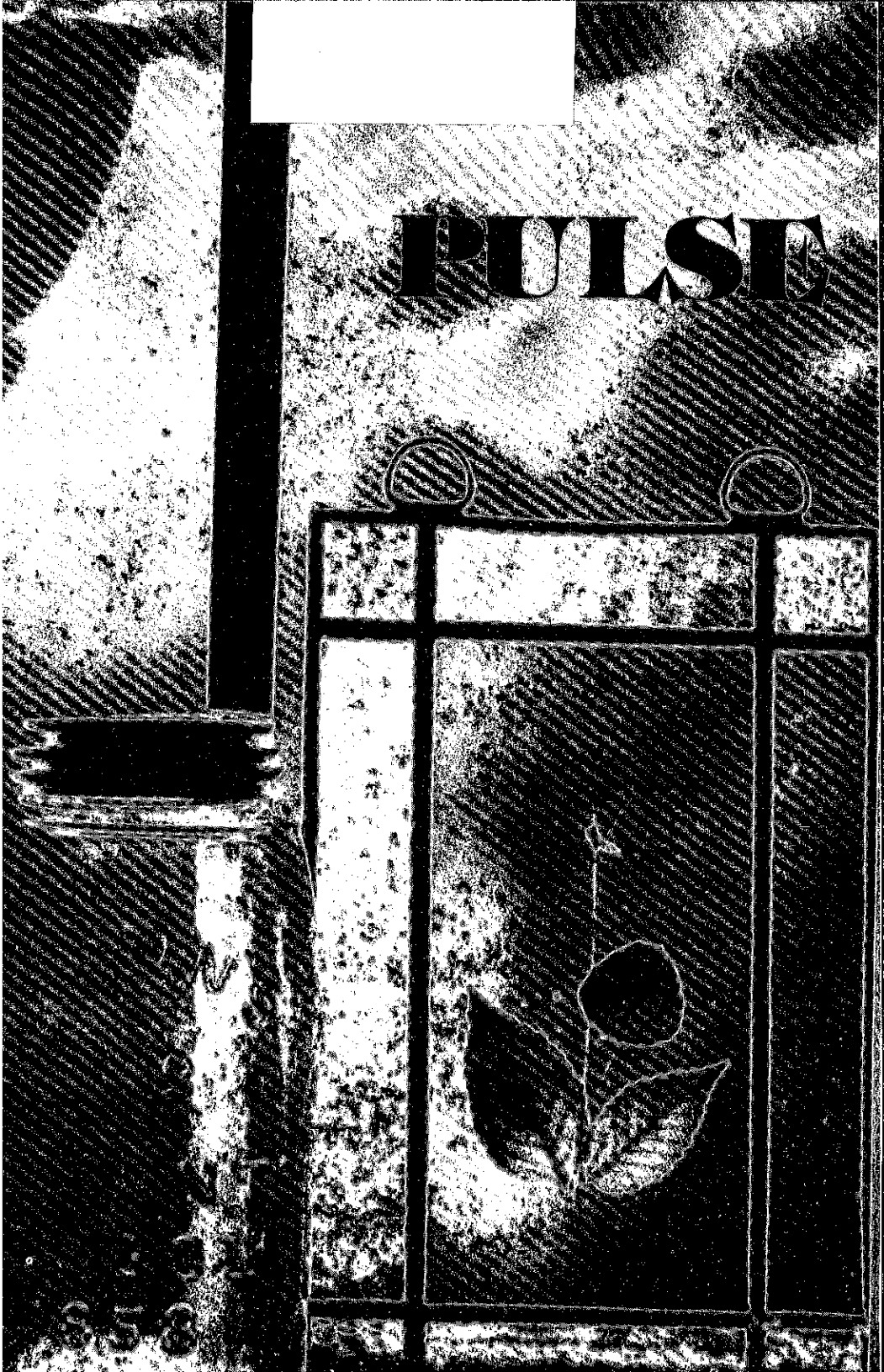


PULSE



PULSE Spring 1977 VOL. XIX No. 2

Editor, Greg Busceme

Assistant Editor, Alaina Cribbs

Publication Consultant, Jo Ann Thrash

Faculty Sponsor-Advisor, Olga D. Harvill

Art Advisor, Lynn Lokensgard

Acknowledgement, Cecil King

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CONTEST WINNERS

Eleanor Poetry Award

"Haunts," Deborah Lynne Hollister
"Saratoga," Deborah Lynne Hollister
"Solitaire," Darcy C. Walker

Professor's Poetry Award

"The Spear," Tom Newton
(Judges chose to extend only
a second place award.)

Short Fiction Award

"All the Young Boys," Darcy Walker
"The Sentence," Al Navarro
"He Knew," Theresa Trahan

Pulse Cover Award

"Reflections," Norma Provost

staff of **PULSE** would like to thank the following faculty
ers for contributing their time and knowledge in judging
mpetition entries.

Eleanor Poetry Competition

ay J. Curet
land C. Jones
les T. Summerlin

Professor's Poetry Award

Christoper P. Baker
Dale Dillinger
Winfred S. Emmons

Short Fiction Competition

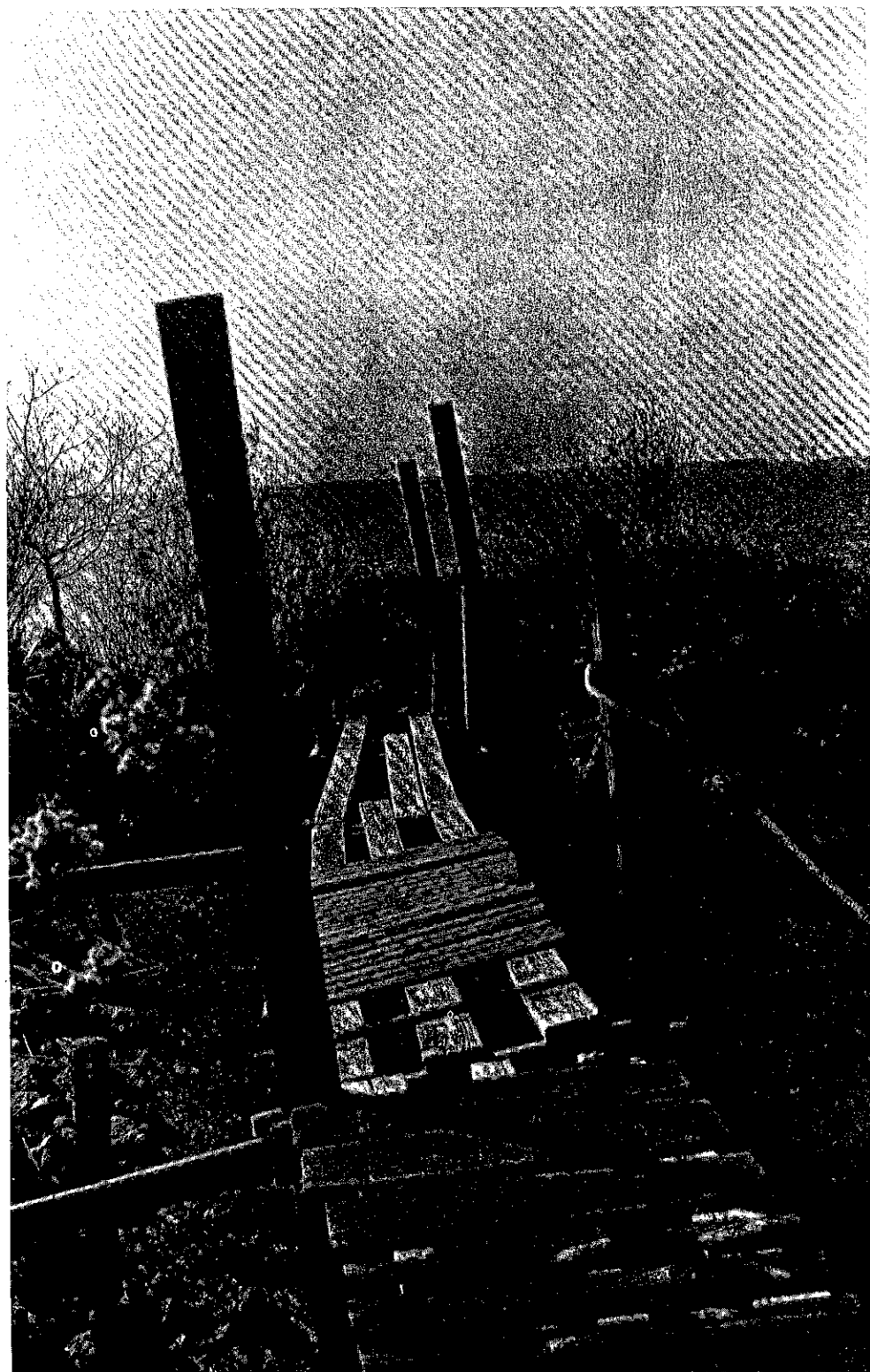
y Benesh
B. Wilkerson
lyn Georgas

Short Essay Competition

Robert C. Olson
Jo Ann Stiles
Claudia J. Spence

Award Notes

okesbury is the 1977 recipient of Lamar's Rowe Award.
ned as a memorial to Bessie Maas Rowe, this grant is
matically extended annually, but awarded for conspicuous
a graduating senior who has significantly contributed
ve literature. Ms. Stokesbury, former assistant Editor
magazine, has been published in **Pulse** where she was
nner of the Eleanor Poetry Competition. Her latest
on is in Cedar Rock, Spring 1977.



Haunts

Tears are not the only price.
Sobs
that come from chambers
deep inside my house of
unresolved conflicts are like
Ghosts

 bursting
 through in
gusts of dank wind, flapping
the shutters and cloudy curtains.
My friend, there are doors
that I will not allow you to enter.
You may see the shadows of ghosts
snuff the candles in my eyes.
Look away, they are not yours
to chase, nor solve.
They are the raven,
the knock at the door,
the unwelcome guests, roosting.
But my house has been
a brooding place long enough.
I have paid the price.
The departure is overdue.
Shoo!

Deborah Lynne Hollister

Night Play

I watch the curtain drawn, the rope pulled over
itself, hand over limbered hand.
Audience of one, tired tree,
clacks its branches, releases
birds and leaves, their wings small and mingled.
My ended day, my pretty play, the lovely ones
together mount each other and ride the pale,
unbridled horse through the monuments of night
to stand before the stone that tells my name.

Carol Stokesbury

Saratoga

Oh, you know . . .
where the haunted
lights are and that
funky little
Big Thicket Museum
and the monument
under an arbor
of pine trees,
One-horse town.
A couple of gas stations
and general stores.
red brick post office.
five or six churches,
and not a honky tonk
within seven or eight miles.
(Precinct 3 is dry, you know)

I guess you heard
about the time those two
hippies-with-long-hair
stole some blue-jeans
from the dry goods
store and ran off
into the thicket and
the deputy-sheriff
summoned all the
blood hounds in the county.
They must have been
high on that
marijuana. (the hippies, that is)
Yet, there is a place about
three miles past the old oil field alive
with wild azaleas
in the spring
and
white
white violets
and
morning glories
and magnolia blossoms
and
day lilies
and
crepe myrtles that look like
watermelon slices
and
dogwood
and yellow jasmine
and sleepy wood fern
and . . .
Karma.

Deborah Lynne Hollister

Solitaire

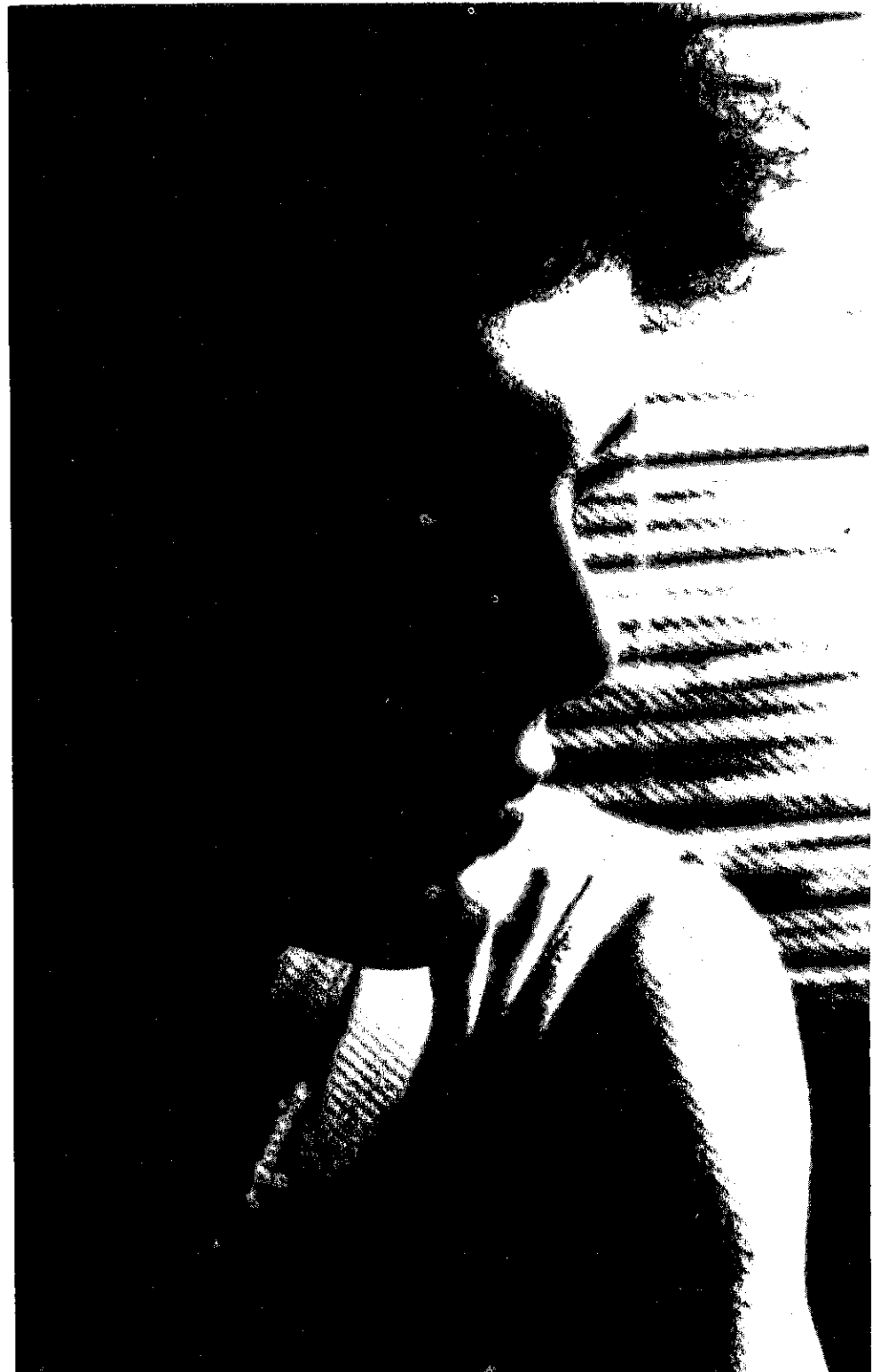
Alone does not mean lonely
As night does not mean gloom
and being single does not mean
She could not catch a man
For men can not be caught
It does not mean she failed in life
or failed her duty as a woman
for she herself must write her script
To be — or not to be —
Roots to someone else's tree

Darcy Walker

The Club Taboo

They will always say they love you
with words that are numb
as the tongue they come from.
Last call, round about two,
will always find a bar full
of no one but you.
So you walk to your car all alone
just like you always do.
Your fingers grip the wheel.
Your mind is sad and empty
like a tea-room feel.
Back home you bury your tears in a pillowy bier.
You screw the mattress on your narrow bed
wishing to God it was a man instead
who'd change your nightmare to a dream affair;
who'd promise you breakfast and stay on for dinner;
who'd make you a satisfied saint instead of a sinner.
So unless you hear me now, I guess
you'll keep not understanding why
my face grows dismal as this bar
when I watch while you cruise
with a drink in your eye
and look in your hand
for the man who'll never be there.

Larry Norton



Cubicle

I climbed, heart pounding,
from the brick tomb
trapped (an hour paid in advance)
by the Amoeba spewing
faulty thought
twice weekly.
I remove myself
conjuring you through
walls to fill me with
fantasy yet to be born
and that which has matured,
burst like marigolds
and died, seeding my mind
waiting to find a Spring
for new blooms to break
beyond the tomb
when the Amoeba
has found a dry spot
to be dormant
and babble to himself.

Greg Busceme

The Spear

The eyes observe the sharpness of the stone
As blood drips from the savage hand of man.
The brain perceives a puncture past the bone
And vital meat to feed his hungry clan.
The agile thumb and fingers join the shaft
And point with vines. He draws the weapon near
And feels the wood and stone — admires the graft.
Now puny man will be something to fear.
The clawless, fangless beast sets forth with hope.
He finds his prey. His triceps flexes hard.
The charging beast falls down the shallow slope.
Its charisma is now forever scarred —
There lying dying on the ancient plain
Is proof of mankind's destiny to reign.

Tom Newton

A Eulogy

Almost not there
in the hair on my leg
an ant traverses.
With his machete mandibles
he ambles through
the blondy brush and vines;
canting his frantic antennae
for signs of:
"The Lost Column."
Pausing only for a sip of sweat
at some partially filled pore,
he wipes his forehead
with a leg
and rests upon a pimple
in a clearing near my knee.
From there surveys the world
as far as he can see;
reflects upon the marvels of creation,
the freedom of his nation,
transubstantiation.
Then,
more mundanely
checks his gear
before deciding

on a path that's near
(the years of trooper-training
obviously well ingrained).
He soldierly inspects
his weapon,
testing bayonet
for razor point,
finds the edge
still keen
though somewhat stained.
He wiped it clean
till not a spot remained.
Then,
as if to finish off
this satin shine,
raised up his ass
and put his full
untiring weight behind
the slender needles mass,
driving downward into oil
deep within the sebum soil;
and that is why
I wrote
A Eulogy

Jess J. W. Doiron, Jr.

near, bird of you, the air
zor wing —
air flow traveler flow.
te the diagonal shadow
ches
etch across time.
ue to be, to prove,
ere is a pattern,
e are linked.

. Brown

Strong Wind Huh?

What be the only way of knowing
Where the wind that's blowing,
Going?

Whistling, thistling, through
Streets that are bustling
With both automobiles
And pedestrians cussing.

'Tis appalling,
My Darling,
To see your health falling;
Because of this wind which is steadily calling:
Help!

On account
Of the smoke
And the smut,
That only
A slut
And a bald,
Ribald rut
Could dare
To inhale
As they sit
Drinking ale
To the tune
Of a song
That's so
Terribly long
That's carried by wind that's so terribly strong
And stinks!

Jess J. W. Doiron, Jr.

Butterfly Hunting with Carlo

In my mind
there is a warm summer day;
filled with green
and time.
You are there
and I;
we are young
and laughing.
Someone yells.
Eyes fly open.
The green
is rubbed over our faces
suddenly;
there is little time.

Jess J. W. Doiron, Jr.

Visions

Pearl pendant moonlight
Is transgressed by weightless
Footfalls through avenues of void.
Surging of blood through bodyvein
Is hidden in no secret oozing recess.
No river heaves and swells to refuse
To be spanned from rib to rib by rib.
Primeval urge and process
Are quelled by machines
And white-masked men.
Our lands of now never present silence
Long for past visionary days when
Awe was a product of first glances . . .
We desperately need our mysteries —
Else, when all truths are man-ordered,
The patterns are known,
The dancer knows the Dance,
We curl up in some deserted,
But Understood corner,
Pick our noses, and ask, why bother?

Allen R. Brown

Tommy

its hard to tell
that within such a small box —
a small, metal casket —
so many people lie.
the parents and grandparents
the universe of knowers
all packed tightly,
permanently,
within the grey box,
against the velvet
and the child
who died too suddenly
for one to clench teeth,
grasp an armrest,
anything to buffer the shock
of the sky falling full weight
on them.
the mortician suggested
it remain closed;
a tiny, grey box is all I saw.
we placed it above the hole
as strained sobs dart through the air
slowly testing the waters of reality
of the child in the box — Box
above the hole, dug deep,
where so many people lie.

Greg Busceme

Savanna Justice

Savanna justice dictated that
Today a battle would be fought
Benaath the blaze white sun
Between the antelope and the hyena,
And that the antelope would lose.
His desperate groans and pleas
To the antelope gods were in vain.
They made no difference when the
Gnashing teeth of the hyenas
Ripped and wearied the antelope
To his knees, exposing sinew
To the blaze white sun,
Confirming that the brief interlude
With life was spilling into the grass.
Back legs fell, pain grew
Beyond feeling.
And the antelope yielded
As he saw eight more hyenas
In even stride crossing
The grassland in his direction
In the blaze white sun.

Allen R. Brown

Mole Hill

A mountain was before me
or more accurately
sprouted from the earth.
It seemed to grow fat
like a pig for lard
and the peak was jagged
not at first but little
by little
from a round smooth greenness
to lumps breaking the top
invading until there was
no green or round or smooth,
and it was too high to breath.

It used to be a tiny place,
just big enough for a two ounce
half-blind creature to seek refuge beneath the earth.

Greg Busceme

Poem To Leave By

This day is held by a locust shell,
brittle, abandoned,
painfully slit down the back
to tell about growing.

Where has the insect flown.
It surely crouched here
waiting to dry,
hiding beneath these leaves
and fearing every shadow.
But then how bright new wings
must have gleamed
to know the first safe sunlight.

I leave brittle things behind —
books not read,
lies and promises,
poems I should have finished.
Crouching in this darkness
I am drying now,
glad for the sun
and for people who love the sound
of bright beginning flight.

Jo Ann Thrash



"The meeting will now come to order." The president was old-
ed; she insisted on using a gavel at important meetings,
on, Folks, Settle down, we can socialize later." Bang, Bang.
v old do you think she's getting?" Dr. Biyalah whispered,
so softly. "A hundred forty? Fifty?"

"I think she turns one hundred forty-nine tomorrow," I replied.
row. Wasn't something else happening tomorrow?"

Biyalah, Dr. Nizamabad, would you set examples for the
s by being quiet?" I believe I blushed; Biyalah did not. "Pipe
everyone! This meeting will come to order now!" Bang,
The sixty-third Initiation of the Institute of Motherology is
session." Bang, Bang, Bang. Expectant hush. Introductory
s. All of which was really awfully familiar to me, except the
ms — some fool had thought to cut costs by using Silicon-
imitation parchment. Serviceable things, of course, but
not right for the occasion. They had the texture of rotted
and smelled like scorched rubber. " — Mother of Motherol-
r. Arikawa Chumash!" For days we had talked about her.
d not delivered the Address for man, many Initiations —
tiations were only every third year. This might be her last.
oldest person I had ever seen came to the stand. She had to
two hundred years old. (— looked up her age later; she was
ndred thirty-one.) Time had left her face a sagging morass
nkles that surgery could have smoothed; she had refused
ntly. (Her face had character under all those wrinkles; she
aracter; it stuck out all over her. Even her voice had
er.)

"We are about to become hosts." Hands like bony claws gripped
turn. There was no microphone; The architecture of the
naturally amplified her clear, strong voice. "For six years you
studied nutrition, genetics, fetology, and all the other
s necessary to produce the best babies your generation can.
ree years you have prepared your bodies for the nine
s ahead and developed a lifestyle suited to your body and the
ou will nourish. You know what minerals and vitamins in
loses are necessary in what forms during what stages to
p each organ in the fetus. And this afternoon your terms as
egan with the injection of the sperm. Nine months from
he professional mothers will take over. All this will happen
t one miscarriage, one premature birth, one baby deformed
way — except, of course, those of you chosen to bear boys."
ot hear the rest of her speech; I could only hear the urgency,
e tortured face of a boy who wanted very badly to be normal,
us who could not understand why his genes had booby-

trapped him.

There had been a certain desperation in his eyes, a kind of
pleading in the way he clutched my sleeve. But he had merely said,
"Dr. Nizamabad, could I talk to you? It would only take a minute."

"I don't suppose you remember me."

"Yes, I do." I did, and I did not need to refer to the employee file.
"You're the only boy employed at this research facility as anything
but an experimental subject — in fact, probably the only boy so
employed in any facility."

"I want to be normal" He whispered fiercely.

Why he had chosen me as confidant I did not know; we had met
only once before, while I was passing through the Genetics II Lab.
As Administrator, I was an authority figure, not a fairy godmother
or symbol of comfort. But he was being quite unreasonable. "You
can't, you know that. It's impossible. You've seen the research, in
fact, I dare say you've done some yourself. You —"

"I want to be a lab technician!"

"Do you have a certificate of —"

"No!" His face was flushed. I began to wonder if his mind were
going already.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty." His eyes, those wide, desperate eyes, dropped.
"Twenty tomorrow, anyway."

He had lost. He knew it, I knew it, the whole world knew it, but
he would not admit it.

"I can do the work! I know it!"

"Two years' training to be a technician —"

"One! I've been an assistant for two years, I've been watching,
asking questions, all kinds of questions —"

"So only one year of training, what difference does it make?
You'll be dead in five years anyway — your heart, your lungs, your
brain —"

"My heart."

"You know it. So why fight it? Probably every boy you know will
be dead by age twenty-five, and those who live to be thirty either
go crazy or become vegetables."

"It's not my fault!" I'd heard of boys getting wild as their time
came near. Training him to be a lab tech was not the answer.

"I know. I'm employed by an industry devoted to exploring this
genetic sex-linked order to self-destruct. You're employed by it. A
quarter of the world's population is involved in it. Have you talked
to your counselor?"

"Sure. She wants me to be a good little boy and die on schedule."

"Why must you be a technician?"

"So I can make something of the rest of my life," He said simply.
"— can't do enough as an assistant. If I had been born a woman,"
The thin hands twisted into knots. "I would be a person. I mean a

son. Live long enough to be one."
You had been born a woman, you just might be the one to
make the break-through and save the lives of the boys of the

watched your work. It's unbelievable. It's also already
going erratic. You may not have five years left. You're due for
the top soon, aren't you?"
Tomorrow."

That's right, your twentieth birthday. Well, even if the
rough came tomorrow, it would be too late for you.
Nothing in this world that can stop your body from killing

I could understand why the boy had said so urgently. "I
be normal!"

and myself on my feet with the rest of the audience,
going wildly as Dr. Chumash left the stand. I bought a copy
speech later.

Hundred twenty-six young women between the ages of
fifteen and sixty were initiated that night. In their smooth brown
they had artificial candles that never flickered or went out in
the night, but cast a halo of light around each young face. I could
not remember my own initiation — with real candles
flames had wavered no matter how carefully we had held
them all right, maybe my hands hadn't been rock-steady. Still, the
use of technology did not necessarily mean the death of
the ceremony.

When the ceremony ended, I would have left in a daze if
he had not accosted me. "Time to wake up, Kid. You looked
like a zombie during Chumash's speech. Can you get home all

right, sure. I was just thinking."
I'll get used to it after a while."

He was old enough to give her a playful poke in the ribs.

They were in the streets now; A car slowed down. "Hey, want a
ride?" the driver leaned over. "You two left so fast I didn't get a
chance to say hello."

"I'm just kind of wrapped up in my thoughts," I answered.

"You're sleepwalking now," Biyalah explained. "Note the vacant
expression on your face" — "I am not!" I protested.

"Come on, get it!" Biyalah urged. So we settled ourselves on the
front seats inside. The driver honked at another car and waved.
"Where are they?" I asked.

"They're the initiates." Khoisan chuckled. "They were a little surprised
to find me there. You know how young blood must have its fling
before going host. Well, they went to this new bordello on the
edge of town — excuse me, is this where I turn to go to your
business?"

"Not here — the next corner."

"Oh, that's right." The streetlights turned on as the car
approached them; behind, the lights died as the car left them. "As I
was saying, they had their fun with the boys, and in the process,
they met the manager — Me. So today they show up in their white
Robes of Ceremony and are handed their candles by someone who
saw them at the Bordello the night before." She grinned at the
memory.

"What about the boys?" I asked involuntarily.

"What about them?" She pulled up in front of my apartment.

"Khoisan, How do they like being sex objects? What's it like to
grow out of adolescence and know you have only two or three
years left before your mind and body start to degenerate? What's
it like to be employed only as a prostitute or guinea pig?"

"Now you're beginning to sound paranoid," Biyalah declared.

"Wait a minute, Bi. I hear the boys talking among themselves
about it. How unfair it is." She was silent for a minute. "Once in a
while a boy goes berserk. Hangs himself. Slashes his wrists. Or
attacks another boy. Actually — and I think both of you will be
getting a memo about this — this Bordello is just one more lab in
which to study their behavior."

"But they're illegal" I protested.

"We keep them that way to serve as an outlet for the boys."

"The Gezaire experiment," said Biyalah.

That's right. A city without any Bordello, legal or illegal, just a
hotel for them. It lasted exactly three weeks.

I remembered that one. Thirty-one suicides out of forty-seven
boys. I could still hear him: "I want to be a lab technician!". He
wanted some meaningful activity — probably they all did.

The phone was buzzing as I entered my apartment, and I pressed
the receiver switch. "Hello? Hello? Anyone there?" Silence. "Look,
you haven't hung up, so say something!" Silence.

"Hello, Bi." I tapped her on the shoulder. "Hello, I said."

"Oh! Oh, There you are!" She grinned. "Oh! absent-minded
scientist here forgot she asked you to come and look at
something." She handed me a beaker less than half-filled with a
clear liquid.

"So you've invented water." I sloshed the liquid around. "What
are we paying you that fabulous salary for?"

"That's not water and I didn't invent it. Habib did."

Habib? Yadi Habib?" I dimly recalled the woman who had been a
high-fashion model in her sixties and had matured into a brilliant
chemist. She could not be quite as old as Dr. Chumash. "You mean
she's still around?"

"You know, Niz, you really are quite observant sometimes." Bi
shook her head. "She's been dead about two months now. I came

was, but no formula, and her notes are flat impossible. I
ze time now to derive it from the solution anyway. But I
you ought to know. Because that, my dear Administrator,
to put you, me and a quarter of the world's population out
in twenty-five years, destroy the world's second largest
and change the direction of the future."

nnocent-looking liquid?" "Well, alright, what is it?"

cial sperm."

art stopped.

ore inefficient sperm banks. No more industries based on
odies that self-destruct. No more money wasted on
for it. Finally, we can expand development in other

ore boys. The newly born ones would phase themselves
venty-five years — then no more boys. The human race
ever be the same. The only world we had ever known — or
— would be gone, within our lifetime, with all the young
ire, there would be high-level discussions and fist-
g debates and behind-the-scenes wrangling. But because it
e possible to eliminate the people who represented the
problem we had ever known, rather than solve the
the question would not be, "Why should we?", but
"Why shouldn't we?"

he who had called me last night (and had not spoken)
nswered the phone. In the middle of a heart attack, he had
all — not his doctor, not even his counselor. Me.

e had wanted to be a lab tech. Lowest post on the totem
far, far out of reach.

art began beating again. **"YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A
ACE TO KEEP SOMETHING THIS IRREPLACEABLE,"**

hat you like with it." She wagged a finger at me. "But you
d care of it. (It's all we've got.)"

l a very good place. I went unobserved to the restroom.
poured it down the drain.

ceding material was excerpted from hearings on the
nent for gross official misconduct of Dr. Shaden
ad, Administrator of the Arikawa Chumash Research
of the University of Muwaylih at Magharah. For a
ned record of the complete hearings, refer to Sec. 8, Div.
, RTX-499175, Inter

Walker

He Knew

He did not know the sound that woke him. He opened his eyes in
fluid motion, pricked delicate furred ears to listen and flared moist
nostrils. He lay without sound listening, nearly without a drawn
breath listening. He could hear them. Each making twice the noise
any forest creature would.

His father sat Indian-style on frozen forest floor some twenty
yards distant. A regular show among irregular ones, a darker
among patterned ones. Ice coated bramble and yopon gave a mute
grey glow that framed the shoulders and head. The boy squatted,
his weight on his heels, the backs of his forearms pressing against
his thighs, and his wrists strained across respective knee caps. The
fingers of each hand were stretched and pulled by the weight of
the gun he balanced. A peep hole showed a darker block of
silhouette set apart by the mold grey-green of brush and show.
The squared shoulders and craggy head denoted a memorial to
fathers, connoted a monument for their sons.

They both saw him at the same time. The father remained
seated, pretended not to see. Each knew his role in the game. The
son would do the killing.

There were two of them. He could sense, almost be, in their
breathing. They had three smells. One each masculine and a
combined one, not animal, more mineral. A light masculine smell
came; it was nervous, wars, a kindred animal spirit. He seemed
anxious, afraid. The other masculine smell was heavy, cold,
unhurried, unnervous, and uninviting. The animal feared this one.
The third smell was high, light, toxic, and clung to every thing it
touched. It as a nauseous smell.

With flat velvet eyes, he looked about, and saw almost the same
scene now as when he lay down. The difference was the ice. It
coasted, covered, glossed the uppersides of everything, even his
coat. The ice clung to and matted the tan red brown fur with the
accents of black and white.

He thought it well to escape. And though not in pain, when he
tried to rise he found his knees also ice covered and near frozen.
He could not move. He knew, became aware that this may be the
end.

The squatting, freckle-faced boy came to his feet with as much
grace as his clumsy age would allow.

His head was up, alert, not blinking. He knew.

The father stood up to view the scene, and increased the son's
apprehension and anxiety.

The twig snap was close. Clear and resonant the crack sounded.
The feel, the sense of the crack, served as catalyst to explode the
emotion, and disavowed the dread felt by the two major players,

o of animal spirit.
re thought, he was struggling to his racing feet.
dropped to his knees on frozen earth. The sudden hanging of
ad arched to nearly touch his spine. His knees and body
, then the head smoothly moved forward. As the head
in proper symmetry, he felt his blood rolling over the back
tongue, thick and full, filling the mouth with great salt taste.
e knew. Last he placed his chin upon an ice frosted knee, and
le of red returned to the earth.
y came from the brush then, the horrified young one, the
old ones.

animal lay where he had fallen, his last effort one of
sure: legs folded under trim lithe body; eyes gently closed;
ice still clinging and matting in the growth patterns of the
ie sole violation of an otherwise natural state was the blood.
g from warm body into cold air, it had already begun to
ize, to mingle and merge almost naturally with the ice and

venty-six pointer." The older said. The voice was flat, meant
g by what it said. The voice was unemotional, full of facts
thority.

said the young one."

when He could trust his voice to the hearing of his father,
beautiful."

sa Trahan

The Sentence

cold, November afternoon as the men line up in four files in
lifferent groups in what they hope will be their last
ion of Army basic training.

chilly breeze works its way around the young soldiers, yet
Polanco knows better than to put his hands in his pockets.
esn't want rocks stuck in them again. Just because basic
g is over doesn't mean that the drill sergeants have to stop
chicken-shit.

n where Polanco is standing, the fourth squad of the fourth
n, his vision is limited to the men in front and to the side. He
ree other close buddies in this company. Garcia and
ez are also in the fourth platoon, in the first and second
respectively. Solis is in the second platoon.

the men are nervous. They know the reason for this
ion. Now that their initial training is finished, they will be
ed to other places for further training. The anxiety is shown
faces. Most of them have an idea where they will be going

next, to Advanced Infantry Training in North Fort Polk, otherwise
known as Tigerland. After that, the next step will be Vietnam and
Victor Charlie. Of course, most of the men hope for better things
like supply school in the East, missile training in Texas or mechanic
training in California. Anything else will do but Tigerland.

Sergeant Brydson approaches the ead of the formation along
with Sergeant Harrison. The young men focus their eyes on them.
Brydson is the platoon sergeant, the top dog of the drill sergeants.
Polanco feels that Brydson doesn't look right in Army fatigues,
holding a clipboard. The big, black sergeant would look better in a
football uniform with the number 32, since he resembles Jim
Brown. He looks even bigger when standing next to Sergeant
Harrison, a blondish, boyish-looking fellow from Indiana. Al-
though short and slim, the men found out that Harrison can be
tough. He has already been in combat in Vietnam and has related
some war stories to the men, mostly on the lighter side. He got the
men curious about bald, slanted pussy. Brydson is also a war
veteran, having served in Korea. But Korea does not register with
the young soldiers.

Brydson starts shouting names in alphabetical order. "Adams—
North Fort." Well, isn't that something, thinks Polanco, first name
off and we got a winner. He is headed for North Fort Polk and
Tigerland. "Archer—", continues Brydson, "—North Fort." Two
for two, thinks Polanco. "Atkins—Fort Huachuca." Well, he is
lucky. He is going to New Mexico for something but it sure as hell
isn't Tigerland. Brydson keeps on with his roll call as he flips pages
from his clipboard. Polanco listens. Soon the names have passed
through the E's. Polanco's buddy should be the first of the G's.
"Grace-see-a," bellows Brydson meaning Garcia, "North Fort."
Polanco looks forward to where Garcia is standing. He can see only
the back of his cap-covered head but Polanco knows that at this
instant Garcia's eyes must be a little moist thinking about his wife
and kids back in San Antonio. Polanco can feel the tenseness in the
air as the names crackle all around the platoons. As each name is
called, the owner responds with a rigid stance.

It is funny, thinks Polanco, it is like a goddam courtroom with
Judge Brydson pronouncing sentence. Most of us so far have
gotten the death sentence.

Polanco listens for Martinez's name. Brydson again mispro-
nounces, "Martyr-ness-". As the sergeant says it, Polanco thinks in
unison, North Fort. Well, tough luck, Polanco says to himself, not
looking around for Martinez. I know he was hoping for something
else and so was I for him. He sure had a hell of a time through basic
and I didn't think he would make it.

Polanco puts his thoughts aside and once again concentrates on
Brydson. His name should be coming up soon "Palmer—Fort
Bliss." Lucky asshole. "Plummer—North Fort." Sorry, fellow.
"Planko—" That's me, recognizes Polanco through Brydson's

tongue. "—North Fort," finishes the sergeant. Polanco es. The gavel has struck. Where the hell else, dammit? He ump on his throat and cannot swallow. Shit, I must be more than I thought, Polanco realizes. The sentence has been and there is no appeal. Polanco had felt fear when he had d his draft notice. His buddies back home had joked about ng to Vietnam. They had laughed then. Now Polanco knows ere really is nothing funny.

name is called although Brydson says it as Soul-is. Bingo n also. North Fort is awaiting. Hell, he is one guy that care. Polanco quietly suggests. Verdict accepted. Solis is d and out of the four of us seems most Army gung-ho. y, he volunteered for the Army. I don't believe he would ven if they sent him to Mongolia. If there is any consolation f this, it is that the four of us will be together, considers

. Weber, the last man, is called. He fares no better than of the other men. "North Fort." Guilty as pronounced. for being in this time, in this place.

son clears his throat and spits. Looking over the olive-drab e says, "Your individual orders will be given to your platoon . He will issue them to you. Later you will be notified when e. No one is to leave the company area. That's all for now. t!"

's all? Polanco silently queries as Brydson walks away from mation. Not even good luck or kiss my ass? Well, I guess ouldn't expect the judge to wish his best upon those just ned. Anyway, Brydson is and always will be a hard ass. I ice a thin smile on Harrison. I guess he recognized our looks as been there before. He is probably saying to himself, I feel or you sons-of-a-bitches. But there is more to that smile. It ort of smile that a prosecuting attorney gives once he has case.

men break from their ranks and gather around their n leaders. Most of them are quiet, with a little grumbling nd there. They grab thin sheets of paper and look upon The ones that are smiling the widest have been acquitted. re not going to Tigerland. Out of 157 men, 144 have been d to learn the art of jungle fighting.

anco looks down on his orders. Any faint doubts have been ed. It has been deemed right for him to be sentenced to nd.

anco wonders who the jurors were.

Engine, Engine

He was sitting in his car. One of many sitting in their cars on Railroad Avenue waiting for the train to go by. He knew that they did it on purpose. They would send the trains out at eight in the morning to catch you on your way to work and then again at noon to make you late for your lunch hour or back to your office. Then at the end of your tedious working day, you had to wait on them again. They cunningly sent the trains out at four fifteen just in time to catch you and make you wait and wait and wait. He was sick with frustrated anger. There was nothing you could do. There was some law or other about trains not being allowed to block an intersection for more than ten minutes. But to do anything you had to have the engine number and the conductor's name and a list of five witnesses. There was nothing you could do but wait and fume and curse and wait.

He flipped his cigarette out of the window. He counted some of the cars and got bored at about number fifty-five. That was only entertaining when you were a kid. You would jump up and down on the seat of the car and see who could identify the car from farthest away. Kansas City Southern, The Rock Island Line, Union Pacific, Sante Fe, he knew them all and hated them all with a boiling passion. He hated to wait. To waste his time and sit in his car with the engine idling stupidly and carbon monoxide stinking up through the floor board.

They had no right to make him wait. He would like to shoot at the cars. He began to daydream about horrible derailings, cars and engines burning and tumbling off of the tracks. Loads of freight lying about in twisted nightmare shapes. He could hear the conductor screaming as he burned and burned with his clattering monster writhing in agony. He liked the thought. It make him smile and feel a little better. That would teach them, he thought. Blow up a bridge with a train in the middle and see the freight cars tumbling in slow motion down into the foaming water and hear the grinding and screeching of metal twisting and crumpling. He laughed a little out loud and began to hum.

The car behind him honked in irritation. The train had passed. When he got to his office his boss was waiting for him.

"You're late again, Burley. That's three times this week. If you can't roll out in the morning maybe I'll have to find someone who can."

"I've been sitting behind some damn train on Railroad for twenty minutes. You know how they slow down or stop and then back up some before they start again."

"Maybe if you left for work early some morning you might miss the train."

Burley hated his boss too. For the rest of the day he had fantasies about Mr. Wall with a conductor's hat on in a pinstriped overall. He would reach up for the cord of the air whistle. But the

would not be that dull off-key braying that all train whistles could be the sound of the fluid spurting out of the hydraulic. He would grab frantically for the emergency handles of the brakes but a note would flutter down out of nowhere and say "Love to you from Burley"; and then would come the snarl. Burley would change the face of the conductor many that day. It would be the leering grotesque face of his drill t, or the wrinkled hawk like face of his landlady. Everyone, the who ever made him crawl or wait or pay died that day in the railway accident. He felt very good and worked a little that evening. He decided to take a different route home. It was a train on Railroad he would fool it and go home down College Street. It passed under Railroad in a beautiful underpass. Here it was again, half way down College. He did not even see the fourth Street. There was a Union Pacific engine changing tracks across College. They almost never used this track. They were on purpose. They knew he was going home this way. The servile types were running up and down waving red rags and shouting. Jumping and flopping around the engine like little acrobats on a swollen queen. Burley cursed venomously. He probably have run over them if there weren't twenty or so in front of him. He would back up and go another way but the road already closed in behind him. He wanted to scream. And so probably the day he began seriously to formulate his plan. In his spare hours he collected information about city rail plans. He went to the library, to the railway offices themselves, to the city hall, even as far away as Houston for current information on all types of rails. It took him nearly five months to gather all of the references he needed. And then he went to work on the plans. This was much harder. There were no construction plans in the entire area that used them. He had to go to north where the land was rocky and they used charges to cut through the rocks for the highways.

He nearly gave up many times. He was spending all of his money and time and the charges were almost impossible to get. On one day he was stuck on Railroad again. He looked at the clock a different way now. He would not curse and smoke cigarettes and "rev" his engine. He would grow quiet and sly and hold his hands together while he estimated tonnage. When he got to his office there was a note on his desk from Mr. Wall.

"You are fired. You might go to work for the railroad since they need more of your time than I do. Miss Peebles has your check. Bye, Wall."

His hands shook and he bit his lip in rage. He raked everything off his desk with a violent sweep of his arm. You'll pay, oh you'll pay, he thought. He picked up his check from Peebles and raked it off her desk too.

Wallace Monroe had replaced Burley in Mr. Wall's office. He was prompt, indeed early. He was never caught by trains on his

way to the office. He was always snugly settled in his swivel chair when they went rumbling and swaying down the tracks on their way to wherever. He didn't know much about Burley. They said he was a peculiar type and threw an hysterical fit when he was terminated. That would never happen to Monroe.

Monroe was shuffling through his papers when he heard the first explosion. He thought it was an earthquake at first. He was on the twelfth floor of the Beaumont Savings Building. He ran to the window that overlooked Orleans and saw black smoke and flames boiling into the sky from somewhere by Railroad Avenue. Then he heard the second blast.

It was the College Street underpass, though he did not know it. He thought it was a bombing. Then the overpass by Park Street went. He could see it clearly. Huge sheets of flaming metal shot hundreds of feet into the air revolving slowly. Far away on Eleventh Street the rail cars were tumbling off the framework and smashing automobiles like insects under giant oblivious feet. Calder, McFaddin, North, everywhere trains were exploding and leveling buildings and cars and people. The entire downtown section of Beaumont was isolated. The smaller explosions on Crockett and Gladys had sealed it off.

Wallace Monroe was shaking and crying and moaning "Oh my God" "Oh my God". It was like war . . .

It was beautiful. The dream fulfilled. He could hear the sirens wailing but he knew they could not reach the wreckage downtown, it would burn and burn with all the freight and cars and nasty people, (thought Burley.) He was dancing wildly on the trestle over the Port of Beaumont. He could see the whole city, a giant burning carcass. There would be many "after-explosions". Grain in the cars, oil in the cars, it would burn for days. He would sit up here even if he starved to watch every moment. The trestle swayed. Burley grabbed frantically at the girders. He held the metal super structure as it wagged wildly, its foundations crumpled by the heavy blasts.

"Take that," screamed Burley, "that'll teach you. Does that burn you Wall, does that burn you, Peebles. How do you like your filthy duplex now, Mrs. Langley, you old hag." He was screaming and laughing and waving his free arm. He could see all their faces crushed and burning.

Wallace Monroe was staring dumbly out of the window at all the smoke and fumes and fire and wreckage. He felt he was going to vomit or faint. Then he saw the man. Some poor man caught on the trestle over the Port. He saw the trestle quiver and then lay over on its side in slow motion. The poor man held on all the way down. He seemed to be dancing.

Alaina W. Cribbs

Contributors

R. Brown has been published by the Texas Society of Poets recently in **Pulse**, Fall 1977.

Busceme, a Speech major at Lamar, has been regularly published in **Pulse**. He has been both assistant Editor and Editor of the magazine.

W. Cribbs, assistant Editor of this issue, has won awards for short fiction in past issues of **Pulse**.

W. Doiron, Jr. has been previously published in **Pulse**.

Barah Lynne Hollister is a past second place winner in the Poetry Competition.

Marvarro, a junior English major is published for the first time in this issue.

Newton is enrolled in Lamar's School of Vocations where he studies Plant Maintenance.

Norton is a graduate teaching assistant in the English Department.

Al Stokesbury, a senior English major, will be a graduate teaching assistant in the history department in the fall.

John Thrash, past Editor of **Pulse**, will be a graduate teaching assistant in English at Virginia Tech in September.

Debra Trahan is a psychology major previously published in the magazine.

W. C. Walker, a sociology major, won the essay competition in the magazine, Spring 1976.

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