

S-84  
XXVI - #1

Amberg

# **PULSE**

**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**  
**Journal of the Arts**  
**Spring 1984**

**Volume XXVI**

**Number 1**

## CONTENTS

Patrick Wright	4
Flora Lutz	10
Rob Block	14
Alice Jordan	15
Regina Bartley	17
Carole Schnell	17
Julie Stewart	18
Dana Keenan	19
Karen Miller	20
Anita Holloway	23
Catarina Moreno	24
Brenda Gray	26
Dana Keenan	27
Gwen Whitehead	28
Susan Chandler	30
Beverley Benham	32
Kerry Fare	37
Andrew Preslar	39
Laura Harris	43
Rob Block	43

## AWARDS

### Eleanor Poetry Award

"Night Drive" by Patrick Wright

### Professor's Poetry Award

"The Child" by Brenda Gray

### PULSE Poetry Award

"Castle In The Sand" by Flora Lutz

### PULSE Staff Award

"Window" by Gwen Whitehead

### PULSE Fiction Award

"Country Style" by Beverly Benham (Tie)

"The Vacant Lot" by Beverly Benham

### PULSE Essay Award

"Federal Funding of the Arts" by Karen Miller

## JUDGES

### Poetry:

Dr. Norman German

Dr. Charles T. Summerlin

Dr. Lloyd Diagrepoint

### Fiction:

Dr. Chris Ellery

Dr. Marion Ingham

Dr. Mary Northcutt

### Essay:

Dr. Christopher P. Baker

## The Inchworm Spins a Yarn

I wanted to mend my ways,  
but I couldn't find  
the right thread.

In resolution, I've decided  
I'm made of the wrong fabric.

I'm just a woolly-booger.  
I'll wrap myself in satin  
sheets and sleep through

winter.

by Patrick Wright

## Swept Up and Carried

The wind annoys me  
as I walk among  
the falling leaves,  
swept up and carried.

I shove hands deep  
into my jacket  
and scowl at the sky.

I follow the path  
past the corner  
and cross the street  
at the stop sign.

Still, I look up  
with a suddenness  
at the white pillows  
traveling at magnificent  
speed, eastward.

by Patrick Wright

## Beirut

Crossing campus,  
I passed our ROTC  
building

and was reminded  
by the banner  
flapping low

against  
the blue  
sky.

My skin drew tight  
into my muscles,  
again:

Fire and ice  
mixed in hell  
found some of us.

We separated  
ourselves  
from ourselves.

So remembering  
ourselves  
by ourselves,

I shivered.

by Patrick Wright

## Morning Storm

He spoke in concert as I  
sat in bed wondering  
at the winds howling  
through leaves and limbs.

He allowed the light  
to flash upon my face  
as the tears of storm  
streamed down the panes.

And I rose from bed  
confident of the coffee  
and shower which I  
was about to take.

by Patrick Wright

## Tonight, a Gentle Breeze

Tonight, a gentle breeze  
brings southerly winds in  
through my bay view window.

The briny bay air off the gulf  
carries the call of a gull  
sharply banking above the waves.

She flies solitary against  
the moon, at one with silver  
clouds moving northward.

She counters and banks again,  
her eyes fixed upon the tide  
and the ferry crossing the bay.

She is waiting for a sailor  
to cast her a bit of bread  
as he crosses from the mainland

to the isle.

by Patrick Wright

## Night Drive

A drive through the new moon night  
takes us among tanks and stench  
of refineries making gasoline,

past tankers unloaded, keel up  
at the docks on the intercoastal canal.

The road winds its way through marsh  
grass burning off winterkill for spring,  
so cattle with calves can fatten.

Pulling into Sea Rim State Park  
we wheel past recreational  
vehicles hooked up and lit bright,

down to the barricade with the sign,  
Closed for Winter -- Vehicles Prohibited.

