



pulse

pulse

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Cover art by Janna Smith

Eleanor Poetry Award

Given to the best poem overall.
Catherine Preslar "Seeds Like Letters On a Page"

de Schweinitz Poetry Award

Given to the best poem written in an open form.
Vic Odegar "Callous Sensibility"

Barnes Poetry Award

Given to the best poem written in a traditional form.
Vic Odegar "Shoeshine"

Rowe Poetry Award

Chosen by the Pulse editorial staff (limited to undergraduates).
Jody Pate "Honey Island, 1925"

Pulse Essay Award

Given to the best essay.
Kevin Poston "Beat Therapy"

Pulse Fiction Award

Given to the best short story.
Mark Bankston "Southern Upbringing"

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All's the Matter

Where the air sweats like Nixon,
Where the wind smells of sulphur,
Where the river runs slow brown,
Is a Library that's gray.

Where the lots are lunar smooth,
Where pipeworks spike the skyline,
Where King's truncated namesake
Buzzes like the nearby minds,
Is an Institute that's brass.

Where a weathered statesman brooks
His bird-white hair and shoulders
And holds his smouldering cigar,
Is a building like Phoenix.

Where a founder is deaf, as
Styrofoam wax clogs his ears,
A hub juts skewing walkways
Rightly as shell spits shrapnel.

Where the sidewalks are sage, their
Day-glo graffiti profound,
Is a Maze where humanists,
Those mice, find their way beneath
The VDTs' looming stares.

Where the Olympians meet
To play with their orange globe,
Is a Mountain patched over
With dirty green foliage,
The Center's one precious vein
Clogged with tarnished golden ore.

Vic Odegar
English, SR

The Man in the Mind of Time

he was all of these things:
the midnight man, drawing the
lights of the stars, the
light that has arrived, the
light that is already here,
saving in cold rooms for the winter.
he was the voice that has not arrived, the
words that are on the way, the
sound that will be here soon, the
expecting windows in pretremble,
he was the tilted, poised ear.
he was the emperor of the treetops, the
green screams flung out to the flat air, the
exploding pipebomb blooms of white, the
ripping of speech from tongue, holding words
at arm's length from wood, water, and fire.

his nights were nights of travel
the sounds of wind falling to earth
was his music his mouth was the mouth
of the skyline he was of the shapeless
beams of sun under the ocean he was
of the births of a thousand birds

he was all of these things:
a tiger dancing a stone frowning
a woman falling from a great height
a moment in the life of a body louse
a burst of september a drop of saliva
he was the only man in the mind of god
his was mine, ours is his

Jody Pate
English, JR

A Voyager's Tale

I've never seen the ocean, never felt
The restless tide come in and cover me,
Nor let the crashing, deafening waves pelt
Me with the life they carry through the sea.
The scent of Neptune's salt I've yet to know,
And never have I known the brine through taste.
I've witnessed no sandcastles melt and flow,
Nor watched the seabirds run in hungry haste.
Yet I have walked the Pequod's wooden decks,
And sailed among the Beagle's eager crew,
And with Ulysses I have lived through wrecks,
And seen with Conrad what true sailors do.
If I should never sail I still have known
The pleasure of these sailors, though alone.

Kevin Poston
English, GS

Pecan

A crunch under a footstep
chick fallen to ground.

A lump of tan
enshrouded by green spears.

A tree egg, speckled with black
hatched from split casing.

Harvesting hands
touched pecan-egg smoothness,

cracked with silver nut crackers--
shell fragments removed
from inbetween
wrinkled valleys and grooves--

mild sweetness sampled by mouth
unused to pecan
unadorned by
clinging syrup flavor.

Brandy Leigh Copley
Political Science, SO

Pulse Fiction Award

Southern Upbringing

Southern mothers tell their sons the place to find a wife is in church and I am sure that mothers in the Heartland tell their sons the same thing, although, I cannot be sure of mothers up east or those out in California. Buddy Bodine and I used to think our mothers were quoting the Scriptures when they said this--they're both Southern Baptist anyway--but I stopped believing it when I read the Good Book from cover to cover at age 12 and never found it in there. It took me awhile to convince Buddy, my good and true friend, who drives this '78 Camaro I own at the Saturday night races in Silsbee. The way I figure, our mothers pounding this saying into our heads all these years is the reason we're both such rotten drunks and our behavior is so wicked, which is not to say that those two sweet ladies are at fault; they were just being what they were brought up in Riverport to be.

I ought not blame anybody for my being lost because it was me who reckoned that since you find a wife in church, you also find girlfriends there and so I only darkened the doors to meet girls, my idea of God getting twisted each time as I would pray to get set up with a particular girl and my reasons not pure of spirit or heart. Thinking of God in those terms, you start to believe He's a kind of dating service or the Big Matchmaker, or if you're really twisted, a pimp, and that kind of thinking won't get you into Paradise.

All in all, Buddy and I never were very lucky with church girls. I made the grand mistake of falling for one who loved a preacher's son instead of me and Buddy got tired of them not putting out. Buddy is like that; he doesn't have much use for girls who won't sleep with him, including his wife Mary Francis. He met her at the races and they've been married about a year now and when she goes on her period or finds other excuses not to take care of him, he swells up for days and talks a lot about regret.

My girlfriend's name is Lynette and she wants to be a country singer like Reba, so she thinks she has to put herself through misery to be able to sing sad country songs and usually I get dragged into the misery, too. I don't know whether I ought to believe some of the things she tells me, like that she left her husband Daryl, who is apparently in the Army and stationed at Fort Polk, because he knocked her around and that she spent some time in a battered women's shelter after leaving him. Not that it couldn't be, in fact, true, but if you knew Lynette, you would understand why I doubt her. I never know if she's just making it

up to give credence to the heartache in her songs. Anyway, she's always telling me that her life hasn't turned out the way she planned it, as if anybody's ever did.

Lynette and I started seeing each other about two months ago, after we exchanged numbers in a kicker bar where she was singing. On our first date, she went down on me and still does it readily, without even being asked, so it's hard to say no when she calls and tells me to come over. I don't love Lynette and I know I never will. Like most people, I'm just staying with her until something better comes along, which makes me a turd, sure, but most people are turds anyway. At least, when I leave her, she'll have something sad to sing about.

The races are held every Saturday night and you can't find a parking place anywhere close to the grandstand because most everybody in Hardin County comes out there. Looking at the speedway for the first time, you might think that the fella who built the place had just converted an old high school football stadium into a race track, but it's not so. He had a bunch of trees cleared out and a dirt track the length of a football field put in and a wall around it and on one side wood and steal bleachers and a press box on top. There is one stadium light above the stands, which doesn't do much in the way of helping visibility, but does a hell of a job attracting moths, chiggers and mosquitoes. This is just me talking, but I think that fella is pretty sharp for making it look like a football stadium, seeing how Southeast Texas is high school football country and you figure if people like sitting on bleachers to watch football on Friday nights, they would just as soon sit on bleachers to watch some good car races on Saturday night, too. Bleachers are kind of habit forming that way.

The prizes for winning a race are pretty small, barely enough to keep a car running. A month ago Buddy won the feature race and that was \$100, but he had a blowout coming out of the final turn--he was so far ahead by then it didn't matter--and the winnings went for a new tire. Luckily, we've got a couple of good sponsors, Gautreaux's Automotive out of Beaumont and Claud's Wrecking Yard out of Lumberton. All the sponsors keep everybody at the speedway in business and they get lots of advertisement from the PA announcer, who reads off a list of them every ten minutes. The other thing that helps the speedway make money is the concession stand, which charges too much, but serves up good boudain, barbecue, links, nachos, hot dogs and crawdads, and you can bring in a cooler with you if you want a beer, or several beers, as the case may be.

Much of my time is spent in the pits out beyond the bleachers, helping Buddy fix the Camaro, but I like to go up into the bleachers and sit with all the folks to watch the actual races. I call them folks and that is just what they are, salt of the earth, country folks. You see mostly

white faces, hardened by life, some of the men wearing beards or moustaches, smoking, drinking, dressed in oil-stained jeans and crusty boots, mesh baseball caps tipped back on their heads and the women in flower-print blouses and bright-colored pants, hair short and tightly permed or long and unkept. The kids run around in packs, racing up and down the bleachers, and the planks are so warped that it's like sitting on a trampoline as the kids bound from row to row.

I usually sit down low, close to the track, to watch the races because the engines rev up and the sound hits you square in the chest the way nothing else ever could, knocking the breath out of you and the only thing that could even come close to the violence of it, I imagine, is a linebacker flattening you at the line of scrimmage. I was sitting down low there--by myself because Mary Francis was sick of the races and played bridge on Saturday nights--right before the start of the feature race the evening Shelby Champagne came out to the speedway.

Shelby was the church girl I had fallen for, and I hadn't seen her in a couple of years, not since she broke up with the preacher's son and went off to the Baptist college in Houston, while I had moved to Beaumont and started selling computer software. Seeing her again was like seeing your first car after you've sold it driving through your neighborhood. I swallowed my beer wrong and started coughing and my eyes watered so bad I thought I was hallucinating. But my vision cleared and sure enough, it was Shelby Champagne, in all her glory.

As she came closer, I couldn't tell much different about her, except that she was wearing her blonde hair shorter and she looked paler than I remembered, but she still had her beauty and her glamor. If anything, she was even prettier and so I poured the rest of my beer down my throat, hid the can under the plank behind me, kicked back with my feet stuck out and propping myself on my elbows, pretended that I hadn't seen her. A moment later, Shelby was standing beside me.

"Hey, stranger," she said and gently kicked one of my legs. "How are you doing?"

Faking surprise, I glanced up and widened my eyes and said, "Well, I'll be damned. What are you doing here?"

Shelby beamed and, kind of giddy, she said, "I'm just in town for the weekend. Your momma told me I'd find you out here."

"Yeah, well, I own one of the cars."

"My heavens, when did you get into racing?"

"I've always liked cars."

Shelby nodded. "Yeah, I remember now. So how have you been?"

"Good."

"Everything's going okay?"

"I can't complain, but then again, nobody would ever listen if I did."

She smiled and sat down next to me, not too close, and it was damned awkward to be in her presence again. The last time we'd seen each other was graduation and our parting had been civil at best. Shelby and I had started out as friends, and spending time with her alone, I had developed feelings which she never returned, never anything more than what you might feel for a buddy. That is always the worst case scenario when it comes to relationships and doesn't it always seem to be like that. I wonder if there ever were two persons who felt for each other equally.

