



# PULSE

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# **PULSE**

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**Department of English and Foreign Languages  
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### Editor's Note

In the 1995 Spring issue of *Pulse*, Gayla Chaney's poem entitled "With Keys of Brass for Grandfather Clocks", which received honorable mention, was inadvertently left out of the publication due to a printing error. This poem has been printed at the end of this issue to make up for the oversight.

In the 1995 Spring issue of *Pulse*, there were also quite a few typos and misspellings. The editors would also like to apologize for these editorial oversights.

### Acknowledgements

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We wish to express our most sincere thanks to

Eleanore Perlstein Weinbaum

for her continued, generous support  
of Pulse and the liberal arts of Lamar University

## Awards

- Eleanor Poetry Award** for best poem overall  
Rita J. Self "Going Home with Miss Pearl"
- Barnes Poetry Award** for best poem in traditional form  
Timothy Carter "A Bite of Rice"
- de Schweinitz Poetry Award** for best poem in open form  
Rita J. Self "Sleeping with the Sofa"
- Rowe Poetry Award** chosen by the *Pulse* co-editors  
Tasha S. Harper "And this, dear, is Frivolton"
- Pulse Fiction Award** for best short fiction  
Daniel Bartlett "The Interview"
- Pulse Essay Award** for best essay  
Timothy Carter "A Modest Proposal Revisted"
- Rowe Critical Paper Award** for best critical essay  
Kathy Kowalik "Milton's *Comus*: An assault on Chastity"
- Honorable Mention - Short Fiction**  
Ellen Howard "Conversation over Sundaes"

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*Eleanor Poetry Award*

**Going Home with Miss Pearl**

Pearl tows me behind her, like a mother ship  
trailing its dinghy. Her bag brims over,  
parcels and packages, secret ingredients  
for chicken gumbo, beignets, rice and gravy.  
Down Main we go, left tack at the barber shop.  
We near her house, and people turn and call  
"Miss Pearl, you got your little girl with you?"  
She smiles and nods, but never both at once.  
And if she snorts like Grandpaw's mule, Big Joan,  
I look whoever over like a judge.  
They must be a sinner and stay up late and  
we don't slow down until Miss Pearl sees home.  
The house is white. The shutters gleam black ink.  
Crepe myrtles -- red one, pink one -- lean like winos,  
a yearly spray across the porch littering  
the planks with petals that she keeps for smell.  
We go to Sunday school. The ladies are  
merry Christmas candies wrapped and bowed,  
a holy red and gold and green parade.  
And Brother Moses stirs our air with Pearl's  
Merciful Rest Funeral Parlour fan.

*Rita J. Self*

*English, Post Baccalaureate*

*Barnes Poetry Award*

**A Bite of Rice**

In the Globe, Ann Rice recalls  
the time of her life when dark clouds  
crawl on a summer day  
against the noon sun without  
an umbrella. It was a time when shards  
of glass reflect on doubts

of sober truths beneath  
the sources of milk. A salute  
to the porcelain kings soils her true kith.  
With scotch as her vice, she disputes  
the haze of sparks buzzing  
in the air. After cussing

for two years lost, Ann awakes  
from hiatus and stirs the pen  
of bloody M's as she takes  
the eyes of harpies drawn  
in the fangs of walking dead.  
As the hunger for blood spreads,

Ann whips pages of feasting  
hounds of lamia who drink  
the saps of prey tasting  
the lime zing at the nape of the neck.  
Two badges from grim savages  
swells on the apple bulges.

In a temple where chains and bars  
arouses ardent aches  
of flesh, Ann pursues the scars  
of Charon's touch on the whelp  
on the leaves of her book. She deals  
the sun like pillars of salt.

*Timothy Carter*  
*English, Senior*

*de Schweinitz Poetry Award*

**Sleeping with the Sofa**

My bed cries for you every night.  
It sobs and wails  
Until the neighbors upstairs  
Beat my ceiling with a broom handle.  
Then it just lies there engulfing me  
In sheets and sniffles  
Until I have to get up.  
In the afternoon, I catch a nap with the sofa.  
It didn't move in until after you left,  
So it doesn't miss you like the bed  
And cry and keep me awake  
When I sleep by myself.

*Rita J. Self*  
*English, Post Baccalaureate*

*Rowe Poetry Award*

And this, dear, is Frivolton

Past the gate  
in the red  
picket fence  
sits a house  
just like all the others,  
and inside are  
liars loving while  
her husband makes  
a living --  
her living and his existence, and  
her pleasure.

Only they are rushing  
-- the town is listening --  
well, only one, but  
news travels  
fast.

Meanwhile,  
women whisper  
over cards from under the  
table  
as the diner  
swims in tales of  
fish this big, and  
tongue-in-cheek comments  
concerning the new waitress.

They don't drink coffee  
- the diner doesn't serve it -  
and tea is for women  
so beer it is  
-- and eggs and toast and  
ham.

The children have gone to school  
to forget their education  
and will return home  
to learn the lesson  
text books dare not  
mention.

Some liberate the injustices  
within, themselves  
- others are unaware that they  
breathe.

- Dogs bite the hands that feed them. -

And this, dear, is Frivolton.  
They are restless, but  
unwilling to leave  
-- for here they have a name  
- however obscene  
-- there, just another  
blank face,  
mindless wanderer, unreachable  
- proud!

*Tasha S. Harper*  
*English, Freshman*

**The Interview**

It came as no surprise when Jack Strong's name came up. He was the best person for the job. An undisputable knack for investigative reporting was boasted for by his many awards and honors, including the distinguished Pulitzer. Reputed for his in-depth personal interviews, Jack Strong's fame for revealing the true personalities and backgrounds of celebrities went unsurpassed. So when it came to be that someone would be granted an interview with the newly elected President on the night before the inauguration, the obvious choice was Jack Strong.

That afternoon the White House Press Secretary announced the decision to invite none other than Jack Strong for a personal interview with the next President of the United States. Strong sat back comfortably in his chair and locked his fingers behind his head. A satisfied smirk crossed his face while cold, steel gray eyes shrouded the fiery spirit and determination he could unleash upon an uncooperative subject.

In the journalism field Jack Strong was highly revered and respected. As the name implied, he pursued his stories with a ferocity unparalleled. And anything standing in his way would be damned. Most investigative reporters that displayed his kind of conviction burned out early. But not Jack Strong. He simply rolled over anything in his path...including his three ex-wives.

At five o'clock on the evening before the inauguration Jack Strong pulled up in front of the White House in his German sports car. Upon seeing the familiar face, a surge of media rushed toward him shouting a barrage of questions. As the security guards formed a barrier, Strong turned his back to the hectic crowd.

"Mr. Strong, so glad you could make it," accosted the Press Secretary approaching with a broad smile. Extending his hand he looked into the stony, expressionless face.

Ignoring the polite gesture, Strong brushed past the official and started toward the gates muttering, "A regular damn circus."

From a second story window, the President-elect watched the masses with amused anticipation. For the first time, he would be offering the world a glimpse into his personality... and with no less than the notorious Jack Strong.

The President-elect shaded an obscure background behind him. Rising from relative anonymity in the seventies, he capitalized on incredible persuasive speaking abilities to claim an office in the House of Representatives. From there he advanced to Senator and then worked behind the scenes as Secretary of State before declaring his entrance into the Presidential race.

Already well known for his mass employment programs, he successfully campaigned on a platform promising a stronger nation. Advocating an increase in industrial production, he proposed to do away with unemployment. Beyond that, his ability to rally the people was uncanny. Never before had there been such a strong feeling of nationalism.

As Jack Strong was shown into the office the President-elect turned from the window and bowed courtly. "It is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Strong. I was just admiring your fine automobile. A nice piece of work." A warm smile crossed his face as he observed the reporter.

Strong waited for the guards to exit the office before looking up into the dark, powerful eyes of his subject. "Yeah, those Germans are damn fine engineers if nothing else." Taking off his coat, he folded it across a chair's back.

The President-elect smiled with a slight shake of his head. "Well they do have some nice composers. Are you familiar with Wagner? He's a tremendous composer of marches."

"No, I don't really listen to Classical."

"Well actual he's considered a Romantic composer," corrected the President-elect. "But I suppose it doesn't matter."

"Oh," responded Strong distantly... obviously unconcerned. Glancing around the office, he began investigating its elaborate contents.

The room contained an exquisite collection of Romantic era artwork. On the bookshelf sat a broad library of adventure stories as well as a number of opera and theater programs. The room seemed to confess of its occupant's fondness for the arts.

Picking up on this notion Strong turned toward the onlooking President-elect. "You seem to be a fan of the arts."



"Yes. I always dreamed of becoming an artist. Still would if I had the time."

"What happened?" pushed Strong.

The President-elect appeared to ponder this query momentarily before responding. For a brief second he seemed to be in another world. "Well, things just did not work out as I had intended."

"Uh-huh," Strong urged, unsatisfied with his answer.

"I had to move on to more realistic issues. So I went into politics." Moving to the phone on his desk, he pushed the intercom and spoke to a secretary. "Could you please send up some coffee and pastries." Turning back to Strong, he smiled openly. "I have loved pastries since I was a little boy."

Staring absently at a canvas painting, Strong posed another question. "How about your childhood? You seemed to have risen from nowhere. Your past is relatively unknown. No parents to speak of, no known family at all. In fact there's really no records of you until you ran for election in seventy-six."

"Well, you sure have done your research."

"That's why I'm here and not some other slack-ass reporter." Strong turned and studied the captivating presence of the figure before him.

Peering back into those steel eyes, the President-elect forced a short laugh. "My father was a well respected but strict man. I suppose he provided for us well, though I never much cared for him. He died long before my mother and left us a fair pension." He paused as an attractive young woman carried in a tray of pastries and coffee. "Please, place it over next to the fireplace," he instructed. Watching the woman with open appreciation, he remained observant until she closed the door behind herself.

Gesturing Strong to a seat near the fire, the President-elect reclined in a soft leather chair and delicately picked out a nice pastry. When the reporter sat back looking smugly comfortable he continued.

"My mother was a fine woman. She indulged me with everything I asked. However, she became incurably ill with cancer. I also had five siblings though only one, my younger sister Paula, lived to maturity. But she unfortunately died in nineteen-sixty. Other than that I have no family to speak of."

The nonchalant manner with which he told the story was very much as if he were simply reciting a history. Cool and unaffected, he seemed to be measuring up the infamous reporter.

"Well," pursued Strong, crossing one leg over the other and adjusting himself to sit crooked in the chair, "It's been said that your positions lean intensely toward socialism." Purposely phrasing this as a statement instead of a question, he intended to test the President-elect's diplomacy.

Known for his ardent temper tantrums when defied or pushed, the President-elect adversely remained controlled. Cracking a nearly sinister smile, he rose to his feet and turning his back upon the probing investigator, deeply concentrated his attention on an oil portrait of George Washington.

"Socialism? No. I simply favor a strong nation. One where everyone works and carries a sense of loyalty to the state. I preach the gospel for a nation superior to all others. I do not intend to create a socialist government. It is not necessary. My goals can all be achieved with the proper democratic leadership and a strong chief executive."

Strong arose and gazed into the dancing flames of the fireplace. "Sounds reminiscent of Nazi Germany." Turning to face the President-elect, he studied the imposing figure before him. Two things caught his attention: the ever-present ominous black gloves and the classic ivory handled mahogany walking stick which remained by his side at all times. For some reason these two items characterized the man better than any words ever could. "Shall I call you Fuhrer?"

"I've heard it a few times in my days," the President-elect chuckled.

Strong scrutinized the enigmatic face before him trying desperately to determine if the man was serious. Unable to come to any stable conclusion, he dismissed the comment and pushed on. "Since so little is known of you prior to seventy-six, why don't you fill me in on your life up to that point."

For a moment the President-elect paused, contemplative. Then visually coming to a decision, he returned to his place by the fire. "Very well, Mr. Strong. But I think you should have a seat."

Suddenly the hour struck six, filling the room with the gongs and chimes of an old fashioned Grandfather clock. In this commotion, Strong returned to his chair and patiently awaited the end of the alarm. Upon chiming its fill, the gong submitted the room to an awkward silence interrupted only by the hissing and crackling of the fire.

"You want to know about my past. I imagine you find it enticingly odd that no record of me exists preceding nineteen seventy-six."

"Yes, I do," answered Strong still contemplating the eccentric tone of this conversation.

Leaning forward to close the space between the two, the President-elect's piercing stare bore straight through Strong's eyes. "Would you believe that I am Adolf Hitler?"

For the first time in his illustrious career, Jack Strong found himself completely off guard. Had he heard correctly? Certainly not.

"Uh... You, umm, are..."

"Adolf Hitler. In the flesh." The President-elect reclined to a comfortable position and watched a squirming Strong with obvious amusement.

Trying to cope with the insanity of what just presented itself, Strong jumped to his feet and paced in front of the fireplace. Not sure whether to take this information seriously or not, he glanced back at the President-elect for reassurance. In that chilling face he saw absolute conviction. This was no joke.

Electing to pursue the issue, he forced himself on. "Well uh, how did you come to be here?"

Laying his head back, the President-elect studied the ceiling as if pondering this question. "Well, as the Allies pressed on into Germany and our defeat appeared inevitable, we turned toward drastic measures." Stopping abruptly he checked to see if Strong was keeping up. Satisfied that the reporter followed along with due intent he pressed on. "While your top scientists worked on the atomic bomb, mine worked on the possibility of time travel, so that I could return to carry on the legacy. As you can see, we succeeded."

"Well, uh... what about the fact that Soviet Intelligence had photographs of Hitler's charred remains after he committed suicide?"

"Jack," he whispered, strangely opting to use the first name. "Do not underestimate the resourcefulness of my Reich." Again returning to the pastry tray, the President-elect seemed completely at ease with his tale. The calm manner with which the story was revealed captivated Strong, preventing him from immediately dismissing this as madness. Finally, he gathered his wits.

"So you time warped here into the seventies and started in politics once again? Why here, and not Germany?"

"Well I leapt forward into the seventies, but I remained in exactly the spot, a basement laboratory, where I warped from. Amazingly, it is still there today. It took me several days to shake off the disorientation. However, I eventually came to my senses and decided to start over in the land of promise. Where else can a man emerge from nowhere and take hold of a high public office?"

Strong shook his head in response but remained taciturn. As the President-elect finished his speech, the intercom on the desk buzzed. Offering an apologetic nod, he excused himself to respond to its beckon. "Please, give us a few more minutes. We will not be much longer."

"If you really are Hitler, and I'm not saying that I believe you... it's my job as a reporter to remain unbiased and present only the facts... but if you really are Hitler, then why would you risk being revealed to tell me this?"

"Mr. Strong," started the President-elect with an eerie smirk. "First off, I don't care how well respected you are. Who the hell would believe this if you relayed it? Oh sure, I suppose that they could simply view me as out of my mind. But for that matter, I could simply deny this. However, I told you this for one simple reason. I knew that if anyone would see the truth, it would be you. You have a nose for it. Like a bloodhound."

"But still," interjected a confused Strong. "Why tell me?"

"Simple. If you had successfully pulled off what I have, would you not want to boast of your achievement to someone who may find it feasible? Someone who could appreciate its monumental value."

Strong considered the question while attempting to browse through a randomly chosen opera program. It was printed in German. "So, uh... What, what do you ... intend to do now?" A shaky hand reached out to return the book to its shelf.

"As far as what?" responded the President-elect tapping his walking stick lightly upon the floor.

"You'll soon assume the most powerful office in the world," Strong studied his subject cautiously avoiding the mesmeric eyes. "What will you do? You will not be able to turn it into a fascist dictatorship." Stopping suddenly, he carefully eyed the President-elect's response for any signs that the man may lose his temper.

However, neither the infamous temper tantrums of Adolf Hitler nor the common rantings of the President-elect arose. Instead, his calm manner prevailed.

"You intend to test me, do you? I need not have a dictatorship. The country already subscribes to my program."

Sensing the gloating direction which the President-elect seemed to be leading the conversation, Strong decided to divert it in a direction of his own; one where he could regain the control he was accustomed to. "So, Adolf, how far do you think you'll get before being..."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Strong, but we're out of time. I have a very important meeting to attend," the President-elect interjected with obvious pleasure. "I have to meet with my Press Secretary. You know... propaganda." He stood up and offered a rigid salute, but did not offer his hand. "It was interesting to meet you, Mr. Strong. I will have someone show you out."

At that he tucked the stick under his arm and left the still room to Jack Strong, alone.

The following day, inauguration day, the President-elect stepped out before an ecstatic crowd. A million flashes dotted the masses as spectators attempted to forever preserve the moment on film. Standing sternly straight, he caressed his walking stick's ivory handle with a firm grip of his black gloves while surveying the crowd. A satisfied grin lined his strict face.

Miles away a highway department crew extracted a mangled corpse from a roadside ditch. Lifting it up out of the tall grass, the crew turned its deformed pulp upright.

"Oh my God," one of the officers gasped, slinking back but unable to take his eyes off of the carcass. "It's that reporter Jack Strong."

The excited crew stood gaping at the dismembered figure. Most significant, and sickening, was the mark which had been branded upon the man's chest: a bold Nazi swastika!

At that very moment, the new President took his oath of office.

*Daniel Bartlett  
Political Science, Sophomore*

## *Pulse Essay Award*

### **A Modest Proposal Revisited**

Why are there poor people in the United States of America in the twentieth century? Given the vast number of economic opportunities available in America, a person can readily find employment. Under the current conditions, jobs remain in plentiful supply to eliminate the poverty situation. However, people who still live at or below the poverty level do so at their own volition.

Why do people live at the poverty level? The simple and obvious reason is laziness. Poor people simply choose not to work. They simply believe that work (especially hard work) is not necessary for them to exist. In fact, statistics have shown that a large percentage chooses not to work. In these people's opinion (poor people's), their time is too valuable to be spent on such trivial matters as work. In fact, some people actually never work.

How do people choose not to work and still exist? A simple government program meant for disabled veterans and handicapped individuals has been exploited. This program called "welfare," in present day terms, stands as a government hand out to poor people. These poor people simply sign up for the program and receive generous monthly payments directly from the government. In fact, the more children these poor people procreate, then the larger the amount of the check the government will send to these creatures. What type of an incentive is this for poor people? By continuing this program, the government in essence says, "as long as you (poor people) have more children, then the larger the check will be from us (the tax paying public)."

On the other hand, another reason people live at the poverty level is their educational aptitude. Statistics have shown that a large majority of poor people do not even receive a high school diploma. When a person cannot even graduate high school, then how can this person be expected to hold down a full time job? If this person is fortunate enough to obtain a full time job, then what type of job will be available? With the limited amount of skills at this person's disposal, he will only be qualified to obtain a small sample of jobs. "Would you like a shake with that burger and

fries" seems a typical scenario for this particular individual. In fact, many poor people consider this work demeaning and not worth the effort for the small wages garnered.

Why is poverty so prevalent in the United States? Many poor people were born into poverty. So, they grow up in an environment where everyday hopelessness and despair pervade. This environment later becomes a part of them. Excuses become an ingrained belief too difficult to overcome. In fact, a majority of people at the poverty level remain at this level, and also bring their children up in this environment beginning another cycle of underclass people. This cycle becomes a pattern and a lifestyle for many individuals who as some people say, "know no better." This life cycle of poverty not only passes from person to person, but it also passes from generation to generation thereby creating a nearly indestructible vice.

Given many of the problems of poor people, a simple solution exists to end poverty. First of all, the welfare system must end. This system perpetuates the problem of poverty. Poor people are simply milking the government for billions of dollars per year while not contributing a single dollar to society. These poor imbeciles with their idle behavior and no job skills can begin helping themselves. With their dependence on the government terminated, they can rely solely upon themselves for survival. Any lazy person who chooses not to work will either resort to crime where they will immediately be sent to jail or become a vagrant on the streets. These vagrants will then be hauled to a firing squad and executed. With this approach, the phrase "out of sight, out of mind" will hold some truth.

The best procedure is simply to eliminate the problem. The only method to completely eliminate the problem is to kill the poor person. If poor people simply refuse to work and cause distress to the employed public, then the only solution is to kill them. As one method, poor people can test our electric chairs. Since these chairs require so much electricity and not all States have this equipment available, lethal injections are also a viable option. With a lethal injection, the expensive electric cost is eliminated and a swift execution of the beasts plaguing society can be administered. These methods will guarantee the extinction of poverty eventually. In fact, this method insures not one single poor

person will escape between the cracks. Thus, the government will quickly end its frequent monthly handout payments to the scoundrels.

However, an even greater deterrent to eliminate poverty is through starvation. If a lazy, insignificant burden refuses to contribute to society by working, then a stronger message needs to be administered. For example, several poor people should be rounded up into a group of ten and slowly starved in the presence of other poor creatures. In fact, this program in actuality kills two birds with one stone. The humiliation and torture not only eliminates the waste of nonproductive lives, but also serves as a vehicle to deter other would be burdens upon society.

On the other hand, the families of poor people should be allowed to participate in eliminating poverty. First of all, these families have already suffered humiliation and disgrace from these monsters who cannot support themselves. So, these family members can each, with a switchblade in hand, take a stab and strike down the decrepit disgrace to their precious name. In fact, they should administer the decisive blow which destroys the beasts of humanity. With this method, dignity and prestige can be restored to their family name, because "they took care of their own."

In other words, the government as well as the family has a responsibility to the public to maintain the best interests of society as a whole. This responsibility includes the welfare of its citizens. By totally eradicating poverty in the United States, the government has fulfilled its obligation to its citizens. In the end, poverty will be eliminated and citizens can focus on their daily lives.

*Timothy Carter*  
*English, Senior*

Milton's *Comus*: An Assault on Chastity

John Milton's Ludlow mask has been the topic of numerous debates, including the belabored argument of whether the work meets the qualifications of a mask at all. One of the most recent controversies, however, questions the relevance of two highly significant and publicized rape cases pertinent to the Earl of Bridgewater. The Castlehaven scandal was first suggested as a possible influence on *Comus*'s theme in 1960. The second Earl of Castlehaven was beheaded in 1631 after being found guilty of inciting his servants to repeatedly rape his wife, Lady Anne Stanley, and his twelve-year-old stepdaughter, Elizabeth. Frances Edgerton, the Earl of Bridgewater's wife, was Lady Anne's sister, and the scandal was an obvious embarrassment to the family. Another highly-publicized rape case involved fourteen-year-old Margery Evans, an illiterate servingmaid, who was reportedly raped along a roadside on Midsummer eve, 1631. When she ran to a nearby town for help, she was thrown in jail where she stayed without possibility of parole and without any formal charge for twenty-five days. After no arrests were made of her alleged attackers, she appealed to King who then ordered John Edgerton to make inquiries in the case. The case would drag on for at least the next four years. In light of these two cases of rape surrounding the Edgerton family, the reading of *Comus* as a tale of temptation falls short. A purer examination of the mask reveals not *Comus*'s temptation of the Lady, but rather a quite explicit threat of assault. The issues of virginity and chastity must be considered in the atmosphere of Ludlow Castle in 1634, and the prevailing notion of temptation must be reconsidered.

The presentation of *Comus* as part of the celebration honoring John Edgerton's installation as Lord President of Wales was not merely "a private family celebration, but a political event" (Marcus 294). Marcus points out that members of the Council of Wales, four of whom were in permanent residence at Ludlow, probably attended the Michaelmas night performance (295) and that this

council was "troubled by laxity and corruption" (294). Furthermore, one of the key themes for Michaelmas liturgies is "the enlightenment or humiliation of judges" (296). The Council of Wales had not only failed to investigate the Evans rape, but also had allowed the complainant herself to be imprisoned. Marcus believes the newly-inducted Earl of Bridgewater, who would later investigate the case vigorously, wanted to send a message that he would not tolerate negligence or corruption (294-6). John Leonard notes that although no specific allusion to the Evans case appears in *Comus*'s text, "this need not invalidate" the theme of sexual assault (130). Neither does John Creaser's argument against the effect of the Castlehaven scandal on the reputation of the Edgerton family (308-9) necessarily preclude the examination of *Comus*'s text in relation to the theme of rape.

The analysis of references to Echo and Daphne reveal further connections to sexual assault. In Lady's song to Echo she refers to the "sad Song" of the "love-lorn Nightingale" (234-5). Leonard points out that the nightingale is Philomela, "the victim of a particularly brutal rape," and that the term "love-lorn" originally meant "lost or ruined through love" (132). Furthermore, Leonard believes the Attendant Spirit relates Philomela to the Lady with his worried exclamation, "O poor hapless Nightingale" (566). *Comus* later refers to Daphne, another "near victim of rape" (Marcus 317) when he forces the Lady to remain seated lest he immobilize her "as Daphne was, / Rootbound, that fled Apollo" (661-2). Charles Moseley considers *Comus*'s language at this point "an open threat" (196). Twice, then, Milton infers a connection between the Lady and sexual assault.

The Attendant Spirit's invocation of Sabrina also lends credence to the idea that Milton viewed *Comus*'s actions and words as threatening rather than tempting. Marcus states that Sabrina "had been the guiltless product of a forced sexual relationship" and was prompted to appeal to Neptune for protection against satyrs who emerged from the forest to rape her nymphs (319). Furthermore, Marcus points out Sabrina's "historical connections with judgement and the law" (319). William Oran likewise recognizes the "political dimension" of Sabrina and suggests that the Lady's struggle may "parallel" the Earl of Bridgewater's "task in ruling his new dominion" (138). The River Severn spanned the border between England and Wales, and in

Michael Drayton's *Poly Olbrion*, Sabrina acts as mediator between England and Wales (Marcus 320). Marcus argues that Sabrina's "basic judicial aims and functions were the same as those of the Earl and the Council" (320). Marcus sees Sabrina as an example to the council members in attendance at the Ludlow performance, of the proper and forthright administration of justice. This idea stems from Marcus's opinion that the jury which acquitted Margery Evans's accused rapists "voted as they did out of intimidation or misplaced loyalty" (311). William Kerrigan strongly refutes Marcus's not wholly unfounded opinion, however, preferring to believe the jury acquitted the accused "because they thought the men were innocent" (151). Nevertheless, the purpose here is to suggest that the invocation of Sabrina is trebly appropriate as the goddess to save the Lady: she is the local goddess of the River Severn; she is associated with law; and she assures empathy with the Lady's predicament.

Temptation has been the most commonly named theme of *Comus*. However, the instances which exemplify this theme are rarely supported by the actual text. *Comus*'s deceptions and proselytizing are usually discussed as instances of temptation, but his attempts to tempt the Lady are never successful. Nowhere in the text is there any evidence that the Lady feels attracted. In fact after she learns of *Comus*'s true identity, she is consistently disgusted by him. But critics insist on questioning the Lady's fortitude. The Lady follows *Comus* because he has tricked her into believing he will keep her from danger. "Shepherd, I take thy word,/And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy" (321-2). But Kerrigan contends that the Lady seeks the "darkness of the woods" out of her own guilt (qtd. in Leonard 131). The Lady may be guilty of naivete, but to credit her trust to faltering virtue is not logical. Milton intended to illustrate the innocence of the Lady, and observers of this drama would not have viewed the Lady's misplaced trust as giving in to temptation.

James Obertino believes that the Lady has been aroused by *Comus*. The only evidence he and others can provide of her arousal are her immobility, which Obertino attributes to her "internal conflict" (31), and the frustratingly cryptic "gums of glutinous heat" (917). John Leonard's amusing synopsis of conjectured meanings of this phrase tends to nullify the plausibility that Milton was inferring sexual arousal on the part of Lady Alice

Edgerton. Leonard's rather distasteful list of offered interpretations of these "spillages" is incredibly devoid of any mention of the wrath of young Lady Alice's father. In any case, the absurdity of these explanations does tend to exemplify the fallacious insistence of some critics to read *Comus* as a temptation tale.

The prevailing attitude in Seventeenth century England toward rape victims was that some defect in the women's nature allowed them to become victimized. The perpetrators, when found guilty, no doubt bore the brunt of blame, but the victims were often ostracized as well. In the Castlehaven scandal, Lady Anne and her stepdaughter both had to receive pardons from the King before the Countess Dowager of Derby, Lady Anne's mother, would agree to merely be in their presence (Creaser 311). Margery Evans was treated similarly, as her twenty-five day imprisonment indicates. Rape victims were attributed with a weakness of virtue, just as critics of *Comus* attribute the Lady with susceptibility to temptation.

*Comus*'s so-called appeal to the Lady's vanity is also mentioned in an effort to find a trace of culpability in the Lady's ego. *Comus* does praise the Lady's beauty and youth, but placed within the context in which they were stated, his words are anything but complimentary. The Lady has been taken to *Comus*'s palace under false pretenses, she is surrounded by a frighteningly riotous rabble, and *Comus* has forbidden her to leave. He indicates that her "dainty limbs" are meant for "delicate usage" (680-1) and compares her beauty to a coin that must be circulated (739-40). *Comus* may intend for his words to appeal the Lady's pride, but under the circumstances his words can only be seen as menacing.

Most critics are inclined to agree that Milton placed the stronger emphasis on chastity rather than virginity. A. E. Dyson concludes that in *Comus*, "Chastity is more than an isolated virtue: it is symptomatic of spiritual wholeness and the life of grace" (108). The Lady first mentions chastity as she reflects on the possible dangers she may encounter in her present predicament. But as Dyson observes, she has confidence in the protection her virtue affords "even (from) the worst assaults of the enemy" (121):

O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,  
Thou hovering Angel girt with golden wings,  
And thou unblemish't form of Chastity (213-5)

Dyson contends that "the assertion is not that the body itself can be protected from violation, but that there is final protection for the virtuous soul" (121). The Lady's song to Echo "summarizes and expresses the moral harmony she represents" (Moseley 191), and more importantly the song briefly transfixes Comus. The power of virtue is immediately felt through Comus's reaction. "Can any mortal mixture of Earth's mold/ Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?" (244-5) Moseley suggests that Comus acknowledges the "Platonic view of man as... an animal with a heavenly destiny" (192). The Lady, according to Dyson, "does not stand for a particular virtue but for Virtue itself" (108). However, Dyson does believe that Milton considered chastity to be the most important virtue, citing Milton's discussion of the topic in *An Apology for Smectymnuus* (108).

In the conversation between the Elder and Second Brothers, the Elder attempts to comfort his sibling's anxiety over their sister's safety. He considers his sister as "not so defenseless left/As you imagine" (414-5) and relates the "hidden strength" (415) which protects her. When the Second Brother questions the nature of this strength, the Elder Brother replies, "'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity" (420). He goes on to describe "when a soul is found sincerely so,; A thousand liveried Angels lackey her," (454-5) and transform "The unpolluted temple of the mind" (460) to immortality. The reference to the mind as the temple of God immediately recalls St. Paul's defining of the body as the temple of God in his instructions regarding Christian conduct. Susan M. Felch's discussion of Milton's use of the Corinthian epistles as his basic biblical intertext curiously does not relate I Corinthians 6:19 to the Elder Brother's statement. Perhaps Milton's substitution of the "temple of the mind" suggests that it is the mind or soul which is the true residence of grace. If so, it would follow that a forced assault on the body in no way affects the purity of the chaste mind.

The Elder Brother's faith in the power of chastity is persistently defined in terms of protection against bodily harm. But this interpretation cannot be based on the meaning of the brother's words. Leonard is at pains to explain this comment, and can only come up with the ridiculous notion that, according to the Elder Brother, "sincere virgins cannot be raped" (131). But it is the Lady's soul that the brother believes will be protected from the

"lewd and lavish act of sin" (465). The Elder Brother does not waver in his belief that virtue will protect the soul. Moseley extends the argument by pointing to the emphasis on the inward light which protects the soul (193):

He that has light within his own Cheer brest  
May sit i'th' center, and enjoy bright day,  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
Benighted walks under the mid-day Sun,  
Himself is his own dungeon. (381-5)

Thus is introduced the idea that, although deprived of their virginity, virtuous women who are raped retain their spiritual chastity. The morality of Lady Anne and Margery Evans, therefore, was not polluted by the actions of their rapists even though both were treated, either by family or society, as if it had been. The Lady is confident that her chastity cannot be expunged through rape.

Fool, do not boast,  
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind  
With all the charms, although this corporal rind  
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.  
(662-5)

Comus may exert his power over the Lady's body, but her mind is free to sustain her faith in virtue. Consequently, Heaven sees only the truth of her spirit and does not judge her for that which is beyond her control. Critics who attribute the Lady's inability to rise from the chair to her inner turmoil (Obertino 31) cannot possibly reconcile Heaven seeing good in submission to sin.

Following this misguided explanation for the Lady's immobility, some critics extend their interpretation to include the Lady's disavowal of her own sexuality. The Lady's refusal to drink from Comus's cup even "were it a drought for Juno when she banquets" (701) is described by Kerrigan as a "repudiation of marriage" (153). But Leonard cleverly rejects Kerrigan's conclusion with the Lady's own words: "Good men can give good things" (703). Leonard interprets this line as a vindication of sexuality (134). The Lady's refusal is of Comus's lasciviousness, not of marriage. Even this small concession is dangerous though. Her predicament makes it "impossible for her to voice... so open a celebration of marriage" (Kerrigan 135).

Comus cannot understand spiritual chastity. His arguments are grounded in the *carpe diem* tradition. He urges the Lady to follow her nature and to enjoy nature's bounties. The Lady's response has often been labeled a concession. She offers an "alternative vision" (Moseley 198) of the "Sun-clad power of Chastity" (782), but realizes that Comus is "not fit to hear thyself convinc't" (792). Comus is unable to grasp the concept of spiritual glory, steeped as he is in physical pleasure. But as Leonard notes, where the Lady is reticent, the Attendant Spirit is not (136). The Epilogue's celebration of marriage clearly disclaims any disavowal of such by the Lady. According to Dyson, the Attendant Spirit is a connection to the purer realms of Heaven and thus can "be taken as wholly reliable" (115). Therefore, the Spirit's return "to those happy climes" where "celestial Cupid" (977, 1004) awaits his joyful marriage with Psyche can be interpreted as a reaffirmation of the chaste love of marriage.

Analyzing John Milton's Ludlow mask solely on its relationship to the Castlehaven scandal and the rape case of Margery Evans is obviously fatuitous. But to exclude the possibility of their influence on the theme of the mask would deny an interesting dimension by which *Comus* can be interpreted. As mentioned before, there is no concrete evidence to support the claim that Milton even had heard of Margery Evans although there can be no doubt of his awareness of the Castlehaven scandal. Leah Marcus initially revealed the facts of the Evans rape case in 1983, and although the absence of references to the rape in all criticism dated before that time may tend to support Milton's ignorance of the case, Marcus's research proves that members of the Ludlow audience were deeply involved in the case's investigation and settlement. Comus commends the Edgerton children's virtue and, according to Marcus, "praises the Earl(s)... capacity to cut a path of rectitude through a world beset" by tribulation (322). Lady Alice Edgerton was "made a paradigm for victims of sexual assault" in an attempt to symbolically and publically acknowledge the Bridgewater family's own vulnerability (Marcus 323). In doing this, the audience is forced to recognize not only the power of chastity, but also the innocence of the Lady. By consistently exalting the glory and power of spiritual purity, *Comus* can be read, whether intentional on Milton's part or not, as an indictment of the inequity with which victims of sexual assault were judged.

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Kathy Kowalik  
English, Senior



## Lust

A smile stretches across my bridge of hunger.  
I yearn to taste a sip of your French bridge.  
You pose for a picture and carve a special place  
somewhere music can never touch. My body aches  
with every breath away. I'll pay any toll  
to breathe the same air as you. My eyes

hunger for your presence. My love for you  
is like cancer. It needs and feeds and eats  
away like tiny ants on flesh. I crave  
a warm shower of lips across your bare chest.  
Your lips so full and wet beg for my touch.  
I watch you under the tree by McGinnis

combing the locks of the grass looking for the center  
of lover's pasture while holding the hands  
of another man. I sit at a distance  
pining for you. The great oak tree with branches  
reaching far in the sky and arching back  
to the ground shields you from me. You wet my thirst.

*Timothy Carter*  
*English, Senior*

## Sanctuary

Under the limbs of bark  
I sleep like a snail curled up  
in a shell of flesh. I kick  
and turn from side to side.  
While testing my limbs, a damp  
balloon houses the liquid  
blanket. I'm safe from the wars  
of breathing. This is my sanctuary.

But, my home revolts.  
As my kicks puncture the dross,  
two hands and one push slowly  
drag and rip me from the bliss  
of life. With a slap on the butt  
and a snip of the cord, that's it.

*Timothy Carter*  
*English, Senior*

## My Eyes are Open

I dream and dream. I dream of a day when the light  
shines down. A light so bright that the sun would blush  
with fear. Oh, how I'd welcome the day when I'd write  
the death of race. No black, no white, not even  
the shades of gray would stay. I wish and wish.  
I wish on the highest star for my hand to be seen  
as a hand and only a hand. My greatest hope  
awaits the day of land without color.

-- But, the dream is over. My eyes are open.  
I'm no Martin Luther. I'm no preacher.  
My wishes become my fears. My fears escape  
the stars' reach. The waiting game ends. The wake  
ushers a tide of rebels, klan, skin heads.  
I'll say, "Welcome to a land of only plaid."

*Timothy Carter*  
*English, Senior*

## Prosthetic

Two men stand upon a stage  
with large voices as deep as echoes  
skating through stone chimneys. One man  
of royal birth wields a virgin foil  
with a hemlock tip. They fence a duel  
of revenge over premature deaths of fathers.

A dance of death pits two friends in a war  
like a snake and mongoose. Family pride  
escapes the loser's grasp like sand  
slipping through the glass of time.

Ten people behind ten people with row  
after row of prosthetic eyes  
sit detached and suspended  
while watching the murder of a prince.

*Timothy Carter*  
*English, Senior*

### The Circuit Breaker

You shattered the circle,  
Ripping family quilts to shreds.  
History skittered from under your foot  
Seeking refuge in dirty floor cracks.  
The oscillator caught it and blew it up.  
It swirled lazily out the broken pane  
Like the ashes left behind  
By a flame.  
Into the sane light of the sun  
It fled, taking suitcases  
Of guilt, and hate, and shame.

*Rita J. Self*  
*English, Post Baccalaureate*

### The Rock

You plucked it from the ground, a gift for me,  
and squeezing, exposed the rock beneath the clay.  
Your fingers brush away the grains of time,  
every shade of brown stacked up, squeezed down  
into palm-sized chunk of Mother Earth.  
It has a lovely feel, so cool, impassive.  
Rocks don't tell time, or fall in love, or die;  
and will only speak to those who listen.  
With no thought, you filled my simple request,  
buried my gift in your coat pocket, and checked  
me off your mental list of things to do.  
It was a simple exchange, no touching, no hugs  
just thank you, good bye, don't bother me. You  
know I never expected more than a rock from you.

*Rita J. Self*  
*English, Post Baccalaureate*

## Whisper

A word licking my ear, the merging mesh of  
stockinged thighs, a beckoning of breath  
that speaks, trees enveloped by the wind --  
All of these I've known and felt. But nothing  
could prepare me for the Sunday when  
you took me out, Red Lobster, "Let's have lunch."  
You leaned across the table, eyes fixed upon  
your plate and whispered to your scampi, "I  
am filing for divorce." I swear the words  
they hung above your head, and I just stared  
and wondered who'd be picking up the check.  
I remember nodding my head, some dashboard dog  
that bobbles when the brakes are slammed too fast.  
Who'd of guessed, a do-it-yourself divorce  
for only \$10.19 (without court costs).  
The forms were quite efficient, you petition,  
and I respond with cool politeness, well,  
at least I tried. No property to speak  
of, just an avalanche of books. We fought  
about the literature the most -- just who'd  
take Shelley's Frankenstein, and don't forget  
Chopin. We even laughed to find our gnawed  
and crumbling candle, unity eaten by rats.  
The wax, it waned, and clearly that's not all.  
I gathered up my pile and loaded up  
my car. I heard the rasp, the closing door,  
just like my sheets, now whispering emptiness.

*Erin Kahla*  
*English, Senior*

## Untitled

Woolen curtains draping  
night across my face -- choking  
on grains of sand that grit  
my teeth (wishing to oyster)  
pearling coatings for  
quivering, raw flesh  
tongue, breast, womb

The madness falls from your lips  
(glittering peacock feathers) bits  
of Icarus, singeing wax  
You say I play the martyr  
Well, then -- drive the nails.

*Erin Kahla*  
*English, Senior*

## Passing

Leaves, tumbling -- flecked  
with golden weight  
of sunlight.  
They lie like brass angels  
in the grass, waiting  
for the breath of gods.  
Limbs, brambled -- entwined  
with false embrace  
of sky.  
They quiver like dark glass  
tapped by the careless earth,  
a statement of winter.

*Erin Kahla*  
*English, Senior*

## a plea in earnest

the child is restless.  
why must he run?  
Father, Mother  
never proud.  
sought perfection is  
all they allow.

He longs to know  
why the caged bird  
sings.  
He longs to write  
by candlelight  
the melodies of  
His soul.

Father's legacy is  
all-important,  
Mother's dream even  
more so.

tomorrow He will fly  
to that forbidden place  
with earthen skies...  
PEACE!