We step over the barricade onto sand,  
clastic particles of shell worn and left,  
or bits of Oklahoma valleys swept down

by headwaters beginning a song of travel:

Endless cycles of transgression and cover,  
uplift and wear, rebirth and death;

all of this under the stars, patterns  
across the sky inundated in black mystery;  
solar systems, galaxies

and the steady glow of planets  
in our system as we circle  
about our galaxy, farther from Orion

than we know, closer to  
the faded stars of our recess  
in the universe,

centering ourselves,  
knowing so much of the earth,  
and how to use it.

by Patrick Wright

## Two Candles Burning

Two candles lit  
are better than one.

As one flame burns  
in a long cone,  
the other dances.

Its bright crescent glows,  
dancing as a rhythmic tongue  
repeatedly licking smooth  
white sides. It melts  
the thick-molded form  
into grace.

The green candle burns  
into a green pool.

Its straight, tall cone  
barely moves, melting  
rivulets inside the green  
edge curling, bending  
down, feeding the green  
pool feeding the tall cone  
burning, glowing.

Two candles lit  
are better than one.

by Patrick Wright

## Lao Tzu: No Judgment

I have been  
with you,  
for years  
separated by miles  
of forest cover  
and waves.

Now we have come  
into a single  
wooded hemisphere,  
proximic time  
measured  
in widening circles.

Our tossed pebble  
causes ripples  
in the lake face,  
sending shimmers  
of the sun  
toward  
all shores.

by Patrick Wright

## Castle in the Sand

Two children made a castle  
on the beach of sparkling sand  
while I watched them undetected.  
But I didn't understand

Why they went to all that effort  
to build something that would go  
out to sea as soon as evening  
brought the tide's unerring flow.

They hauled pails of their damp mortar,  
piled it high and then began  
smoothing walls and molding towers  
with their shovels and small hands.

As the sun began descending  
they walked hand-in-hand for home  
as the eager waves swirled round  
the walls that crumbled in the foam.

That night when you made love to me  
I had a fleeting thought  
of the castle in the sand  
that the boy and girl had wrought.

by Flora Lutz

## Rocking Chair

You've got some nerve  
telling me  
that I should give this chair  
to the Salvation Army.

You just can't see  
what it is  
about this rocking chair  
that gives me such pleasure.

It doesn't fit  
our decor;  
The varnish has worn off;  
it creaks when I rock.

The smooth dark wood  
feels like satin;  
The sturdy back and seat  
cradle my body.

I was comforted  
on those nights  
when I rocked in the dark  
and waited for you.

by Flora Lutz

## Looking Out The Window

I look out the window and see the children  
    playing in the sand.  
As I watch, my thoughts wander to other children  
    and their games.  
The sand piles are transformed before my eyes into  
    alabaster dunes of snow, brilliant in the deceitful winter sun.  
The children are muffled beneath layers of  
    snowsuits, scarves, mittens, hats and boots.  
They move like little robots, unable to look left  
    or right without turning their entire bodies.  
Their shouts are stifled by their knitted cocoons.  
Bright spots of red, blue, green and yellow,  
    they roll in the snow and throw it in the air  
    or mold it in their hands.  
The boys have built a mound of the white stuff and  
    knock each other off in their game of king-of-the-mountain.  
On the hill at the back of the lot, the sleds fly down  
    with breathtaking speed, throwing up flames of glittering  
    white spray in their wake, till they coast to a stop.  
There in the corner of the yard, a new-born snowman sports  
    Dad's brand new hat.  
The sun sets early on those winter days.  
As the meager warmth disappears, the children realize  
    how cold they are, and one-by-one and two-by-two,  
    they trudge off across the lots and down the streets.  
Inside the kitchen door, they make a colorful pile of  
    soggy mittens, caps, socks and coats.  
They emerge rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed as layer after layer  
    is removed and added to the heap.  
Then, wrapped in their warm, dry flannel robes they sit  
    around the table and drink hot chocolate.  
The closing of a door interrupts my reverie and I turn  
    to see my tanned urchins with that bright sun-streaked hair.  
They shed a little pile of sand with each step of their  
    sneaker-clad feet across the kitchen floor.  
"Mama, we want some Kool-Aid."  
I send them back out to take off their shoes and as I turn  
    to get their drinks  
I see a small puddle of water standing by the door.