The cars rolled onto the track, sixteen of them, all in two-by-two formation, driving around until the pole-sitter reached the starting line. Buddy was in the fourth position, next to a '76 Cutlass. My Camaro was midnight blue and had a white number 8 painted on both doors and it was pretty well banged up, but good-looking nonetheless. I pointed it out to Shelby, "There she is. See her, the blue Camaro?"

"How come you're not driving it?" she asked.

"I'd rather win the races, so I let Buddy drive," I answered.

"How is Buddy?"

"Fine. He got married last year."

"That's what I heard," Shelby said. "Are they happy?"

"About as happy as anyone ever gets."

"My heavens," Shelby said. The engines revved up and the green flag went down and the cars rolled forward under a yellow light. The light turned green as the cars finished the pace lap and by the time they reached the starting line, all were hitting top speed. Shelby covered her ears, but I sat up straight, exhilarated by the sound of the powerful V-8 engines slamming into my chest, rattling the bleachers under me.

Shelby hollered something at me over the roar, but I couldn't make it out. Shelby now was an intrusion, an unwelcome one, and a surge of resentment welled up in me. I just nodded at her and left whatever I felt like saying bitter on my tongue.

The race lasted twenty laps and along the way some of the cars blew tires or spun too wildly through the narrow turns and crashed into other cars or just simply up and died from mechanical failures. Buddy finished third, not a bad showing, but a disappointing one, since the purse for third place was so small. Shelby stayed quiet during the race and my attention was so focused on Buddy that when it was over, I reached into the cooler and got a beer, forgetting whose company I was in. Popping the tab, I glanced over at Shelby and felt the blood gush into my face.

Shelby looked at me sort of slack-jawed and asked, "I didn't know you started drinking."

"You want one?" I baited her.

"My heavens, no," she responded.

Feeling like I had something over Shelby, I took a few long swallows. Sometimes, there's a certain glee in wicked behavior, and I

wished Lynette were there with me right then, instead of singing three sets at the Cattlecar, so I could study Shelby's reaction to seeing Lynette and me together.

Shelby faced the racetrack and said, "I've got some news."

I didn't say anything as my attention drifted down to Shelby's hands, which she was fidgeting and rubbing together and damn near wringing and all at once, seeing what was on her finger, I knew what the news was. I didn't need her to tell me, but of course, she proceeded to do just that.

"I'm getting married," she said.

I sat there for a moment, soaking in Shelby's words, trying to figure out whether I was surprised, remembering something I had thought up in high school after I had told Shelby I loved her and she hadn't said anything, not a damn thing, not even that she didn't feel the same way, something about a windshield, her silence being like a rock hitting a windshield and the glass spider-webbing just a bit at first, then slowly a crack spreading across the windshield until it was ruined and it was time to get a new one. I used to think nothing could ever hurt as bad as when the rock hit, that every other jarring would just make the crack worse, but wouldn't hurt as much. I was still chewing on that thought when Shelby continued.

"I wanted to tell you in person," she said. "I didn't want you to open the newspaper in May and see it in there."

"I'm happy for you," I lied to her.

She sighed, as if in relief, and thanked me. "He's a great guy," she said. "I mean, he's truly a man after God's heart."

"Did you meet him at school?"

"Yes. He's from Tyler and he's fixing to go to seminary cause he feels like he's being called into the ministry."

"Sounds like you've found your man," I said.

"Well, I like to think the Lord found him for me." She smiled.

"I'm sure He did," I lied again.

"I just wanted to tell you in person, you know? And invite you to the wedding."

"Okay."

"I'll be sending you an invitation. Is it all right if I just send it to your mamma's house?"

"That's fine."

"Good. Well, I've gotta run," Shelby said and got up. "It was good seeing you."

"Good seeing you, too."

"I know things are different between us now," she said, looking at the ground. "But I'll always think of you as my friend."

"You don't have to say those things," I told her, suddenly desperate to avoid such talk.

"It's just the way I feel."

"I wish you wouldn't."

"Okay," she said and looked up and there was a tear on her cheek. "You take care of yourself."

Shelby stepped away and I didn't watch her go, concluding that I was not, after all, surprised by her news. Shelby had always wanted to marry a preacher and I was the furthest thing from that and always had been, even when I used to try. Realizing this made it harder to hate her than it should have been.

For the last race, about thirty kids got out onto the track with their bikes and circled around a few times. The crowd loved it, and after it was over, Buddy and I loaded up the Camaro on its trailer, hitched it up to my pickup and went to the Cattlecar to catch Lynette's last set of the night. The Cattlecar was not the nightclub's real name; I just called it that because so many people went there and the air conditioning was poor and everybody would sweat and smell like livestock.

Buddy didn't call Mary Francis and it seemed to me he was mad at her and probably figuring on finding somebody to take his mind off her. I was always warning Buddy about messing around because you could catch anything from someone in a bar, but adding to his scorecard did something for Buddy that fidelity apparently could not.

It took several minutes to cross the dance floor and along the way Buddy disappeared. I didn't bother with trying to find him in the crowd; chances were I wouldn't see him again that night, so I went and got a beer and watched and listened to Lynette sing.

Lynette liked flashy costumes with lots of sequins and rhinestones to wear on stage and anything that showed her cleavage in all its abundance, which was like a big old plate of your favorite food that makes you hungry just looking at it, but when you've had your fill and there's still half a plate left, you feel sick to your stomach. Much of what used to attract me to Shelby was what attracted me to Lynette, except that, in many ways, she was like an exaggeration of Shelby. Both were blonde, with blue eyes and shapely figures; however, Lynette's features weren't as sharp as Shelby's, and you did not get the impression of high-breeding, and everything Shelby had, Lynette had more of it.

Lynette twanged one more song and the crowd of urban cowboys and gals on the dance floor clapped for her, and smiling and waving, she left the stage. When I got to her, she was wearing a frown and seeing me didn't cure it. We commandeered a table, and she bummed a cigarette off someone she knew. A few moments went by before I asked her what was wrong.

"Nothing," she answered.

"You don't look real happy."

"Neither do you. I guess y'all didn't win again tonight," Lynette said.

"Third place."

"How long has it been since Buddy won a race?"

"It's been about a month. I guess Buddy is in a slump."

"I don't think Buddy is as good a driver as you say he is. I think you ought to be driving your own car."

"Don't start that again. We've been over that I don't know how many times."

"I just don't know why you would rather sit in the stands and watch instead of getting out onto the track yourself."

"Well, I'm not like you, Lynette. Some people want to be in the spotlight and some people like it behind the scenes and that's just where I want to be. Are you on the rag or something?"

"No, I am not. I just see someone who could be in more control of things in his life and not waiting around to be discovered or something great to happen to him and instead you just sit around letting things pass you by."

"Is that what's got you so upset? Are you getting discouraged about your career again?"

Lynette took a long drag off her cigarette and, holding in the smoke, tapped the ashes into an ashtray. Then she released the smoke through her nose and mouth and said, "I don't want to talk about it. I'll get even more depressed than I already am."

I tried to change the subject. "Look, we're both out of kilter tonight. Why don't we go out to the pickup for a while?"

Lynette lowered her eyes and the color raised in her cheeks. "I've got to go back on in a few minutes."

"I know, but there's time."

Lynette took one more drag and dashed out her cigarette. She didn't look at me. She didn't say anything.

"If you don't want to," I told her, "just says so."

"I don't want to," she clipped and pushed her chair back. Standing up, she said, "I've got to go pee. I'll be right back."

Watching her walk toward the bathroom, I guzzled the last of my beer and tried to control my anger, but it would have helped if I knew what was really making me mad, that Lynette was denying me sex for the first time or that I was so low I was trying to find cheer in a bar where I didn't belong and a woman I didn't want to belong to.

Were it not for the leaves, you might never notice the seasons change in Southeast Texas, as the weather is entirely unreliable and it can be 80 degrees on Christmas morning and you can't tell it's winter except for the naked trees and the dead, brown leaves covering up the grass. Likewise, you don't know spring has come until the leaves grow

back green and the flowers bloom and all of last year's leaves have been raked up and burned or hauled off. As the seasons changed from summer to fall to winter and, finally, to spring, I thought about Shelby periodically and wondered if she had become disengaged--the wicked part of me wanted to see that happen--but sure enough, the invitation came the first of May, and my mother forwarded it to me a few days later.

At the time, I was still seeing Lynette, although we were not getting along, but more annoyed with each other. Nothing better had come my way, so she was the only woman I could take with me to see Shelby get married. But I didn't want her to go because the wedding was at my old church in Riverport and Lynette was not the type of woman you wanted to be seen at Services with, as she always wore too much makeup and revealing clothes that make all the proper ladies at the church look down their noses at you and you felt like crawling under the pew. So, I didn't tell her about Shelby or the wedding and decided to go alone.

I bought a new suit and got a haircut and shaved real close the day of the wedding and even washed my pickup. Driving to the church that evening, I was exceedingly nervous and apprehensive and it only got worse when I walked into the sanctuary filled with flowers and lit candles and love hymns flowing from the pipe organ and saw the 200 or more people there. The usher asked me which side I wanted to sit on and I told him the bride's and he took me to a pew toward the back of the sanctuary. I got settled and started looking around, but I didn't recognize a quarter of the people gathered. There were several lone guys not from my town sitting on Shelby's side and that made me feel both foolish and fine, as if I were part of a fraternity. I wondered how many of them still thought they loved her, too.

The groom and his procession and all the bridesmaids filed into the sanctuary and I stared at the groom and he wasn't anything like what I had expected. He was rather plain-looking, of average height, fair-skinned and straight brown hair and I didn't think most girls would've turned their noses up at him, but neither would they giggle and say shocking things at the sight of him. I was altogether unimpressed.

The wedding march cranked up and everybody's heads turned around in synchronicity and there Shelby was with her father standing at the entrance to the sanctuary. I felt my spirits drop and then lift in one smooth action, like a car hitting a large dip in the road at a high rate of speed. She was all beauty could ever hope to be, dressed in a southern-belle style white gown with hat and veil and as she began forward to the altar, her eyes were fixed straight ahead at her man-after-God's-heart, who had gotten hers in the deal, too and everything else she had to offer. I felt a contemptible swell of envy and loss and had to think about something else to keep from bawling.