He will write the mortal  
words his parents  
cannot comprehend.

they will not think: the  
blackness of his fingertips  
is from candle flames  
not ink.

the child without a  
childhood will surely  
pass away.  
touch Him, Emily, before  
it's too late.

*Tasha S. Harper*  
*English, Freshman*

### A Child's Verse

I learned to talk to  
leaves and trees,  
and cats and dogs  
who carry fleas.

I'd laugh and play  
with rocks and clay  
everyday from  
June 'til May.

Sometimes I'd see  
a masked raccoon,  
then we would sing  
by light of moon.

Mom and Dad, they  
never knew.  
I cannot tell them  
for I still do  
talk to  
leaves and cats  
and coons.

*Tasha S. Harper*  
*English, Freshman*

## The Night

The night, a bed of a billion dreamers who explore the infinite shadows;  
A place of comfort and ease for those with clouds in their eyes,  
Full of wonder and fearless curiosity of what mystery hides  
in the darkness.

The night, the blue-black drapes that cover the unusual and private;  
A place where strangers know each other,  
And an alley cat could become a leopard,  
Where only cowards have nightmares.

The night, where the musk fragrance never ceases to exist  
Like the scent of a lover after moments of passion,  
A place where eyes never turn away and faces do not crimson  
With confusion or dishonesty.

The night, where a storm of emotions can enter the mind,  
Without causing a tear or a smile.  
A place for those who appreciate the black of the sky for  
emphasizing the shimmer of the stars,  
Where worries escape the mothers of the sun.

And for the day when dawn does not arrive, leave the spineless  
and boring to mourn for an eternity.  
But let the creatures of the night continue to feast on the  
constant discoveries of every step that daylight cannot reveal.

*Lisa Nicole Beaumont  
Undecided, Freshman*

## Night Show

An ankle-deep carpet of kelly clover  
Ripples in twilight's breeze  
Mosquitoes take flight  
From the disturbed springiness,  
And Mesmer's wand conducts the wheedle  
Of rubbing cricket legs.

Each clover folds up into a tiny emerald  
Umbrella, protecting itself  
From the imminent darkness.  
The man in the moon works his spotlight  
As Cassiopeia and Cepheus glitter  
Across the blacked-out stage.

The hours tick off, the rug becomes sodden  
With dew. Nothing but cool silence.  
The phantom moon glides over  
To Mother's dark side. Having missed  
The night show, the droplet-laden  
Sleepy ones unfurl to see the "Day" star.

*Aimee D. Haley  
English, Junior*

## Bachelor Pad

The mess in there is driving Bill insane:  
A pile of garbage mounts, the kitchen floor  
Is sticky (syrup spilled), a greasy stain  
Has wrecked the couch. A moldy apple core,  
A crusty dish, a crumpled bit of foil,  
Some dirty shirts, an empty soda can  
And stacks of magazines -- a pack rat's spoil.  
It all is making Bill a hopeless man.  
No maid will step a foot into his sty  
And Bill won't stop his sloppiness. "No way,  
How can I change? I'm such a messy guy  
It would be hard to get a girl to stay."  
He has to make a choice: find a girlfriend  
Or let the heap of rubbish be his end.

*Aimee D. Haley*  
*English, Junior*

## Sunday Dinner

She doesn't stand still. Every word has with it  
a flightless flap of the arms, which  
is how to tell when she is irritated,  
or merely drinking too much Taster's Choice.

The kitchen is her place of comfort, where  
she stirs together vegetable casseroles  
and hums songs with words that she forgets--  
a happy place where Lawrence Welk still polkas.

A minor inconvenience, the thoughts that  
others have. Not as interesting as the  
turkey at Kroger, on for sixty-nine cents  
a pound. And don't forget the maraschinos.

Respect the elders, I've always been told,  
for that's the Christian way to be; but why  
is that as difficult as swallowing a slice  
of coconut cake with extra-thick frosting?

*Ellen Howard*  
*English, Senior*



## A Conversation over Sundaes

Seeing Caitlin Collins at the class reunion was such a scream, I thought I would just bust my buttons. I was never more surprised in all my life, and that's been a few decades you know.

I mean, here I was worried because I didn't have date for the fancy dinner at the Hilton, like that's anything new. I'm not what you would exactly call gorgeous or beautiful. More like striking, which means I'm 5'11 and okay, but my red hair doesn't exactly stop the traffic.

Just like in high school, when girls dressed up in minis and clogs, pretending to have fun at those lame dances in the gym. I refused to wear anything but flats; I didn't want to be the lone giraffe. Whoever came up with "ladies' choice" numbers anyway?

Well, I almost didn't go to the dinner. Boy, am I glad I did. You should have seen how Little Miss Cheerleader has changed.

I mean, she used to be so slender and all. And that blonde hair of hers, down to her waist and never a strand out of place. She was the envy of all the girls at Yellow Springs High, even some of the "ins."

I have to admit, I was a bit intimidated by her myself. Can you imagine that? I mean, she was only about 5'2" or so; she probably weighed about 100 pounds. I always felt like the ugly duckling or something.

Not that she treated me that way. She was actually kind of nice, in that fake sort of manner. You know, around try-outs time, when the hopefuls are running around giving everyone candy-laced sheets of paper with their latest photo and tons of buttons with their name on them.

She was always really sweet to me then. She even invited me to a few of the parties she had at the country club. Not that that is the most exciting place to be, you know; a lot of boring people standing around with expressions almost like stone statues.

However, it was at one of those parties that I first met Chase Hawkins. Man, was he a hunk or what? Tall, broad-shouldered, and raven-haired; he had the most incredible brown eyes, the color of a delicious cup of mocha. My legs were cooked macaroni every time I saw him.

Well, it was common knowledge around campus that Caitlin had the hots for Chase; he was at every party that she had a hand in planning. And he chose to come and dance with me. I can still remember how good he looked and the cute little dimple in his cheek when he smiled. Man, that Percy Sledge number never sounded so good.

Actually, I would've liked going out with him. Problem was, he was an "in" and I wasn't; besides, he was an inch too short. Just right for Caitlin, though.

I mean, don't get me wrong, Chase was a nice guy and all, he just never mastered the art of thinking for himself. Everything was done according to what "the group" unofficially decided. His one fatal flaw, so to speak.

I didn't see him after graduation. He left Yellow Springs to pursue an acting career. He kind of considered himself the next James Dean. Ended up in Sacramento, I think.

As for Caitlin, she went away to Austin to live it up at UT. I think mainly because her parents, grandparents, and about half a dozen aunts and uncles all went there, - family tradition or something.

She even joined Alpha Chi Omega, so she could continue her role as the princess-socialite. I heard it all at dinner; I never thought she would shut up and let anyone else speak.

You know, the really funny part about all of it was she didn't even have a clue. She wasn't quite so slender, and her hair had more than a few strands of gray. She looked like a slightly lumpy pillow, stuffed into a shimmery, red dress and matching pumps. Pounds just hide better on tall women, you know?

And there she was, holding court at our table like it was still 1966. It's amazing how some people change, yet stay the same. I suddenly felt like Cinderella at the ball.