by Flora Lutz

## I Thought of Love

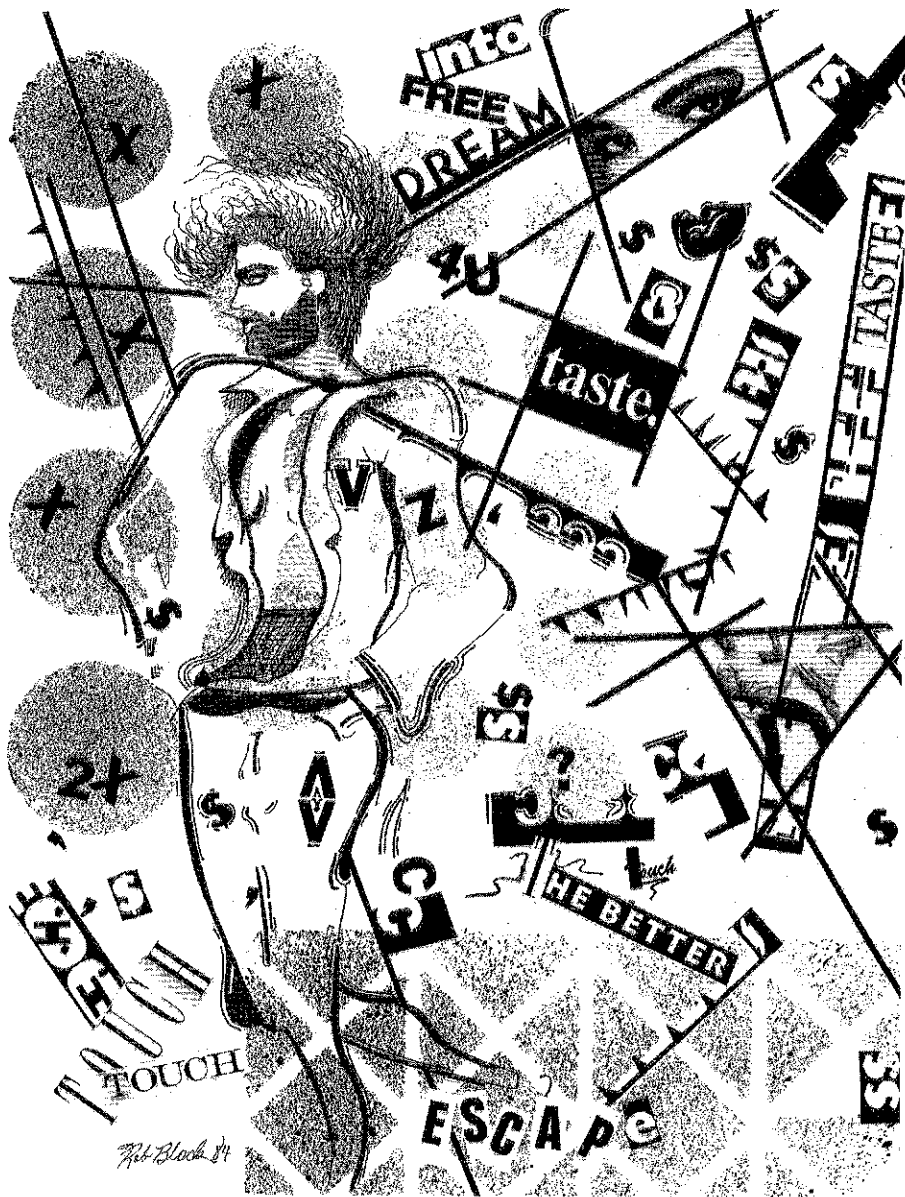
I thought of love as only an illusion,  
A word that man invented for his needs,  
A chimera--poet's fabrication  
To make his poems prettier to read.