As the preacher started the ceremony with "dearly beloved," I gazed at the baptismal behind him and thought about Lynette, ignoring Shelby and her groom and imagining wicked things, the kinkiness of taking Lynette in the baptismal, how forbidden and exciting and gleeful it would be, the words of my mother, the southern promise, drifting into my mind and seeming so empty and treacherous. I doubted, right then, if I would ever find anything in church and I never felt further separated from religion than at that moment.

It all seemed to pass in no time, like a pack of race cars zipping by on the track, and soon the groom was kissing his bride and the candlelight on their faces like the glow of some spotlight hitting them from above and the sounds of weeping and clapping all around, like the applause of the crowd in the stands watching.

Mark Bankston
English, SR

Matreiya

The Bodhi tree shivers and tastes the wind
And feels in the earth an essential fire
Which shall be quelled at the touch of a mind
That, though still of man, knows nought of desire.

Each cell of the tree burns with hunger pure,
Racing to Entropy's vacuum embrace.
Yet in each there lies to that end a cure:
A smiling man on the nuclei's face.

A molecule spins to Creation's tune,
A burned double helix, of acid made.
From deep within it a voice whispers, "Soon,"
And travels in echoes which will not fade.

In fiery temper all atoms rage,
Kept in a balance too precious for words,
For within each proton a wizened Sage
Holds the electrons in courses, like birds.

Somewhere in mankind a son is now born
Who speaks in the voice of Authority.
His link with his race is firm, not yet shorn,
So he smiles and welcomes humanity.

But soon he will turn his mind to the world,
And bring peace to all that rages and burns,
Set free the Essence in each atom curled
And end the pain for which gross matter yearns.

Kevin Poston
English, GS

Girl Turning

a slipped turn a modified
slip a turned spin on the
echoed floor of the blank
hall scratched the grit in
the sole of her thin boot
cracked in the ankle tendon
a pop in the knee with a spiral
twist in the paper thin velvet
corkscrewing the rubbery
air a rising of the chest
arms out straight in the
trailing gold strands swish
in non-weight and nothing
but the arc of her nose, blurred

Jody Pate
English, JR

Eleanor Poetry Award

Seeds Like Letters on a Page

red on
gold
and green gold
peeks through like
a cheese moon dipped
in cherry kool-aid
struggling to be
what it was

a spout
straw
stuffed on top
(holds flavor--
nature's zip-lock)
flared rim like cartoon
shotguns ready
to fire seeds

in a
child's
hand it sits
round and flat
a handball slammed
too often against
a concrete wall
awkward fruit

a rind
like
old lemon
but slick, hard,
splits with crunching
spills the kool-aid locked
inside--the halves
look sunward

shining
cran-
berry red,
countless seeds
flavor coated
with translucent sweet
lure the children
from boredom

Grandma
knows
small fingers
and young mouths
cause trouble when
time looms too large to
spend--so she grows
pomegranates

*Catherine Preslar
English, SR*

Paranoid Followed Home from Funhouse

Up so high, thinking the moon a streetlight,
He rushes home from a secret plywood shack.
He has to get to bed before he wakes
So he won't stumble and drop what's in his head.

He runs
Through cluttered, slippery alleys,
Splashing through black puddles,
Leaping ragged strays.
The echoes of his footsteps
Lag behind like wary shadows;
He pounds harder
To scare them away.

Yet they catch him as he stops
To please his withered lungs.
They bounce from brick,
Then wait at his heel
Like mastiffs.
He knows if he never stops
They will always follow,
But he chokes air once
Then starts to run
Again.

A lamp glows in his dingy bedroom window.
Mistaking it for sun, he mouths a curse
And shields his varicose eyes.
Knowing he can't cross that glaring white sill
Or rest in the light that's blistered it,
He twitches a smile and crumbles to asphalt
In the shade.

*Vic Odegar
English, SR*

Beat Therapy

Among the scattered relics of my past, there is one article which stands out in my memory. In time I may forget my collection of polished stones and the tomahawk I made while very young, but I shall never forget my first typewriter. One would naturally assume that, as I am a writer, my typewriter would produce my first stumbling attempts at fiction or poetry, but in fact I never used a typewriter until high school. No, my first typewriter was much more than a writing instrument: it served, for a short while, as the conduit of a young boy's soul, and provided much more intense sensations than any mere piece of writing.

I obtained the typewriter when, passing by a local school, I spied the wrecked machine among the garbage. It was a leviathan to my young eyes, a fractured and discarded Grendel staring at me through its square monocle emblazoned with IBM. How could anyone throw out such a marvelously complex, gleaming piece of industrial glory? I ran back to my neighborhood and got several of my friends to help bear its burden, for the electric typewriter seemed heavier and sturdier than my own 8-year-old form. Our trip back to my house would be a story in itself, so I will merely say that soon I had this damaged behemoth in my own room.

It spent an entire week with me, subject to my fitful experimentation. Plugging it in revealed that it would hum steadily, suggesting a potential for powerful delivery which never came. Removing its cover with a screwdriver, I discovered the web of intricacy which formed its core, and also found what kind of mess young boys can make with typewriter ribbon. After a week I made the startling discovery that it actually was broken and would never awaken me one morning with a staccato rhythm of clackity-clack-clack to reveal its resurrection. My interest in it fell immediately, but I was still unwilling to surrender such a wonderfully complicated contraption, whether it worked or not. My mother and I compromised, and it was moved into the woods behind my house.

I placed it on a ramshackle table which I found half-buried in the woods, and for two years these companions served mostly as a landmark to help me and my friends carve our secret, invisible paths through the maze of trees. Pine needles and bird-droppings fell on the typewriter constantly, but I faithfully cleaned it to preserve the integrity of its gears and keys. It was the machine in the garden, the one intrusion upon nature by technology which we young, small, pitiful

excuses for men could muster. It was our indelible mark upon the one little bit of space we boys could call our own. Needless to say, I was quite the hero of my "gang" for providing this inspirational device, but that did not last.

Then came my tenth year. The pleasures of my gang and the woods no longer suited me: I was burning with Twain, Poe, Shakespeare. Shakespeare at ten! These men crafted words as I crafted mud forts, shaped ideas from the very air and spoke across centuries to minds living in places undreamed of even by them. To be a writer, even a poet, became my sole endeavor, but I had no words! A 5th-grader is not given much opportunity to broaden his vocabulary apart from reading the dictionary, and that proved extremely boring. There was a tiger, a beast of fangs and blood and predation struggling to get out of me, but I did not know the words or the right expression to give it form. An entire world slowly built itself up behind my eyes, but I could find no release.

Then I strolled into the woods one day and met my typewriter again. I had not cared for it in a while, but beneath the rust its hammers still smiled at me and its rubber platen would turn under my hands with that familiar grinding-clicking sound. In a small moment of perfect clarity I knew what I had to do. I ran to my garage, found a ballpeen hammer, and returned to my typewriter, armed. There was still one type of expression I had not tried yet, a type shared by all of humanity at all times: violence. Without slowing down and thinking--I was careful not to make this a ritual--I swung the hammer above my head and brought it down heavily on the typewriter.

I can still hear the musical jingle of the first blow, the ringing of the machine's little bell mixing with the rending of metal. The next blows were quick and harsh, and the ring was never again quite as clear and joyful. I continued until one of the table's legs broke and the entire edifice came crashing at my feet, the temple destroyed, the pyramid violated. Breathing heavily, I staggered back to my home, dragging the hammer in the dirt behind me as if to leave a permanent trail to the site. Once I had washed the hammer, I went to my room, sat on my bed, and laughed until I fell asleep.

Since then, I have matured quite a bit more and have fulfilled my ambition. When I look back on this event I can be sure of only one thing: at that time, I did not know what I was doing. So why did I do it? I think it has something to do with neurotic anxiety. Anxiety is formed when the mind is threatened by something, and apart from anxieties made from physical objects or moral difficulties, there are neurotic anxieties which are made for no reason. Something within the brain merely creates the need to worry. And I think there is also a part of the brain which creates the need to heal itself. That is the instinct

which told me to pick up a hammer, and that is the instinct I've been trusting ever since.

Kevin Poston
English, GS

Barnes Poetry Award

Shoeshine

Two dull oxfords rest on a wood-grain stand.
Two quick hands go at them with a cotton rag
That hisses as it erodes a clinging film of white dust.
A wandering rag, this one disturbs the thin laces
And scrapes the Argyle socks.

Two planted oxfords stripped of dust, still dull,
The cylinders of tweed slacks rising from them
Sturdy, brown, and immobile--like twin factory smokestacks,
They await the caress of the other rag,
The spotted rag just dipped

In the thick coffee of the squat, smudged tin.
Balm for dry leather, ointment for scuffs, the oiled
Cloth glides over the skin of one shoe spreading thin its stain,
Visits the tin once more, then coats the other,
Then settles to the ground.

Two coffee oxfords wait for a buffing
From the brisk, soft brush that will raise their color.
A flurry of strokes from the whispering bristles, warming
With friendly friction those two familiar shoes,
Again makes dull the glow.

Vic Odegard
English, SR

The Word of the Sound of the Late Package

in the huge chair
shrunk among obscene flowers
came visions of burning-
something about a plane,
something about a fire.

folding time over on itself the
when becomes now the
soft manilla fiber needles the
smooth square regularity the
physical paper torn with black gloves the
thin hemp rope parting like a vein at the
silver touch of the
patient razor

looking out over the waiting
chance expands into a mazy topography
a funneled mist of probabilities
on the wastes of his face,
the rivers of his eyes

and time always folds back out
like a crumpled straw wrapper
in a drop of water

*Jody Pate
English, JR*

Sea Life

The blue water lapped up the white, gritty sand.
Seagulls called out to everyone as they flew in the blue sky.
Pelicans swallowed the vast sea in search of silvery fish.
The waves formed a bubbly film and pulled at the ocean floor.

Evening came on and the sun was partially hidden behind the
distant waters.
Way out in the depths, octopuses, sea urchins, and barracudas
searched for food.
The seaweed floated on the top of the seawater in massive clumps.
And the last glow of the sun on the water's surface disappeared.

