzliya—in the South—with her husband and two children.

Finally, Maryam dragged me away from the window and took me to a comfortable, clean hut outside the camp, where German airmen had been living. We lodged two or three to a room. After many years I was again lying in a soft, warm bed, undressed, with my shoes under the bed—not under my head. I was afraid. I had the idea that the Nazis would come back at any moment. They were still lurking in the forest and now, under cover of darkness, would recapture the camp, attack the airmen's hut and shoot us all for daring to occupy beds intended for the "supermen."... And the night was by no means tranquil. Shots, explosions, the sounds of numerous footsteps did not cease for a moment. It was said in the camp that it was the Russians exploding shells thrown away on the roads by the retreating Germans—but I kept jumping with fright at every explosion.

Next morning was a sunny May day. I went out into the open air with Maryam. On the highway we were greeted by a mild breeze, carrying from afar the sound of a song sung by marching troops. Only then did I take a deep breath and know that at last, at last, we were free.

The first free song I heard on German soil was the Russian "Fishing by the river . . ."

To this day, the song sounds to me as grand as any elevated magnificent hymn, and always arouses in me the same emotions.

Halina Birenbaumfrom Hope is the Last to Die

The interior of a duplex apartment, made of cinder blocks, in a government housing project near the Sinai in 1964. The living room is characterized by the kind of sterility that typifies such projects, alleviated here and there by large wall tapestries, handmade furniture, and various representations of Halina's Faith.

Halina: (Early afternoon on a hot day in mid-summer. Halina is seated on an overstuffed couch in the living room, facing a television set which is turned on) . . . been wandering around in a daze all day and there's so much that needs to get done . . . damn it, it's probably the heat or Mrs. Yepanchin's bread rolls, bless her . . . must have eaten a dozen . . . Rachel and Heshie will be here by six and the turkey's still solid! (She rises to go to the kitchen and thinks better of it) . . . Sabrina's coming home from school soon to raise her usual hell . . . can't sit still five seconds . . . you'd think by eleven they'd settle down a bit . . . nobody knows how to raise a child, least of all some psychologist in Tel Aviv who decides to write a book. What do you do about perpetual motion in pig tails that hasn't learned the basics? . . . You repeat yourself, over and over . . . you're patient. Never shuts up either . . . even Halek has no luck with her . . . (wiping her face with a handkerchief as she takes up a fan). I ought to start in on the rug . . . the kids would use it for a toilet if I let them, especially little Kuba, although he ought to know better . . . I'll try some spot remover if a good sweeping doesn't work . . . Sabrina can take care of the front steps and clean the vegetables. and I'll have her watch Kuba when we're done with dinner. Caught her sizing herself up in the mirror yesterday without a stitch of clothing . . . had her hand down there awhile as if she'd just discovered something . . . no reason to make anything of it ... I told her to get a bath since she'd managed to rid herself of everything . . . says she'll be needing a bra . . . my God they grow up guick . . . Halek fell apart when he heard about it . . . laughed all through dinner, and poor Sabrina had no idea why . . . thank God she hasn't found out . . . one secret I should have kept ... a training bra indeed! ... (Rising again, she moves to the open window, shouting to a friend on the street who responds) ... Look at the poor Chasidim out there . . . it's bad enough to laugh . . . those overcoats! . . . one hundred five on the streets and they're worrying about dressing up for God . . . does God want them suffocating to death in their orthodoxy? . . . Rachel says they're madmen . . . a country full of crazies, but where else can we live? . . . Halek's uncle in New Jersey wanted to sponsor