I've always been suspicious of a thing  
I couldn't see, or touch--at least define.  
The cynic in me wouldn't let me cling  
To thoughts that love was real, or could be mine.

So I resigned myself to never know  
This mystic force that deftly rules mankind,  
and fully unprepared for that first blow,  
I wonder that I could have been so blind.  
    I knew love at its all-consuming best  
    When my first child was laid upon my breast.

by Flora Lutz





by Rob Block

## Narrow Minds

Going nowhere,  
 Always staying  
 Still inside a  
 Frame of mind that  
 Leaves no room for  
 Adding colors--  
 Tints of life in  
 Scenes completed  
 Many years past--  
 Showing only  
 antiquated,  
 Single color  
 Still-lives, narrow  
 Minds just gather  
 Dust and cobwebs  
 In old, shuttered  
 Upstairs rooms.

by Alice Jordan

## Nothing Much and Something

The day goes by just like the one before,  
 And nothing much takes place to think about.  
 Some calls come in; some folks come through the door  
 To see someone, not me, then go back out.  
 I sit and wish that I could go to sleep.  
 The clocks must all be drugged to move so slow.  
 I do not want to work, or even weep,  
 Waiting until the clocks say I can go.  
 But finally the office hours end  
 and I am fully pardoned and set free.  
 I walk out to my car, a proven friend  
 Who carries me past silent, sunlit trees  
 And down a winding road that seems to roam.  
 This shows me all I want and leads me home.

by Alice Jordan

## Just Another Rumor

Breathing the dust of blasted concrete slabs  
Along with air, the last he will take in,  
He thinks in silence, deaf and trapped beneath.  
No doubt he sees the future, sees too far.

A vision comes to mind: her soft, brown hair  
Falls over hands pressed hard against her eyes.  
They do not stop the tears from seeping out.  
His child, a baby, won't remember him.

His thoughts are not on waving stars and stripes  
Or symbols of a nation proud and free:  
The White House or the nation's capitol.  
Instead, he's seeing one more scene of life.

The walks along the dusty roads at home,  
A fishing trip his Grandpa took him on,  
The games he won't be playing with his son  
Become his only thoughts of glory now.

He thinks it strange; he used to say he'd die  
A proud, triumphant soldier for his home  
And for his country. Under crushing stones,  
Breathing his blood, he thinks himself a fool.

He is not glad to die for national pride.  
He'd sell it all away for one more day.  
To say he's glad to sacrifice his life  
Is just another rumor of the war.

by Alice Jordan

## Just Rain?

Anticipation, it looks like rain  
The dark black clouds chase away the white  
As the darkness deepens the excitement rises  
The heavenly drummer performs his cadence  
As angels watch the candles flicker to his rythm  
The climax of his cadences begins the shower  
Droplets of crystal fall spotting the earth with drink  
The intensity begins to change charging upon the earth as to war  
As if on cue the storm subsides  
Its power rests upon the land  
Beauty comes, colors, brightness;  
A promise...

by Carole Schnell

## Courage Borne

The noise inside had ended  
And a light borne of the silence  
Shone bleak and wavering

At this, the beat of footsteps  
Close behind  
Hesitated and held

Courage came forth  
To lift a new spindly arm  
In glory

And strength rose up  
Into a man  
So oft before a boy.