*Linda Odegard
Theatre, FR*

Night Fishing

At 3 a.m. we have been here too long
trying to keep warm with Mexican coffee
and telling stories we half believe
about a rusty hook John pried out of some driftwood.
He tosses a log onto the fire and

there you are
standing on the black water
the fire's red glow licking
the salt off your back
pulling in the errant tide
with your raised spear
you turn and I see her struggling
against the prongs
the light hits her hair her breasts
the scales below her waist
she has a name I can't recall

John grabs my arm, nods toward his pole--
he's caught something.

Karen Holstead-Franzen
English, GS

Each Night I Count the Stars

Who'll be looking out for me,
When I start giving in?
-Robert Earle Keene, Jr.

Rosalita was not the kind of woman used to being the fifth wheel. Neither was I for that matter, though I had been the fifth wheel often enough that I should be used to it by now.

I had finished putting up my tent when I first saw her. Arthur and Julia and I were sitting on the picnic table the state park was kind enough to provide, along with a view of the skyline of Lamar, Texas (pop. 841, plus the inmates at the booby hatch).

We felt that a week in the wilderness was just the cure for the frazzled nerves produced prior to spring break. Getting back to nature would provide the peace, solitude and isolation required to properly reflect on the paths our lives were taking.

Instead, we got a state park teeming with campers and filled with old people and their infant grandchildren. And Rosalita.

She didn't have a great face, or great tits, or even a great personality, but for a week I was as close to Aphrodite as any man will ever get outside a Women's Lit class. I don't know exactly what to call it, and whatever I called it would be cliched, but she had something that made her completely irresistible for six days.

Or maybe I had something irresistible about me for six days. It doesn't really matter now I suppose.

I first noticed her when the camper backed into the parking space next to ours (the fact that we had parking spaces shows how utterly we failed to escape civilization). It was one of those campers that expands when you crank it, and it was pulled by a red Tarus station wagon. As we watched from our perch on the table, a couple in their mid-thirties tumbled out of the station wagon followed by a child who appeared to be too young and stupid to have learned his alphabet.

Then Rosalita came out. The faded jeans she wore were rolled up to just above the ankle and were almost, but not quite, baggy. They did a supreme job of showing off her ass. Her T-shirt said something in Spanish and was big enough to give just a hint of rounded breasts.

Her walk was spectacular. She glided over the campsite, like a pebble skipping on water. I watched her unabashedly as they set up camp; when she bent over to get a drink out of the cooler, my breathing stopped.

As she turned and tipped the can to her lips, I caught my first look at her face. It was framed by long black hair that fell halfway down

her back. Her eyes were as black as the fur of a Labrador, I could detect no pupils, only reflected light. Her nose curved upward gently, and her lips were red and full, contrasting with her brown skin.

As she brought the drink down, she saw me looking at her. She smiled gently, but not shyly. I tried to smile back, but I had a large dip of snuff in my lip, and could only grimace without making her think I had no teeth.

After Rosalita cranked up her trailer, she went inside with her family, and I turned my attention to setting up our own campsite, where Arthur and Julia were setting up the green Coleman stove for dinner.

After dinner, I went for a walk to give Arthur and Julia some time alone. I wasn't exactly a walk into the jungle. The road was paved, the path lighted sporadically by electric lights.

As I passed one trailer, I heard the distinctive sound of rubber soles squeaking on a wooden floor and the muffled roar of an excited crowd. I was slow to recognize the sounds as I stood still with my head cocked in the direction the sounds were coming from. Then I heard a whistle, and I realized that someone was watching basketball.

I stoped at the trailer and watched the first round games of the NCAA basketball tournament on the TV and satellite this old couple had hooked up to the Honda generator. I swear to God I am not making this up. I caught the end of Memphis State's upset of Arkansas. I had picked the Razorbacks to go to the finals, so for the tenth year in a row, I was eliminated in the family pool before the first round was over.

The temperature had dropped drastically, leaving a strong nip in the air. When I returned to the campsite, Arthur and Julia had built a fire, and our new neighbors were sitting around it.

I froze for a moment. This was not a scenario I had invisioned. If I had wanted to screw women I would never see again, then I would have gone to Padre with the rest of my friends. I really did not want to have to deal with any women at all.

I hung back in the shadows, eavesdropping basically, where they could not see me. The fire was throwing weird shadows onto everyone's face.

Arthur was talking to Rosalita, who held the boy on her lap. I could make out just enough of the conversation to tell they were talking about someone who wasn't there, probably me.

I was facing Rosalita, and the fire was reflected in her eyes. I was caught, mesmerized like a squirrel facing a rattlesnake. Her eyes gave off pictures deep in her soul, past her life, into some cavernous history that I could not comprehend. Like me, she was without a mate for the week, but unlike me, she was not alone. She had a history behind her and a future in front of her guided by that history.

She was in the light, holding her nephew, relaxed, talking, listening and laughing with her new friends. I hung back in the shadows just observing, not wanting to be seen. I was scared of what lay before me in the light.

I suppose I only stood there for about five minutes, but I think I fell a little bit in love with Rosalita while I hung out in the shadows. I knew, or rather, I sensed that I could not stand there alone all night. I would either have to go back to my tent, in which case I would be acting rudely, or join the circle around the fire.

I stepped on a twig as I moved toward them, and everyone jumped in surprise. As I exited my shadow world, Rosalita was the first one who recognized me as a human, and not a wild animal intent on having a free buffet. She smiled at me, the fire reflected off her white teeth, making her face brighter than the light thrown from the burning wood, and said, "You must be Robert."

Except she didn't say "Robert", she said "Roberto". She had a soft Spanish accent which made everything she said roll gracefully off the tongue.

Free of the self-consciousness caused by worm-dirt in the mouth, I showed her two-thousand dollars worth of orthodontic work and replied coolly (or so I thought), "Yes. I'm Roberto. You must be my divine hallucination for the evening."

She gave me what I thought at the time was a flirtacious look, but was probably the same look she'd give to a man with two heads. I walked past her and around the fire where I sat at the end of the log Arthur and Julia were sharing.

As I looked past the couple sitting next to Rosalita and stared shamelessly into her eyes, I could hear Arthur making the introductions.

"Robert Stephens," he said motioning to the bearded man across the fire sitting next to the middle aged woman, "this is Jerry Simpson, his wife Margurite, their son Sonny Raul, and you've already met Margurite's sister Rosalita Garcia."

I started to reach across the fire to shake Jerry's hand, but I stumbled. When I put my hand down to catch myself, it landed on a glowing wood chip.

"Shit!" I completely ignore the presence of young Raul. "Oh Fuck."

I held my left hand at my belt buckle trying to ease the burning by squeezing it into a fist and pressing it with my right, while bringing my knees together and bending at the waste.

"Are you all right?" was asked by everyone at the campsite except Rosalita and Sonny.

"Let me see it," Julia said, and grabbed my wrist. The motion only intensified the burning.

"Jesus Christ," I exclaimed, finally opening my hand to let Julia inspect the damage.

"Looks pretty bad Bobby," she said, shaking her head. "I'll get some butter."

"No," came a softly urgent voice from the dark. "Butter is bad." It was Rosalita. "I've got some ice," she lilted. "We need to put that on it to lower the skin temperature."

She took my hand from Julia and laid two or three pieces of ice in it, closing my fist over it. Her hands felt soft and warm, despite the ice she had been holding and the heat in my own charred skin.

"Hold this in your hand," she purred. "The burn doesn't look too bad, but it will be very painful."

"How do you know so much about this?" I asked.

"I am a nurse."

"Well that's very good," I thought aloud, "I think I need to be nursed."

She brushed a loose strand of shining hair behind her ear and smiled, more demurely than she had at the campfire, then lowered her gaze to the damaged organ.

"I think you will live," she said in a clinically caustic tone. Then softening her voice and smiling she said, "It will be very painful tonight though."

After giving me instructions on how to wrap my wound, she patted my hand and said, "If it keeps you from sleeping, just knock on our door and I'll see what I can do." She gave me a wink, then turned and picked up the child hiding behind her and started to glide off.

"Hey Sonny," I said, "don't let me catch you saying any of those words I said."

Rosalita turned and grinned at me, then disappeared into the shadows.

The night was bitterly cold. I snuggled as deep into my sleeping bag as possible, but this only immobilized me, too fearful to move, lest I allow my body to come into contact with a pocket of cold air. Of course I became uncomfortably warm inside the heavy sleeping bag, and began to feel the first pangs of claustrophobia. Once again I was hung up in no man's land, without a choice of a comforting choice.

I was awakened for the final time by a horrible gurgling roar coming from outside my tent at about 6 a.m. Never being the type to believe that discretion is the better part of valor, I ventured outside to investigate. It was already a gray day, and it didn't appear that it was going to get any better. There in the gloom, I saw two huge Airstream trailers parked at the exit to our camping site. An elderly husband and wife, the Henderson's was the name on the spare

tire of the blue and silver Suburban, were hooking up a hose to the back of the trailer with the other end sticking somewhere in the ground.

When the Hendersons finished dumping their refuse, they pulled out and the Fulkersons of Bandara, Tx. pulled up and repeated the process. After the Fulkersons pulled out, two more blue and silver Suburbans lugged their silver campers up to the hook-up and the process started all over, always two at a time, like Noah had decided to take old farts who liked electricity in the outdoors with him. After watching about three pairs purify their environment, while destroying ours, I decided to risk the walk through the wilderness to the shower house.

The morning was still fighting with the night for supremacy, and the ground was hard to see. In the back of my mind I was afraid of stepping on a snake, but it was too cold for that.

The shower house was not the cleanest place I had ever bathed. There were spiders on the walls, and the floor was slimy and cold. The shower curtain was mildewed, and the building was unheated. I turned on the hot water full blast and was surprised when the water that sprayed forth was actually hot.

As I stepped into the warm stream, coming from a shower head that was at chest level, the soreness from sleeping on the ground began to slowly ease out of my body. I picked up a piece of soap from the floor (how dirty can soap get) and began to lather my body. I rolled my head from side to side and felt my neck crack.

Before I could reach for my shampoo, the water had already begun to cool. By the time I had a good lather worked up in my hair, the water was as cold as the air outside. I hastily rinsed my hair and turned off the water with some soap still on my body. As I stepped over the raised tile that marked the edge of the shower and reached for my towel, I slipped on the slimy floor and fell hard on the concrete.

