

A black and white photograph of a 12-egg carton. In the top right corner, a hand is shown painting one of the eggs bright yellow with a brush. The word "WATERSHED" is printed in large, white, bold, serif capital letters across the middle of the carton, with a black outline. The background consists of the rows of white eggs in the carton.

WATERSHED

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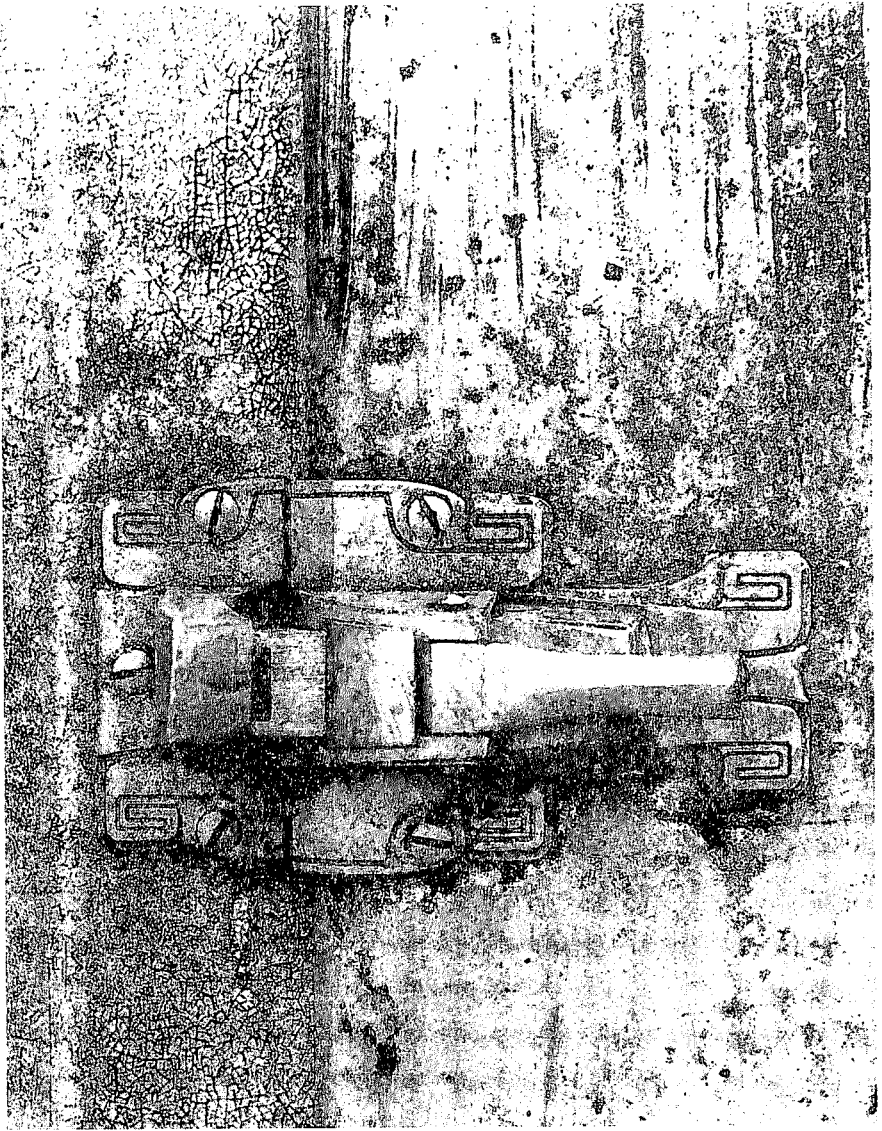
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Mark Haren

Believe

readying poems
for submissions
is like laundry day;
you hang your heart
and ass out on a limb.
and for what,
money
fame
recognition
maybe.
someone
to spill stale coffee
over hours of toil
and god knows
if they ran out
of toilet paper
that day
or if they've
been porking
your girlfriend
in the backseat
of their new coupe
and then have
the nerve
to write back
and tell you
to keep up the good
work, better luck
next time—
though you'd rather
just let it all pile up
then stuff it under
the cushions
out of sight
out of their hands

—sitting behind
their desk tossing out
the next person in line
hell yes, my friends
hell yes.