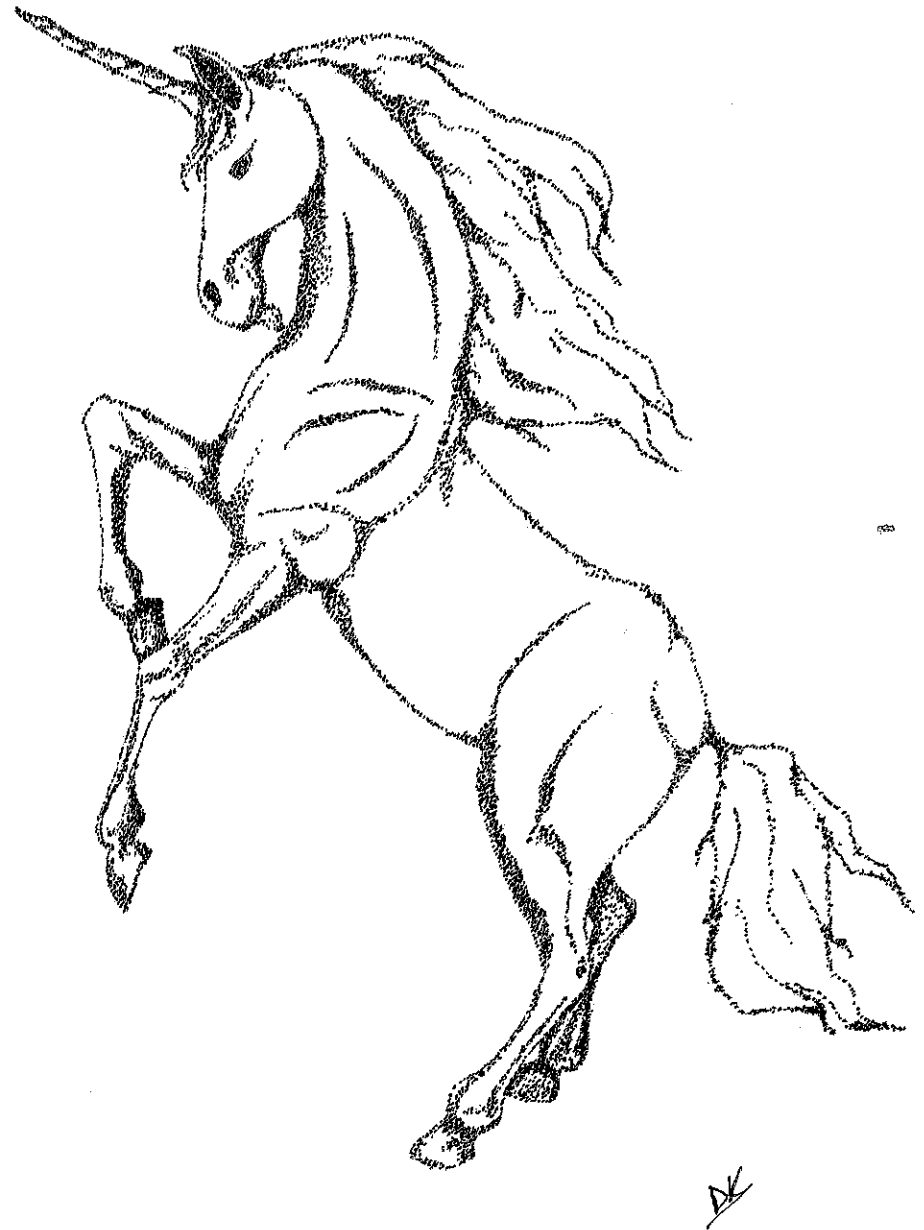
by Regina Bartley

## Marriage

We came expecting brunch -  
French croissants,  
Butter yellow and feather light  
On fragile china plates,  
Eggs Benedict and  
Freshly squeezed juice.