I was unhurt, except for my pride. I remained sitting on the floor for a few moments, just feeling sorry for myself, until I heard the door open and someone else enter the bathhouse. I pulled myself up gingerly and began to dress.

When I got back to the campsite, Arthur and Julia were up and were kneeling by the campfire. Arthur was holding a pan over the fire, shaking it as if he was panning for gold. The smell of sizzling bacon greeted me as the wind shifted into my face.

"Breakfast isn't ready yet?" I asked Julia. "Come on Julia, don't you know that your job is to get breakfast ready on time, woman?"

Julia's blue eyes grew dark as she spat an "Eat Shit" at me. Arthur just laughed. Since he and Julia have been engaged, he is afraid to express his chauvinism.

I reached into the sizzling pan and pulled out a limp piece of bacon, juggling it between two hands so I wouldn't burn myself. As I put it into my mouth, I heard a soft, lilting "good morning."

I turned around and saw Rosalita, just out of bed. She smiled shyly at me and rubbed the sleep from her eyes. For my part, all I could do was make obscene sounding noises as I sucked in to keep the hot bacon from burning my mouth.

"Guh morin," I said, trying to suck bacon grease off my chin.

Rosalita kind of pulled her head backwards and tilted it to the side. "Hi," she said, with a softness that had been absent the night before. There were dark circles under her eyes that softened her appearance.

I motioned to the pan Arthur was still holding and asked her,

"Wan som bwefas?"

"No," she smiled again, "I'm not much of a morning eater. How is your hand?"

I had almost forgotten about the burn. "It's doing much better, thank you.

"It looks like you are going to burn you mouth this time."

"I'm used to getting burned. I guess I'm just a klutz."

"Maybe you just have a short attention span," she was grinning at me now. "They say that accidents are a sign of that."

"It's probably," I grinned back at her. "What were we talking about again?"

She laughed quietly, then looked at her toe and brushed a wisp of hair behind her ear. Behind me I heard a throat clear.

"Excuse me," it was Julia. "I'm sorry to interrupt this primitive mating ritual, but I could use some help cleaning up."

I felt my face begin to burn as the blood rushed to my cheeks. I wonder what causes blushing? I'm sure there is a scientific explanation for why blood collects in the face when we are embarrassed, but what is the function of such a feeling?

Rosalita was not blushing, though I probably would not have been able to tell if her copper skin had reddened. "I'm sorry Julia," she said. She turned to walk off, then stopped and turned back toward us, making a 180 with an amazing amount of grace.

"Julia," she called out, "does he really do dishes?"

Julia, helpful as always, smiled and said, "Only when you make him. Otherwise he would wait for porcelain plates to biodegrade on the kitchen table."

I raised an eyebrow at Julia and then turned to begin to clean up the campsite, while Rosalita went to check on her nephew.

After we finished with the dishes, Arthur and Julia decided to go into town and look at the antique stores. I deftly declined their

offer to accompany them, citing the need to do some reading for the return to class.

Arthur gave me a desperate look, and Julia glared at him. They had only known each other for four months, and they were already engaged. They made a good couple. They already acted as though they had been married for fifty years.

I shivered and zipped up my beaten up leather jacket as I watched Arthur and Julia pull off in Julia's big four-wheel drive truck. She cruised slowly until she made the turn out of the parking lot for our camping area, then gunned the engine to a roar as she sped down the road that led out of the park.

I was alone again.

I ducked into my tent and pulled my copy of Song of Solomon out of my backpack. I stuffed it into my jacket pocket and walked to the wooden picnic bench and sat down. I pulled the book out again, but I didn't open it. Instead, I stared out into the trees, not even knowing what I was looking for. Later I thought of how the shadows, which had put on such a show the night before, were completely absent in the gray light of the overcast day. In my memory, everything is shrouded in a mist, even though it wasn't foggy.

Finally I pulled out the book. I was at the part where Pilate goes back to Virginia to find her past. At first I didn't really read it, but just skimmed the surface. In my mind I was somewhere else. I think it may have been Scotland, or Tennessee, but I don't know for sure.

At the time I was about to focus totally on the book in front of me, I felt a light touch on my shoulder. She was standing behind me and to my right with young Sonny in her arms, though I didn't notice him at first. I turned and looked into Rosalita's eyes. For the first time, she wasn't smiling behind them. There was no fire reflected in them, only a deep abyss that pulled me in. The force with which they pulled was so strong even light could not escape.

"You want some company?"

"Sure."

"What are you reading?"

"Here, take a look."

"Song of Solomon." What's it about?"

"A black kid finding his roots, basically."

"I thought James Earl Jones wrote that."

"No that was the book Roots. And James Earl Jones played the author in the movie. Alex Haley wrote it; it was supposed to be a true story."

"It is good, yes?"

"Yes."

We sat there in silence for a moment. Sonny began to squirm, so she let him go run off with his ball. Rosalita put one elbow on the table and rested her cheek on her palm. I laughed at the way it scrunched up her face.

"What?"

"You look funny."

"Why?"

"Half of your face is fat, and the other half looks like it has been lifted more than Joan River's."

"Stop it." She slapped me lightly on the arm.

"Stop what?"

"Making fun of me."

"I'm not making fun of you."

"Yes you are."

"I'm merely making an observation of the unique contortions of your face when you are in that position."

"Huh?"

"I was making fun of you."

"Rosa! Look what I can do!" Sonny was spinning around in circles, then falling down.

"That's cool man. When you get older you'll have to drink to be able to do that."

"Don't teach him that. It's bad enough that you taught him to cuss."

"Shit!"

"Sonny, what did I tell you about using those words?"

"I told him I was going to spank him."

"You should."

"No, I should spank you instead."

"Heeeyy. Would you please?"

"I beg your pardon."

"I'm sorry. I don't even know what that means."

"Yeah, I'll bet."

I did my best to look sheepish, and I guess I succeed because she started talking to me after watching Sonny spin around like an idiot for several minutes.

"You are in college, yes?"

"Yes."

"What is your major?"

"English."

"What do you want to do with that?"

"Win the Nobel Prize for Literature and be the voice of my generation."

"What about your friends?"

"Well Julia is a poet. Arthur wants to write the Great American Novel."

"Why don't you write the Great American Novel?"

"I don't think there is one."

She grew quiet again, and I began to feel a little nervous. I looked back to Sonny, who was now poking a stick into the ground.

He was probably playing with ants. I didn't really care.

I looked back at Rosalita. Her hands were folded on the table in front of her. I reached out and brushed the ubiquitous strand of hair back behind her ear. She turned toward me and I let my hand stay on her head a split second longer than was polite, if fixing a strange girls hair is polite at all.

"Do you have a girlfriend?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"She left me."

"Why."

"I don't know."

"Maybe that is why."

"What about you?"

"I haven't found the right doctor yet."

"Where are you from?"

"The valley. My parents swam the Rio Grande." She was smiling. "I live in Dallas now."

"Do you live with your sister?"

"No. They still live in Harlingen. They came to visit me and we decided to go camping."

"It's as good a way as any to kill a weekend I suppose."

"It beats dodging the drive-bys."

"It sure does." I smiled weakly. Her eyes were pulling me in again. "May I kiss you?" I was the first time in my life that I had ever asked permission.

"Why?"

"Because the urge hit me?"

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Yes."

I leaned over and just barely touched her lips with mine. The first contact was soft yet dry. I pulled back a fraction of an inch, breaking contact for an instant to wet my lips. I tried to make my lips as soft as hers. She tasted a bit like Scope. Her mouth was pliable and inviting. She slipped just a bit of her tongue in my mouth, but withdrew quickly.

Then the horn honked.

Fire has fascinated me since I was a child. When I look at it, I am carried away to another realm. I know that's corny and cliched, but I don't know any other way to put it. She came to our campfire alone that night, after Sonny had gone to bed. I was sitting around it with Arthur and Julia, just staring at the flames.

She didn't say anything but just crawled under the blanket covering me and cuddled up to my body, laying her head on my shoulder. She was warm, very warm. Her hand found mine, and we stayed there for a while, watching the fire.

Julia started some small talk, waiting to see if Rosalita and I would sneak off together. We managed to wait her out, with the help of Arthur's need for sixteen hours of sleep per day.

She spent the night in my tent. All I can say is that she was everything I thought she'd be, and then more. That's cliched too, but being with her was a totally new experience. For one thing it didn't feel dirty. She knew that sex was a good thing, and she wasn't ashamed of it. I guess her attitude rubbed off on me. She was, and I guess she still is, special.

They left early the next morning. She said good-bye, but refused to exchange addresses and phone numbers. "That never works out," she said. She was, of course, right.

I watched the station wagon pull over the hill into the sunrise. After they were out of sight, I began taking down my tent for the drive home in the opposite direction.

When Arthur and Julia dropped me off at my apartment that afternoon, they asked if I had a good time. They hadn't mentioned a word about Rosalita the entire trip back. I gave Julia a skeptical look, then smiled.

"Yes I did," I was genuinely surprised. "Let's do it again next year."

Micheal Wright
English, SR

Rowe Poetry Award

Honey Island, 1925 (the birth of my grandfather)

he looked out the sliding wooden window
sad eyed at the passing of april. the vapor
hung to his face the rain pounded the rubbery
thicket leaves one step from the house. the rain
hid the tiny sycamore except for a faint image of
growing. his wavy hair turned the green light
in the wood boxed room. a scream in the back room
pulled his mouth tight at the corners. his hands
troubled the cotton overall pants in bunches.
he winced at a scream of passing time he breathed
the wet full air his eyes were black wet pine bark.
the clouds in the west were tense. they thickened
his blood to sap. he saw four grey snakes in the yard
searching for a darkness. ants bunched on flotsam
with a buzz. crawfish castles crumbled in streams
of rainwater. his eyes rolled up and around
in the dark wooden room. the tiny voice of god
screamed in the back room. he shut the window
and turned. the rain knocked to be let in.

Jody Pate
English, JR

The Back Room

Let the doctor define The Doctor
And you shall hear of Hipocrates,
Of Galen and Schweitzer and Salk.

The bloody work of the back room,
With slippery fingers fumbling through hot organs
And the knife turned wrong and far too quick,
Shall not be mentioned.