John Gurnee

Myself, next to Her

First, the self. Then, the observing self.

—Hayden Carruth

there's a certain bent appeal knowing
I sat next to her in poetry class
not knowing I would be next to her now.

these past hours, next to her, have flown,
flown like the fucking wind
and it's cold on her doorstep
and she asks me to come inside
and she tells me not to be afraid
and so I lie next to her,
eyes closed and reaching
out to find what *was* next to her

4 | a young boy's face
looks up
from flannel sheets
and her fingers
brush his hair

John Gurnee

Mi Amor

La luz de la luna baila en tus ojos tan bonitas
y mi corazón es solamente para ti

Roughly translated, this means:

I want to snort rails
of coke from the dip
between your hip
and belly
while sipping gin fizzes
on a sticky summer sedated
noontime waking

Geoff Thomas

It takes a long time to stop loving someone

6 | *It takes a long time to stop loving someone* your heart never quite recovers I go on believing that a bouquet of wildflowers will never stop reminding me of him the quietness when he came to my room bent down to kiss my neck and I madly writing in my notebook delphinium fields how he almost botched his proposal forgetting his wallet down on his knees in front of the townhouses under a nearly full moon and remember eating pesto pizza at zachary's on college ave one piece after the next and talking about columbus and the indians and soccer and oh how I cried my whole body shaking unashamed when he left for europe on the train afraid he might never return and the hematite necklace he brought from instanbul the black beads like strung birds eyes I've worn ever since and we slept in on weekends in the oakland hills and didn't even get up to let out the dog or to pee and ate pancakes with sour cream and cinnamon apples at rick and anne's and watched young couples play tennis at the claremont over the sunday funnies on his lap the way he said my name tasted rich like heavy cream over blackberries and I ate the whole bowl so slowly bite by bite and he offered the point of his napkin dipped in his glass when a little cream spilled down my blouse and the first time we kissed yes our bodies danced yes and when I first heard him sing a little off key but the sound of his voice the guitar was dry and hollow and just listening I knew a thousand tomorrows couldn't save me from a certain dying that would come if ever I thought of letting go standing knee deep scooping water from the lake a child sang *goodbye bucket, goodbye bucket, goodbye bucket, I'll see you again tonight*

Amy Antoniovanni

Roxy Bistro

Martini olives languish on picks as
vermouthed vodka slips sly down throats—
hazily coats.

Stockings fishnet down calves,
lips pout red and supple, each word
sultry, assured.

Gazes fishnet down calves.
Leather belt buckled shiny at the waist
confidently awaits.

Devilish nectar sweeps past swilling tongue.
Rise of color—warm pinking of the skin.
Voices grin.

Calypso eyes vivid in the half light
cultivate thoughts of compromising positions,
blushing visions:

Moisture condensing and wriggling
in sweet rivulets down spines, over hands—
salty strands.

Calypso eyes vivid in the half light
twist thoughts in devious twirls—I am starting to slip.
Another sip.

Elizabyth Hiscox

smoke

I'm bathed in smoky red
on a wooden stool
wet reed, sax in hand
verse in heart,
organ, trumpet,
trombone and strings
at my back
as a dark audience
looks on in silence
anticipation
sucking down scotch and
cosmopolitans
as I reach back
soul-rattle-slide
into jazzy-blue
emotion
liquidation
trumpet-wail
bass-pervade
organ-ascend
sax-scratch mirrored pane
of nightside alleyways
black desolate
muffled echoes
bounce and
fading into
another
improvised
riff

Geoff Thomas

ghost story

her toes are curling, pressing against the damp concrete. she smokes, winding breath around her fingers. it is the half life of moth wings, a sigh of enveloping. a trembling inside. she can feel the isolation of her fingers. of space behind her. there is motion yet to be observed inside; lungs, womb. a desire buried within. she exists as the hum within a firefly's throat.