And found just breakfast —  
Raisin Bran,  
Mottled brown and stale  
In chipped brown bowls,  
Cold, dry toast and  
Tang.

by Julie Stewart



by Dana Keenan

## Federal Funding of the Arts

on February 4, 1981, a tentative list of budget cuts was sent to Capitol Hill. Among the proposals to cut federal expenditures was the "recommendation that Federal Contributions to the National Endowment for the Arts...be recued by 50 percent."<sup>1</sup> Budget Director David Stockman reportedly wanted to cut cultural funds to zero, calling the NEA the "National Endowment of Frills."<sup>2</sup> The administration's proposals met with much controversy. Artists, actors, and writers as well as congressmen and other concerned citizens were deeply concerned. Said arts lobbyist Anne Murphy, "An unemployed artist is just as unemployed as an unemployed steelworker."<sup>3</sup>

The federal government began its close involvement with the arts in 1963 when President Kennedy established the Advisory Council on the Arts. He, unfortunately, was assassinated before members of the council were chosen. In September of 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson set up the National Council on the Arts, an advisory body of citizens prominent in the arts, to "maintain and increase the cultural resources of the Nation..."<sup>4</sup> A year later Congress established the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was part of this Foundation.

The NEA was created to "encourage and support American art and artists."<sup>5</sup> Its purpose is to encourage art activities in America, to promote financial stability of arts organizations, and to make the arts available to a wider audience. The Endowment acts as part of the arts-supported community.<sup>6</sup>

The Chairman of the Arts Endowment is appointed by the President of the United States for a term of four years. The Chairman is a member of the National Council on the Arts along with twenty-six other presidentially appointed citizens who are recognized for their interest in the arts. The Council advises the NEA on programs and also reviews and makes recommendations on applications for grants. More than five hundred artists, art administrators, board members, critics, and other expert citizens serve on advisory panels which operate the individual Endowment programs. Together the Council and the advisory panels provide a system of peer review to evaluate applications, identify problems, and develop the policies and programs of the NEA.<sup>7</sup>

Federal funding of the arts is desirable for many reasons. More money can be made available to a greater variety of arts institutions through federal funding as opposed to private funding. However, changes are needed in the NEA's funding policies and procedures. If the funding policies of the National Endowment for the Arts are improved, a budget cut would not hinder the benefits of federal funding for the arts.

If federal funds are cut to the NEA, artists, for obvious reasons, would suffer directly. Most artists are not as concerned with the level of cutbacks as they are with

the suggestion that the Reagan Administration may want to reopen the whole debate over whether government should

subsidize the arts at all--a debate they thought was won 15 years ago when the two endowments were created by Congress.<sup>8</sup>

Federal funding of the arts is more beneficial than support through private funding for several reasons. First, federal funds make an indirect contribution to the overall economy. The arts are an industry "employing over a million people [and] generating five dollars in local tax revenues for every dollar of government support."<sup>9</sup> If a conversion to totally private funding were to occur many artists and organizations would fold due to insufficient capital. Private corporations already subsidize many arts programs but they can supply only minimum amounts of money. Spokesmen for AT&T, IBM, and Exxon were doubtful whether they would be able to increase their arts funding very much. Robert Thill of AT&T in New York said, "...there just isn't enough to take care of everybody."<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, where private funding would tend to be discriminatory, federal funds can be distributed to all on an equal basis. many writers have found financial support through the NEA where they may have been overlooked by private philanthropic institutions because of sex, race, or ethnic origins.<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that discrimination does not occur. However, money from the government can be distributed more equitably to a broader range of organizations and artists than can private donations.

Finally, federal funding helps make art available to all people. Many opponents of federal funding feel that only those who benefit from art should pay for it. Lawyer and novelist George V. Higgins voiced the opinion of many when he said, "I don't like the idea of a steamfitter [paying taxes to] subsidize a book of poetry."<sup>12</sup> On the other side of this argument is Broadway producer and director Harold Prince: "High art is for all people...it isn't the privileged few who jam the museums [and] the concert halls..."<sup>13</sup> If federal funds were replaced with private funds many institutions would become inaccessible to some people. Martin Segel, Chairman of New York's Lincoln Center, said, "It's not the people who pay top ticket prices who would be hit; it's the people who can't afford them."<sup>14</sup>