Let the lawyer define The Lawyer
And you shall hear of Hamurabi,
Of Corpus Juris and Henry II.

The numbness of the researching mind,
The cold calculation behind the smile
And the evil intent behind neutral words,
Shall not be mentioned.

Let the soldier define The Soldier
And you shall hear of Alexander,
Of Sun Tzu and Bonaparte and Patton.

The gut-rending sickness more deadly than knives,
The frozen fear brought by fires in the night
And boredom that makes one hunger for blood,
Shall not be mentioned.

Let the poet define The Poet
And you shall hear of Shakespeare,
Of Homer and Li Po and Pound.

The 2:00 AM horror of emptiness,
With the burning surety of never continuing
And the prayer for help to the Muse and Id,
Shall not be mentioned.

Kevin Poston
English, GS

The Blind Woman

the openings in her eyes filled up at sunrise
each twin beam picked a blade of grass to wither
out of her dry mouth moved the sound of mirrors,
assembling thoughts in the ore of light

mirrors that bent inward upon themselves,
curling to spheres of inward darkness,
until the twin, both of them, were her eyes

and from the cavern of her head
they rolled ponderously toward the light
of the sun, the beaches of her dry lips,
to hear and collect

Jody Pate
English, JR

Black and Red

IMAGE I

sunlight shatters
night
to black shards which fall upon the grass
and cut my feet
as I walk
in the aftermath of dawn.

IMAGE III

sweat trickles down her breast
a tiny bead
rolling
between to disappear
behind fabric my teeth
could easily tear.

*Carey Foster
Computer Science, GS*

As he stepped off the porch and into the front yard, he felt the weight of the world topple from his shoulders. Blades of grass stabbed up between his toes, and he strolled unhurriedly to prolong the feeling. The sun had been dead for a long time, so he gave the moon his best smile and continued to look at it instead of where he was going. He knew this hill well, knew every tricky gopher hole and rain-ditch, so he felt that he could ignore the ground.

The night air leeches into him, not just into his lungs but through his pores; every hair was alive to Luna's influence. The moonlight invaded everything within his gaze, quite blinding him to the pitiful sparkling of the stars. The white light picked out individual leaves of the trees around him, lived in the grooves of the tree bark, touched certain blessed blades of grass, and damned the rest of the world to ignorant darkness.

Just for a change, he looked into the darkness and saw the light as a shadow of its black brilliance. He felt at first as if there was an intelligence looking back at him, a mind of black with far too much knowledge, but he scoffed at that idea. The night was merely a mirror for his own mind, which was already spinning too quickly, and he was made aware again of the weight on his shoulders, of the responsibility waiting back at the house. Now the darkness laughed at him, taunted him with its own freedom.

He shook off his thoughts and leapt forward, striving to join the ebony air around him and escape the necessity of thinking. This, he realized, is what the darkness truly is. A blank area of the world free from structure and number, amorphous and unrealized and totally satisfied to be a desert of the mind. A laugh broke from him as he clawed the ground, attempting to make his grave in the night, to seal himself up in its frozen embrace. But then he saw his hands.

His arms were outlined by the moonlight, showing the impotence of the light when it attempted to slash its way into the realm of darkness, but the hands were enshrouded in jet numbness. His fingertips held the solid meat of the night, a pungent mass of the dark's ground bones and flesh: obviously the soil he had been digging in. But his palms were covered in an inky substance which he could not explain. It had even splattered onto his arms, and the moonlight, in its illuminated weakness, could not penetrate it and bring forth a color to his eyes. It remained a purely black mystery, covering his hands and greeting his nose with a sickly-familiar smell, and he began to think that it was connected in some way with the thinking, the feeling, the burden

of responsibility waiting behind him. As such, of course, it was to be avoided and ignored for as long as possible. Tonight, the dark owned him.

Then he saw a flash of red in the corner of his eye and spun around to face it. The red now dominated, a force as powerful as the blackness and the moonlight, and he had no choice but to surrender to it. So, this was "thought," this red passion which burned through his body, this confusion which overwhelmed all of his other senses. He walked slowly, winding his way without a care back to the house. The red was now scaring him, burning away the essence of the night air which had soaked into his flesh.

The black was also gone, as it must ever retreat before the red forces of rationality. He would not admit to actually missing the darkness, for it now held no place within his mind, but he still knew that it had been the better experience. With the red in his thoughts he was suddenly assaulted with memories and images flashing before him, using the night as a projection screen. There was a house in poor condition, a man who moved and spoke in violence, a woman screaming at him, a blinding white light which carried with it a ripping sound, and a taste of metal. This was all too muddled and obscure to him--the black had been much more comforting.

Yet he had little hope of escape. The crimson pounded over him like waves, carrying powerful thoughts which slowly rebuilt his character, reconstructed what the darkness had claimed. As he looked down the hill toward the house, he saw the source of the red and knew a quick moment of fear. But that illumination could not soon stand before the commanding presence of the bloody, insistent light. And with that word, "bloody," he also recalled suddenly that the source of the red was another strange word, "police." He still felt far too confused to understand what the word meant, but hoping for the best, he stepped off the hill to meet the strange new men waiting for him beside his house.

Kevin Poston
English, GS

The Pioneer

walked toward the sun's home
always, always
the old man moved between breaths
sometimes, always
the dark blue moon pressed him down
onto the shoulder like a specimen
occasionally he moved past the moon,
but he never caught up with the sun

in the summer he walked toward vacation
always pulling behind him the end of a rope--
not the beginning--the end, as if something
were pulling him forward, from behind
and he stumbled toward vacation with a vengeance

the moon fell from the sky one night
as he walked, and filled a glass with itself.
the old man felt compelled to drink the moon.
he dreamed: i'm playing in the road with a dog
without the road, without the dog,
i'm carrying the space previously occupied
by the road and the dog on my back

the old man walked always west, to the sun's home,
muttering to himself
the name of the game is attraction
gravitation mutual indifference
sexual dime's depreciated to nine cents
the name of the game is one, two, three.
the name of the game is the road.

Jody Pate
English, JR

The Brown Rooster

The water froths pink
as she cleanses her hands
of her bloody business.

The brown rooster fought
with a fury that said
that it expected to win.

It had grown too old
and ruled the yard far too long
to give its killer an easy victory.

Its single-lensed eye
blinked in surprise to see
its headless body leap and twist.

She holds no anger
but rather admires him
for giving her a good scrap.

The prize of its heart
will not go to her lazy dogs
but be taken by her.

The scars on her hands
will forever mark this day
of hate and blood and hunger.

The rooster's children
will note them with pleasure
while pecking corn from her palm.

Kevin Poston
English, GS

de Schweinitz Poetry Award

Callus Sensibility

A taut hand grips a maple neck;
Palm sticks to laminate with sweat.
The rosewood board is burnished,
So long an anvil for the fingers
That hammer six silver strings
Against nickel frets,
Bending metal into song.

Somehow fingertips callused into leather
Are not dead to texture:
Four fingers writhe up then down the neck
Through glass Aeolian, spongy Lydian,
Silk Ionian, sandy Phrygian.
Flitting string to string, fret to fret,
They feel every melody
That thickens their skin.

Vic Odegard
English, SR

**The Word of the Sound
of the Missed Chance**

my eyes whirled into the distance
when your tired example sped past

i tried to find the sound of a new word
for love in the well, that the moon
is in the top and bottom of

but the mumbles of trying spun like
falling dead leaves on the backs of my eyes
reflecting the gleaming water

the futility swelled in my throat
like a huge oak in a tiny tight acorn

*Jody Pate
English, JR*

The sunlight teases me back into the garden
and I remember Adam
feigning sleep beneath the Dum Dum tree,
watching me surreptitiously,
feeling a new kind of power
because he hears voices in his head.

The neighbor's cat avoids the lying Adam,
pulls close against my legs.
A leaf drops from the tree,
reminds me of some crazy dream
as Adam walks toward me with an apple.

*Karen Holstead-Franzen
English, GS*

Emotional Chaos

sudden weariness
 sleep calls
 heavy yawn
buried in ice dreams
 heavy blanket
snow and blind white

the dream cracks from
 one hot tear
then melts
 everything melts

drowning now
 floating hair
 flailing arms
 thrashing legs
struggling to be free

and rage
 and more rage
confused panic
 no dramatic breakthrough
 no horrific death scene
just sinking
 sinking

into another

*Catherine Preslar
English, SR*

What Bob Found On the Side Of the Road

It wasn't the thumb but the sky that made Bob Gray pull to the side of the road. The sky looked black and purple and mean--like it really wanted to rain on somebody. So he waited patiently for the hitchhiker trudging along the rocky shoulder toward his car.

As he studied her in his rearview mirror, Bob hoped she could hold a decent conversation. A hitchhiker wasn't his idea of a great companion, but she might help him take his mind off where he was going. Of course, even if she didn't have anything to say, Bob didn't mind picking her up. She obviously needed help. Bob pulled out his wallet and leafed through the bills to see how much he had to spare. As he decided on ten dollars, a thunderclap rumbled through the air, and the first drops of rain dotted his windshield. He mentally patted himself on the back for his timing, then smoothed his thinning brown hair as he glanced in the mirror again.

She looked about nineteen. Bob thought her eyes probably made her look older, but long strands of straight black hair obscured them. Her clothes were what really told her story. They were a shade darker than they should have been, as if she'd been on the highway so long the exhaust fumes had saturated her clothes and turned them gray. Her skin looked similarly affected--pale but with an off-white tint. She looked like she'd been living on carbon monoxide.

Yet something came from underneath all that drabness. She had a rather exaggerated step--high and proud, perhaps even pompous. Her head was high, tilted back just a bit, and she held her body stiff and straight.

The girl stepped up to the passenger side, and Bob reached over and opened the door for her. "Hi," he said as she climbed in. He smiled. "My name's Bob Gray."

The girl closed the door as she settled into the passenger seat then unzipped her stained and tattered bag. It was stuffed with packages of cigarettes--not just three or four packs, nor a mere nine or ten. At least three dozen packs bulged the sides of that bag.

Bob stared at the bag as he accelerated down the shoulder and pulled onto the highway. As he adjusted to the traffic flow, he realized the girl was going to smoke, so he glanced at her and cleared his throat. He kept a smile on his face, so the cough came out more like a hoarse laugh. The girl didn't appear to notice either way. She punched in the car's lighter, its sharp click a foreign sound to Bob. Bob coughed again.