Trevor Calvert

Out of Synch

We fall
in and out of lovers,
but never in coincidence,
one or the other
entangled.

Too subtle,
the brush of a fingertip,
the arch of a brow,
such crucial gestures of desire
are lost in the shuffle
of what we think we want.

We agree
to certain spaces
of acceptable affection,
but when you hold me close to dance

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I know
I could give you my clumsiness.
With your hand at the curve of my back,
I could gain the grace of letting go.

Marilyn Ringer

Not Enough

Emily knew she was fat. There was no longer any way that she could convince herself that it was “baby weight.” Josh was two and a half years old. She had weaned him six months ago, hoping that the fat would drain away with her mother’s milk. Instead, she ended up with deflated breasts, but no visible change in the size of the rest of her body. A feeling of panic was beginning to settle in as Emily contemplated herself in the bedroom mirror. Thanksgiving was coming and with it a visit to her father’s house. Home to Landsdown where everyone had known her as slim and lithe. Home to the disapproving glances from Harrison Caldwell as he took in her frumpy clothes and excess bulk. “So buy yourself some new clothes that fit you,” Thomas said from their bed where he sat propped up on a pile of pillows, his nose buried unconcernedly in a paperback novel.

“Easy for you to say. It’s not like new clothes are going to camouflage the rolls at my belly. Unless you think I should just wear mumus and give up on waist lines all together.” Emily pinched the offending skin around her stomach in disgust, then looked up to try and read Thomas’ expression.

“It’s your father and sister. They’re going to love you no matter if you’re a size twelve instead of a six.”

“I haven’t been a six since junior high and if you were my height, size twelve would look bad on you, too.”

“Honey, if I was your height, would you have even looked at me twice to marry me?” Thomas put down his book and looked up at her.

“How can you say that? I loved you long before your hormones kicked in and you grew tall!”

“I’m just pointing out to you that we all have standards that we think we have to measure up to. The right weight, the right height, the right size of your boobs...”

“Which are saggy and flat and have stretch marks...” Emily felt the tears welling up in her throat and tried to swallow them down.

“Which are beautiful and sexy and womanly...” Thomas smiled at her.

“You’re just saying that, you have to say that.”

“I don’t have to say anything. I think you’re beautiful and sexy.”

“No you don’t,” Emily said, turning back to the mirror with a frown. “I’m fat. How can I be sexy?”

“Come here and I’ll show you,” Thomas said with a devilish grin.

“Tell me...”

“I want to show you,” he answered.

Thomas slid off the bed and walked over to where Emily stood in front of the mirror. Standing behind her, his eyes met hers in the mirror as he looked at their reflections. Gently he removed from her hands the dress which she had been holding up to herself with such frustration. Slowly his hands traveled from her shoulders down her soft skin to her waist, where he paused to caress the gentle folds of skin there. His long fingers stroked the skin of her belly, tracing the silvery stretch marks until they disappeared under the white cotton of her underwear. A shiver ran up Emily's spine at the seductiveness of his touch and his hands slid back up across her hips, massaging their fullness through the cotton, then expertly inching the cotton covering down to expose them in their glory. Her skin was white and dimpled where he touched it on her rear and when he bent his head and kissed the hollow at the base of her neck while cupping the fullness of her buttocks in his hands, a groan escaped her.

