

Watershed



Brian

Watershed
a
literary magazine

volume 6

number 1

Editor

Sara Nordhus

Editorial Assistant

Byron Fountain

Editorial Staff

Robyn Goodman

Kaye Hippenstiel

Sue Ikle

Mary Ann Latimer

Scott McCarthy

Lynn McGonigle

Maria White

Jerry Winthrop

Advisors

Ellen Walker

Casey Huff

Sponsors

English Department CSUC

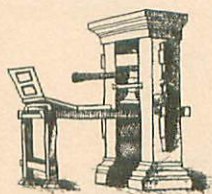
Instructionally Related Activities

Cover Design

Brian Conery

Copyright © 1982

English Department CSUC



Hoping to feature John Gardner in this issue of *Watershed*, we wrote to him at the beginning of the semester to beg a contribution. Two weeks later he was killed in a motor cycle accident.

Gardner was involved with the first literary magazines at Chico when he was teaching here in the early 60's. He advised the student magazine *Selections* for a year before founding *MSS*. These two magazines, though in existence for only a few years, had an impressive cast of contributors, including William Stafford, W.H. Gass, George P. Elliott, and William Carlos Williams.

Gardner revived *MSS* last year at the State University of New York at Binghamton. As promotion for the magazine, his friend Ken Morrow—of the CSU art department—painted a male winged angel and sold a limited number of copies. Morrow has donated the painting to *Watershed* to use in our dedication.

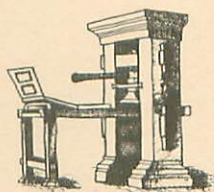
The *Watershed* staff would like to dedicate this issue to John Gardner.

To the hundreds of writers who submitted their work: thank you. We enjoyed reading it.

Sara Nordhus
Editor



—to John Gardner



Contents

<i>Stephen Metzger</i>	
All We Know	1
<i>Michael Jenkins</i>	
Waiting for the Moon	2
Portrait	3
<i>Sheri L. Pritchard</i>	
Friend He	4
<i>Kathleen Gallo</i>	
The Smell of Orange	5
<i>Kate Hulbert</i>	
Violet	6
<i>K.J. Burkhardt</i>	
On Molivos, Greece	7
<i>Suzanne Meyer</i>	
Quasimodo	8
<i>Joseph Martin</i>	
In Grandfather's Raincoat	10
<i>S.L. Shirley</i>	
The Man Who Shot Trotsky	11
Betting the Bankroll on SENATOR	12
<i>Barbara Kimball</i>	
Spring Night in Kansas	13
<i>Shannon Minor</i>	
Listening to Jazz	14
<i>Mark Rodriguez</i>	
Objects	16
Confessions of Joaquin	17

<i>Kenneth Farrar</i>	
It Ain't Nothing	19
<i>Victor Williams</i>	
The Abstract Man	29
<i>George Keithley</i>	
Mingus Today	33
<i>Elizabeth Renfro</i>	
Dance	39
<i>Stephen Metzger</i>	
Traction	43
<i>Jeff Goolsby</i>	
Phone Calls	57

Artwork by Anita L. Sterling.

Insofar as literature is a telling of new stories, literature has been “exhausted” for centuries, but insofar as literature tells archetypal stories in an attempt to understand once more their truth—translate their wisdom for another generation—literature will only be exhausted when we all, in our foolish arrogance, abandon it.

—John Gardner, **On Moral Fiction**

All We Know

Auguste Rodin, who knew, as we do,
Sculpted agony from stone.
And the eyes of his Head saw at once
Somehow
The cut — the bewildered eyes of the first woman
Who, in a darkened cave near bone and fire,
Knelt by her stillborn child;
The reopening — the helplessness in my friend's,
Whose lover died as he drove madly
Up the Valley
To be with her;
And the scar — the resignation in ours,
As we face our days,
Small fights,
And twilights.

But our spaniel, who didn't know (poor bitch),
Turned quietly one day,
Climbed the stairs out back, lay
Down,
And calmly closed her eyes.

—*Stephen Metzger*

Waiting for the Moon

Beneath uncertain stars you are balanced
On a fence post, waiting for the moon
To rise like a rotted fruit flowing
Red over this dark fertile field.

Straddling the rail you remember Michael,
Boasting as always, mounting your horse, Selene,
And riding her hard down to the river
Only to return by himself, bucked and bruised.

With the gate wide open you waited.
And when Selene finally ambled home,
Michael was forgiven, because after all,
You could have stopped him if you wanted.

But out here, feeling feminine and half-
Alone among the hushed whispers of hay,
It is not a matter of choice, but anticipation.
For mercy comes in phases and luminous risings.

—*Michael Jenkins*

Portrait

We were counting the shades of green here in the clearing when they came parting through the landscape: a photographer and a family with three small daughters.

They gathered beneath the arms of the scenery, brushing wrinkles from young dresses, while the legs of a tripod were spread before them.

Carefully, arms and necks were bent and tilted because the photographer was fancied an artist with an eye for detail. We went unnoticed, as always.

They had come here to hold on to something they did not fully understand. They smiled without looking directly into the lens that saw we would take their youngest daughter within the year.

The camera shuddered with impatience, eager to wink. And when all was still and ready, a small click sucked the family in, taking us in with them.

When it was over, the camera was gathered by the legs, the three daughters by the arms, and led quickly away. The flattened grass where they had stood slowly rose.

We kept a part of them with us, still and unmoving, posed here in the clearing. And they have a part of us. Look closely, there, behind the mother.

—*Michael Jenkins*

Friend He

Ragged and unwound
I feel his gut-reactions
thread through me to
pick up that lost stitch.

—*Sheri L. Pritchard*

The Smell of Orange

For Nancy, lost to me
in Guatemala.

We had traveled by train
two days from snow and January
following the same white brilliance
on dining-car linen to sunbleached
sidewalk and stucco. For the first time,
I saw orange trees—marigold moons
shining through emerald leaves,
the colors intense as Chinese enamelware.
Azaleas and Bleeding-Hearts spilled in our paths.
In search of ideas like exotic fruits,
we sat at the feet of travelers
just returned from the South.
We accepted their gifts:
precious spice of a new world.

Now I live with orange trees,
blossoms cover my walk—
gifts tucked away in old trunks.
I think of you who wore them like skin:
still traveling South, still searching.
I peel the memories of those lost days slowly,
savoring each segment for its richness,
inviting the bitter—the smell of orange
lingers still.

—Kathleen Gallo

Violet

My grandmother's name is Violet.
Small and delicate, not frail
they say she's senile.
Sturdy bird-boned woman
blood-sucking, bright
frigid talking beauty
you always were the strongest.

Tormentor of your children, you spat
them away in impatience and wound
them back with wit. Violet
in a walker now you beguile
the doctors, sweet talk
nurses and bind your daughter
in a stinging gauze of guilt.
My mother has no peace.
Violet I love you. I wish
you to die and free us, I wish
you to live forever.

Your granddaughter understands you.
My daughter is drawn
to you in a familiar way
we outside women cannot know.
Violet the needle-prick
of your being awakens us, stings
our soft breasts, draws blood
and laughter. Violet your piercing
contralto will call us
from our sleep forever.

—Kate Hulbert

On Molivos, Greece

hands touch
my body like moths.
cool and listless,
the dark, soft wings
spread across my skin.
we lie by the water,
try to fit
bone and curve
between each stone.
i taste sweat
like the sea
on his lips.
i hold him tight
like a shell found
half-buried in sand.
perfect, it turns
in and in
on itself.

—*K.J. Burkhardt*

Quasimodo

To write and not to speak.
To sit here without a mouth,
Forgetting the howls that make a civilization.
To carefully cast the words,
Watching them stretch to hold the fleeting
Ideas that pour from my head through
My hands is my obsession.

I've torn out my tongue.
It was a curse,

Betraying what I did not wish to be known,
Lying when I wished to speak the truth.
I've thrown away what I couldn't trust,
What I feared most.

I fear my tongue and the words it holds at
its tip.
To be unable to dam the rush of thoughts
Tripping from my mouth through the bars
Of my teeth,
To let the muses of my soul go unsuffocated
Through my lips into the hollow world of
Plastic trees and deaf celluloid beings
Terrifies me.
I've kept my fingers.
They are also a curse,
But their betrayals are dumb,
Speaking mutely to the dry pages,
Leaving me the choice to expose their rantings,
To whom I might.

I've kept what I couldn't trust,
But what I could direct.

I direct my fingers and the ideas they
Trace.
To mold the half-truths pacing restlessly
Behind my eyes into definite shapes.
To sketch these shadows of reality as
They slip noiselessly away is my
Obsession.

To scrawl my thoughts
On the world's sneering face.
To know my ideas may pierce another
Being with the same hideous compulsion.
To reach out silently through burdened
Pages calms me, as the wind howls
Aimlessly through my eyes and the
Words begin to slip off the page.

—*Suzanne M. Meyer*

In Grandfather's Raincoat

In Grandfather's raincoat
I am walking through the rain.
My name, these winter branches,
the traffic lights shining
on the wet streets
all have a different meaning to me now.
Inside the left hand pocket;
a few coins, a key,
and an old handkerchief,
still spattered and stained
still crumpled in pain, the old man
knew his death, his friendly death
that greeted him each morning
from the pocket of his raincoat,
the death that came to him so slowly,
gently, like water rising over the heads of cattle.

—*Joseph Martin*

The Man Who Shot Trotsky

short with a pimply mole on left cheek
who smoked Luckies through an iron holder
puffs reaching Atlantic liners steaming
toward bearclawed islands

Mexico City the Patron of Death
as sands soak sponge blood bath ordinary Wednesday
afternoon
while bodyguards grab a quick taco at Ernie's on the
corner

Gunga Din from Afghanistan
loyal vodka carrier from Kabul
Hooverilles inventing football and spaghetti
armed without a passport in a city without a name
Brink's couldn't have saved Leon
the fleeing Vite trailed by horse carriages and Tugboat
Annies
peasants on way to mass and young Fidel Castros
wearing Red Sox baseball caps.

Kissless:

Betrayed by your bean-eating high school sweetheart
wearing your Moscow lettermen jacket
Crimson M spilling onto the medalled chest
boring machine holes through ancient speeches
upsetting passers bearing witness to a new Western
filmed live from the eighteen-story busses
with Marlon Brando studying crackled photographs
C.O.D. with Leningrad memorial stamps
negatives sent back to the Man from Uncle
shelving the files with Trotsky numbers to close a case
making heroes speak through silent films
a goatchinned old man gunned down
leading assassins to the third paragraph
as an alibi graces wanted posters; unidentified killer.

—S.L. Shirley

Betting the Bankroll on SENATOR

to be reared in swamps as south
as Louisiana
near Orleans frogs frying Tennessee breath
to be born in sweltered afternoon
doublenecktied deep in excuse
the beard and pince-nez an afterthought
not to be fragged a moment too late
yes,
alligators sleep:
the tents of a last desire & cigar before
sunrise, dirty dog
they led you not on leash
to run at wild chase wary rabbits
and sleep in saloons:
the dusk none known in Texas
to run a very sloppy third
shot by the last furlong.

—S.L. Shirley

Spring Night in Kansas

Dark steals in, edges twilight,
The night winds pull
clouds across the moon.
The horned owl calls
over trembling blackjacks.
In this sweet dying,
I don't know my name.

—*Barbara Kimball*

Listening to Jazz

Electric violins
give birth to a lustful creature
through speakers beside
my bed;
they shiver labor pains of dissonance
into this room,
ooze raw
 jazz
 chord
plucked and torn
by taunt-held hands;
nimble,
swift,
the sounds are born from the strings
on a slick white belly which
curves and slides across
each waiting nerve.

The finger-flicking one-man-band
explodes
Oriental
vibration,
which peels my fibered mind
like unripe fruit.
I am candid and exposed
as a naked shot
snapped in surprise.

Its business is sensual force
like a hand, squeezing my breast hard,
with brute abandon.
I find myself singing words which
come from somewhere but
make no sense;
I cannot care for
gentle melodies or
symphonic blues,
I choose this lover's violence . . . willfully.

—*Shannon Minor*

Objects

A crow hangs in my room
I found her dead
tied to a tree
Cut her down
and brought her here
I painted the feathers
with ink
The dish of berries went uneaten
The water never touched
I fashioned a nest
from wire coat hangers
placing inside
eggs made of porcelain
glazed bright colors
I put rhinestones
where her eyes once were
I got a bird book and pointed
to the glossy crow picture
hoping she would think it a mirror

She must enjoy death
and want to stay there

—*Mark Rodriguez*

Confessions of Joaquín

I slept last night
in the hollow of a sequoia
During the night
I felt my blood flow
away from me
At dawn it returned
weak as rosewater
I believe this is how
a man goes crazy
piece by piece
Losing his sense of direction
to whatever bird
flies over and wants it
Losing his skill at romance
to any creek he falls into
I swear the trout
steal your eyes and spawn them
I did kill a man
up in Angels Camp
You must understand with his eyes
he told me he wanted to die

There is a meanness born inside me
sharper than the call of any animal
It haunts me
from the cave of my soul
I want to die peacefully leaf by leaf
moon by moon, grain by grain
in the arms of a woman gone nine years
But the only thing I know is this meanness
It's a bridge that stops short
on both sides of the canyon
and only love or meanness
can carry you across

—Mark Rodriguez

It Ain't Nothing

—*Kenneth Farrar*

They first come on Thursday. I had just dropped off to sleep, when I heard this thunk thunk thunk. First I thought I was dreaming, because it sounded a lot like the carcasses slamming together at the slaughter house. I pulled the pillow over my head, but the thunk thunk thunk rattled up through the floor, shaking the bed. Some fucker was hammering. I work hard and long hours and I ain't none too happy about not getting my rest. The only place near mine is the old lady's house across the way. I got up, went into the kitchen and looked out the window.

Two men was standing in front of her house next to a pick up that had some lettering on the side. In the back of the truck was a pile of boards. One of the men wandered over and slid one out. The other one swung a hammer loose in his hand. When the board come up, he reached and steadied it with one hand. They set it long-side down, so that it run from the corner of the house to the front door, and started pounding. I don't much care what someone does with their house, but they was spoiling my sleep and I aimed to find out why. I pulled on overalls and went out.

They was pulling another board out of the truck. I looked at the one they just done. It wasn't surviving too good. Standing thirty feet off, I could see the crack down one side and the

nails sticking out, bent and twisted like steel worms.

The one carrying the board ran smack into the house, kicked at the wall like it was the one moving, then laid the board next to the other one, across the lower half of the door. The one with the hammer set up a nail, tapped it twice, then swung hard. He missed and smacked the board with a loud thunk. The nail fell out. He cursed and dug in the dirt for it.

It seems even someone fixing a house that bad ain't gonna close off the door. I walked closer. They was watching the hammering and didn't see me.

"What in the hell are you doing?"

The hammer stopped. They looked over their shoulder at me.

"What?" said the one holding the board.

"That's a hell of a way to fix a house."

"We ain't fixing," said Hammer.

"You boarding it up?"

"What's it look like?" said Boardman.

I eyed the bent nails and splintered wood. "A mess."

Boardman snorted.

Hammer stood up. "Whatchoo want?" He slapped the hammer head against his hand and stepped towards me.

"Well, nothing," I said, "but they's a lady inside."

He stopped. The head of the hammer slapped into his hand and he held it. "There is?"

Boardman spoke. "Nothing to do about that." He set up another piece of wood and Hammer started pounding. The nail bent. Boards gave him another.

"I know she lives there."

Boards snorted. "Sheeit."

Hammer stopped pounding and looked at me over one shoulder. "We ain't doubting you." Boards was grinning at me like the boys when they set a cow loose for fun. "Set up another one," said Hammer. He took a nail from Boards.

"You're fucking up my sleep. When the hell you gonna finish?"

Hammer stopped pounding. "What's that?"

"How long is it going to take? I want to get some sleep."

"Two days."

"Two days?"

"It's a two day job." That was Boards. "And two day jobs take two days." He was still grinning. I wished I'd of brought

out my shotgun. We'd see who'd grin.

"We'll be gone in another hour or so," said Hammer, "if'n we don't get interrupted too much." He reached for a nail.

Neither of them looked at me. Boards set up a piece of plywood. Hammer tapped the nail to get it started, then hit it hard two times before the board split.

"Sheeit."

"Get another," said Hammer.

I walked back to my house, got the bourbon from the kitchen, took a good slug, then another. I was too tired to watch the tube. I carried the bottle into the bedroom. I sat on the corner of the bed and took a good pull. It ain't that hard to finish a bottle.

I work nights at the slaughter house over to the other side of town. It used to be that I hammered the cows before they got the electric prod. I had a good job then. Swinging the mallet takes good timing and good aim. I was good and strong and fast. You got to hit them just right, just between the eyes. If you hit too low you break the nose, then they shake and spray blood and bellow and kick and are harder than hell to get a shot at. And if you hit the skull too far back, sometimes they ain't stunned good enough and start moving when the cutters are working on them.

Most cows ain't nothing. They come in and you hammer them and that's all. But some cows is strange. Some of them'll give you trouble. You got to watch their eyes as they come through the door. The ones that just look at you is ok. It's the ones that swing their heads and keep trying to see past you that gives the trouble. They look at you and they look at the hooks and they knows.

Once they got the prod, things changed. All it takes is a touch and the steer's down. It don't take no skill at all. All the younger ones want to work the prod. Guess that's ok with me. I never did get it right. Once I even hit some bastard that walked in front of me. He went down like I'd hammered him and they had a hard time getting him breathing again. After that I worked mostly with the hose. When the prod taps the cow, the eyes roll white and the legs go stiff, then they just let loose like they didn't have no bones at all. It ain't just the legs either, the inside muscles turn to nothing. So I spend a lot of time hosing all the green slime into a trough. Once in a while though, when things get slow and the foreman ain't around, they let a cow loose on purpose. Then I gets my mallet, chases

them to a corner and hammers them. I'm the only one that can do it anymore. Sometimes they bets on where and how long before I nail the cow. One time, I was down on my knees scraping some stuff by the trough that wouldn't come up, and they let one loose. It come charging through and bumped me good, right into the trough, then stepped on this here leg and busted it. They was laughing pretty good and making jokes about the muck on me until the blood started seeping out of my boot. But it healed all right. I don't limp none, no more. I know they done it all for fun, just like they bets for fun. They're funning me too, but I don't care because I'd rather hammer than spray shit into a trough.

When I come to, it was getting near dark. I fried up some tortillas, heated some beans and got a beer. I ate standing by the stove. Then I got another beer, flipped on the tube and wandered to the back porch. The sun was down. Three hours to work. I went back in and grabbed another tortilla and a beer. The tube said a storm's coming. I walked out front and leaned in the doorway. Already most light had sucked from the sky. The old lady's house sat like a gray rock in the dust. The plywood was a lighter gray and stretched in a band around the bottom of the house. I don't know the old lady. I seen her walk to town and smell her baking some, but we never talked. While I was standing there, I seen her door open. The light had gone real bad and her face was just a gray blob in the dark. She looked up and down the street, like for traffic, though there ain't never any, and stepped out the door. That board they nailed must have been up past her knees, but she just walked over it like it wasn't there. She is little and old but creaks along pretty good. In a second the darkness had sucked her up. I walked back inside. The tube was starting some Western but I was going to see enough cows in a while. I got a beer, flipped channels, and watched something until I had to go to work.

On Friday they woke me up again. This time it wasn't the pounding, but some kind of argument. One would say something loud and the other would sort of whine back at him. Their voices went loud and soft, loud and soft, like someone snoring, and I'm wide awake, staring at my fucking walls. Seeing as how we were good friends already, I decided to see if I could help out. I got up and pulled on my overalls.

They was standing by her window when I come out the door. Everything else, including the door, was nailed up, boxed under them cracked boards. The window showed like a big blank eye. One of them was holding a piece of plywood and kept pointing to it and the other was shaking his head. They stopped their muttering when they saw me.

"Morning," I said.

The one with the plywood mumbled something to the board. I stuck a finger in my ear like I was trying to clean it out.

"What?"

Plywood Board shook his head. I spoke again. "Seems I was hearing an argument or some kind of squawking."

The other one looked at his hand. "No argument," he said.

"I wanted to say: if there's no argument, then why don't you shut the fuck up? Instead, I pointed to the board.

"Where's that supposed to go?"

That got Plywood going. "Goddam it," he slobbered, "we was almost done and making good time, and this one don't fit." He held up the board and slammed it against the wall. "See, if it goes like this, the edges overlap. And if it goes like this . . . well, it won't 'cus of the goddam window."

"And he forgot the goddam saw." That was Other said that.

Plywood looked at him like he wished he had a prod or maybe a shotgun. "They's pre-fitted. They's all pre-fitted."

I knew I'd never get some sleep unless I done something, so I said, "Why don't you take out the window?"

Other looked at me like I was a dead squirrel. "You can't just go around taking out people's windows."

"Ask her."

Plywood shook his head.

"What's it matter if it overlaps?" I said. "It ain't like no one's gonna notice."

They both just stood there and sort of looked at the ground, so I went up to Plywood, took the board and held it over the window. As I leaned against the wall, I could smell warm cinnamon. Smelled like coffee cake.

"Look," I said, "you turn it like this, it don't fit, right? Well, if you take out the window and turn it like this, it'll cover half and you don't need a saw. That ain't everything, but you use up the board and I get some quiet. That's what counts, right?"

They stared at me and then at the board and then at the window with faces like steers outside the slaughter house.

"Well," said Other, "I don't know."

"We got the tools," said Plywood.

"Well," said Other, "I don't know."

They fussed for a while, then Plywood headed for the pickup and pulled out a metal box. I went back to bed.

They didn't come yesterday or today, it being the weekend, but nobody could have done nothing anyway, on account of the storm. When I got off work, it was blowing real good and the sky off to one side was going black. I don't have a car and it ain't so far, less than a mile, but I hustled my butt home. And just in time too, 'cus when I slammed my door all hell broke loose. The wind hit one wall like a big old foot trying to stove it in. Rain thrashed another. A little leaky puddle oozed under the front door, so I stuffed a towel in the crack.

I don't mind storms like that as long as the tube is working and I have some bourbon. When I get home in the morning they's usually playing some old movie that's pretty good. After a few pulls on the bottle it don't matter anyhow. They's playing a good movie too yesterday when the power went out. It was a war one with everybody starring. I don't remember their names, but we was thrashing the japs real good. I was getting pretty relaxed, laughing at all the cow-faces getting knocked off, when there was a big thump that I could feel up through my feet, and the screen went out.

There ain't nothing you can do about things bigger than you and I hadn't seen a storm kick that hard in a long time, so I pulled up a chair to the window and watched. The rain weren't coming down, it was shooting sideways. The wind was shaking the hell out of everything. What I really liked was the lightning. I could just picture God up there with a huge prod whamming a bolt at a cloud, then scooting across to nail some bastard with a stalled car and just having a hell of a time.

It was a kick-ass storm all right, but I got tired after a while and headed for bed. The window in my kitchen looks right across at the old lady's house and I wondered what she was doing with that hole now that the glass is gone. When I put away the bottle, I took a look. Right then all the noise stopped. The rain let up or something. It was like watching the tube with the sound off. I could still see the wind ripping the puddles, but didn't hear nothing. I'd had lots of slugs from the bottle and probably my hearing was screwy.

The old lady's house was getting as whacked as mine, though maybe not quite as bad, seeing she had just had all that custom siding put on. There was a sheet hanging over the hole. It couldn't a done much good, the way it was flapping. While I was looking, the sheet flapped to one side and I seen a black umbrella sticking out, her face underneath. I couldn't see none too well, but it seemed she was talking. Anyway, her lips was moving. Then she started swaying side to side. I thought the wind was throwing her around, but the wind was wild and her swaying was real steady-like and her lips moved as she swayed and then I knew she was singing, but damn if I can figure out why. She was still there when I went to bed.

The storm blew out sometime that morning. When I woke, the sun was blinking on and off through the clouds, and my frigerator was empty. I don't need a lot of food. I'm happy as long as I got my tortilla flour and beans, but I was out of beer. I took a slug or two of bourbon to get me started and stepped outside.

The air had more kick to it than the booze. I took a breath and my face froze. I rubbed my hands and looked at the street. Then I went back to get the rubber waders that I wear at work. If a stream ran that big year-round, you could boat into town. It slurped and looked like oily mud, like the muck I wash from the cows. As I was figuring how to get across, some cardboard boxes and a dead cat sucked by. Seemed the only way was to walk up the road a ways and cross where the water ran wider, then cut back in front of the old lady's house.

The ground underwater was mucked-out and grabbed my boots every step, but I oozed through it ok. Coming back by the old lady's house, I stuck tight by the wall because the ground dropped right off. As I slipped by her window, I felt something touch my shoulder. I thought I just bumped the wall or something and kept walking until I heard her.

"Hey," she said. "Hey" like my foreman at work when he's in a bad mood. I turned, my feet slipped in the mud, and I grabbed at the window sill. My fingers caught the edge and as I hung over the mud and slurping water, I heard her again.

"Hey what're you doing?"

I kicked at the mud until my feet stuck, and crouching, heaved for air. She started tapping on my fingers.

"Hey you," she said. I couldn't say anything. She tapped

on my fingers again. "Hey, what're you doing?"

I pulled myself up until my eyes cleared the sill. Her face was six inches away. It looked dead and old and the wrinkles ran like long deep cuts past her eyes and down from the corners of her mouth.

"Young man, what do you think you're doing?"

"Lady, I'm forty-three and I'm trying to keep from dying."

She blinked at me. "Well, what are you doing out there in the first place?"

I was still breathing hard and I guess I was blowing right at her because her whole face wrinkled into mess and she stepped back.

"Young man, you've been drinking."

"Shit," I said.

"You've been drinking and you're getting yourself all muddy and . . . and you need to shave."

I tried to figure out how to let go with one hand and punch her without falling but she was too far away anyway.

She stepped up and threw her face close to mine. "Well?"

I looked down at my feet to keep hold on my temper. They was buried in the green slime and sinking. I held tight to the window.

"Young man." I could feel her breath on my ear. "Young man, I want an answer."

"Going to the grocery," I muttered.

"What?"

I watched my boots slowly sinking in the slime.

"What did you say?"

"I'm going to the goddam grocery."

"Oh, good. Wait here." Her footsteps clunked away, then came right back. "Here," she said.

I didn't look up. I was trying to figure a way past the mud heap I was standing on. If I could stretch far enough to reach the edge of the house, I could pull myself around onto solid ground. The lady grabbed one of my fingers and pulled like a calf sucking at mama's tit. Then she grabbed another finger and peeled it off the sill.

"Wait," I said, "what're you doing?" Her scrawny little fingers tried for my wrist, but couldn't get a grip. She pulled at another finger. "All right. All right." I said, "don't knock me off."

"Here." She held out her hand. I noticed her eyes. They

was big and brown with long lashes. They was too big for her face. They was cow eyes all right.

"Here." She tapped my knuckles.

I let go and opened my hand. She dropped a couple bills in it.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Money."

"What for?"

"You're going to the grocery. I need some chocolate. Tomorrow's my baking day and I forgot to buy some."

I wanted to say: tomorrow's the day they's closing you in, but she didn't give me a chance.

"Unsweetened. No sugar."

She caught me all unawares. I didn't know what to do. I know what I shoulda done. I shoulda taken them bills and dropped them in that river sucking at my feet and laughed at what her cow eyes woulda done. But she had done caught me by surprise. I put the bills in a pocket.

"Now get going." Her face dropped from the window.

I eased as far along the wall as I could and still have one hand on the window. I could just reach the edge. My feet was stuck real good from standing there so long. One boot came off when I stepped. I yanked it out of the muck, hopped to a clear place, put it on and headed for the first bar in town.

When I walked out it was around dark and I tripped over the wooden step they put there. The mud played soft around my fingers as I pushed to my feet. I cussed and kicked at the step. Then I seen in my mind what the old lady done the first day they nailed them boards; how she stepped right over the piece of plywood like it wasn't even there. I thought, why don't the old lady just out and kick them down? That couldn't be too hard, seeing as how it was built. Then I remembered the chocolate and had to run like hell before the store closed.

When I come back, the river had petered out to a trickle and the walking was easy. She was waiting at the window, her nose stuck over the edge and her big eyes nothing but black holes. I had made up my mind to ask her, but when I got close enough to hear, she was already talking.

"... thought you done fallen in or forgot and I wasn't going to get my chocolate." Her skinny little arm stuck out the window. "Here." I thought, maybe she just isn't strong enough, and then no, because she don't even try.

"Here," she said. I dropped the sack with the chocolate in her hand. "Thank-you."

"Lady." She was gone from the window.

"Lady." I waited a while but didn't hear nothing.

It looked like I could wade the stream now and I moved pretty easy 'bout halfway before I heard her again.

"Young man."

I turned. "Whatcha want, lady?"

"About twenty-two cents, the way I figure."

"You figure funny." The water was deeper than I thought and the soft mud pulled my feet down. "The way I see it, I made a trip for you. That should be worth a lot more than twenty-two cents."

"You was going anyway." Her hand thrust out the window. "Here."

I know I shoulda just kept going, or better, have dropped them four worthless little coins into the water, but a man can't think good when his boots are about to flood. I waded back and dropped them in her hand.

"Thank-you." She dropped the sheet in my face.

Today the storm ain't quite gone. The wind is down and it ain't exactly raining, but the sky is oozing like a drooling old man.

A while back I seen the old lady staring out her window. I leaned back so she couldn't see me.

Well, tomorrow they's gonna finish. They'll hammer up that last board and she won't look out or bother me no more.

Tomorrow night I go back to work. Sometimes it's good to get back to something that fills the time.

Sometimes after a kicking storm, with lightning and all, the cow's is all messed up and spook easy. Maybe tomorrow if they's still not settled, a lot will break by the prod and I'll get some hammering in. I need to do some hammering. I hope I get ten cows to hammer.

The Abstract Man

—Victor Williams

For Tracee

It's wonderful that she didn't buy any new clothes for the trip. At least I've cured her of the need to change, to conform. She's so beautiful today in her familiar pink sweater and fading Levis. The familiarity pulls newness out of the old, pulls us away from the doubting faces and now I know she's the only one who loved me enough to go, to stay with me. We can both laugh at those left out. Wait—do I have everything? No. Yes. Nothing and everything at the same time and it doesn't matter anyway. I warned them all (no, not warned, just suggested with great confidence, as if I had dropped my words on them like dropping a dollar into a charity fund container and knowing immediately the face that dollar was going to feed)—told them all through college and couple of years afterward. No mortgage or white picket fence or 1.8 children or dog with a plastic bowl and a dumb passive smile which seems to say yes you're here trapped and playing out your cards like you're supposed to with your b.a. and fizzled out dreams lying behind your eyeballs like a book of matches lost somewhere under the seat of your new financed Pontiac station wagon. And I'm your dog and you have to stay here and feed me. Take me to the vet, watch me get old. Your life sped up by seven times. . . . No, that dog is not mine; I prefer the ones who wander and dig through their blissful lives, stay in some alley for a while until

they tire of it and move on, maybe to another alley or dusty shaded rural road or superhighway where they're finally run down. They don't care, they have lived.

I hope she doesn't hold too many high expectations. I've tried to get her out of the habit. Expectations are for those who sit and wait; then they become faceless and dissolve into the Visa card background. The numbers pile up on them and they realize it's too late to join fools like me. Credit card hell for them while I disconnect heaven from death. But I can't brag at them because the languages don't mix. The words are the same but not equal.

This airport is amazing—or is it just the purpose behind it that's amazing? Long shiny stairways and winding hallways opening up into the arena of coming and going, sport jackets and briefcases zigzagging around her and me (I wonder if her mind is changing about this trip, but I won't worry about it), stopping at ticket counters, always hurrying, catching planes and keeping appointments; we have a plane to catch but we've plenty of time because no one held us up and we're coming from nowhere. At least that's how I like to think of it, despite all the friends and fun and education. I was prepared to stay, to become a corporate cog in a three-piece suit, shaking hands with the fat red-eyed triple-chinned mirrors of my future until I walked into the mirror, grabbed my gold watch and my pension and jumped into the hole. All the cliches waiting for me, packaged so cunningly on TV, and I have turned off the set.

And what about her walking next to me? Is she going with me out of love for me or for her own separate discovery? I should ask her as I've asked her many times but she'd only give me the same answer—it's for the love—and I'd accept it because I don't want to cross her and lose her; that's the strange thing about this quest—I could never do it alone, for it wouldn't be freedom I'm looking for, but merely escape.

escape into another trap but then what is a trap is my marrying her walking so lightly next to me a trap well i cant consider that as one not when theres love in that walk in her not looking at me why hasnt she looked at me is it because she doesnt have to anymore and can speak to me without her eyes or even her mouth and why dont i speak up its been at least half an hour but no i cant think about time either time has confused me chained me for long enough setting the alarm clock and eating lunch promptly at noon and scheduling

classes winding my watch my god im still wearing the damn thing but i just cant take it off not now maybe after were on the plane and off to hawaii why hawaii she once asked me well i said its close to paradise as long as we are not tourists but she said nobody has been to paradise that is reserved for the dead no i said thats what we are supposed to believe just so death will seem less ominous but its still death still the end of whatever we make out of life of ourselves and she said yes i suppose youre right and she hasnt argued since she just laughs back over her shoulder along with me and keeps pace with me even when i walk too fast and get caught up in time again and have to check myself oh yes and here it is again haunting and gate 45 just ahead the people there waiting all tourists no doubt with new clothes and some unfocused hope for revelation after only seven days and eight nights we have fifteen minutes to departure and the excitement is finally starting to boil over and all at once i look down at her the dark hair sometimes red in a slanting indirect light her mouth curving between a pout of joy and sudden gloom her round jaw soft and unblemished so young then the face and hair and body shrink away from the eyes the eyes grow around me engulf me their vindictive greenness sharpens i cannot look away from her now though i can hear people start to board the plane i try to say we must go but her eyes bore right through my skull completing her dissent her realization then she turns away but the eyes remain shes leaving walking back to the past the friends the fun she no longer believes in me i cannot stop her i step toward gate 45 the people laughing with excitement expectations why are they laughing they are tourists i turn back still seeing her im running the watch flashing on my wrist her eyes draw me on please turn around please turn and wait for me i wont leave you i love you. I love you.

Mingus Today

—George Keithley

As a matter of record, the masthead of the *Sacramento Valley Sentinel*, the only newspaper published daily in the entire county, lists the following names:

Patricia Fahey, *Publisher*

Edward Fahey, Jr., *Managing Editor*

Paul Goldman, *City Editor*

Tony Vostic, *Agriculture*

José Ortega, *Sports*

The paper is printed in the heart of Mingus, the county seat, in a brick building facing the downtown plaza—a wheel-shaped park in which the sidewalks reach out like spokes to the circling street that forms its perimeter, while the green valley firs, frazzled palms, and leafless elms tower over a statue of the Spanish rancher, Don Carlos Dominguez, who stands at its hub, at the center of the town and the county that have grown out of his landholdings.

One hand behind his back in a gesture of unthreatened leisure, his other hand grips a riding whip as he stares from under his broad hat, over the chill-glazed benches where winter sunlight sits. A piercing gaze by which his Nineteenth century sculptor suggested the effort it must have cost Don Carlos to discern the future development of the valley; a hard-eyed look which now implies to our generation his infinite impatience with the present moment, and unrelenting displeasure with the Hotel Mingus, the clothing stores, drive-in banks, and bicycle shops that crowd against the Don's circle of grass and trees.

By twelve o'clock the press-run for the afternoon is completed, and the newspapers are bundled into trucks for delivery to the vending boxes and stores around town, and in the student union building of the university. And when the schools

let out in mid-afternoon, a squadron of boys and girls pedal up to the back of the brick building, leaving their bikes propped at odd angles like a wire sculpture of animals grazing on concrete. Indoors they roll and bag the papers for home delivery, then they speed out through the town, beyond the stone-eyed stare of its founder, tossing the papers onto damp doorsteps, over the shambling fences, into dormant rose bushes.

This much is current history in our community. And a curious part of that history is the last name on that list from the masthead of the *Sentinel*:

José Ortega.

Called Joey.

"To make him feel American," as Tony Vostic (Ag Desk) puts it.

José Ortega, son of Luis and Isabella Ortega, Isabella the daughter of Felipe and Lupina Sanchez, Lupina the daughter of Carlotta Dominguez, the unwed granddaughter of Don Carlos Dominguez, whose vast rancho was the only non-Indian landholding lying east against the river, which would go to wild grass when his hacienda was burned by Indians escaping the round-up intended to herd them north onto the Nome Lackee Reservation. So they didn't consider that he was non-white but thought only that he was not Indian. Yana. Maidu. Wintun. Yuki. Pomo. None of these. They saw rather that he dressed white (hard boots), drank white (grain whiskey), used two horses to pull his coach along the road which he'd hired Indians to clear across the prairie, instead of mounting one horse to ride over the grass; and traded white, not Indian, giving paper for goods and "services," teaching them that "services" meant sweating labor in his fields and orchards and mill, dawn to sundown six days a week, rewarded with his paper or punished with his horsewhip. (So they were astonished when he sent a black-suited clergyman to invite them to a "Sunday service" at the hacienda. And declined what they could only assume was an offer to come to his home on a Sunday to work or be whipped.) So when they neared the river, those twelve men riding hard down the dirt road to the Dominguez hacienda, pursued by a mounted posse, and seeing perhaps twenty more riflemen encamped on the west side of the river, they did not ask Carlos' help. But helped themselves, taking him in a rush although he dropped one of them with a pistol shot full in the face; the others dragged Carlos out

back to his stable. Then these eleven entered his hacienda to defend themselves against the posse, not with any of the rifles on Carlos' gun wall—none had ever fired a rifle or handgun—but with bow and arrows and rock-hurling slingshots, to the last two survivors. Who set the house ablaze from the kitchen, in a frenzy surrounding themselves in shrieking fire, perishing in the inferno that flamed up and smoked and flapped out finally in the falling dark. All twelve charred bodies found next day in the reeking rubble. And the corpse of Carlos Dominguez was discovered that same day at noon, not a hair scorched as he hung by his boots, face down in the cool old cistern that his Chinese and his Indians had dug beside the stable. His hands reaching into the water, dark below his head, deep in the cylinder of stone wall surrounding him.

Discovered the next day in the still smouldering rubble was the gun the Don had fired: an old double action pistol made in Spain by Orbea Hermanos, then shipped to the New World, perhaps arriving in Mexico before it found its way north to California, delivered into the hands of its fated owner. The weapon was a five-chambered pistol, an exact copy of the popular Kerr percussion revolver carried by scores of other proud and fated men when they went to their capture or death. That is, the original model of the Don's pistol, which the Spanish manufacturers had copied, was the standard handgun issued to officers in the Army of the Confederacy.

Two questions remain for our community today, about that pistol fired by the Don, blowing away the head of one of his attackers. In the first place, since he could fire at such close range, why had he killed only one of them? There is, in those last moments of his story, just the suggestion that he knew we would be coming by the thousands to settle the valley after him, and he must say something to us; must leave us a last desperate message about the use of force. It does not save you, the ghost of the Don can say to us when we examine his handgun, preserved for history. It does not spare you your fate. Still you must use it. If he had not killed one Indian he would have been hanged by twelve instead of eleven. But with no word in his own defense. That was what the weapon was, then. A voice. The voice of the all but vanquished, saying, *My will be done*. Let it speak soon enough, or often enough, and it achieves a certain kind of victory. We who survive him will not be so vain and blind as to call it the triumph of virtue over

wickedness; but a triumph of the will it certainly was. Like all oracles, the Don had delivered a prophecy that was mostly a mystery. The single shot fired from his pistol told us, you can prevail over anyone if you have the will to use this means. Its echo answered, yes, but your loss and your disgrace is that you cannot work your will without it.

When this pistol of Don Carlos Dominguez was discovered in the rubble of his hacienda, it had been scorched by the flames, a fact which raises the second question: Why had it not exploded? And the simple answer is, there were no shells in the revolver's five chambers. But we know that a man would not purchase such a serviceable gun for its appearance. Out of allegiance to Spain the Don, if he wished, could have bought truly beautiful pistols manufactured in Madrid, their black handles inlaid with pearl, their barrels scrolled with gold. But the Kerr revolver was practical, easy to repair—a necessity since new parts would be impossible to obtain. It was a gun for a man who would know how to use it; who would not fire five shots into twelve men crowding toward him and hit only one.

Thinking of that scene, recited to all school children raised in the valley, we wonder as we pass that stern figure in the plaza, what were his final considerations?

It is late afternoon, the bicycles have fled. Dusk settled into the plaza, it is nearly night under the trees, where Don Carlos Dominguez stares at the homeward traffic circling by. Even as his form ebbs into darkness, there remains the implacable presence of his statue, that tenacious, upright posture which would succumb to oblivion, yes, but would not bend. And the child within us, who was raised in the shadow of his story, wonders about his state of mind in those final moments when he saw that other darkness descending, and made his peace. Made peace not with his God but with his death.

Certainly he saw the twelve Indians force open the gate and approach his house. He had time to note the size of the party and their desperation, in their only violent resistance to the whites who had hunted them out of the foothills and would herd them from the valley floor as well. He had time to reflect that if he succeeded in killing five, still he would be slain by the other seven. So he had loaded only one chamber in his pistol, he would take only one man with him when he departed this life.

It was not the act of a man who hated his attackers. Or he would have filled the five chambers and emptied them into the Indians crowding upon him. More likely he hardly regarded them at all. Had little regard for an Indian anytime, and at this moment would not have thought twice about killing a white man either. *You are the instruments of my end*, the Don must have thought. *I go because I must; not because I am willing to admit to my wrong-doing, nor submit to your justice.* His final act in a proud and willful life had been to show his displeasure with leaving it. *You work your will upon me, as I've done to you and to others. I see it's the end, yes. I must cease, yes. But I do not submit.* The one gunshot that dropped the Indian at his feet had been, for us, the signature of Don Carlos Dominguez to his last will and testament.

His house was levelled by the fire. But his land was spared; to be deeded off, settled, planted, and given the Yankee version of his name that the town of Mingus bears today.

Dance

—Elizabeth Renfro

Margaret rolled another pair of socks, inspected an age spot on her hand, and then tossed the roll into Warren's pile. Warren could be such a turd, she thought. She didn't think the penguins on the shower curtain were such a big deal, but she should have guessed Warren would. Turd, turd, Warren is an old turd. Margaret picked up the stack of towels and sidestepped to the linen closet. Turd, turd (sidestep, sidestep), Warren is an old turd (hop, hop, sashay, sidestep). She paused for breath, then tossed towels and washcloths wantonly on top of sheets and mattress pads.

She heard the front door open, and Warren walked in, wearing, she noticed, that tweed vest. Doesn't the old fool even know it's spring, she thought.

"Margaret, . . ."

She neatly lobbed the last handtowel deep into the blanket shelf before she turned. She carefully raised her left eyebrow. "Hey, toots," she responded. "How's tricks?"

"Margaret, please, we need to talk."

She swallowed hard. She always felt like throwing up when Warren used that sincerely agonized voice. She had never been able to decide whether Warren was manipulative or just incredibly pompous. "What is it, my dear?" Margaret

was pleased with the way that came out. She repeated, interrupting Warren's third pleasemargaret. "My dear, what is it?" No, the term of direct address was better at the end. "What is it, my dear?"

The old turd sighed moistly. "Margaret, you and I have a lot to talk about. Things are not improving at all. Dr. Abrahms has told me that you have missed three appointments."

"The government's licensed contractions, Warren. Wanna get loose and try some?" Margaret smoothed her housecoat over her hips and, left eyebrow askew, sashayed out to the pile of folded clothes on the couch. She began slam-dunking rolled socks into the laundry basket. She heard the front door close.

That evening she fried pork chops. She toyed briefly with the idea of eating them defiantly pink, but she heard that your hands and feet turn numb when you get trichinosis. She hated that numb feeling she got when she sat reading too long in one position. Instead, she tossed her salad with only lettuce and tomato. She wondered how long it would be before the bell pepper would soften and grow furry in the hydrator. She ate standing, at the butcher block counter beside the stove.

After dinner Margaret went out to the living room. She lit the gas fire, and then went into the spare bedroom and peered under the bed. She located and pulled out the heavy cardboard box, and dragged it out to the living room, leaving a trail of dust bunnies down the hall. With a slight grunt, she sat crosslegged before the fire and began sorting through the pictures and artifacts. Piles of ticket stubs; *Gone with the Wind*, Boston Symphony, with Arthur Rubinstein conducting, *On the Waterfront*, *My Fair Lady*, the Van Gogh Exhibit. Margaret wasn't sure when they'd stopped going to those things. Just as well, though—they never had much fun. She talked too much, laughed too loudly, cried too wildly. The problem was that she never realized that she was doing that. "People are staring, honey." Constipated old turd. She never saw them stare.

Margaret pulled out a stack of photographs. Old vacations, nieces and nephews, their first home, that puppy that ran away. She'd cried too wildly then too. She liked looking at all her old haircuts and styles. The girl in the swinging ponytail didn't look the least bit familiar, but she could remember the bubble clearly. Warren really liked that. The long and straight

look—playing beatnik, Warren said. And what a hopeless bother that feathered look was. Her faces looked different in each picture, too. She marvelled at how she kept looking younger in each successive picture. Her features seemed to be fading, while, in contrast, framed by increasing wrinkles, her eyes kept looking bluer and wider. She guessed it made sense, though. Old ladies did have a kind of bug-eyed fetal look to them.

She started through the pictures again, looking at Warren. Warren always had six teeth. No frowns, no grins, no pink tongue; just six white teeth.

Margaret's knees began to ache, and she labored to her feet, rubbing her legs and stretching. She left everything on the floor before the fire and went to run a bath. She smiled at the penguins on the shower curtain before she pushed them back and turned the taps on full. She dumped in half the bottle of bath oil, then came back out, humming. Old turd, old turd, constipated old turd. She nodded. Meter was better now; it really scanned. She picked up a handful of ticket stubs and photos and began tossing them into the fireplace, punctuating her song. Old (toss) turd (toss), old (toss) turd (toss), con-(toss) sti-(toss) pated (toss) old turd (toss, toss, toss). Pleased she expanded her routine. Two vicious kicks to Warren's club chair, pirouette, toss, toss. Margaret whirled across the room, bent gracefully at the waist, and plucked three pairs of rolled socks from the laundry basket. She leapt winsomely across the carpet, pincurls flying, executed a sweeping tour jeté, and fluidly tossed the socks, roll by roll, into the flames. She stopped to catch her breath. Watching the nylon ribbing in Warren's socks curl and spark in the fire, she heard the bath water running over. She tossed a last handful of six-toothed Warrens into the fireplace and went to get undressed.

As she soaked in the tub, Margaret thought about graduate school. She wondered if she could qualify for some kind of special assistance. Surely she fit into some sort of affirmative action category. She wondered what the requirements were for an anthropology degree. Old bones were fascinating. She hoped she wouldn't have to wrestle with any math. Numbers were so demanding, unyielding.

She settled lower into the tub, sending new waves of bath water onto the floor. She lowered her face to the water, filled her mouth, and spit the water at Warren's gray towel.

“Margaret.”

Choking slightly on the water, she looked up to see the six-toothed turd looking at her from the bathroom doorway. She quirked her eyebrow and delivered her line. “What is it, my dear?”

Warren walked over to the bathtub. Margaret turned her face back to the water and blew experimental bubbles on the oil-slicked surface. “Hmmmmm?” she murmured.

Warren reached out and rested his hand on her damp hair and pushed. She looked up at him sideways, through the hazy water, eyes widening. Warren didn’t let go. Old turd.

Traction

—*Stephen Metzger*

Me and Evans stopped by the hospital last week to see Krantzman. We were on our way home from a night class and it was getting late. So his room wasn't as crowded as it usually was. Usually the whole gang was up there, and somebody'd be kicking Krantzman's soccer ball around, and someone else, usually Silva, would be tipping on a beer. There was only supposed to be three visitors to a room, but we usually had around twelve. I couldn't believe a hospital'd be so loose.

He didn't have a roommate, Krantzman that is, so a few of us would sit on the other bed, and we'd all cut up and watch television. In fact, one time Silva lay down on the other bed and got under the sheets and started messing with some buttons and raising and lowering the back of the bed. Broke everyone up.

I think one reason everyone was always laughing was to try and forget how bad Krantzman looked. See he'd broken his neck diving into this lake up by Tahoe and they'd taken him right to a hospital and then after a week had taken him by ambulance down here where they said he'd have to stay a couple months. After that they said he'd have to go to some physical therapist for a year or so and would have to miss at least a whole soccer season. And that was a damn shame, 'cause he had a good shot at All League.

Anyway, Krantzman looked bad. The sides of his head were shaved, and these two bolts with cables attached were screwed in just above his ears. The cables came together over his head and went through a pulley on the headboard and then down into this weird chrome counterweight. Evans was always telling him he'd be taller when he got out.

So with those cables and that weight, he had to lie still all the time, which must've been pretty hard—especially for him—and he could only look at us if we leaned over his bed when we talked to him. And when it was hot, the nurse would pull the sheets down to his waist, and his chest and forehead were all pimply and his hair was oily. That night was quiet though. Me and Evans were watching television, and Krantzman's parents were talking to each other, and his older sister, Julie, kept coming into the room and going out again.

Pretty soon a doctor came in and a nurse, and Krantzman's parents asked me and Evans to leave.

"Why don't you go on down to the cafeteria and get some cokes or something," Krantzman's mom said, handing me a bunch of change. "We want to talk to the doctor."

"Don't leave though," Krantzman said, straining to catch sight of us from the corner of one eye.

"We won't," I said. "We'll be just down the hall."

"Good . . . I wanna talk to you guys when Frank and Ruth aren't around."

It was weird how he was always calling his parents by their first names. Mine would've killed me for that.

"Okay," Evans said, "don't go anywhere."

The nurse shot him a nasty look, and I started to tell her that Evans was always saying stuff like that and not meaning it. But I decided not to.

We walked down the hall to the cafeteria, me and Evans and Julie, and Evans bought some of that canned chocolate pudding from a machine, and Julie bought a Seven-Up. The smell of the hospital was getting to me and making me not hungry, so I didn't buy anything. There was hardly anyone in there that late, except for a couple of nurses that must've been on break, 'cause they were drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes, and an old black janitor mopping behind the counter. We sat down at the end of one of those metal and formica folding tables.

"Want some of my Seven-Up?" Julie asked me.

"No thanks," I said.

"Pudding?"

"No thanks, Dave."

"You sure . . . ? It's good for your teeth."

"Let's go back to the waiting room," Julie said.

"Good idea," Evans said, getting up.

The waiting room was also deserted. We sat down in separate couches, Evans in front of a coffee table with some magazines on it.

"Oh good," he said, "a *National Wildlife*. I can look at the foldout of Moose July."

Not very funny, I thought, but a noble effort.

"You think he's only gonna hafta miss one season?"

Evans said, flipping through the magazine. I looked to Julie.

"That's what the doctors say," she said. "They took some more x-rays today and should know more tomorrow. In fact, I'm gonna see what they're talking about."

"Keep us posted," Evans said, and as she disappeared we heard her sandals clicking down the hall.

I shuffled through the magazines looking for something to read.

"Menace?" Evans said.

"Yeah?" I answered.

"Still wanna go camping?"

"I don't know," I said. "Be kinda weird without Don."

"Yeah . . . I know. But I think he'd want us to go. Besides . . . we can bring pictures back."

"Yeah . . . I guess," I said.

"Got yer fishin' license yet?" Evans asked.

"Yeah . . . got it last week . . . probably won't need it though if it's anything like last year."

"But we gotta have 'em. Even if we don't catch anything. Besides . . . we got a pretty good chance of catching something this year, 'specially if we stop at the ranch again. Still wanna do that don't you?"

"Shit . . . I don't know," I said. "Each year it seems more and more possible to get something around here on a regular basis . . . for free."

Evans started reading again or at least lookin' at his magazine again. Me, I could hardly think of anything except Krantzman down the hall. That image of him all stretched out and still kept comin' back to me. And I was gettin' tired too. I

stood up, threw my head back, and stuffed my hands into my pants pockets.

"Christ . . . I'm about ready to hit the road," Evans said. "But I guess we really ought to wait around, huh?"

"Yeah . . . we promised we would."

"Well, I hope they're through pretty soon. I gotta work tomorrow."

"I'm sure they will be," I said. "Anyway . . . the hospital's not gonna let us stay around much longer."

"Yeah . . . you're probably right."

Then, to kill time, I guess, Evans started asking me questions about the camping trip. We decided to go even though it would be strange without Don, but we'd been goin' every summer since the eighth grade, and, as Evans said, we couldn't let Krantzman's little accident spoil it for the rest of us.

We talked about some of the old trips, and it was funny, because somehow the further we got from each trip, the easier it was to remember how much fun it was. Pretty soon we got to talking about when we'd all met. It was in our eighth grade home room. Swear to God, we had the weirdest class. In fact me and Evans and Krantzman were the only normal ones in there. First there was Darla Simpkins, this crippled girl. I mean we felt sorry for her and everything, but Krantzman was always imitating her when she wasn't around. And he really did it good. I think she had cerebral palsy or something, and people said she wrote pretty good poetry, but the thing was, she had to attach this long tube to her front tooth and put a typewriter on a board across the arms of her wheelchair, and the way she wrote was by nodding her head up and down and hitting the keys with the end of the tube. She drooled a lot, so she had to wear a bib all the time, and she was strapped to her wheelchair to keep her from flopping out when she got excited. Then there was Theresa Jenson. I think she'd been born with her head attached to her shoulder, 'cause she always walked around holding it at an angle like she was looking at you sideways.

"No . . . I had to go turn in some science homework to Mr. Flynn."

"Oh . . . I see," Krantzman said, and then made a kissing sound with his lips. And that kinda made me mad. Evans was my best friend, and besides . . . Krantzman was the biggest

kiss-ass of all.

The whole time Krantzman hadn't even looked up from the drawer. "Here it is," he finally shouted. "John C. 'Ocurance at Owls Creek.' Come on. Let's get outa here."

I was already out the door when I heard him slam the drawer. We ran out around to the back side of the gym. Krantzman was already laughing when he sat down hard on the asphalt and leaned up against the gray wall. Me and Evans were a little out of breath and a little scared. Then Krantzman took the paper in both hands like he was reading a document to a king or something.

"'Ocurance at Owls Creek, by John C.' Well, at least he spelled his name right." Then Krantzman started talking out of the side of his mouth in a perfect imitation of Costa. "'It was a good move.' Move," he said. "Can you believe it? He spelled movie with just an 'e' on the end." He held up his hand to quiet us, even though he was the only one laughing so far. "'It was a good move for 8 grad.' That's it. That's his paper, and he even left the 'e' off grade. Can you believe it? That's all he wrote."

I didn't want to say it was practically longer than mine. It was pretty funny though, I have to admit, and before long Krantzman had me and Evans laughing right along with him with that imitation of Costa and all.

"Well," Krantzman said finally, "we oughta get outa here. You guys take this paper back so we don't get caught."

"What?" Evans said. "We're all in this. Let's all go back."

"No way," Krantzman said. "I gotta go home."

I wanted to call him a kiss-ass but I didn't.

"Come on," he said. "Let's get outa here." He stood up, handed me the paper, and took off.

I looked at Evans. "Well . . ."

"That asshole," he said.

"Yeah . . . but we better take it back."

"I guess so."

The next morning I got another note from Krantzman: "Meet me at lunch behind the gym." Oh, no . . . not again. I wondered what he was up to this time and spent till the bell rang trying to decide whether I wanted to meet him or not. We got through health and were just learning about the Continental Congress when the bell rang. Mrs. Stevens stopped in mid-sentence as we all flew toward the door.

I went out to my locker, traded my books for my sack

lunch, and was sitting down to eat when I heard Krantzman, "Mence, come on. I gotta show you something." I reluctantly refolded my wax paper around my sandwich, dropped it back in the bag and followed him. When we got to the other side of the gym, Evans was already there. Krantzman pulled a sheet of paper from inside his windbreaker and studied it closely.

"You guys aren't gonna believe this," he said.

"What?" Evans said. "Whatcha got?"

"Kanify," Krantzman said without looking up from the paper. "Uh licky kanivies."

I looked at Evans. Evans was halfway into a peanut-butter and honey sandwich. He looked at Krantzman as if he'd gone nuts. I looked back at Krantzman. He could hardly sit still.

"Doe yawoo jewies licky kanivies?" He looked questioningly from Evans to me and back to Evans. Then he dug into his pocket and brought out a small Swiss Army knife. "Die yawoo jewies licky tahice kanify?"

"What the hell are you talking about?" Evans said finally. "Are you on drugs or something?"

"No, no. Listen . . . Remember Costa's essay, the one about the 'good move'?"

"Yeah," I said.

But swear to God, the weirdest guy in the whole school was in there too. His name was John Costa, and he wasn't deformed or anything, not like Jenson and Simpkins, but something about him. I don't even know how he got into the eighth grade 'cause he was even stupider than my little sister who was in the **fifth** grade. To give you some idea of what he was like, he was the kind of guy whose best friend was the shop teacher. I think they must've had contests to see who could wear the baggiest pants, and they used to wear those tan, old-man pants where the crotch hangs way down almost to the knees. He also had the worst complexion of anyone I'd ever met, and we always used to speculate on how many zits he had to the square inch. And at the end of eighth grade when we all had to take an American history test to pass into high school, all Costa had to do was spell the word "Constitution."

I don't know who first started making fun of him, but it was most likely Krantzman. Mrs. Stevens told us not to though, because she said his parents were really smart and had just demanded so much of him that he had freaked out. It was bad, I know, to laugh, but when Krantzman started imitating Costa by talking out of the side of his mouth, Christ, it

was the funniest damn thing I'd ever seen.

Anyway, one day Mrs. Stevens showed us a movie in the last period and told us to write an essay on it. The movie was *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, and it was an okay movie, but I sure didn't know what to say about it. So I'm sitting at my desk trying to think of something to write about when I feel a tap on my shoulder. I turn around, and Lori Thompson, who I'd gone steady with for three weeks at the beginning of the year, hands me a note. I knew immediately it was from Krantzman because he sat right behind her, so I stuffed it into my shirt pocket and tried to write my paper. A couple minutes later, another tap, another note. I figured I ought to open it to see what might be so important, so I made sure Mrs. Stevens wasn't looking then I unfolded it. "Mence—read the other note." What? I looked back to Lori and behind her to Krantzman. He was looking at me like I was an idiot or something and reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out an imaginary note, pretended like he was unfolding it and reading it, then mouthed, "Read the other goddamn note."

"Are you having trouble with your essay, Donald?" Mrs. Stevens asked.

"Oh . . . no, Ma'am . . . I was just asking Lori if she knew who the star of the movie was." At least he'd left me out of it.

"Well, it doesn't matter," she replied, "you need not know the star in order to discuss the movie in an intelligent manner."

"Yes, Ma'am."

I couldn't stand how Krantzman was always saying stuff like that—"Yes, Ma'am," "No, Ma'am," "Please." It'd be all right if he meant them, but his politeness was so phony.

Pretty soon Mrs. Stevens turned back to the work at her desk—I think she was grading papers—and I still couldn't think of what to write, and besides, I could still feel Krantzman's eyes burning into my back. So I took the first note from my pocket, and, crouching low in my seat, unfolded it and read it. "Mence—stay after class. We'll get Costa's essay." See what I mean? There's Krantzman being polite as hell on the outside and just rotten inside.

At first I thought, no way . . . I'm not gonna stay and play his little games and get into trouble again. But by the time the bell rang, I'd changed my mind and stayed. Well, "stay" isn't exactly the right word, 'cause Mrs. Stevens always stayed till we were all gone, so what we did was, we turned in our papers

when the bell rang, saw what drawer she put them in, and then went to our lockers. I put my books away and was sitting on the bench when Mrs. Stevens walked by.

"Oh . . . you boys still around? I thought you'd be gone by now."

"Yeah," I said. "I'm waiting for Don."

"And what are you doing still at school, Mr. Krantzman?"

"I'm cleaning out my locker, Ma'am."

Oh barf! I couldn't believe it. How could she fall for that crap?"

"Well that's a very good idea, Donald. It's always good to remove the clutter from one's life. And you, Peter, might pay attention, because you just might learn something here."

"Sure," I said. "My locker's pretty clean though."

"Well, I'll see you boys in the morning."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Stevens," Krantzman said.

"Yeah . . . see ya tomorrow," I mumbled.

As soon as she was gone, Krantzman slammed his locker shut, said, "Come on, Mence. Let's go," and ran over to the classroom door. "Nice . . . it's not locked," he said bursting through.

I followed him in, looking back over my shoulder, and he was immediately at her desk, rifling through the drawer. Just then I heard the doorknob turn behind us and I almost shit my pants. Swear to God.

"Hey you guys . . . sorry I'm late."

Christ . . . it was only Evans. I thought for sure we were in for it.

"Where you been?" Krantzman demanded. "You hafta go call your mommy and tell her you'd be late?"

"Well last night I figured out what he does, and it makes perfect sense. You know that crap Mrs. Murray taught us about long vowels and short vowels and silent letters?"

"Yeah," me and Evans both said.

"But I never thought much about it," Evans added. "It didn't do me a whole lotta good."

"Well Costa didn't think much about it either, but he should have," 'cause he mighta learned to spell if he had."

What? This was it. Krantzman's always done good in school, but he never had to think about it. It just came naturally to him.

"Krantzman," I said. "I . . ."

"Shut up, Mence. I gotta show you guys something. Here . . . gimme a piece of paper."

He grabbed a lunch bag, tore a half circle from the top, and scribbled onto it. "Here . . . what does this say?" he asked, holding it up.

I looked at Evans. "Knife," I said. "What else?"

"What else?" That's exactly it. Remember how Costa spelled 'move'?"

"Yeah," me and Evans said.

"Well, to him it did spell 'movie.' And to him, this would say 'kanify' not 'knife.'"

"Kanify?" I said. "Kanify?"

"Sure . . . he doesn't understand the whole thing about silent letters, so he just spells things the way they sound."

"So what?" Evans said. "I don't see what the big deal is. What're you so excited about?"

"Goddammit," Krantzman said, "don't you guys see? We can turn what he's doing around. When I said 'kanify' you had no idea what I was saying. So last night I figured it out. I made up a whole new language . . . Costavakian."

"Costavakian?" Evans said, looking at me and then back to Krantzman.

"Yeah. Costavakian! Gimme any word and I'll show you how it works."

"Bike," Evans said.

"Okay . . . what you do is change the long vowels to short and short vowels to long and pronounce all silent letters . . . 'bicky.'"

"Bicky?" I said.

"Yes . . . bicky! Now gimme a sentence."

"Bikes are nice," I said.

"Let's see . . . bickies aree . . . no, airy nissy . . . no, soft consonants become hard, too . . . nicky. Bickies airy nicky."

"Unbelievable," Evans said. "Unbelievable."

"Let's see," Krantzman said, "Yoon-beh-ly-ey-vay-blee."

All of a sudden Krantzman was goin' crazy. "Yoonbe-lyehvayblee," he shouted. "That's funnier than shit." It was too, and pretty soon the three of us were rolling on the ground we were laughing so hard. And Krantzman was not only talking in Costavakian, but out of the side of his mouth as well. "Can you guys behlyehavyblee ite?" he said. "We've got our

own language that no one else in the whole world understands. Come on . . . let's go try it out on somebody. Maybe we can find Lori Thompson."

"Oh, come on," I said, "not her."

"It doesn't matter who. We've gotta try it out before the bell rings. Come on," he said, getting up, "Let's go."

He started running back to the lockers without waiting for us. Evans looked at me. "What do ya think?"

"I don't know," I said. "It's pretty funny, but . . ."

"Well, what the hell," he said. "Let's go see what he's up to."

"All right," I said, picking up Krantzman's lunch bag and orange peel.

We started back around to the front of the gym, stopping at a garbage can. Just as I was dropping Krantzman's crap into a dented can, Evans grabbed my shoulder and pointed to Krantzman over by the volleyball courts talking to Lori. Oh, shit, I thought. He's gonna blow it this time.

"Evans . . . Mence . . . Come here," he yelled.

Right when we got to where they were standing, Krantzman turned to Lori, who was tall and blonde and stacked just right, and winked at us without even trying to hide it. "Doe yawoo juwies licky Lori's tites?"

"What are you talking about, Don?" she said.

"Nothing," Krantzman said, then to us, "Doe yawoo licky Lori's tites?"

Me and Evans were a little slow and still trying to figure out exactly what he'd said about her tites when Lori turned and ran toward the lockers. I still don't think she knew what he'd said.

"Come on, Don," I said. "You're gonna get us in trouble. We better cool it."

"No way," Krantzman said. "This is great. We can say anything we want and nobody'll know what we're talking about. Last night I tried it out on Frank and Ruth and they couldn't figure out what the hell I was saying."

Within a few weeks Krantzman had taught us well. Me and Evans could speak Costavakian right along with him. Mostly we talked it in front of the girls, but everyone had heard us and was getting jealous. And it came in real handy sometimes. Like we could talk in front of our parents and say things in Costavakian we'd never want them to hear. For instance,

sometimes I'd be talking to Evans or Krantzman on the phone, and I'd say, "Let's go out tonight, hustle up a sixpack and see if we can find some girls," and my parents would say something like, "Isn't that cute; they have their own little language."

We got so it was about all we talked, except in class of course, and almost before we knew it, the school year was over. I remember the night of the graduation dance—Krantzman called me up and said he'd scored "sommy wahi-cekwy" and that he'd split it with me and Evans if we'd meet him behind the gym. I have to admit, we ended up getting pretty drunk that night, but swear to God, you should've seen Krantzman—he was in rare form. He danced with both Theresa Jenson **and** Darla Simpkins. He was tipping Simpkins back in her wheelchair making her do wheelies, and spinning it around and stuff, and though everyone pretended like they weren't watching, they were. At the break, the three of us went outside.

"Did you guys see that?" Krantzman said. "Fuckin' Simpkins dancin' in her wheelchair. I can't believe it."

"Well you asked her," Evans said.

"Course I did, but I just wanted to watch her spaz out. I think I'll ask her to dance the next slow one and whisper sweet nothings into her bib."

"Ah, cut it out," I said. "She tries. Shit . . . if I was in a wheelchair I wouldn't even come to a dance . . . let alone a school like this."

The next Monday we all took the Constitution test, and as far as I know, no one flunked, not even Costa, though I'm pretty sure he had to do more than spell it. They're not going to let just **anybody** into high school. I don't care how smart their parents are.

We spent the summer doing our paper routes, smoking, and calling up girls we hardly knew, and then, just before school started, we all went camping for a week up by Lake Tahoe. And we polished our Costavakian. We could rattle it off like nothing and sometimes when we'd go into The City we'd talk it to try and convince people we were from another country. And as we got older, it got kind've strange, because not only could we hide what we were saying from other people, we could hide from each other, at least partially, what we really meant. I mean all the arguments were in Costavakian, on the baseball field and over money. And Costavakian

became the official language to hassle each other in, to be honest with each other in. Like we'd get pissed at Krantzman or something, but rather than get down on him for it, we'd just hassle him in Costavakian and then laugh it off, and it was somehow safer. It was much easier to call each other "acehol-lies" than "assholes."

I looked at Evans and saw that he had put his *National Wildlife* down.

"Dave?" I said.

"Yeah?"

"When's the last time you talked in Costavakian?"

"Shit . . . it's been a couple years anyway. We sort of grew out of it I guess."

"Yeah . . . but it was fun, huh?"

"Sure, but I think most kids have little languages like that—Pig Latin, and that weird one the girls used to talk."

"Yeah . . . but Costavakian was different, don't you think?"

"Oh . . . not really. I just think it gave us a way to deal with being thirteen and fourteen. Not that I'm knocking it or anything . . . I wonder what Ol' Costa's up to these days."

"Yeah . . . I wonder if he's seen any good moves."

Just then Julie came into the room. She'd been crying and was still holding back tears—I could tell because her chin was trembling like mad.

"What's wrong?" Evans said, standing up.

"They just got the x-rays back and it's worse than they thought," she said.

"What do you mean?" I said. "He's gonna be all right, isn't he?"

"No . . . he's not . . . his spinal chord was cut right in half. It can't mend . . . he's gonna be a quadriplegic."

"Quadriplegic?" Evans said.

"Yeah . . . he'll never be able to walk again, and he'll hardly be able to use his arms at all."

"Never?" I said. "Ah, come on. He'll get over it."

"No," Julie said. "He can't. The doctors say it's impossible. They say they'll be able to strengthen his arms and teach him to grab things, but he's gonna have to be in a wheelchair the rest of his life."

I looked at Evans and then back at Julie. She was crying

like hell. I got up and put my arms around her and let her cry in to my chest. Finally she said, "He wants to see you guys. My parents have gone for a little while."

As we walked down the hall, the cold brass of my belt buckle seemed to work through my jeans and tucked-in shirt, constricting me, and I felt like throwing up. I pushed my hands down into my front pockets and let my head sorta hang. Julie stood at the door and me and Evans went on in. I felt silly when I realized I'd been looking down, 'cause when I looked over at Krantzman I saw he couldn't see us anyway. There he was, held all still by the machinery, looking straight up at the ceiling. I walked over to his bed, leaned over him, and looked down at his face. His eyes were watery and cloudy.

"I guess you guys heard the big news," he said.

I didn't know what to say.

"Yeah," Evans said, finally, coming over closer. "I can't believe it . . . I mean . . ."

"I know," Krantzman said, "neither can I . . . looks like I'm gonna be out more seasons than I thought. Talk about early retirement."

I managed a slight smile.

We were quiet then for a long time. Krantzman lay there, his arms at his side, the weight pulling at his head. Finally I had to look away. I walked over to the window and looked down through the night to the empty parking lot below.

"Boys," a nurse said, walking in. "I'm afraid you'll have to leave now. Don's got to get some sleep."

I picked my coat up off a chair and went over to the bed again. Krantzman looked at me and Evans, and I put my hand on his arm.

"I'll stop by tomorrow," I said.

"Thanks," Krantzman said. "You comin' back too, Dave?"

"Course."

"I'm really sorry, Don," I said.

"It's okay," he said. "See you tomorrow."

Me and Evans turned to go, then stood in the doorway looking back at Krantzman, lying there still, a wet spot on the pillow case under the bolt in his head. We walked to the stairwell and then out to the car. Neither of us said much on the way home, but as Evans pulled into my driveway, he said, "Kinda makes you stop and think, doesn't it?"

"No kiddin'," I said, shaking my head softly.

"Well . . . I'll see ya tomorrow," he said. "Still wanna drive?"

"Yeah . . . sure," and then just as I was about to close the door behind me, I stuck my head back in the car and said, "Dave?"

"Yeah?"

"Tacky ite easswie."

"Sure," he said, and I pushed the door shut.

Phone Calls (2)

—Jeff Goolsby

Too many things that had long ago faded keep coming back to me, Aaron. I don't know what's caused you to start calling these days, but now you've started a bank run on my memory, with the daylight of a working-class stiff like me filled with so much time to think about other things, being plagued with repetitious images that slip in beside me on my ladder and show me bright and dim pictures. Ten second clips of you when you were more touchable, standing beside me against the back wall of that bus station, against a chipped and mangled gray dog flexed in some sort of running position, and you laughing so solid under your breath, handing me the bottle.

We were so ugly then. So wonderfully ugly, that nobody would come near us. That nobody would teach us their clean and clear-cut ways of the world, where order and sanity built bridges and weapons and warm beds. So full of contempt, were we, choosing either to curse and harass the hard ones or laugh at those who were weak, all of them revolving on some sort of gigantic wheel, trying to find the center, trying to become solid.

With you bleeding half to death under some overpass, and me grabbing that family man by the collar and yelling in his

face, "If you don't give us a ride I'm going to break every damned bone in your body." Then looking over at you, shaking your head and smiling like I was being so dramatic with the poor guy, causing me to loosen my grip and say, "Look, we really gotta get into town." And him giving quick little nods with his head and helping me load you in the back seat.

You were always in control. Always knew which way we were going, when to leave. And always had the right way to look at a person, had the right glance for me. I can still see your glance, that subtle cock of your head, drawn back lips and half closed eyes. Perfectly timed. Snapped into action. Almost reading our minds.

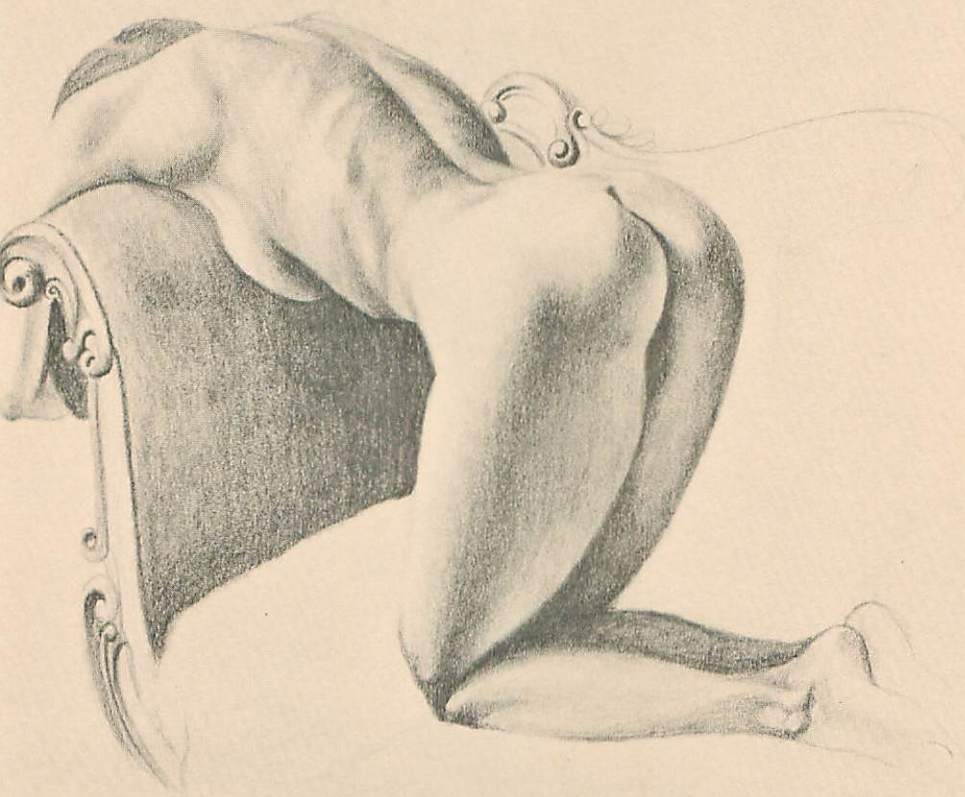
But then you started getting jumpy or something. We moved so fast, changed places so fast. I started thinking about things in the other world. And one night we got so drunk out in that field, and staggered across that slough and fell sitting on the other bank. You told me how cool it was that we saw so eye to eye. How cool it was that I always knew what you were saying, what you meant. "Man," you said, "I hope this doesn't sound weird or anything, but like, if you were a woman . . ." And then, "Oh, forget it! That's . . . Just forget it." And standing up and staggering out across the field. Later I could hear you throwing up somewhere in the moonlight on your hands and knees, while I lay there on my back watching the stars keep moving, until your distant croaks stopped. Then I silently rolling over and quietly throwing up, quietly spitting, slipping down to the water and rinsing out my mouth.

The next day you said "Let's head for Duluth," and I looked down and said I was thinking of staying round longer. You said, "Alright," the same way you used to say "Well just go to hell then." You got it all into one word, and said it twice, then paused and reeled about and went cutting through that traffic like it was made for you, disappearing through the people.

I did stay. I'm staying. And I thought about you for awhile, but now I hardly ever do. Cause it's not so bad here. Cause I found someone I lay in bed with, and we go on vacation when we can, and think we're gonna have kids real soon. And you don't know her, and you don't know what I'm doing now. But you called this week, and I could hear the hiss in the line and knew you were in some other town. And you tried to tell me something, but I couldn't understand. And at first I tried to talk

back, but you couldn't hear me, like it was a one-way connection, and only you could talk and only I could listen. And by the third time I quit trying to talk, just tried to listen, but nothing made sense.

Until last night, when just as I'd reached from my bed and turned out the light you rang again. And I turned the light back on and walked to the kitchen in my pajamas and answered, only to hear the hiss again, and a laugh, quiet and shallow at first, after each pause becoming a little louder, getting higher pitched and strained, each pause becoming shorter, the laughter getting louder and filling in the hiss, until I decided I'd better hang up, hanging up so slowly, pulling the receiver from my face, passing it slowly to the hook, hovering for a moment, and then slowly, like a ship at dock, settling into the cradle of silence.



—Anita L. Sterling

Contributors' Notes



Karen J. Burkhardt got a B.A. in English with an emphasis in creative writing from San Diego State University, and a secondary teaching credential from Sonoma State University. She now teaches high school English in Redding. "Although teaching keeps me extremely busy, I still find time to write poems and letters, to play my guitar and to get crazy with my friends on weekends."

Kenneth Farrar is a seven-year student with ten years to pay. "I always applaud when it's over."

Kathleen Gallo has lived in Chico with her husband and son for eleven years. She's a graduated student focusing on the writing process. She also teaches poetry to children through the California Poetry in Schools Program. "Writing poetry is something I can't always help. Sharing it, however, is my small exercise in courage."

Jeff Goolsby is a house painter.

Kate Hulbert is a graduate assistant in the department of English. "The foolish man wonders at the unusual; the wise at the usual."

Michael Jenkins claims to be noteless.

George Keithley teaches creative writing at CSU, Chico; he is the author of the play, *The Best Blood of the Country* and two books of poetry, *The Donner Party* and *Song in a Strange Land*.

Barbara Kimball—"I write for the fun of it, for the love of it, and the sheer joy of it."

Joseph Martin is an English and Psychology major at CSUC, 23 years old, who has "no clue about what to do with my life. My present ambition is to become the next Michael F. Jenkins, or failing that, at least the next Gil Crutney."

Stephen Metzger—"I like to fish and I like to write, and I never draw to an inside straight."

Suzanne M. Meyer was the editor of her high school literary magazine and was published in the Sierra Community College literary magazine when she went to college there. "I am a biology major emphasizing in Ecology and my interests vary from Tai-Chi Chuan, Yoga, and Kenpo Karate to cooking, gardening and reading literature of all types."

Shannon Minor was raised in northern California and attended College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State University. She has had poems published in several journals, including *Nightsun*, *Oyez Review*, *Letters*, and *College Poetry Review*. Currently living, working, and playing in Chico, she is looking for a publisher for her first collection of poems, *In the Season of Molting*.

Sheri L. Pritchard—"My family is my happiness, my writing is my voice, and my harp is my freedom."

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

Mark Rodriguez graduated from Chico State with a BA in art—then from the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop in '79. "Now I'm back in Chico in the Poets in the Schools program. My only three fears in life are becoming left-handed, chipping my front teeth, and reincarnation, two of which I have already realized."

S.L. Shirley, born '51 in Oakland, California; educated California and Oregon. Treks to Canada early '70s; sojourn in Tennessee during Bi-Centennial '76 searching for voice amidst ignorance and poverty; residency in Siskiyou County, discovering poetry readings and lasting literary friendships. Worked as a printer in various locales from Eugene to San Francisco. On the asphalt early '80s from Arizona to Oregon coast—aborted European travels. Moved to Chico in April '82; attending CSU and pursuing degree in History.

Anita L. Sterling is studying art at CSU, Chico.

Victor Williams will receive a bachelor's degree in English in December, 1982 from CSU, Chico. A native Californian, he is now at work on a novel.



Watershed was set by The Graphic Fox
on an AM Varsity Comp/Edit in 11
point Souvenir, printed on 70 wt. Sunray
Vellum Dusk (text) by the Duplicating
Center CSUC, bound by Inland Bindery,
Sacramento, California.

\$2.00