The girl ignored him as she lit her cigarette and took a drag. She casually tossed her bag to her feet without bothering to zip it up.

She was beginning to look at home. Bob coughed once more, quite loudly, like a patient in a TB ward.

The girl looked at him this time. "Oh, sorry, don't know where my manners are today," she said, pushing her long, greasy bangs out of her eyes. Despite the bags underneath them, the girl's eyes didn't make her look old. In fact, they looked playful.

The girl drew another cigarette from the pack she'd set on the dashboard and lit it. "Thanks for picking me up." She held the cigarette under Bob's nose.

"What? No--no!" he sputtered. He grabbed the cigarette and tried to throw it out the window, which was closed. The cigarette bounced off the glass with a puff of sparks and landed in Bob's lap. He frantically groped with his right hand, found a point of red heat, clenched, and tossed the cigarette over his shoulder.

"I don't smoke," he muttered. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

The girl turned to the back seat and picked up the rejected cigarette, then retrieved her own from where she'd set it on the dashboard and put both between her thin, dark lips. "Never seen anyone so scared of a smoke," she mumbled.

Bob stared out the window and sighed. "So, where you headed?" he asked.

The girl took the cigarettes from her mouth, exhaled a stream of smoke. She shrugged. "I don't know, Bobby. Where are you going?"

Bob narrowed his eyes a bit. "I'm going to Shreveport. My name's Bob, incidentally. What's yours?"

The girl tugged at her chin, scratched her head, squinted. "Hmmm. That's a tough one--Bob." She arched her eyebrows as she said his name. "Don't worry, though. I've got plenty of time to figure it out." She flicked at some ashes that had fallen to her leg. "It's a long way to Shreveport."

Bob ground his teeth. "Yeah, it is, isn't it?"

"Aw come on." She slapped his shoulder. "Don't you like mysteries--Bob?"

Bob rubbed the bridge of his nose and sighed. "Love them."

"I knew it." She took a puff from her cigarettes and blew a smoke ring. "You like root beer?" The girl reached into her bag, pulled out a can, and held it up.

"No."

She popped open the can, took a sip, then held the can toward Bob. "You sure?"

"Yes."

Bob hunched over the steering wheel and listened to the thunk-thunk of his windshield wipers and shallowly breathed the cloudy

air and wondered if he should try to get rid of Jane Doe before he died of smoke inhalation.

"Hey, I know!" the girl said, snapping her fingers. "I'll try to solve your mystery!"

Bob rubbed his watering eyes and looked at the girl.

"Why is--Bob--going to Shreveport?" She took a gulp of root beer, swished with it, and swallowed, then glanced around. "Not much to go on. You travel light. Not staying overnight?"

Bob sighed. "Unfortunately, yes." He gestured toward the back of the car. "I do have a trunk."

"Oh, right. Of course. Well that makes it tough." She frowned, took a drag off her cigarettes, exhaled. "Business?"

Bob shook his head no.

"Religious pilgrimage?"

Bob gave her a sidelong glance, shook his head again.

"Shreveport's First Baptist Church is having its annual bake sale." She paused and pointed at Bob. "An event you never miss."

Bob turned and stared at her a moment before shaking his head again.

"Your on a mission for the government."

Another glance, another shake of the head.

"Right. That would be business, I guess." She sipped some more root beer. Her face brightened as she swallowed. "You're moving there."

"No."

The girl sighed and shook her head. "This isn't working. I guess I'll just have to watch you for a while. Maybe you'll give yourself away." She slowly leaned toward Bob until he could feel her smoky breath on his cheek. "I'll keep an eye on you and I'll figure you out," she said in a low voice. "In fact, maybe I'll keep two on you." She winked. "Nah, one's better."

Bob opened his mouth to ask the girl what she was doing, but no words would come out. His mouth was dry. His palms were wet. He licked his lips then tried to speak again. Still no good. He locked his eyes on the road.

The girl leaned closer and put her hand on his knee. His leg twitched at her touch, making the speedometer needle jerk from sixty-five to seventy. He glanced at her quickly, his head snapping stiffly to the side then back.

"Sorry I have to watch so close, Bob, but I'm nearsighted." She gently stroked his cheek. Her fingers were cool and soft against his burning face.

Bob coughed.

The girl leaned still closer and lowered her voice to a whisper. "What would you do if I was blind?"

Bob had to strain to get his mouth open again. "A wedding, all right? I'm going to a wedding."

The girl slouched back into her seat with a snort. "I knew I could figure you out." She took a gulp of root beer.

Bob stared at the white stripes flitting by on the road and tightly gripped the steering wheel. He was trying to ease the car back down to sixty-five, but his leg seemed to be paralyzed.

The girl rubbed her chin. "A wedding, huh? Geez, that's too bad. I wonder how many hearts will be broken when it's all over."

Bob took one hand from the steering wheel and wiped it on his pants leg. "What?"

"Had to happen sometime, though. I mean--" She fell silent and gazed at Bob a moment, then slowly nodded her head. Bob started to ask what she was mumbling and nodding about, but decided he didn't want to know. He silently stared at the road.

"So, who's the lucky girl?"

He squinted at her. She was holding her chin with one hand, and her head was tilted to the side. "What?"

She let go of her chin to turn up the palm of her hand. "Who'll be walking down the aisle?"

"Oh." He smiled to make it seem that talking about the event pleased him. "My niece."

The girl's face crinkled. "Your niece? Isn't that illegal, Bob? Or is that why you're going to Shreveport? Do they still allow that in Louisiana?"

Bob squinted again. "What?"

"Well, don't take offense, Bob. Hey, you've got my blessing. You just surprised me there. I mean, you pretty much seem like a by-the-book kind of guy to me. You know--you don't exactly look like the Jerry Lee Lewis type. Of course, maybe it's just your hair." Her face crinkled again. "She's not thirteen, is she?"

Bob sighed heavily and slowly shook his head as he wondered how he could get to the bottom of this girl's nonsense questions. "I haven't got the slightest idea what you're talking about."

She smirked and threw up her hands. "Your niece, Bob--you did just tell me you were marrying her, didn't you?"

Bob rolled his eyes. "For god's sake--no! Where'd you get that idea?"

The girl put one hand to her heart. "Don't do that to me, Bob." She ran her fingers through her hair and sighed.

"I didn't say 'my' wedding. I said 'a' wedding." He shook his head and frowned. "I can't even stand that little brat."

This time the girl squinted. "Uh, Bob my dear, can I ask you a question? Why are you driving hundreds of miles to a little brat's

wedding? And why do you hate her anyway? What's the little brat ever done to you?"

Bob was silent a moment. Now that he finally knew what the girl was talking about, he wanted to get off the subject. He massaged his sweaty forehead with one hand as he started to speak. "I'm going because if I didn't, my sister would never let me hear the end of it. I hate my niece because she's my sister's daughter. Okay?"

The girl shrugged and turned up her palms. "Okay, whatever you say, Bob." She shook her head, then thumbed open the empty ashtray beneath the radio and tapped the ashes from her cigarettes. She stared ahead silently as if in deep thought. Bob hoped she would stay that way for a while. Maybe she'd get bored and ask to be let out. Unfortunately, it was a big maybe: the rain was still hammering on the windshield. So boredom might actually be dangerous--she probably had ways of dealing with it that Bob would just as soon not know about.

Bob glanced at her bag, leaking its contents onto the floor of his car. "So, do you live on those things or what?"

The girl put her two stubs in the ashtray then took another cigarette from the pack on the dash. "I don't know. What do you live on--Bob?" She punched in the lighter and smirked.

Bob forced a smile onto his face and tried to laugh, but it came out more like a cough. "I live on food myself. Heard of it?"

"You're a riot, Bob. You remind me of Robin Williams." She grabbed the can of root beer from where she'd set it on the console. She finished it off as she waited for the lighter to pop. "Can we stop somewhere," she said, tossing the empty can to the floor. "I need to go."

"Yeah, sure. Should be a rest area up ahead."

Bob sat waiting in his car outside the rest stop's facilities a good while before he began to wonder why he was waiting. He looked at his watch. The girl had been gone twenty minutes. He'd been waiting for a stranger--a rather strange stranger--for twenty minutes. He'd been trying to figure out how to get rid of this girl almost since he'd picked her up. So why hadn't he left? Because she needed a ride? Because he enjoyed her company? Because he was an idiot? Because her bag was still sitting on the floor of his car?

Bob looked at her bag. He scratched his chin as he began to wonder if that bag held anything besides cigarettes--perhaps something with her name on it. He started to reach for it but stopped. Did he really want to know what else was in there? What would he do if a gun were buried in all those cigarettes? Or drugs? Or a human head? He stared at the door to the ladies' room for a moment, then slowly extended his hand toward the bag. Just as he grasped it, the girl emerged from the restroom.

Bob banged his head on the rearview mirror as he jerked back into his seat. The girl walked up to the car and opened the door. Bob pretended to smooth his hair as he readjusted the mirror.

"I hope you didn't steal any of my smokes while I was gone," the girl said as she climbed into her seat.

"I don't like cigarettes," Bob muttered, wiping the sweat from beneath his nose. He cranked up the car.

They got back on the highway and drove on in silence for about fifteen minutes. Finally, the girl cleared her throat.

"Bob, can we stop somewhere?" she said, her voice high and urgent. "I really need to go."

Bob looked at her. "What? We just stopped."

"Well I couldn't use that one. It was filthy."

"What? You were in there nearly half an hour. What were you doing?" He looked at her for a moment then held up his hand and looked away. "Never mind. You want to stop. Fine. We'll stop. I'm getting hungry anyway." He squinted at a road sign in the distance and pointed to it as they passed. "Nacogdoches is up ahead. We'll stop there. Is McDonald's clean enough for you?"

Bob was halfway through his hamburger before the girl came out of the McDonald's restroom. She walked over to his booth and slid in across from him. Bob pointed to a burger, a drink, and some fries on a tray pushed to the side of the table. "I hope you're hungry. I got you some food."

"You shouldn't have," the girl said as she stuffed a handful of the fries in her mouth and pulled the tray over.

"Well I did anyway."

They ate without further talk, Bob finishing his food bit by small bit and watching the girl engulf her own. He smiled a couple of times as he wondered how she could fit so much food in her mouth at once. Her face was bony, and her skin seemed to have little slack, yet her cheeks bulged as she ate.