Thomas turned her away from the mirror and towards the reflection of her beauty in his eyes. Stumbling backwards to the bed, they fell together onto the coolness of the cotton comforter which enveloped them. Laughing, Thomas rolled onto his side and continued his quiet exploration of her body, deftly unhooking her bra and letting her breasts fall free. His fingers greedily sought the nipples which were no longer small and pale as they had been the first time he had seen them, but were larger and darker from having nursed their baby. "Hhhmmmm," was all he could manage to say as he surveyed her nakedness. Emily giggled a little, nervous and excited by the look in his eyes and the warmth of his touch. His hands trailed down over her voluptuous curves again, dipping into the softness of her belly, stroking the curve of her thigh and circling back to the swell of her hips, which quivered under his fingers. He kissed her cheek, and her lips. He bent his head and kissed the spot of hardness between her lush breasts. His lips encircled a nipple, tongue teasing, then moved on to the other. Head bent, his lips traveled down to her belly, where he rested his cheek against her and sighed. "You are beautiful and womanly," he said, his voice gravelly with emotions. "Your body is utterly feminine. I long, always, to be buried in the comfort of your softness and your curves." Emily felt herself beginning to cry again. She had no way of accepting this worshipping of her, what she felt was a shameful state.

"You're only saying that because you want to get lucky," she tried to joke.

Thomas looked up at her, the hurt showing in his clear blue eyes. "I'm saying this because you are everything a woman could and should

be to me and I want you to let go of the ideals you think people hold you up to.”

“You fell in love with me when I was small and skinny.”

“And you fell in love with me when I was short and hairless. Don’t you love me now that I’m grown and hairy and look like a man? Do you only love the boy I was?”

“Of course not,” Emily said.

“Then don’t assume that I only can love the girl you were. I love the woman you are.” His eyes told her this was true, as did his fingers, and his body.

It had only been with the onset of Thomas’ illness, four and a half years later, that Emily had lost weight. It was only then, as the life drained from her husband and the love drained from her life that she finally felt the weight draining from her body as she had once hoped for. And when it did she found she missed the extra fullness, which had come to mean safety and acceptance and love. She missed the comfortable belly she had carried for so many years, missed having a place of softness to offer to Josh when he cried himself to sleep, missing his daddy. She missed the feeling of ampleness, of being enough, and not too little or too much. She missed the way Thomas’ hands had fingered on her hips in appreciation and came to hate the bony frame she was left with after his death as much as she had once hated her full figure.

Erika C. Traverso

the madness of norwegians

they talked about the madness of norwegians
over buttered crackers
and the chill of mango juice

the woman smoked a cigarette
he rocked in the little white chair
and coaxed the bright blue dog to bite his thumb

i could have been most anything
without the fear
the man began

this won't go on forever
she replied

he coughed

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the woman sighed
and stretched her legs across the turquoise futon
while buddy holly sang to ambrose bierce

and through the sweet and bitter music
through the tangle of the smoke
in the warming chill of mango juice

they put away the madness of norwegians
for the madness of the moon

Bob Garner

In the Window

she sits, staring out
in her black shiny strapped shoes
her legs crossed at the ankles,
porcelain white legs
swing back and forth
dangling beneath her skirt,
her white shirt with pink flowers
is tucked in, looking
just right.
her hands set, unmoving
in her lap
her dark hair
in perfect ringlets
falls to her shoulders,
her face is pale
dark eyelashes curl up
exposing two large sapphires
a bright dot on each cheek
lips and eyes hand-painted

Heidi K. Roseler

Shadow Goddess

She crawled into the
safety of the dark loft
wrapping herself into her
body. The soft skin of her
belly bled into her shirt.
She held her thin legs
closer to her until they
were red and sticky too. In
the dark shadows she let
the transparent tears
slowly slide and fade
away. Like a queen giving
over her reign to
something greater she let
go of hope and pulled
herself apart laying on the
cold wood floors like a
child making an angel in
the snow.

She let death feel her over
the dark winter night's end.

Kelly C. Thomas

Beloved Afternoon

We gripped Toni Morrison today.
Passed her around the room and
plucked fruit off her back.
We tore chunks from her flesh
gnawed on her bones,
'til she wedged slavery in our fingernails,
bled words in our teeth,
and our bodies felt her weight
under our skin.