*Ellen Howard  
English, Senior*

## Rainy Day

Rain kisses the sidewalk  
as I sit inside the house,  
thinking of fuchsia polka-dots  
and sipping flat A & W.

The flowers are dancing,  
bright yellow and purple rows,  
to the lively bongo beating  
of the slanted shingle.

McDoodle lies sleeping,  
unimpressed by the music,  
on the limboing plaid couch --  
a rare moment of silence.

*Ellen Howard*  
*English, Senior*

## Rhythm of Rain

Pitter-patter, pitter-patter  
the soothing sound of rain  
quenching nature's thirst.  
Puddles slurped up by  
roaming dry-mouthed life.  
Bird baths teeming with dust covered  
plumes of black, blue, red.  
A child with outstretched arms  
tries to hold onto her handful of rain.

Pitter-Patter, PITTER-PATTER  
incessant sound of rain  
pounding into saturated earth.  
Soaked animals seek refuge in  
their master's dwelling.  
Silent birds huddle under leaves  
water slipping off wing.  
Children carried inside by  
umbrella toting mothers.

P I t t e r - p a t t e r  
Silence comes, but only after  
everything has washed away.

*Amber McClintock*  
*English, Freshman*

### **...Connected**

Hypnotized by pulsating power -  
tasting electric air -  
lightning bolts dance with copper wires.

Deft fingers poised to strike at the sight  
of that promising blink  
illuminating the screen of night.

Incessant buzz of fluorescent lights  
ignored by jaded ears  
as quick fingers mechanically type.

Silent conversations held on screen  
meaningless words exchanged  
lone lovers of partners never seen.

*Amber McClintock*  
*English, Freshman*

### **The Reminder**

Gush of wind, slam of door  
your spirit exits  
rattling your cane on the hook.

Unnoticed by casual glance,  
but ever in the minds of those left behind  
your cane hangs still.

Touched only by loving hands  
that recall your strong grip and deliberate gait  
as you walked past us.

*Amber McClintock*  
*English, Freshman*

## A Time to Cry

There's a stream that runs through the woods behind my house. Once, when I was younger, I followed that small narrow stream until it grew so large that I couldn't throw a stone across its girth. I had never gone that far into the woods before. Normally, I just followed the stream at a nice slow pace. I used to love walk along that stream in the fall and listen to the crunching of the crisp, yellow and red leaves under my feet. But, that day...

That day I was running, not the graceful running of an athlete trying to make it to the finish line. It was more like the running of a frightened, wounded animal trying to get away from its predators. I had no idea where I was going. I don't even remember how far I had run. I just ran. I'm not even quite sure why I ran. I had to get away. Get away from my family, get away from that house, from the memories. Have you ever done that? Tried to put as much distance as you could between you and your problems. The only thing is that no matter how far you run, you can never get away from your emotions. I didn't know that then. I thought if I ran long enough, all the pain would stay behind.

I almost out ran it, but then I had to catch my breath and it caught up with me. I couldn't go anymore, so I sank down to the damp grass and started to cry. I couldn't help myself. Maybe that's why I ran; I didn't want anyone to see me cry. I had always been like that though. I always kept everything to myself, and I always, always cried alone. I didn't let people know when I was hurting. I was always so strong. I could handle anything. But, I was just fooling myself. I couldn't handle anything; I couldn't always be strong. But, dammit, I could cry alone. And I did.

I must have cried for a long time because when I finally stopped, I found myself curled up into a ball. I didn't even remember lying down, but I must have. I remember how much I wished for someone to be there with me, for someone to hold me and tell me it was alright. But, there was no one. I was alone. I laid there for a while not really thinking about anything. Slowly, I sat up and made my way over to the bank of the stream, well it really wasn't a stream anymore. Somewhere along the way that little narrow stream had become a brook, a very large brook. But, I really didn't notice that until later. The only thing I noticed

about the stream at that time was the reflection of my red, ruddy, mud covered face. It didn't even look like my face. Had anyone seen me then, they would have either laughed at me or felt extreme pity for the poor little wretch before their eyes. I looked like a zebra whose stripes had just been painted on, and who had been caught in a rain storm before the paint could dry. It was really quite ridiculous. Each tear track was clearly visible on my muddy face. I looked pathetic, and I really didn't feel that much better. I couldn't even find the will to wash my face off. I just sat there feeling very sorry for myself and stared at the water going by. It must have been the sudden breeze and the rustling of leaves that made me look up. And, as I raised my head to the sky, I noticed that the tree branch hanging above me had only one leaf left on it. How that one leaf managed to hang on for so much longer than the others, I don't know. I watched that leaf cling stubbornly to that branch as another breeze gently passed, making the fallen leaves dance and swirl in little circles before landing back on the ground. In my heart, I was praying that leaf would never fall, but I knew my prayers would fall on silent ears. Mother Nature is a stubborn woman, and as I sat mesmerized by the sheer will of that leaf to hold on to that life giving tree, a strong gust of wind tore the leaf off the branch and sent it hurdling into the air. My heart sank as I watched that leaf descend and land gently in the stream. It was then that I realized how large that little stream had become, and it was then that I realized that I must have run a long way. I watched the leaf travel down stream and out of my sight. And, as I watched that leaf being carried further and further away from its origin, I realized it was time for me to head home and face my problems. I wasn't like that leaf being carried away by forces outside of its control; I could control my own life and choose my own path.

I stood up to make my long walk home, and I noticed that my face wasn't the only thing covered in mud. I had a mud pinstripe going down the left side of my body, and the bottom of my jeans had soaked up quite a bit of water. Lord, I must look a mess. To rectify my unseemly appearance, I lowered my self back down to the bank of the brook, washed my face and tried to get as much mud off of me as humanly possible. After this task was done, I felt and looked entirely more human. I hurriedly made my way back home. It had taken a while for me to come back to my senses, but it didn't take long for my senses to come back to me.

Why in the world had I just started running like a thing possessed? Did I think I was the only one devastated by the news? How could I be such a selfish little bastard? Everyone must be worried about me. It's not like me to run off like that. I always face my problems; I don't run from them. I had to get back. I had to get back and be strong for everyone else. My time for crying was over.

*Amber McClintock  
English, Freshman*

### With Keys of Brass for Grandfather Clocks

"Somebody  
left the key in the door  
of the grandfather clock!"  
My six-year-old bellows like  
a sentry on patrol.

His eyes,  
just an inch or two above  
the shining brass temptation,  
glaringly visible,  
reachable, forbidden,  
sees what his elders have  
forgotten to remove  
and place beyond the sight and reach  
of some young child, not yet  
tamed and tempered by resistance.

"Some--Body!"  
rings out like a last call  
from a drowning man who  
knows he cannot save himself  
without a helping hand.

Too close  
to turn away, too luring  
to resist without the aid  
of somebody whose eyes  
don't see the way this key  
reflects and sparkles, whose  
ears can't hear soft whispers  
from an ancient voice, enticing,  
not with apples, but with  
keys of brass for grandfather clocks.

*Gayla Chaney  
English, Senior*