us a few years back . . . "Welcome to America," he wrote, "if you really want to come." But our life was here, what with the children, and Halek's position at the shop. We felt freer then and Yossef offered an apartment, completely furnished if we came. "You can fly in to New York," he said, and promised Halek work inside the pharmacy . . . Israel had been my dream and Halek's too. "Who else gives us strength and sanctuary?" he says over and over as if he wants to believe, and will if he says it often enough. But the Feydyeen are busy killing Jews wherever they can find them, though it's better now . . . they hit the market place last week . . . (She moves from the window, picks up the broom, and begins on the rug) . . . kicks up the dust, doesn't it? . . . blew up a postman and a five-vear-old boy . . . I wondered about Kuba when I heard. Mrs. Benbow saw it all. Would Uncle Yossef take us now? (She stops, and picks a cigarette out of the pack on the coffee table. She lights up, leaning against the back of the couch as she idly follows the program on the TV screen. A soap opera is in progress) . . . Sabina gets angry now when I light up. Her health class found out vou lose twelve minutes off your life each time, so she's made it off limits when she's around. As if twelve minutes should make a difference! (She laughs, relaxes, and slides down onto the couch as she continues to watch the TV) . . . twelve minutes or twelve hours or twelve lives or even a million. There are so many things to be learned. (Stubbing out her cigarette as she lights another) Let her have her twelve minutes and she can live to be a hundred. (As she begins to follow the soap opera) Look at her in that gown! I never looked that good, although Halek kids me about it . . . says he likes them that way, but I've never had complaints. (Leaning back as she inhales her cigarette) . . . Abram saved our lives at Majdanek, dear God. (She begins to weep quietly, dropping the cigarette on the carpet where it begins to smoulder) Damn it to hell! (She picks it up and stubs it in the tray, then drops to her knees to inspect the damage as the TV drones on). I'm getting drowsy. (Drawing up her knees in front of her on the floor as she leans against the couch) It's my nerves and a general lack of sleep. Halek snores all night and drives me crazy . . . I need a drink . . . It's funny, loving one man, yet I end up marrying another . . . You can't wed with ghosts. The past seems to ebb away like a sea, and you realize one day you're not so young, and the present must be dealt with . . . (Rising to her knees as she attempts to smooth out her hair). It isn't really Halek . . . I love his snores, and it's an embarrassment when I tell him . . . As soon as I close my eyes each night those doors open wide and the craziness begins . . . (Rising and moving to the kitchen. She returns with a glass and whiskey bottle. She sits on the couch, and proceeds to pour the

glass full) . . . it's not Halek. I worry, too . . . somedav he'll be off to work, or stop at Gephard's for some groceries, and I won't see him ... and the cops will come ... he's hostage or he's dead or some other horror . . . happens to every family . . . the children too . . . (As she buries her face in her hands) . . . I know the panic mother felt when she hid us from the Gestapo . . . she'd wedge us in the nook behind the closet in our apartment, and stuff a muffin in our mouths. We didn't know where she went and nearly threw up from the heat and fright . . . the troopers were thorough as beagles sniffing out a scent. She'd return, and spit out the window at them as they passed below . . . (Pouring herself another drink as she begins to feel the effects). Places you've never seen but only heard of always seem so good . . . America . . . if we had the money . . . the children speak some English . . . Sabina anyway. We'll be here forever, I'm afraid, unless I pick up a yacht with the meat money. The heat is murder without a fan. If opening the windows would help, I'd blow the damned wall out and give us the air we need. One o'clock already and look at me . . . not a thing started . . . I'll call Rachel, make excuses, and tell her it's all off . . . (moving to the phone). We haven't seen each other since chanukah, and Halek's bringing his office friend. He promised air conditioning this year and the year before, but there's always some excuse. The car needs fixing, or we've got to save to buy the house we want and can't afford . . . then comes the air conditioning. So we suffer . . . One time he brings in a cheap electric fan that goes beserk and shorts the whole house! . . . no one survives these summers . . . I'll go run the cold water and spend the afternoon in the tub . . . to hell with dinner . . . (She finishes her drink, moves to the coffee table and pours another, returning to the window) . . . busy little Jews, aren't they, going God knows where, parading around like puffed out little mice . . . (As she lights another cigarette). I'll have to see Kramer again . . . It'd be quite a party if I asked him over, but he'd break into analysis right in the middle of noshes . . . "Halina," he'd tell me, "you fork your turkey like it's the last food vou expect to see awhile," or, "Halina, berating your daughter in front of company is likely a deferred act of vengence against your persecutors."... a lunatic he is, but I have to see him again . . . imagine him complaining last week in analysis about his corns when I'm finally beginning to associate. But the nightmares have to wait . . . how would Rachael feel . . . "vou go to headshrinkers at your age?" though she knows about my time in the camps . . . (She moves to the kitchen again, returning with a can of spot remover, which she tosses on the couch. She pulls another cigarette out, and pours her next drink from the bottle on the table. She is now obviously drunk) . . . better watch it.

There's time, but the turkey's still solid, and the vegetables are a mess. I should have said eight or nine to Rachel when the heat's at least tolerable. I'll call her. Kramer says the pills work as long as I take them according to prescription . . . (She starts for the bathroom, staggers and falls, spilling her drink. She tries to rise, gives up and rolls onto her back, beginning to laugh). At least I've kept the cigarette . . . no more burned rugs, and Kramer will keep a while. I'd call him but his secretary puts me off . . . "Mrs. Birenbaum, he can't drop everything because you've had a couple drinks."... an American from Baltimore, or some such hole. Kramer's incredible . . . Mrs. Narches, who's got the same problem, says her doctor's far more sympathetic, and got her on her feet again . . . says he's made some passes which, thank God, Kramer's willing to spare me . . . I hurt so . . . I do . . . my breasts pain like I've got a congestion spreading here, and here . . . imagine that man giving me a story about his corns and mistress, then charging \$50 an hour to listen. He's meschug. I'll tell vou . . . things he wouldn't tell his wife he tells to me. I'd better drink some coffee . . . (Rising as she gathers the glass from the rug) . . . if I could sleep I'd manage with Rachel and dear Heshie. A shower would help, but we're not allowed in June ... Halek gives me lots of room in bed ... (Moving to the couch as she pours out the last of the bottle) . . . ought to mix this with the coffee . . . last night the dreams came back . . . nineteen years and still it's like last week . . . (Going to the bathroom as the phone rings) . . . same damned song these past years . . . (She returns and picks up the phone) . . . Mrs. Yepanchin? . . . of course, where are you? . . . I forgot, forgive me . . . Sure, I'm fine . . . needed a couple of drinks to cool me down . . . sometimes things just seem to pile up . . . yes . . . the heat's no help . . . how could they build this project in the middle of the desert without some air conditioning? . . . government's stay the same no matter where you are . . . I'd join you down there if I hadn't so much work to do . . . one hundred five . . . Halek says he'll fix the fan that shorted out . . . the market once again? . . . thank God they're all okay . . . it never stops I'll tell you . . . no one's really safe no matter where they are . . . if we had the money, but we're not sure about sponsorship . . . I ache a bit. particularly in the head, and the nightmares return . . . Kramer says it's slow, though I'm improving . . . all of them . . . sure, a game . . . as long as they get their money . . . lack of sleep mostly, and putting up with the kids . . . Sabina should be here by three, and Kuba's at the day care center . . . it's illegal, but they don't check, so no one's the wiser. She's getting to be too much . . . bright and sassy too, like I was with my mother . . . three pumpernickels? . . . let me check . . . (She puts down the

phone, moves to the coffee table and shuffles through some papers, as she returns). Sorry, but my mind's a blank. You're right about the bread, and a loaf or two of rue in case Halek's friend shows up . . . okay, but lady I owe you one . . . you do too much . . . Sabina says so and she never talks that way about anyone . . . a good rain would help, or moving to Antarctica . . . I'm calling Rachel and tell her nine thirty instead of six . . . should have gone for cold cuts and salads instead . . . I'm fine and likely to stay this way . . . okay and thanks again . . . explain it to me . . . as soon as possible . . . (She laws the phone in its cradle, picks up the broom, and begins sweeping the dirt from the rug into a dust pan) . . . plenty of time left, and Sabina is going to help when she returns . . . (She moves to the kitchen. empties the dust pan, and removes the turkey from the refrigerator, returning to the living room). Ought to clean the walls, but first things come first (She goes to the couch, takes up the spot remover, and begins working out the grime in the rug. She becomes absorbed, scrubbing out the spots with an intensity beyond what's called for) ... Funny about Kiesel, but he helped us live, so I suppose we shouldn't complain . . . "If you're alive." Bedi would say, "and you can still bargain." . . . I should try and call, but Kramer wouldn't be bothered . . . could have saved mother and Celina too. but I didn't know how to trade for lives 'till Bedi showed me . . . Bedi . . . we promise to celebrate a chanukah each time, and another year passes . . . I can't go calling her to just unload ... "buying and selling," she said . . . "when Kiesel comes to call, clean up and show him what you've got."... he came and pampered me with sweets... winter made a hell of things, and the creamatoria stopped working (A beat, as she begins a letter) . . . "Bedi . . . apologies for not writing" . . . (She rises, walks to the kitchen, and pulls a bottle of wine from the refrigerator. She returns, opens the bottle, and takes a long drink) . . . "Dear Bedi" . . . hope there's enough of this for dinner . . . "apologies and so on . . . how goes it with the children? . . . I've got snapshots in front of me and David is every inch his father and then some . . . like seeing yourself growing up again . . . don't condemn me because you haven't heard . . . I'm definitely no writer" . . . (Beginning in earnest on the wine) . . . Sabina should be home . . . I could have given her money to pick up cream cheese . . . I count six, seven if Halek brings his friend . . . (Giggling as the wine begins to mix with the whiskey). "So you're off your medication, and the nightmares are better . . . remember Celina? . . . I know how you felt, but we were luckier. don't vou think?" . . . (Finishing the wine as she reels across the room to the bathroom. She is seen crouching before the toilet as the whiskey and wine begin to come up. She stops a moment,

brings up more, then sprawls semi-conscious across the tiled floor) . . . (a beat) . . . Bedi? . . . God help me, I'm so damned sick . . . (She rises and manages the living room on hands and knees. She stops, then moves past the couch to the phone. pulling the table out from under, so that it falls to the floor. She picks up the phone and carefully dials) . . . Bedi? . . . no, sweetheart, just a friend . . . put mommy on the phone, will you? ... hello? ... it's me, Bedi, yes Halina! ... I know it's been forever . . . things could be better, thanks . . . I'm so glad . . . you know how I am with letters . . . Gaby, of course . . . talks like a chatterbox . . . three and a half, I'll bet . . . Sabina's eleven and still raising hell . . . a few drinks but it's been so hot . . . I don't sleep . . . flashbacks are gone, but the nightmares get worse and worse . . . three years already and listen to me . . . she's a wonder. I'm sure . . . I've been dreaming about Kiesel . . . a month, two months, but I haven't told Halek . . . I can't forget ... I want a normal life ... Bedi? ... I still see Kramer ... I know you do . . . (As she begins to weep) . . . I can't tell him . . . it's hot . . . I've got dinner planned this evening . . . wish you weren't off near the end of the world . . . no, I don't care . . . I could invite everyone . . . it's been done . . . call it a survivor's dinner . . . nineteen years . . . of course . . . I'll bring the Russian army . . . the wine's been chilled since yesterday . . . Halek, but I'm tired of getting his meals, and the hell with Sabina and the rest . . . woke up last night and thought it was an air raid . . . my bunk's unmade, you know, and the Kapo's on her way . . . sometimes I can't tell . . . we're daft, I'm sure . . . Celina's face comes floating up in a dream, covered with flowers, with blood clots drying on her back . . . Halek shook me and I screamed . . . it's hard to remember . . . he says I hit him . . . Sunday night . . . I'm sure I did . . . couldn't you get a plane or take the bus? . . . lucky you . . . you're older, so perhaps the memories aren't so intense ... nice to have support (a beat) ... I tried it once ... not really tried, but I wanted someone to know, to realize, so I took a half dozen, and they pumped my stomach out . . . I've talked to others . . . too many years, Bedi . . . you've got the list . . . I'm still there, begging each meal . . . each night Kiesel comes, and sometimes when he touches . . . it's not the same . . . and there's Abram. Without him I would have died off like the rest . . . soun and love and doctors when I needed them . . . I haven't told Halek . . . the baby too . . . It's a lie if you pretend . . . the dead, you know, the dying, and Abram's baby . . . remember? . . . odors that don't wash off and rape and shootings after lunch ... lie to me . . . I know . . . so get the bus, and move the children here . . . (a long beat) . . . forgive me, I forget we change . . . don't worry, I'll sober up . . . he's tolerant, especially with the

kids . . . I'll tell him . . . of course . . . if hell doesn't freeze before . . . (She lets the phone drop and drinks again from the bottle. She rises to her knees, falls, and rises again, attempting to orient herself as the stage lights dim, leaving her outlined against the dark) . . . Bedi? . . . (as she continues to drink) . . . hell. I don't know how to stop . . . can't make out the time . . . Bedi? . . . vou never get used to the smells . . . must be the heat ... and the bodies . . . (As she begins kicking and shoving aside what we take for corpses) . . . no one comes to take them except Saturdays after "selections," and then they sweep the camp, excrement and all . . . (We see her working to clear herself a place on the floor) . . . the pots are overflowing and last week they shut the doors and left us boarded up . . . Celina threw up on herself, and went off to the showers . . . doesn't matter . . . (Dropping to her knees as she goes to a fetal position) . . . mother's gone . . . Bedi went on detail, and dropped her at the infirmary . . . the food is bad enough and she was full of lice . . . Elta the Kapo had an eye on her, and time ran out . . . I've no strength, little enough when the food comes . . . Kiesel wants to know why I don't wash up, but he never helps except for shower space if I perform . . . it's like him, but he brings the food . . . (a beat) . . . she's gone . . . Bedi kept it back and let her die . . . less mouths, more food for all . . . Celina hasn't long . . . her diarrhea will kill us all . . . Abram? . . . I'm tired and it's so hot ... I had a dream ... Abram was standing in a field of roses with his mouth held open and face full of sores, telling me something ... but I couldn't hear, and I offered him the baby, and his mouth staved open until the dream ended . . . he's gone to Auschwitz with the rest . . . the men were taken off one night . . . only Kiesel remains, and he brings us food for fun, he says . . . Celina's dving in her shit . . . I'm sorry, but they'll come for her this week, so cleaning's out of the question . . . Mrs. Planch was caught at line up yesterday with turnips in her bra . . . Bedi grabbed one when the guards turned away . . . we split it before we went to work latrines . . . (Rising to her knees as she searches the darkness) . . . the pots are overflowing and I've got to get some sleep . . . (Struggling to her feet, she makes her way around bodies for a corner). Some aren't dead, but it's hard to tell unless you look . . . (She produces what we take for a small pan, and squats over it as she raises her dress) . . . so many gone . . . Marcus and then Abram, Mrs. Planch and mother . . . Celina too, though Bedi holds out hope . . . If Kiesel didn't make demands, I'd rest, and find another way to feed us . . . Sundays he brings chocolates, and takes me with my dress still on behind the alcove . . . chocolate bars and turnips and occasional greens ... great soup if you're not fussy about what you eat . . . (She

finishes, adjusts her dress, and returns to her place) . . . no one sleeps in this heat, so it doesn't much matter what you do . . . Bedi had a deck of playing cards, and we tried gin rummy and a game or two of drabs, but never for food or clothes . . . I want to sleep, of course, but not forever . . . Celina said that if you dream of food, think about potatoes and forget the meat, then forget potatoes . . . Kiesel goes on about the meat tins in the commissary, but he wants a lot more than he's willing to give . . . they come and go, don't they . . . I made a list of "selectees" on laundry slips, and kept them in my shoes . . . no one remembers, so I wrote them down one by one as the Kapos came and took them off . . . (a beat) . . . Celina never told him about the baby ... and he was gone before I was well again ... (Producing a small locket, which she holds aloft and swings against the darkness) . . . all that's left, and they'd shoot me for even this . . . (a beat) . . . baby's so quiet . . . never made a sound, and Celina barely looked at me . . . They kill the babies if they find them, and how do you hide an infant that's crying to be fed? . . . "Enough Jews in this damned world as it is," says Kiesel, and then laughs when he remembers who he's got his belly up against . . . but the food helps, doesn't it (As the stage lights return) . . . Abram? . . . haven't had a thing since yesterday . . . (Beginning to be sick again) . . . she didn't die, because I hid her and found her milk and medicines (Dropping to her knees as she tries to re-orient) . . . everyone got shuffled around, and we lost track . . . I told him whose child it was, and no one said she died, or got left behind . . . my belly hurts . . . nothing's done, and Sabina should be home . . . Celina's dead and Abram won't be coming back. Must be after two, and look at me! . . . Kramer suggested I go back, and search the Nazi archives, but babies didn't count-they weren't recorded . . . it's way too late for dinner, and I don't give a damn . . . (Rising as she moves to the bathroom. The house has turned into an oven, and she is drenched with sweat. She sits on the toilet seat, her head in her hands) . . . I've forgotten, but the food will spoil before I get it cooked . . . let them hold their stomachs . . . I'm not waiting . . . even if Sabina comes home, I'll be off somewhere, or at the movies . . . the hell with it, I'm tired . . . Sabina or Halek will clean the house . . . Nothing stays buried, and I can't make peace, so what the hell . . . still, Bedi could have helped, but she's important now, running to her classes and back home again. Someday they'll have her teaching at the college . . . "One copes," she says . . . "and even the stink wears off before too long . . . (Rising, and moving to the doorway) . . . a few nightmares, and discomfort with your bowels, but we've got good doctors, and that's the truth." . . . I'd forgotten about the heat

. . . (Checking her watch) . . . Kramer's home and I'll call . . . "Sleep on it," he'll probably tell me, "and call me if it continues." . . . he always says the same . . . (She goes to the bathroom cabinet, and removes a packet of razors). Last night with Halek was like a dream, and I told him I didn't want it, but it happened anyway . . . half way through when I thought he'd finished, he turned into Abram, and things got interesting . . . he thought, of course, that he'd been good to me . . . (Taking out one of the razor blades, she holds it up to the light) . . . "A quick, clean sweep on the wrist," Celina said, and we became expert from watching it again and again (As the apartment door is tried) mother called it a blessing, because you just get drowsy and eventually go to sleep . . . "The idea," Celina said, "is not to think about it." But it wouldn't always work, and then they'd get angry, and dragged away and gassed . . . (A child's voice, and knocking are heard at the door) . . . I started a diary of sorts. writing down names and addresses, just in case . . . but there were so many, the faces merged, and names became just names . . . others were murdered in their sleep . . . (Laving down the razor, she removes her bra, using the bathroom light to inspect herself close range) . . . not so pretty, although Halek still lies . . . Abram was kind and Kiesel wouldn't keep his hands away . . . Sabina and Kuba left marks here, and over here (Fondling her breasts as the knocking at the door continues) . . . still a handful, but I was pretty back then . . . (As she takes up the razor) . . . Abram? . . . (She runs water over the wrist of her right hand, dries with a towel, and begins cutting. She makes a tentative incision across the artery, and watches the blood bubble as the voice of a woman as well as a child are heard, and the door is tried continually) . . . worth remembering, isn't it? . . . each night a recapitulation comes, and a trial takes place, and each death gets counted off before the nightmare ends . . . (Cutting deeper, she falls against the sink onto the floor as the blood gushes, and Mrs. Yapanchin's voice is heard at the door) . . . it becomes a matter of bookkeeping . . . (Acknowledging the noise at the door) . . . Mrs. Yepanchin? . . . I'm sorry . . . (Becoming aware of the blood) . . . I'm so damned dizzy . . . (She attempts to staunch the wound with her other hand as she slips trying to rise) ... yes, a moment please ... Sabina? ... wait now ... (She rises with difficulty as she manages the toilet seat) . . . wait for mommy, and no crying if you don't mind . . . (She moves shakily to the basin, washes the blood off the cut, then dabs at it with a towel. She continues dabbing, then wraps the towel clumsily like a tourniquet around her wrist) . . . it's alright now sweetheart, no one's on fire . . . (She slips on her bra, fumbling with the clasp at the back, then starts for the door. She turns instead, drops

another towel on the floor, and mops with her foot at the blood. She moves to the livingroom, pulls on her sweater, and goes to the door. She grabs at the chain, rewraps the towel, then unlatches and opens as Sabina jumps with a shout into her arms. A cameo of Halina with an arm around Sabina, and Mrs. Yepanchin's arms around them both as the lights go slowly to black).

Night

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the snake winds through
      my belly
       wraps
  around my lungs-
barbed tongue burns
     darts across
       the back
   of my throat-
black razor
      tail
   slashes at the
     insides
  of my thighs-
lidless eyes
              stare
  paralyze
 the lenses of my mind
```

-Elizabeth Renfro

Elsa ate the chicken

Elsa ate the chicken.
Our beautiful black pet chicken.
Momma gave it to her
cause it shit all over the porch.
And then Elsa came back
the next day
and said how good
the chicken had been.
I thought she meant
that it was behaving
but she didn't.
Elsa ate the chicken.

-Rick Paxson

Try To Forget

There never was a tractor by your uncle's barn, and it certainly wasn't green.

You remember a table stocked with cousins, laundry strung between two trees, then you move back to the farm, a river bending hard against your fear.

The trout won't always wait there, fiery and still, and memory quickens as you haul it toward the light.

You say the river is a ripple in your mind, rising.

-Gary Will

What I Have Done

Father! Father the beehives you were keeping are agitated and howling in the backyard this year. The bees' small hands poke through gaps around the door you helped lock, and then their fattened bodies squeeze out. Some of them resemble the nuns from Queen Of Apostles checking my fingernails for dirt as they did every morning. The ruler the nuns carried couldn't measure godliness but it could sting and was probably admired for its love of cleanliness.

They left me fourteen years ago with complete instructions concerning the vitals of genuflexion and were greatly aided by your dedication those frightening nights you made me stay up repeating the Lord's Prayer until it wasn't forgotten or the shoe if it was.

When you joined the nuns two years later I actually smiled and I'm sorry. But now I find you locked behind a door I have never seen, all of you: still forcing yourselves on the world like the damned funeral industry holding your own services with my childhood memory and burning bits of my heart for incense in the quiet hours of my life.

It is that memory's inward eye that opens my small lamp, but only slightly so that I must create all of Spring with just one bloom to grip your fading hand and to love you when I would not. Because what often appears tender in our world is hovering too like our own circumstances precariously balanced though we are unaware, so that the moon is a lamp held above a lake, and the stars . . .

they are the gleaming tips of the fisherman's spears ready to strike.

-Ken O'Conner

Descent

Who is to say that all is not begun in blood and madness? Contradiction speaks like an infant's sigh in a ragged world, like birds in winter—unexpected music in a snow-padded landscape, the air sharp-edged. We feel the unknown with our hands, making questions answered in song. I see you emerging

from nets of sadness, laughing in the early evening, when things settle so heavily: the clock slows, becomes erratic; traffic yowls; I find my heart riding a sculpted beast in a place of flesh and fur.

In memory we live crowded into a one-room walkup, paint chipped from the walls, the noise like a howl of triumph as we descend the stairs twist the handle step onto the street.

-David Cowan



Contributors' Notes

Frank Boschan has lived in Butte County for six years and is teaching part-time at Butte College.

David Cowan is a musician and a free-lance writer living in Chico.

Jeff Everist is a senior, English major, enigma. "My thanks to the folks at the Writing Workshop for their love and support these last few years. Stay cool."

Pamela Giuliano is a graduate English student.

Jeff Goolsby is a graduating English/Visual Communications major who thinks the general public can go to hell.

Kate Hulbert is a graduate assistant in the department of English. She came to Chico by way of Ohio and New York and hopes to become poet laureate of Upper Bidwell Park.

Michael F. Jenkins was born a central valley Californian and has come to CSU, Chico the year as a senior English major with a collegiate background from Modesto Junior College and The University of Oklahoma. He continues to hang on to an illusion of control and in his spare time plays with his favorite four words.

charles fenton nielsen, in case anybody wants to know, is a meek english student at california state university, chico, and all he really wants to do is listen to what a few people have to say about a couple of different things, and then he wants to get the hell out of here without bothering anybody. his favorite colors are maroon and grey.

Ken O'Connor is a Chico poet, born in the mid-state. He believes in the spiral, the dance, and the fish.

Dan Owens moonlights at various odd jobs when not writing or otherwise wasting time.

Skylar Pace is an undergrad here at CSUC. "I like to write when I get the chance. N. Scott Momaday says words have power in and of themselves. I think they're fun, too."

Rick Paxson-"I have no defense."

Mario Phlemke majors in Engslip and Phoolosophy at Chico State. His hobbies are the collecting of celebrity ear wax samples (you should see the lump he got from Theodore Roethke) and looking under rocks. He owns little except for a dirty, unruly portable typewriter and a dirty, but well-behaved, grey dog named Sam.

Elizabeth Renfro is a part-time instructor at CSU, Chico.

Billie Sommerfeld is a business owner in Chico doing graduate work in Communications.

Gary Will lives and writes in Chico, and is currently at work on the Umbrella Press.



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