"Need any more?" Bob asked as she finished her burger.

The girl nodded furiously as she chewed. Bob pulled out his wallet and took a five from it. He set the bill on the table. The girl looked at it for a second, then shrugged, picked it up, gave Bob a quick half-smile, and, still chewing, got up to go to the counter. Bob watched her as she crossed the restaurant, wiping her hands on the worn seat of her jeans.

She seemed more relaxed now--her posture wasn't as proper as when she'd first marched up to his car. She still held her head back just a bit though. Bob smiled, thinking she probably wanted to be sure the burger flippers knew who was important.

The girl started munching her second round of fries on her way back to the booth. Bob held up one hand as she sat, taking a huge bite off her second hamburger. "Hey, there's no hurry," he said. "Take your time."

The girl shrugged, bobbed her head up and down. She pointed to her food and mumbled what sounded like "good," then swallowed and smiled. "It's good."

"It might taste even better if you actually chewed it."

She nodded and took a small bite from her hamburger. She chewed it slowly. "Y'know, Bob," she said after she'd swallowed, "there's something that's bugging me. I still don't get why you're going to this wedding." She looked at Bob as she took another small bite from her burger.

Bob silently stared at the sesame seeds stuck to the bottom of his hamburger carton. He rubbed his face.

"I mean, I guess your sister lives in Shreveport, huh?" The girl slurped some of her drink, swallowed.

Bob looked up, hesitated, nodded.

"And you live in?"

He wiped his mouth with a crumpled napkin. "Spockton." He looked out the McDonald's window at his car, then at the girl. "It's just north of Houston."

"Yeah, I know where it is." She dumped some salt on her fries. "So you live that far apart and you're worried about her bothering you for skipping the wedding?"

Bob put his napkin in his hamburger carton and closed it. He looked at the girl, whose name he still didn't know. "If I lived on Mars it wouldn't help," he said with a sigh. "My sister's got a strong voice. In fact, I can hear her now--'Tammy, you better throw Bob the bouquet or he'll never get married.'"

The girl nodded and smiled as she bit a french fry in half.

"Every time I see her, she tries to tell me how to run my life. Lately it's been, 'You're forty, Bob. When are you getting married?'" Bob propped his chin on his hands and stared out the window. "Shreveport isn't far now, though. No turning back on this trip." He studied the sky. Stars were beginning to poke through its growing darkness. "What's your name?" he asked. He turned from the window, but the girl was gone--off to the counter for a hot fudge sundae.

"It's getting kind of boring around here, Bob," the girl said after they'd been back on the road about an hour. "What we need is another mystery." She sat for a moment, staring straight ahead, then snapped her fingers. "I've got it! The glove compartment. What would a man like Bob Gray have in his glove compartment?" She turned to Bob.

"But just to make it interesting, I'll crack this one with one of my other talents." She closed one eye, raised the brow of the other. "I'm psychic."

Bob couldn't help laughing slightly. "Oh? A psychic who doesn't know her name. I'm impressed."

"Shhh. You're disturbing the cosmic vibrations." She closed her eyes and put her palm to Bob's forehead.

Bob noticed her hand was cool and soft before he decided he didn't like where it was. He pushed it away. "Do you mind?"

"Wait--wait--I'm getting something--"

Bob blinked as the girl slapped her hand back to his forehead. He frowned and squinted through two fingers jutting in front of his eyes. "Stop that, will you?" He tried to push her hand away, but she held it firmly in place.

"Don't break the connection."

"I can't see!"

"Something--I've got something--" The girl suddenly lurched back into her seat. Her eyes were wide. "You were raised by wolves?"

Bob looked at her, smiled, nodded. "As a matter of fact, yes."

The girl stared at Bob with a straight face, then smiled at him. She opened her mouth but then closed it again, as if she wasn't sure what to say. She sucked on her lower lip and stared at him a few more seconds. "That's funny, Bob. I was raised by wolves, too. But I ran away from them. They bit too much." She closed her mouth, opened it again, then put her hand over it as if stifling a yawn. She turned away and stared out the side window.

Bob looked at her silently, unsure how to ask what she meant. He hesitated a moment, then slowly moved his hand toward her shoulder. Before he could touch her, she whirled around, a crazed grin on her face. Bob snatched his hand back.

"The glove compartment! The glove compartment! What's in the glove compartment?" she said, pounding her leg with each shout. She rubbed her hands together.

Bob looked from the road to the girl, then back. He licked his lips. "What did you mean by--"

"The weather's just not right for telepathy." The girl shifted in her seat to face the glove compartment. "That leaves only one way to solve this mystery."

Bob smiled. "Only one way, huh? I wonder what that could be." He sighed and tilted his head back on the head rest.

"I'll just have to look," the girl said. She slowly reached for the latch, gently took hold of it, started to turn it.

Bob jerked his head forward. "Nothing's in there!" he shouted, suddenly remembering what was in there. He slapped at the girl's hand.

She jerked back and stared at him poutingly. "Gosh, Bob, you didn't have to hit me."

"Well I--I'm sorry," he said, his right hand hovering in front of the glove compartment. "It's just full of garbage. I didn't want it to spill all over you." He moved his right hand back to the steering wheel.

The girl leaned toward Bob and put her hand on his shoulder. "But, Bob," she said urgently, "there's still a mystery--what kind of garbage?" Before Bob could react, she whirled around and yanked open the glove compartment. The magazine fell face down into her lap. Bob started to grab it, but he couldn't quite bring himself to put his hand where the magazine had fallen.

Bob felt his face redden as the girl took the magazine by one of its tattered corners and gingerly turned it over. A woman wearing little posed on the cover. The girl slowly shook her head as a smile spread on her face. "Bob, you dirty middle-aged man. Why are you driving around with paper women?"

Bob looked over his left shoulder and changed lanes. "Put that away," he mumbled.

The girl flipped through the magazine. She held up a centerfold. "This, Bob? This instead of me?"

Bob looked over his other shoulder and changed lanes again.

The girl looked at the centerfold for a moment, then looked at Bob. "What's this Candi person got that I haven't got? Portability? Just put her in the glove box when you're tired of her, huh?"

Bob started to turn his head, then realized he'd run out of shoulders to look over. So he looked at the girl. "What's the deal? You were acting just fine in the restaurant, but now--" He shook his head. "You know, you couldn't get away with acting like this if you were--if you--" He shrugged and stared ahead, then looked at the girl out of the corner of one eye. "You know, I'm getting kind of tired of this. 'What's Bob thinking? Where's Bob going?' I guess next you'll want to know what kind of underwear I've got on."

The girl tossed the magazine to the floor, grabbed the front of Bob's shirt, and yanked it out of his pants. "What are you doing?" he shouted as she wriggled her fingers into his pants. "Stop that!" He gasped as she yanked up his underwear.

"Ooooh, boxers," she moaned. "Boxers get me hot, Bob. Can we stop somewhere? I want you."

"Oh? Then why won't you tell me your name?" he squeaked as he tried to pry her fingers from the waistband of his underwear. "Why don't we solve one of your mysteries? What's in your bag besides cigarettes?"

"Don't try to change the subject, Bob."

Bob squirmed in his seat. "What do I have to do to get you out of my hair?"

"Oh, your hair," the girl moaned. She let go of his underwear and began to run her fingers through the thin brown strands atop his head.

"Look, do you want out somewhere?" he grunted, leaning as far as he could away from the girl while trying to tuck his underwear back into his pants and keep the car on the road.

"No, you're stuck with me, Bob," she whispered, pawing at his chest.

He started to voice another protest, but it stuck in his throat as a numbing thought struck him--could he get rid of her before he got to Shreveport? What would the family think? Bob turned to stare at the girl.

And smiled.

She settled into her seat and stared back. Bob turned his gaze back to the road and tried to clear his throat, but his cough came out more like a laugh. He looked at the girl out of the corner of one eye. "I wonder if you'd mind accompanying me to the wedding, Mrs. Gray?"

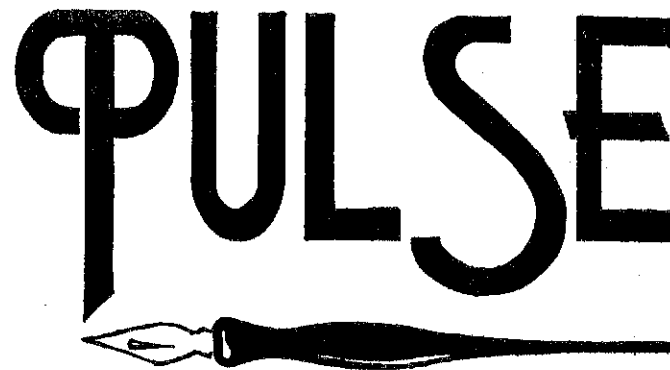
The girl's face went blank for a moment. Bob smiled again, seeing he'd finally gotten her to miss a beat, instead of the other way around. But she didn't miss two. She put one hand to her chin, raised her eyebrows. "Well, I've never turned down a dirty middle-aged man before. But, Mrs. Gray--" She frowned. "That's so old-fashioned. Couldn't we just be lovers?"

"Well--" He shrugged, squinted, smiled. "Well, okay. But what do I call you?"

"The wolves called me Heather Ames." She winked at Bob and blew him a kiss.

He started to raise his hand, hesitated for an instant, then snatched her kiss from the air.

Vic Odegar
English, SR



Pulse is a student publication intended to exhibit works by student writers. It is distributed once each long semester. Cash prizes are awarded in each category. Entries are judged by a panel of qualified professors. All submissions are subject to editorial discretion.

Rules for literary submissions:

1. Entries must be typed and double spaced. Clear photo copies will be accepted. **ENTRIES WILL NOT BE RETURNED.** Keep a copy of all work.
2. You may submit work on IBM compatible disks for use in WordPerfect 5.1. Be sure to label the disk with your name and Social Security number. You must have your student ID card to claim your disk.
3. Author's name should NOT appear on the submission. One submission form should be used for all entries by a single author. Forms are available in the Maes Liberal Arts Building in office 03 or 04.
4. Poetry submissions are limited to ten per author. Fiction and essay entries should not exceed 3,000 words each.

POETRY ESSAYS SHORT FICTION

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS