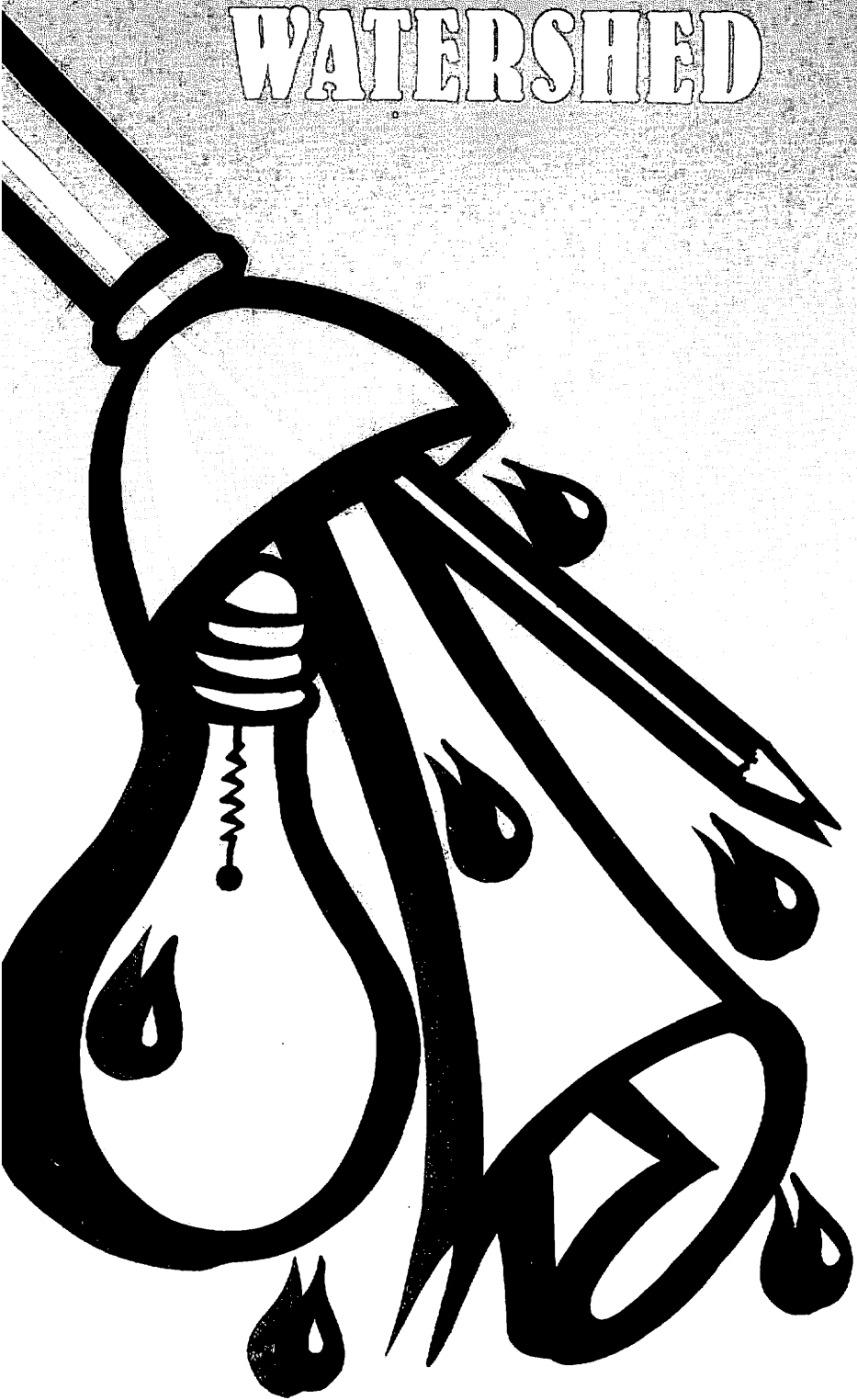


WATERSHED



WATERSHED

Volume 17

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Contents

Seward Bryan Foote	photo	iv
Jennifer McLeod	<i>For Anna Pinsky</i>	1
	<i>Crickets</i>	2
Rachael Andhra Christman	<i>When the World is Like a Dream</i>	3
Amy Reno	<i>The Hands</i>	5
M.E. Parker	<i>Migrations</i>	8
Michael Williams	poem (untitled)	9
Cal Smith	photo	10
Doree Green	<i>Flying West End Rd.</i>	11
Jennifer Howell	<i>A Wave is Born</i>	13
Derek Ordlock	<i>love my mother</i>	14
	<i>Last days of Castro's Cuba</i>	15
Robert A. Howard	<i>Beautiful Grief</i>	16
Matthew C. Helms	<i>Morning Fog</i>	17
Paul Daniels	<i>52,088</i>	19
Lois Ann Abraham	<i>Little Comfort</i>	21
Seward Bryan Foote	photo	26
Shannon Rund	<i>Her Friend</i>	27
ame(lia) barth	<i>hell's kitchen</i>	30
Jennifer McLeod	<i>The Large Black Dog</i>	31
	<i>Desire, when it has fallen</i>	32
	<i>Mexico</i>	33
Erikka Tegman	<i>Deep Inside</i>	34
Joshua Feltman	poem (untitled)	35
Dorette Quintana English	photo	36
Sierra Gehrke	poem (untitled)	37
Dawn Light	<i>Rock Garden</i>	38
Albert Pierce	<i>Homestead</i>	40
Sierra Gehrke	poem (untitled)	42
Patricia Caspers	poem (untitled)	44
M.E. Parker	<i>After the Leaving</i>	46
Adam Rhoades	<i>Ansel the Automatic</i>	47
Caycee Ames	<i>My Addiction</i>	52
Kandie St. Germain	<i>Brakeman</i>	53
Eric Gurney	<i>Yellow Car</i>	54
Seward Bryan Foote	photo	55



Seward Bryan Foote

For Anna Pinsky

Grandmother Anna, from your green eyes
And yellow tail-braid gleamed, dangled,
All my hope; green that gleamed gold,
Churned up colors of the sea in turmoil.

Grandmother Anna, a face of wrinkles closing in
To send out smiles from the lips around your cigarette;
Smiles in creases like waves and scowls of deep silence
Where you sat hoarding cocoa and cigarettes, running the house
With your looks; tall girls with red hair obeyed you.

Grandmother, you dreamed with your eyes more than I
Could ever know, out the back door, across the ragged yard,
Your hunching shoulders, your thick, slow legs,
As you leaned against the wall, smoke curled round you;
The chocolate steamed, the pantry listened
To your unlit mood, so patient in twilight.

Grandmother Anna, my heart still searches the cool warmth
Of soft arm flesh; Grandmother, I was too afraid to kiss you
But you hugged with your green eyes the small girl
With the brand new haircut and no place to spend the night
But beside you in your old feather bed; keeping perfectly still,
Touching backs, in the strange-lit hour of midnight.

Jennifer McLeod

Crickets

I can remember the green cicadas in El Salvador, throbbing
Sweet thickness against the eardrums. At night, crickets recounting
Each day in song, transforming them to magic and mystery and
love.

Here they are considered a pest, miha, these crickets,
Black grasshoppers rubbing their long tapered legs together,
Pretending song—and not a plague, but a shadowy seepage

When the rain flows over the glistening sidewalks,
Intruders into quiet preset lives, annoying, determined,
They try to enter before they are washed away.

Spray them with anything as they land in the sink—
Air freshener—the overpowering scent of flowers—
Hairspray—and hot water as they slip their way to the drain,

Pushing them down, disappearing them for good.
Then, hands soaped in light blond oatmeal, form a gesture
To say up close how different a creature than we thought them.

I remember the green cicadas. In America, they are
The color of coffee, the color of my girl's brown limbs,
Struggling to get in or out, washed away or crushed.

Jennifer McLeod

When the World is Like a Dream

Yesterday I dreamt myself into
sandals, moving cautiously
between rows of glossy skinned
onions, a universe of tempting
burgundy globes, pushing
up through the soil like
the vague guess-work of planets
materializing bright and clean
in the blue night overhead.

A river more pale than the sky,
rushed its water west to
the sea through a narrow bend
in the earth behind me.

Maureen's small freckled
boy ran ahead laughing
and pulling the folded onion buds,
like the domes of Orthodox
steeple, from their sinewy stems.

I too snapped the
flowers, unopened, off the top,
until my hands absorbed
their onion smell, the
dirt and mustard weed
crushing in the shadows
under my shoes, my robe
dragging three paces behind me.

That same night
the paramedics arrived and
an Osage woman held
my wrists while she listened,
unaided, to my body's pulse.

Soon she began to brand
my palms and the horizontal
lines that bend my fingers,
laying out black scratches
that diagrammed my DNA.
Unsure and in shock I
whispered "will this hurt later?"
"Be still" she said, "it's alright,
none of this will hurt
you now."

Rachael Andhra Christman

The Hands

Vivid oranges, yellows, and pinks began to flourish in the open sky. Dense fog rolled onto the shore covering every small house and building in sight. Groggy fishermen pulled in their morning catch as they hollered, "Good Morning's" to one another. Up in the lighthouse, the old man looked down upon the sea and smiled at the thought that another night passed and all ships were safe because of his hands, his eyes, his light. The small cafe on the corner spilled out smells of freshly brewed coffee and hot apple-filled croissants. A seagull soared overhead looking down on the morning rise of the small oceanside town. It was a perfect morning.

"Achey Breaky Heart" suddenly blared from the radio alarm clock, but the teenage boy did not move or even flinch. Joey just laid wide awake with his round green eyes transfixed on the stark white ceiling as he had for the past hour and a half. His burdens were not quite heavy enough to weigh down his eyelids throughout the entire night. Slowly, he rolled to his side and turned off the radio. All was silent, except for a light brushing sound he could not identify. He pushed himself to his feet and walked towards the window. As he opened the dusty blinds, Joey could see his father struggling with the lawnmower on the front lawn. Joey sighed and closed the blinds. He wanted to fall back into his soft, warm bed where he was safe, but he knew he had to move. Big events were occurring today.

He opened his bedroom door and the brushing sound became louder. As he moped down the hallway towards the kitchen, he could hear his younger sister, Katie, turning on the shower. He peeked into the kitchen and stared at his mother, crouched down on her hands and knees scrubbing the floor, a ritual only done for a very special occasions. Her hands were worn, but still beautiful and well groomed. She looked up at him with small beads of sweat running down her face. It was apparent that she had been cleaning for hours.

"It's about time you're up. I was just getting ready to come pound on your door," his mother remarked.

Before Joey could say a word, she snapped, "Go shower. There's lots to be done around here." Joey turned away and rolled his eyes, for he knew it was going to be a long morning.

Once finished showering, Joey came out to the kitchen where his mother was carefully taking out the china. She began to ramble off orders, but was suddenly cut off.

"God damn it! I don't believe this shit! God damn it!"

Joey's father stormed in with his worn hands and arms covered in black oil. He paused for a moment and stared at Joey with his dark, cold eyes and sneered,

"Where the hell have you been? I thought I told you to fix that God damn lawnmower!"

Joey started to speak, but his father snapped, "I don't want to hear it!"

The afternoon seemed to fly by and delightful aromas suddenly filled the Italian household. After hours of hibernating in his room, Joey felt silence fall upon the house, so he crept from his room into the kitchen. It was beautiful. The lights were dimmed and two long, red candles flickered on the dining room table. Six sets of his mother's good china lay upon the freshly ironed tablecloth. He closed his eyes and inhaled the familiar smells of alfredo, spaghetti, and garlic bread. Suddenly, an abrupt knock caught his attention. His eyes quickly opened, and he escaped from his dream world. He went for the door, but his mother had already beaten him. High pitched girlish screams could be heard as he watched his mother embrace his older sister, Kara. A stranger entered behind them carrying her bags, the stranger that was soon to become a part of their family. Joey liked him. He had hands like those of a silk weaver.

A half an hour of talking passed, and everyone seated themselves around the beautiful oak dining table where their stomachs moaned in pleasure after scarfing down the Italian dishes. Joey smiled when he saw Kara holding the stranger's hand. He was kind. He was right. He was "the one."

"So where the hell is dessert?" Joey's father blurted. Without hesitation, his mother hopped up and returned with a smooth, flawless off-white cheesecake she had spent hours preparing. Everyone applauded her hard work, and she began to slice large pieces. She picked up the first piece to place on a plate, but accidentally dropped it right on her freshly scrubbed and waxed floor.

"Oh!" she screamed. "Joey, pick that up right now," she commanded. "What?" Joey questioned, rather confused. "I didn't do it." One of the wooden chairs suddenly pushed back, and Joey's father immediately rose to his feet. His face was fierce

and terrible. He walked towards Joey's chair and grabbed his t-shirt at the shoulder.

"What the hell did you say?" his father said in a low, deep voice. "Get your ass up now and clean up that mess," he commanded. The table grew completely silent as everyone watched Joey. He rose from his chair and went for some paper towels, thinking he might still have a chance of escaping, but his father followed him. He pushed his body close to Joey's and stuck his face within inches of his.