Darlene McCormick

Listen

He knew salmon. The hardness of steelhead struggling upstream.
A River, a stream. A strait to the sea. And simplicity.
Profound simpleness and commonality.
His focus was people. He wrote the everyday of this life.
Stood and held a fistful of dirt to his nose and learned to love it.
The feel, the smell of it. To scoop it up with his toes,
those terminal digits. Slugs he called them when they wouldn't get going.
He was the quintessential malingerer, picker of thoughts.
He could muse on anything. Days and nights of bourbon,
champagne. Broken cars and bankruptcy.
Elephants in the backyard prancing out from bushes.
And Tess. Tall and beautiful woman in a doorway
with sunlight in her hair, asking "what kept you?"
Their tenderness what mattered, the two of them nude on a balcony in Zurich
watching the sky

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begin to lighten. And the salmon, his fingers
mingling with the blood, taking their heads off,
burying what needed burying and keeping the rest.

Now, somewhere, a flame gutters,
Perhaps in a garden,
His laughter lifting above a silver strip of water.

He is happy you see.
He didn't lose this one.
And he wants us to listen. To listen
as the wind picks up out over the water.

For Raymond Carver, 1988

Judy Salee

Box Canyon Sunset

The sunset pierces the clouds and lights the moss-laden basalt of the canyon wall a bright rose. The winter creek's ethereal waters roar by, pregnant from the rains that are returning. Jerry cries "Bertha" in my ear. I close my eyes and I can smell your hair. And Tempe doesn't seem 893 miles away.

Nathan Hislop

MCV Brain Trauma Ward

Christmas Eve in Richmond, Va 1998

for Greg Gagnon

In panda room at the end of a powder blue hall,
shrunk and propped in a taut bed beside
flowers, cards, pictures of your trip to California—

the frown had twisted itself onto your face,
leaving only the eyes to answer all inquiry
and fingers, sometimes rubbing photos for help—

the view from your tiny window was faceless,
a thousand identical rooms on either side;
blackened city bricks stuck in winter's throat—

20 | while I worried about crossing old bridges home,
probably frozen already from the wind beneath.
Hail dressed bare trees like spiders pressed—

when we hugged goodbye I was so careful,
as if, by touch, your swollen skull might crumble,
felt your first word still-born and wet on my cheek—

then fell into an endless stream of traffic
that bled quiet light in patient, watchful line.
Night leaking cold over faintly familiar streets.

C.B. Baldwin

Rhythmic

The quick-witted-tongue-tripping dripping of lines
to the creativity-starved stark white hunger of these
endless pages of confessional soul-searched bearings,
sitting stoned and stoic as I premeditate the murder
of time, rhyme, intertwine heart-filled rhythm-based
thumpings with the literary-lined foundations forming
shifting styles, from long-lined free-verse-funkafied-
ranting-ramblings to the lingering power of minimalistically
chosen chunks of pain and passion lashing out into
emotionally responsive pittings of stomach or lifting
rise of spirited onslaughts of hope and inspiration.

Geoff Thomas

my heroic attempt

three stories up
from the chemical flood
and the alcoholic river
protected from the freak
with the poison head
and the pedophile
with purple lips
and the bang
of the sally trucks
gathering up the residue
of decomposing lives
i step into the empty hall

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and take the elevator
down
down to the bottom floor
break out the door
and scream
at the jaded moon
until a benevolent harpy
in a pink leather jump suit
emerges
from the 8 by 15 tool shed
where the manager's husband
spends entirely too much time

and filled with the fear
of unnatural love
i mount my trusty bike
fall over on my side
and snap another bone
and the slackers across the street
in beer bottle haven
stand up like a troop
of intoxicated boy scouts
and salute
and salute
and salute my heroic attempt

Bob Garner

The Mysteries of Peach Cobbler

1.
12 years old
turning tricks in Okie truckstops
my grandma
1932

she'd do anything
to get out of town
 anything
to fade into that Western sunset
to pick peaches penny a pound
in the Golden State
 in Lamont
 in Arvin
 In Wasco
 in Shafter

she'd lie
tell them she was 16
she'd lie
tell them she loved them
lie
on her back
in the dirty rags and boxes
of their pickup trucks

this pale slip of a blue-eyed farm girl

easy money
from a lonely man
600 miles from his home.
his wife.
his 12-year-old daughter.

and their hot breath stank
of bathrub gin
and hand-rolled cigarettes
and their rough stubble
tore

at her skin
like a father's belt
and she held them all
tightly
and dreamed of palm trees
and fields and fields
of peach trees
ripe for the plucking.

2.
i watch my grandmother's hands
blurred by constant motion
and the gravity of age.

she slips the just sharpened knife
into the soft flesh
of her backyard peaches
and guides
the edge
along the unseen stone,
cracks open the fruit
with a soft, wet ripping of ripe flesh
then peels the thin skin
with flicks of her thumb
against the blade.

she does this for an hour,
her hands pink
and sticky with juice,
while i stir cinnamon and nutmeg
into boiling sugar syrup
and roll flour and salt and ice water
into dough.

later
we spoon the warm golden crisp
and golden bulbs of sweetness—
pure childhood—
into bowls
of cold milk
and she nods her head
as i smile the same grateful grandkid smile
i've had for 32 years.

i do most of the work
when my grandmother makes
peach cobbler these days,
but she insists
on cutting the peaches.

R. Eirik Ott

Free Will

At the flight terminal in mid-July I drag myself out of your arms
and step
 deliberately
 forward
 moving in
 halting framed
 slow motion
Like a similar day running as a child and watching my foot fall onto the
2x4
with a huge rusted nail
 sliding
 tearing
 rubber soles
 and nine-year skin
 with no control.

water wings

Another night
Comfortless
Shadowed, shallow
Swimming
In a sea of souls
None of them deep enough
To dive into

Throw me a life to preserve

Darcey B. Self

The Girl from Greenland

How everything burns, she thought,
waking up on ice instead of
University Avenue. Afoot or on a bike
it didn't matter; the material of the day
was herself, her thoughts and how
they dragged across the museum her mind
was becoming. The mausoleum.

She believed she was an archeologist
of failure, tripping over fossils that were
her lovequotient. Flares of good feeling
followed by eclipses of sorrow, haloes of
mind debris. Crusted pillars of memory—
surfbrine, kill-objects in snowmelt and frost.

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Like enduring men's pushy-in-there eyes.
Boom—another relationship going under,
no survivors. Except there she was, on the rocks—
might as well be strangling in kelpbeds. A bedlam
of grammar—black ink sterner than the blue.

"You lack perspective," a friend said.

Of course she did. The only clear line
was horizon, not always silvery.
Promising.

She preferred tough grasses—
wanted her mind stiff like that.

Warring dance against a green
sky full of hope.

Whereas trees were a plenitude
of imagination. She told herself
to go west, to where Greenland
gets greener. Or to dig straight down
to Shanghai—rattling her ghosts.

“You’re weaving a geography
of defeat, damn you,” she told
herself. “First draw the line
AB Our Desire, and then the second YZ
Satisfying It, running *almost* parallel
to it”—you get the picture.

“Desperately seeking”
new twists to the old trails. But she
ends up circling the wagons again, plodding
the scorched fields of reason.

Green land-girl, try living for those
incandescent slashes of insight
more powerful than anything
short of taking off a beautiful
stranger’s underwear.

R. Brooding

Ebb

I can taste you
on the breeze of my thoughts
racing along the black
breaking crests of
wicked sea striking
cold in June moonlight...

I can smell your skin
in the salty coastal
cliff-lined high-tided
beachfronts, hissing
ebb and flow
caress and recede...

I can hear your
breath and sigh
in the sea
making love
to the shore

Geoff Thomas

Thoughts while Fishing

Pumice Creek, Alaska

i am salmon
in the light clouds part
a riffle
in the headwaters of my mother
i dance without moving
over the ashes of my father
i dream of braids
heavy with sun
knotholes in the sky
birds who know no branches
only how to fly

John Gurnee

Slide

I want to slide
into you like a sax slides
into a jazz riff,
I want to feel
your every inch
of tan soft subtleties
pressed against mine,
I want to slide
my lips from your lips
to your perfect (as they are)
breasts to the silken curve
of your hip—down
into such pleasures spinning
like an opium-candy sky
over the gentle sloping
arch of your back
in shudders,

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I want to taste you
I want you on my lips
I want to breathe you
Feel you
 encompassing me

I want to slide
deep into you
'til I can almost touch your soul

I want to look into your deep azures
through my deep hazels

I want to lose myself
in your splendor

And wake
to the graceful beauty
of smoke against sunlight,
 you
 in my bed

Geoff Thomas

Contributor's Notes

Amy Antongiovanni worked with the Squaw Valley Community of Writers this summer. She teaches at CSU, Chico.

C.B. Baldwin is the calendar editor for the Chico News and Review.

R. Brooding is a recently retired librarian who moved to Chico from the Bay Area this year.

Trevor Calvert stays up late in Chico wishing he had a monster under his bed (a nice one). He has been published in *Key Satch(el)*.

Bob Garner writes true fiction and paints rather small watercolors.

John Gurnee is a senior at CSU, Chico studying English. He dabbles in fiction and dramatic writing, and is working with a local paper. He enjoys poetry, music, and cooking.

Mark Haren is presently enrolled in a master's degree program at CSU, Chico. His goal is to teach English as a foreign language, and photograph his surroundings in his spare time.

Elizabyth Hiscox prefers brief biographies to boxer shorts.

Nathan Hislop is a senior at CSU, Chico. He wants to be a high school teacher because he is tired of teenaged children falling over Gap ads like sheep. He has a lofty goal of making children into thinkers by the age of seventeen.

Darlene McCormick graduated with an English degree in May 1999. She is currently working for a local real estate developer and will enter graduate school in the fall of 2000. Upon completion of her Master's degree she hopes to teach English at a junior college.

R. Eirik Ott is a journalism student by day. By night, he is the host of the Chico Poetry Slam. On weekends, he is a member of the San Francisco Poetry Slam Team, winners of the 1999 National Poetry Slam.

Marilyn Ringer is a poet/teacher with California Poets in the Schools. She also teaches writing workshops for adults. She is a single mother and is addicted to yoga. "Out of Synch" published in this issue was inspired by Louise Glück's poem "Vita Nuova."

Heidi K. Roseler is a psychology major and a creative writing minor, and she is very glad this is her senior year.

Erika Saario is a fourth year English major at CSU, Chico. She enjoys activities ranging from computer games to fly-fishing. A native of Southern California, Erika was lured to Chico by the beautiful trees and friendly people.

Judy Salee is a writer/poet living and working in Sacramento.

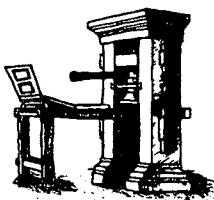
Darcey B. Self is a closet poet, a voracious reader, and an avid Scrabble player. She considers Germany her home and plans on travelling back there once her supply of Kinder-Eggs is exhausted.

Geoff Thomas is a Santa Cruz native, an artist, poet, graduate student, and a surveyor of life's simple beauties.

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Kelly C. Thomas is a senior at CSU, Chico. She majors in English with a minor in creative writing. Her inspirations are her boyfriend Dan, and her best friend Melodie.

Erika C. Traverso is currently enrolled in the English master's program at CSU, Chico studying creative writing and literature.



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