"So Mr. Smart-Ass, you don't listen to your mother, huh? You think you're pretty God damn great, don't you? Well, when she tells you to do something, you better as hell do it!" Joey's father screamed. Joey tried to move, but his father pushed him back with the hands. They came after him. They attacked his face again and again, until they were at last satisfied with the damage. Joey ran to his room. The table was silent. His mother continued to eat as if nothing happened. Kara buried her face in her hands from embarrassment. At last, Katie jumped up from her seat and ran to Joey's bedroom door. She knocked softly. "Joey, are you in there?" her voice squeaked. Joey cried as he could envision her innocent, harmless, little hands rapping on his door. "Joey?" she repeated. He cried aloud and wiped his tears with his shaking left hand. Another knock. The little hands were still persistent. How Joey loved those hands. He closed his eyes, smiled at their sound, and pulled the trigger with his right hand.

The sun slowly melted into the sea.

Amy Reno

Migrations
for Shelley

The first geese of autumn passed
overhead tonight,
Great flapping wings
echoing
off the constellations.

You'd left already when
I heard them.
I stood outside near the
clusters of darkened grapes
draped
over the back fence and
searched the ebony sky
for their passage.

They are the answer, of course.
We just couldn't think
of it when we talked
of love and men.

Spread soft
your wings.
Always fly in V's.
Sing loud against the
stars.

M.E. Parker

Gently I massage his collapsed heart
Groping for that mortal hole
I fill his veins with fluid life
And stop to spark his dying pump.

His heart is blackened by the gun
of another angry child.
His colors hidden by the blood's deep red
The only color now is the color dead.

Michael Williams



Cal Smith

Flying West End Rd.

Wheels and gears and pedals
Wheels and gears and pedals
Redwoods line cow fields and dirt roads
Wheels and gears and pedals

Cold pools
of redwood shade
smell almost
like new home.

Wheels and wind and wings
puff-wuff, puff-wuff-wuffing from fern patch...
 School of swallows
 appears
 at me,
 sharply
 turning
 along me,
 swimming roads together
 past penned-in sheep,
 fenced-in horses;
 we race. I am animated.

 They pull away;
they pull up and away
when we spot
blue flannel shirt and baseball hat
walking his land
in worn working boots.
He doesn't turn to smile
"Hello." He walks on
surveying
barbed-wired land.

Wheels and gears and ...
Horse's head
following my bike glide
stops chewing
grasses in mouth;

fully extended, this is no gelding
urinating. Complacent. Domesticated
property. Watching bike glide.

Bird song returns,
imitates the wind playing branches together,
stops.

Woman turns from her garden,
faces the road.

"Hello!" she waves.

I wave.

Pedal

Pedal

Pedal

into.

Doree Green

A Wave is Born

Think
Moonlit brassy sky
Mother sea, her water broke
She grumbles, groans, spits,
Lady shells hear
 they open themselves,
sponging up the sounds of a delivering mother
Pick one up off the sandy beach, they describe
 give them your ear
Return to the womb
With the push of the moon
Navy, Blue, Teal,
Crest
 over trough,
 over crest
A wave is born to the shores
It dances,
 floods in,
The reef tickles its toes
It jumps, writhes,
White, wet, bubbling milk
Tides of joy
That wave dove...
 caught sand...
Left its mother
Gave us a sound we could sleep to.

Jennifer Howell

love my mother

You touched yourself under the covers.

Your mother would come in
run her hands on your shoulders, say

Get out of bed.
Get dressed.

and stand there watching
your naked body climb out
and slip on underwear.

You remember her smelling like bacon,
her fingers having left
a greasy smear on your shoulders.

You rub the smear in like lipstick—
—you miss her eyes on you
and the taste of bacon in her kiss.

Derek Ordlock

Last days of Castro's Cuba

Old woman,
there is no justice for you.
Behind the scratched glass of your DeSoto—
behind the cloudy lenses of your eyes—
a song plays.

Clouds
roll into the city;
with torrential rain or light shower—
exhume dead gulls from the barnacled jetties.

Old woman,
you can wait a long time
waiting for a call
from Fidel.

There are no parts that can repair your DeSoto.
There are no songs that will take your pain.

Derek Ordlock

Beautiful Grief

The sun's death is beautiful grief.
A burnt memory in the sky,
it bleeds for attention
and holds me rapt and still,
tethered to the west.

A slow helium moon
emits a brilliant light
from its side of the sky.
Cast across the void,
ivory shards collide with a
dark blue eternity
and shatter into stars.

Clouds are opaque wisps
of liquid pearl,
hovering about a dead sun
that has been briefly coined
into a creamy circular eye
that stares at me,
and shares with me,
both the pleasures and frights
of histories in which I stand ignorant.

Earthly shadows flee this light
and hide behind the trees,
dodging this way and that
in night's dark breezes.
The chase ends at dawn;
like truth that annihilates a lie,
the sun impoverishes dark
and gets ready again to die.

Robert A. Howard

Morning Fog

I find her in the transformed bedroom
The pink gown that adorns her
Draped sadly
Over her thin, deteriorating body
While translucent tubes
Pump vital oxygen
Into her exhausted lungs.

Wiping away a waterfall of tears
I reach for her hand
Hoping that she will open
Her tired eyes
And know that I am beside her.

In a desperate attempt
Her arm swings vigorously back
Toward her sweat beaded forehead.
Father dabs it gently
With a cool, wet, blue washcloth—
Anything to ease his mother's pain.

He speaks softly to her
"Mom....Matthew is here."
Heavy eyelids
Flutter back strenuously
Exposing vacant eyes
Unable to focus
On their dreary surroundings.

During the night
She called out for her mother.
Has she seen the other side?
Is she in pain,
Or has her vibrant soul
Already escaped the deathly scene
That her family is confronted with?

With each labored breath
Her chest and stomach
Heave forward
Like a crashing ocean wave
Until finally
There is no undertow.

The morning fog
Surrounding Morro Rock
Has cleared
And the smokestacks
Tower solemnly
Over the quiet town.

Matthew C. Helms

Her clothes were green
on green was red
the smell of stench
this stench was dread

From jungles of rice
and napalm red
the blood of the young
and old was shed

The bags zipped up
the tags displayed
while bodies inside
slowly decayed

Decayed was the future
the future of man
fighting for what
to free this land

This land of Yellow
and Communist men
that the U.S.A.
fought to pretend

Pretend that the evil
coursing through veins
was the infectious tool
of a barbarous reign

This reign of the East
but not the West
America pretended
they were the best

The best at what?
the child asked
as he watched his country
crumble and pass

Paul Daniels

Little Comfort

Martha sat in the dark, cool space between the bushes and the house, her spine lightly interlocked with the ridges of the overlapping shingles in a way she found most comforting. The velvety moss grew thick on the ground there. She had found this hideout only the week before, and she was still enthralled with the soft, green light and the magic of a secret place so close to the house and so unsuspected. Three wonderful diamond buttons lay on a large, flat rock—buttons Martha had stolen the last time she had been sick and her mother had lifted the button box down from the fragrant and mysterious top drawer for her to play Kingdoms with. A small clump of sour clover she had tried to transplant was turning yellow and limp in the center of the moss where she had stuck it into the mud.

The Princess Delphine stands in the Emerald ballroom in her pink ruffled gown, pale golden hair curling down her shoulders. She turns, and Prince Carl is stunned by the depth and sparkle of the fascinating blue eyes she reveals. "Will you dance?" he stammers. The Princess Delphine nods graciously and gracefully places her slender, white hand on his shoulder; away they whirl in a haze of perfume and pink mist, around and around.

"Martha!"

She could see Andrew's grubby black high-tops under the bottoms of the shrubs as he went by, calling her name in his clear, deceptively pleasant voice.

"Suppertime, Martha," he shouted from around the front of the house. She scooped along the wall to where the bay window jutted out, and along the cold cement side of the front porch, and emerged. She was surprised to see how dark it had become and how cool the dusk air was on her hot face. She stood quickly, alert and wary, as Andrew came back around the house.

"Suppertime. Where have you been?" His cool blue eyes surveyed her dirty knees and hands and returned to her tightly guarded face. She was careful not to betray her hiding place with her eyes. "Does it have a secret, then?" he quavered in his best wicked witch falsetto, forcing her to smile. "You'd better hurry up, Martha. Mom's already mad at you for being late." He gave the advice in that avuncular tone he had assumed ever since his twelfth birthday, when he had begun a series of treacheries, unilaterally

dissolving their compact of childhood loyalty and leaving Martha bereft and stunned. "Come on, Button-face, I'm just trying to warn you. She's really mad."

The first few times Andrew had called her Button-face she had felt obscurely flattered, like a treasured baby sister. Observing her complacent face, he had taken her aside and set her straight.

"Do you know what Button-face means? Boy, are you stupid. It means Butt-on-face, get it? Face like a butt?" He spoke pityingly and with a mock concern that aroused a hate in her heart hot enough to last a lifetime.

"Hello? Martha? Anyone home?"

She gave him a practiced look of scorn and went up the front steps and in to supper, stopping on the way to the dining room to wash her knees and hands. Andrew was probably rushing her so that she would forget to wash and get into trouble. The last time she had fallen for it.

Her father stood behind his chair at the head of the table, a sandy-haired bushy-eyebrowed fellow, grown soft in the middle, dressed still in his Sunday suit pants with his Sunday white shirt sleeves rolled up to the middle of his beefy curly-haired forearms. With his big padded hands, he pulled out Martha's chair for her, a courtesy playful or perhaps half-mocking.

"A chair for the little lady?" he suggested.

She gave him a gracious smile. The Princess Delphine steps to the throne and sits, settling around her the swirls of her pink satin gown.

"Martha! Since when do you seat yourself before grace? I don't know why a child of mine turned out so unmannerly. Are your hands clean?" She met the accusation in her mother's eyes with a hard, solemn look all her own, and slipped out of the chair. She cast her eyes in appeal to her father.

"Don't talk back, Martha," he said, inclining his face toward her but avoiding her eyes.

"Andrew? Will you return thanks, dear?"

Andrew folded his hands on the back of his chair, and spoke clearly and evenly. "Dear God, we thank Thee for this day. Bless this food, oh heavenly Father, and the hands that prepared it. Amen."

With a flourish, Andrew pulled out the chair nearest the kitchen for his mother, who sat with a conscious grace, and fluttered her nervous, butterfly hands over the business of a napkin,

water glass, and silverware.

"Such a headache, I hardly slept a wink last night! Those dogs! Barking and howling till all hours. I don't know what people are thinking of to keep a dog like that! I wouldn't have one around the house." She grimaced with distaste.

"Why do they howl at the train?" Martha asked. "It's like singing or something." She was momentarily diverted from her mashed potatoes. She loved to lie in bed and listen to the dogs at night, and she counted it as a special boon when she was awake to hear the express train racketing its way through town and the howling of the town dogs when everyone else was asleep.

"I don't know why we can't find a subject for dinner table conversation besides those awful dogs." And her mother began to talk about people Martha didn't know, about the church building committee, so that although Martha could no longer keep track or listen, Andrew cocked his head and looked attentively back and forth between the two adults. Martha sighed and picked up her spoon.

After supper, as Martha stacked the dishes on the counter, Andrew sat at the kitchen table and taunted her.

"Singing dogs, eh Martha? That is one of the stupidest things old Button-face has ever come up with. Are you trying to be stupid, or does it just come natural? My, my." He shook his head in spurious amazement. "Sometimes I think you are not only the ugliest, but also the stupidest girl in all of Oklahoma."

"I am not." Martha was triumphant and sure. "I am not stupider than Janie Frisch, that's for sure. Janie Frisch is a whole lot stupider than me."

Her mother, coming in the door at that moment, overheard her and her face creased with annoyance. "Honestly, Martha, I don't know why you can't be more tolerant for those less fortunate than yourself."

"I'm tolerant about Janie Frisch. I just said that she's stupider than me."

"Do not answer back to me, young lady. You will speak when spoken to."

"But you spoke to me, didn't she, Andrew?"

"You are on your way to bed, Martha. Go on. I have just about had enough trouble from you for one day."

The Princess Delphine ascends the stairs, her dainty foot shod in slippers of the palest pink satin. Her hair tonight is as soft as

moonlight, and all the people standing below hold their breath as she moves up toward the Throne Room. She looks down at their faces and her heart is filled with a love so sweet and delightful that it causes her to laugh aloud. Her laugh is like a cascade of silvery bells.

Martha stopped on the landing. "Son of a bitch," she said, and waited for a moment or two, her face expectant and serious. Gus Jefferies had told her that morning right after Sunday school that if you had said the S.O.B. word out loud, God would strike you dead with lightning. She waited long enough to give Him a chance, and then the Princess Delphine moves on up the curving stairs in a dark velvet cloak as dark as the midnight sky with diamonds like stars in her hair and on her fingers. She turns at the top of the stairway and looks back at Prince Carl, who adores her. A beautiful smile appears for a brief moment on her petal-pink lips, and he sighs deeply.

As she quickly brushed her teeth, Martha glanced at her grim reflection in the mirror. A stolid, biege face with a long nose like her father's, shaped as though by a potter who had inadvertently left his fingerprints in the clay, implacable brown eyes. "I'm supposed to have Mother's eyes," she thought. But her mother's eyes were appealingly soft and doe-like, not at all like these hard, cynical lumps of mud. She remembered Grandmother Baker adjusting her Sunday hat in the hall mirror, a humorous smirk on her mouth and a funny little shrug, saying "Well, it'll just have to do, there's no help for it." She ran along to her bedroom, enjoying the soft slip of the flannel as she ran. Sliding her legs between cold sheets and slapping her head straight back onto the pillow, she forgot to say her prayers and fell asleep with only a quick flash of pink satin.

The dogs woke her up, barking nearby and answering from far away. She could hear the cold night in their voices, the cold night and the cold dirt where they lay on their warm bellies. She wanted to be with them in the wildness and willfulness of their barking, and she pictured herself, Martha the dog, the kind of black dog that has brown eyebrows. She tried a low bark. It sounded like a warning, and she tried again, softly, to bark with the same abandon she was hearing in the yelping of the town dogs.

"Martha, honey, are you okay?" She saw her father's head come through the doorway. She turned on her lamp, and they both blinked and squinted in the glare. He turned aside for a moment

and she thought he was leaving, but he came in and lowered himself heavily onto the side of her bed. His pajama top was buttoned wrong, and she felt a rush of love and longing for him. She sat up and threw her arms around him, nestling her cheek against his rumpled chest.

"Did you have a bad dream, sweetheart?"

"I dreamed that you and Mama died." She was not aware that she was lying.

He rested his bristly face against her satin smooth head and rocked her back and forth. "Oh, well now," he murmured, "Mama and I are not going to die."

"I bet you do," said Martha. She felt him stiffen and his face was hostile as he pushed her away, clonking her head on the hard headboard. His lips twisted and his eyes were hard.

"Daddy's Little Comfort," he said, sarcastically, and they looked at each other for a long moment. Then he stood and walked out of the room without looking at her again, saying only "Go to sleep, Martha," as he turned off her lamp and opened the door. She saw that he had left a tray outside on the hall table, and as he closed the door, she smelt the unpleasantly mingled odors of chocolate and beef.

She pulled her legs up against her body, to capture the remaining warmth of the momentary contact. Sinking her front teeth into one of her rough dry knees, she let the tears run down her thighs and blot themselves on the soft flannel of her nightgown. Far away, she could hear the first dog beginning to howl, heralding the arrival of the express train. The Princess Delphine stands alone at the top of the glacier. All around her the wolves have gathered, and they howl at her as at the moon, cold and lonesome. She looks about her in distress and fear, but Prince Carl is nowhere to be seen. She throws back her golden head, bares her gleaming white throat, and lets the howl that has been buried in her dark soul escape into the frosty, starlit night. And so softly that she could hardly even hear herself, Martha howled, cold and long, long after the wailing train had raced through town and the dogs were silent and sleeping once again.

Lois Ann Abraham



Seward Bryan Foote

Her Friend

The music
is what woke me.

A slow,
provocative,
rhythmic sound.

It seemed so alive
despite the darkness
filling my room

Walking quietly,
I followed the music,
letting the wall be my guide,
hoping not to disturb
the voices.

My innocent curiosity
led me to the door
guarding the music,
separating me
from the happiness
behind it.

An unexplainable fear
and excitement
filled my small frame.

One voice was familiar,
the other,
belonged to a stranger.

Their laughter
added to my wonder.

I eased my head
around the corner
of that huge wooden door,

allowing only one eye
to have a look, knowing
this was not something to be seen
by myself,
or anyone.

The familiar voice,
smiling,
laughing,
she was happy,
enjoying the music,
and her friend.

Her friend smiled back
and held her
as they danced.

The two seemed
so close,
to be sharing something.

To them the outside world
was non-existent.

Yet,
I was there.
I had intruded
on their world,
let myself in without permission.

Confused,
I pulled myself
out of their world,
and tip-toed quietly
back to my room,
knowing
I was oblivious.

As I lay in bed,
I pulled the covers
tight,

confused,
their image vivid
in my dreams,
wondering
who the stranger was
and when
my Daddy would be home.

Shannon Rund

hell's kitchen

the unattended bowl
of chicken noodle soup
begins to bubble, thickly,
like escaping marsh gas
in a corningware swamp.
one pointy ear, then two,
as the small demon sits up,
with pasta on his head
and broth in his eye.
tiny fists rub the gargoyle face
that grins grotesquely,
and smacks lips in anticipation
of the saltines.

ame(lia) barth

The Large Black Dog

It is nothing how he sinks like a slow spreading pool into earth
Under the almonds; it is nothing that he now resembles
A black river that flows in five directions.

The woman of the house cannot touch the mangled jaw,
Watch the long, fig-colored intestine beside the wavy fur.
Now that the sun has beaten him, she cannot walk outside,
Smell the sweet-rotten flesh filling the air with invisible night.

Later, leaves will fall like rain into the river.
They will harvest the nuts of gold shaken over him,
Finger the hulls that float the wavy coat, rest on lifeless eyes,
Fall with dull clicks between unclamped white teeth.

In two months, she will sigh how he sank like a river
Into the sea of October, until one morning he was only
A black bough—fallen, moss-covered, with one kick, discarded.

Jennifer McLeod

Desire, when it has fallen

Your eyes rivet to my breast
And break nothing. Buttons close
Fast against my gaze. Come.
Travel the white fortress of my neck
With light-fingering desire. Fall
Into the ruin of my eyes.
Collect the empty offering.

I keep no gifts for you or anyone—
Only phrases I was too tired
To throw out or amend or forget
As I slept and rain beat
Petals against my dreams,

Days when truth wore flowers for eyes,
Sported death for no reason.
But now the occasion has ended.
Truth is dark, outrageous,
Edifies no man. Or woman.

Or girl huddled under streetlamp
Overhearing in her own heart
How death and love wage final war
Each whispering of pulse,
How fields of wild violets
Pave silent with time.

What could I tell you
You would not believe?
Already lies grow in acres
On your heartbeating too near,
You innocent! What more is
There—here against my breast?

Novelty, then night blooms.
Days wither. Hearts grow
Silent underground.

Jennifer McLeod

Mexico

Her children waited for her there
Until she could retrieve them
One by one, from Mexico.

They were guides, they told her later,
Like different-sized posts to lead
Others through the water.

Only at night, and often
They wished the silvery ghost
Whirling on the water's surface

Would be pulled down
And the swift brown water erase
The face of the moon

Because it chased the starlight
Through their hair,
Laughed out loud into their eyes.

Jennifer McLeod

Deep Inside

Deep inside, I wander around,
I must hide - to be found;
Following the path to find my way,
Swallowing my pride another day.

Deep inside, I play the game,
I only lied - to save my name;
Selling rules amidst the crowd,
Telling truths a bit too loud.

Deep inside, I've always known,
I have died - to stay alone;
Confused at everything that I see,
Refused to burn my dignity.

Deep inside, I feel the storm,
I confide - to keep us warm;
Peace within the life I sold,
Cease to tell you why I'm cold.

Deep inside, I try to scream,
I decide - to wake the dream;
Gained the words without a voice,
Pained by those who make my choice.

Deep inside, I commit the sin,
I have cried - to hide the grin;
Shun the Faith I can't defend,
No one can judge me in the end.

Erikka Tegman

Barbie and Jack the Ripper
are equally famous.
Ken is only as famous
as
King Tut
or
George Washington
or
maybe
Robin Hood.
Barbie likes dogs.
She drives a better car
than
Betsy Ross
or
Queen Elizabeth
or
maybe
the pope.
Barbie likes sunsets.
She has a nicer house
than
you
or
me
or
maybe
G.I. Joe.
She's
a
beautiful
role
model.
She's realer than real,
she's lifer than life.

She's
envy
with
a
plastic
bustline.
How nice!

Joshua Feltman



Dorette Quintana English

Sometimes I am proud
of the curves that
make me a woman

My hips and
breasts are
circles
I inherited

My shape more
reminiscent of
Michaelangelo's models
than the air-brushed
perfection of today

Those women with long straight
lines
narrowness all over

Sometimes despite myself
their
long, long, slender legs
make me hate my
own

Sierra Gehrke

Rock Garden

My family is a handful of stones tossed
Everywhere, scattered, no central home.
Each member separated, alone.

I am still and quiet in the sun
With the fresh morning light
Brightening my pink to red.

He is sparkling blue and green.

She is marbled grey on black.

We each grow hot and wait to see
Who will outlast the others.

I am proud to feign this posture.
Surely I will prove to have
The greatest endurance.
It is the best strategy.
When one of us mentions the holidays
I lapse into my statue mode.

If you would take an hour
Or a hammer and break me in half
Somehow to see the inside,
What a soft flower you would see,
Really, not a stone at all.
You might even recognize yourself.

I spend too much time wondering
Why a family of weightless petals
Pose as pretty rocks.

And then I know
How soon a rose withers
Without persistent care,
And how rock gardens
Are springing up everywhere.

A stone is a perfect thing to be.

Dawn Light

Homestead

Do you remember how we had to trim
the branches of the oak outside
our bedroom window? How the limbs would scrape
against the roof and how the noise could wake
us even from the deepest sleep?
Do you recall the wind chimes — made of glass,
which rang so loud, when storms came from the south?
— your sister's gift, too many years ago.

*I remember the prick of barbed wire,
the weary arms and back,
the heat of a wood stove,
and the coldest winters we'd ever known.*

Do you recall: my love upon your lips?
The bitter sting of early morning coffee?

* * *

The time we tried to make our bread with yeast
a bit too old? And how the cats pursued
the gophers endlessly from hole to hole?
The horses, dogs, and ducks who greeted us?
The toast which burned while we made morning love?
Do you recall my hands upon your face?

*I recall the calloused hands,
the feel of hot sun on a blue tractor,
I smell the new-cut grass,
the tulips, lilacs, roses, and wonder if
their fragrance ever fills your living room.
Or if they died in summer's heat.*

Do you remember how I looked with pick or
hoe in hand and dressed in garden dirt?

* * *

And how the rain would wet the clothes we left
out on the line? The time you fell
and hurt your leg, it bruised (you limped for weeks)?

*I see you standing there the final time
I said good-bye, your daughter at your side,
sad hand in sad hand.*

Did you remember at that moment all
the plans we made, the ones
we made come true? The only one we failed?

*I recall you telling me so often
many things in life would lose
their worth without someone to share them with.*

Recall I didn't understand you at the time?

I've known for years exactly what you meant.

Albert Pierce

Most times
I smile at
everyone
I pass

Like today,
I smiled
at you,
who
was walking
on the same side
of the street
in the
opposite
direction

you didn't
smile
back

In fact,
in your eyes,
I could tell
that you
blamed
me

It stems
from the fact
that maybe
I've never been
scared
the same way
you have

and that
my father loved me
and maybe

yours
wasn't
around

I think
I smile
at you because
I want you
to know that
I didn't make
you a slave
and that
I've never been
proud
of being white

Sierra Gehrke

I know you'll leave me later,
when the sky is grey.

I won't ask any questions.
I won't make you lie.

You love me in form,
the shell of my body
but without any soul,

the way you love your dog,
good to wrestle with...
soon you'll grow weary.

My year is one day.
Come play with me
for a few hours.

Be my boy.
Bring me sugar,
I'll barter with you
for my salty sex.

It's all I have.
My gifts have been stolen.
Other boys.
Other hours.

Love me
how you love your dog
and I will follow
until you run.

Drifting behind
with watery eyes,
lingering arms and
crooked smile.

I won't ask you to stay;
that is enormous,
and sugar
is momentarily sweet.

I know you'll leave me later,
when the sun is low.

I will not mourn for you,
who will not mourn for me,

but I'll thief
golden slivers of you.

As long as you wander this world,
I'll hold the dust of your smile
beneath my pillow.

Patricia Caspers

After the Leaving

Separation stings so much
early on
because the absence of what was to be
seems so much greater
than the presence of
what was.

It takes so long to see
that those who leave us behind
do not steal our hearts.

Do not take away
the hush
of early morning
breaking open before
our eyes,
bearing today.

Our eyes are just
closed for awhile.

Resting .

It is tiring to search
for last glimpses of them.

Later, what once was,
becomes memories.

Memories
of why we loved
remind us
of why we can again.

This is the gift they
leave behind.

M.E. Parker

Ansel the Automatic

In the middle of a kiss she breaks away and tells me she has TB. Unwarranted, just like that. I'm thinking, christ, tuberculosis, can I get it, too?

But she tells me, "I'm not contagious."

Then why say?

"And it's not terminal."

Shame, that. There's a half-excitement in hooking into a one night stand and find out the lady's dying. You can spread lies about her and see if they come back around before she goes. Not that I have, but given the opportunity, I might.

I kiss her again, but she has to talk.

"I had a magazine article published that I wrote about it."

"About TB?" I ask.

She nods.

"You don't say."

"I write," she says. "I've written many things. Would you like to read some?"

"No, I don't read at all," I lie. "But I watch many movies. Mostly comedies. I enjoy a good laugh."

She gives me the resigned frown-of-sympathy for the preliterate. I recognize it; I wear it often myself.

"And... I write in the most amazing manner."

She is too gleeful about her TB inspired craft, I think.

"Really?"

"You'll never guess."

"Try me."

She moves from the floor to the couch, enjoining me to follow. I think all is fine, but once there she turns from me and reaches behind us. From an end table she takes a Ouija board, nothing fancy, the simple, mass-produced cardboard flat, but a Ouija board nonetheless.

She smiles.

"And this is how I do it."

I should've seen this coming. Automatic writing. She's an automatic writer. That explained it all. Her simple yes/no answers at dinner. The way she looked to her hands when answering. An automatic writer ruining it for the rest! Automatics had sixteen on the top twenty seller list. Which, though never saying much, says

far more than enough.

"Of course I didn't write my TB article with this," she confesses. "That's why it's not as good as the stories and poems. Well, his stories and poems."

"His?"

"Ansel's. My channelled writer."

"That's a great writer's name," I add after a lengthy pause.

"Ansel is."

"That's what I say." She holds up the board. "Want to? It works! I can make you a believer."

"No," I decline. "But I'd like to kiss more."

"Certainly," she responds. "That's why we're here, right?"

I nod. Now we might see what is what. But instead of kissing she stands and moves to a sparse and randomly decorated bookshelf.

"What about kissing?"

She doesn't hear me.

You know it used to be my philosophy that a girl should stop reading after twenty because, well, especially a writer, because at twenty you start getting smart and if you read too much, or read the wrong thing, all that you end up writing is only paraphrasing, even plagiarizing. And that's no good."

Then she peels her skirt off, just nonchalantly, uncovering a silk bikini, and drops it in a heap. She flashes an embarrassed grin.

"Cigarette?" I'm not sure whether she's asking or proffering so I nod dubiously.

Then she flies off on some other tangent with a stretch to a notebook on a high shelf.

"This is Ansel's writing. A friend of mine, Henry, transcribes while I channel."

"You do that thing alone?"

"Mm-hhmm. And Henry transcribes. He's my plumber."

"Yeah. I bet."

"What?"

"Uh.... Cigarette? You wanted one?"

"Yes, Thank you."

So I light two and give her one.

"Ansel says I can read anything I want to now."

"Really?"

"Yes."

I'm looking at her, now, and it dawns on me. Ah, yes. This

one's just crazy. That's the long and the short of it. I'd forgotten that crazy people sometimes look normal, maybe pretty. That they even take our jobs and come our way. I might have been thrown for a minute, but things had come clear. She's just crazy. It happens. Overlook it.

She breaks in.

"Stop frowning, Adam."

I shrug.

"I'm reading these books now. Just started. Ansel says I can read because he's really the one writing. You know, in the long run, I'll be richer and more popular this way. I don't have to think, or anything. Funny how things work."

"Very funny."

She blows more smoke.

"Oh. Ashtray."

And I'm just about to get the hell out and tell this one she's too off cake for me, and that's saying a fair bit, but when she bends to take the ashtray from a low shelf I remember why I'm here and say something else.

"You got beer, right?"

She perks up.

"That's why we came here, right you handsome devil?"

I nod.

"Hold on. Mary-Ann has gin. Is gin all right?"

"I prefer beer."

She skitters past me, dropping the notebook on my lap. Then she's out the door, her and her panties, in the hall, on the way to Mary-Ann's for gin.

So of course I open the notebook to a random place some dozen pages in. And with the exception of inane comments from Henry the stupid plumber, the page seems to be all dialogue with small blocked capitals for Ansel's words, all lowercase for hers.

hello ansel.

HELLO BETTY.

do you want to write ansel?

YES. HOW IS THE TUBERCULOSIS?

tuberculosis. the medication is working.

CONSUMPTION IS NEVER A JOY.

read that. (she responds:) no.

IS HENRY READY?

yes.

GOOD. TODAY I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT INVISIBLE MASS. IT IS CALLED BY SOME SCIENTISTS MISSING MASS. THEY ARE INCORRECT IN BELIEVING THAT AFTER THE CRITICAL EXPLOSION THAT EXCITED THE UNIVERSE TO EXPAND, EXPANSION CONTINUED TO A PREFORMULATED MAXIMUM POINT, THEN BEGAN TO CONTRACT. THEY SPECULATE THAT UPON CONTRACTION A TRACE PERIMETER REMAINED AND MARKS THIS ABSOLUTE EXPANSION. THAT THE UNIVERSE IS NOW IN CONTRACTION AND THAT THE SPACE ONCE FILLED IS CALLED MISSING MASS. THESE SCIENTISTS ARE WRONG. IT IS NOT MISSING, ONLY INVISIBLE TO THEIR SCIENCE. THE UNIVERSE IS ACTUALLY IMMENSELY LARGER THAN THEY CONCEIVE AND CONTINUES TO EXPAND. THERE IS NO MAXIMUM EXPANSION, ONLY INVISIBLE SPACE.

he paused. what's it about?

TO CONTINUE. ASIDE FROM MODERN SCIENCE THIS TRUTH HAS GREAT IMPACT UPON NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND HUMANISTIC METAPHOR. METAPHORISM IS, IN MANY ASPECTS, CONSCIOUSLY REFLECTIVE OF THE LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE. IT IS A PHILOSOPHY OF WHAT IS SEEMINGLY UNMISTAKABLE. AND THAT THE UNIVERSE IS NOT IN CONTRACTION IS DESTRUCTIVE TO THE VIEW THAT THE NATURAL STATE OF THE UNIVERSE IS IN COLLAPSE AND THAT A HUMAN METAPHORICALLY REFLECTS THIS LAW OF DECAY AND TRENDS NATURALLY TOWARD SUCH.

he stopped. ansel?

READ THAT.

read that so far. (I read aloud) we read it ansel.

GOOD. WHAT THIS DEFAMES IS THE CONCEPT THAT ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE DESIGNED IN ACCORDANCE TO THE LAW OF EVENTUAL ABSOLUTE DECAY. IT MEANS THAT THE NATURAL ORDER IS ONE OF CREATION AND CONTINUATION. IT MEANS THAT ENTROPY DOES NOT EXIST AND THAT HUMANKIND NEEDS TO CREATE NEW METAPHORS.

he stopped again. read that last part henry.

TOMORROW WE WILL BEGIN A STORY ON THE SUBJECT. A CAMPY YET POIGNANT PIECE TITLED THE ORIGINAL UPWARD SWING. AS OF YESTERDAY—

Then I hear a sound in the hall, so I discreetly close the book and set it on the floor. She slinks in with a bottle of Bombay Sapphire and sits it on my lap, giving me a delicious and delicate kiss. I remember again why I am here.

Adam Rhoades

My Addiction

After a while
of giving
away parts and pieces
there's really not
much left
at my second-hand
store.

So to salvage
something sacred
in me, rip
it away, examine
its potential,
its value; oh
it's been done before
and it's no trick at all
to do it once more.

But still,
after a while
of the giving away
for the sake
of the giving, the gift—
that cold ache—
becomes a familiar friend.

And we all love the familiar.

Caycee Ames

Brakeman

It is always like that. The ground moans
before it's heard, before
the metal beard nears, hungry,
and the hollow trill hounds
track stragglers to move, to move.

Tracks fork between the mother's eyes
as she squints
at the Western Pacific Cargo
looking for her husband—flat car, box car,
box car, Juan and Paula spray painted red.

In twenty years the youngest daughter
will have these same lines, now her face
just feeling the crunch. She is sitting
on the warm curb with hawk thumbs
circling temples, clawing a constant headache.

This girl knows her stepdad
will pass their parked car and waits
for him to step burly on to the tail of the red caboose:
chest taut with red plaid, face wide and pursed
with a Winston .

Like circus seals, they are all trained to wave.
Even her sister, arm a Nazi boot swinging
like the bar that blocks the cars.
And to the man she has made up,
the mother blows a kiss and raises both arms.

And the youngest, with each metal throb throb,
is relieved when she sees him on the fading end of noise.
Her own arm lifts: a white flag—
just as somebody's two-fingered whistle
spears the train's mountain holler.

Kandie St. Germain

Yellow Car

I sense my growing in these days
like spring through winter haze
Up shoots a warm wisp of wind
through a thin dark tree
A yellow car in a grey smog
running on
electricity

Eric Gurney



Seward Bryan Foote

Contributors

Lois Ann Abraham was born in 1947 in the panhandle of Texas and raised in New Mexico. She has been reading and writing since the age of six. She is currently a senior at CSUC, still reading and writing. Her goals are to teach so students can learn and to continue to write and read.

Caycee Ames loves abstractions: "Symbols. The elusive." She reads and writes to experience the sudden pain that travels through the spine, the tremor, the joy.

ame(lia) barth spends a lot of time thinking about vienna sausages. nobody admits liking them, but everybody has a can in the cupboard. she wonders where they come from.

Patricia Caspers is an English Major at CSUC. She doesn't know what she wants to do with her life other than write and travel through Europe. Her favorite writers are Alice Walker, Joyce Carol Oates, and Langston Hughes.

Rachael Andhra Christman grew up in Berkeley and moved to Chico six years ago. She is a double major in Journalism and American Studies. She usually carries her poems around in her purse or backpack until she has read them to at least one friend.

Paul Daniels lives in Paradise.

Dorette Quintana English is a graduate student in English at CSUC and has a daughter, Eva. She received a Graduate Equity Fellowship and a research fellowship to support her studies.

Joshua Feltman is 22, and married. He and his wife enjoy a monastic lifestyle in the heart of Chico. He thinks of his poems as interestingly wrought enzymes, engineered to aid the digestion of social detritus.

Seward Bryan Foote is currently spending his time trying to discover a new link between dinosaurs and birds.

Sierra Gehrke was born and raised in the Santa Cruz mountains. This is her third and last year at Chico because, she says, "it is time to move on." She is rethinking her major in History and is a sculptor.

Doree Green is a graduate student at CSUC. Born in The Bronx, "NY's loveliest borough," she received her B.A. in Creative Writing/Literature from Binghamton University. In Arcata, CA she ran a poetry series and brought poetry to local TV and radio.

Eric Gurney says "my Dad's in green Washington, Mom's in gray L.A., and I'm in the middle, half-way between heaven and hell, on Earth, in Chico, living a greenish silver existence.

Matthew C. Helms is considering an English major. His hobbies are reading, writing, hiking, biking, running, weightlifting, backpacking, and travelling.

Robert A. Howard is in his last year of graduate studies in Psychology. He has worked as a millworker, logger, real estate salesman, contractor, and inspector. His goal is to establish a private practice in psychotherapy and grow as a writer.

Jennifer Howell is a Liberal Studies major at CSUC. She is originally from Corning.

Dawn Light is majoring in Chemistry at CSUC. She has been writing poems for 10-12 years, and is a swimmer.

Jennifer McLeod is a graduate student in English at CSUC. She is more accustomed to translating poetry than to writing it. These poems are from a workshop she took with Carole Oles.

Derek Ordlock just graduated from CSUC and is stuck between real life and imagination, having recently started substitute teaching. He never learned to fix a car's brakes, or mow the lawn, but he can bake a great cake and watch the sun rise, if asked to.

M.E. Parker has lived extensively in coastal and south-central Alaska. She now lives in Chico and works as a registered nurse in an emergency department and teaches part-time in the CSUC School of Nursing. She enjoys outdoor activities, including weeding her garden.

Albert Pierce is a graduate Student "(in English, to the dismay of my professors)."

Amy Reno is a student at CSUC, fresh out of high school. She plans to major in English with a single-subject teaching credential and a minor in Creative Writing.

Adam Rhoades says, "At 34 I feel somewhat old to be returning to school and submitting such private things, a little misplaced."

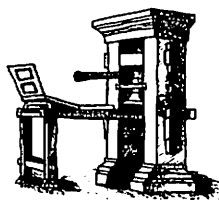
Shannon Rund is a native of Montana. She moved to Chico in 1990. She recently changed her major from Public Relations to English.

Cal Smith writes "for the reward of getting it said." He also takes photos.

Kandie St. Germain is a student at CSUC. Her poems have appeared most recently in *The Santa Clara Review*, *The Davis Review*, and *Buffalo Spree*

Erikka Tegman lives in Chico, CA.

Michael Williams is a registered nurse originally from Baton Rouge, LA. He works in the Emergency Room at Enloe Hospital and worked in a hospital in southcentral L.A. during the riots. He enjoys cooking, Cajun cuisine and writing about his experiences.



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