As beneficial as federal funding may be, the NEA needs to and can streamline programs to make them more efficient. Joseph Duffy, head of the Humanities Endowment, has said, "Both Endowments have grown too quickly...areas nobody questions are riding high."<sup>15</sup> Specific problems include funding of "questionable" arts projects. Some arts Endowment programs tend to have a more social goal than an artistic one. Such programs as funding an artist-in-residence in the Oklahoma prison system and paying blues guitarist Fenton Robinson to play for a "Blues in the Schools" project can be viewed as questionable forms of true art.<sup>16</sup>

Another weakness of the NEA is its fellowship awarding policies. Hilary Masters, in the *Georgia Review*, said, "A radical overhaul of the selection process and criteria is badly needed."<sup>17</sup> There are many cases in which merit is too seldom the prime consideration and "cronyism" is commonplace. A specific case in point

occurred recently on the west coast. It seems that a pretigious publishing company called on a local previously unknown author after he received a fellowship. The company learned the man had applied for the grant only after talking with a friend of his who had recently been appointed to the NEA Literature Panel. His friend suggested the man should apply for a fellowship. He did--and won \$10,000.<sup>18</sup>

The National Arts Endowment should review its procedures and policies. Changes can be made in three main areas. First, the Endowment should make its administration more efficient. Secondly, the NEA needs to make a list of institutions and forms of art it thinks are indispensable. And third, the process by which applications are reviewed and fellowships are awarded should be made more fair.<sup>19</sup>

Many areas of the budget need to be reduced because of our nation's growing economic problems. With a concerted effort and a willingness to cooperate, many government agencies can be made financially more efficient. This financial adjustment does not have to interfere with the benefits of the programs. If funding policies of the National Endowment for the Arts are improved then a budget cut would not diminish the effectiveness of the NEA and its goals. Chairman of the Endowment, Frank Hodsell, said, "...my first real job was to rebuild a sense of confidence about the Endowment. We are here to stay, and to continue to assist the arts in America."<sup>20</sup> Chairman Hodsell's attitude is a step in the right direction.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Tentative Budget-Cut List Distributed on Capitol Hill," *New York Times*, 5 Feb. 1981, Sec. 1, p. 20, Col. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Jerry Adler and others, "The Arts Under Reagan's Ax," *Newsweek*, 16 Mr. 1981, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Adler, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>National Endowment for the Arts, "Guide to the National Endowment for the Arts," (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1983), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>National Endowment for the Arts, "Annual Report 1982," (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>"Guide to the National Endowment for the Arts," p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>"Annual Report 1982," p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Adler, p. 31.

<sup>9</sup>Adler, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>Adler, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>Hilary Masters, "Go Down Dignified: The NEA Writing Fellowships," *Georgia Review*, 35 (1981), p. 233.

<sup>12</sup>Adler, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup>"Cut Federal Aid for Culture?," *U.S. News and World Report*, 13 Jul. 1981, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup>Adler, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup>Adler, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup>Adler, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>Masters, p. 244.

<sup>18</sup>Masters, p. 234. See also pp. 234-241 for similar examples.

<sup>19</sup>Compiled from lists found in "Cut Federal Aid for Culture?," p. 64, and Dick Netzer, *The Subsidized Muse: Public Support for the Arts in the United States*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 135.

<sup>20</sup>"Annual Report 1982," p. 4.

by Karen Miller

## Dostoyevsky's Dog

"Meow, meow, meow, meow"

by ?

I sit on your doorstep  
tapping a tune out  
on my teeth  
and doubting your existence  
tense, crouching, watchful  
as the day fades  
and the darkness settles  
like dust  
in an abandoned room  
and as I sit very still  
and move my eyes just so  
and listen just close enough  
I'm once again  
the young tree climber  
secret agent  
invisible elf  
who wound dreams of you  
around trees, under bushes  
and behind red brick walls;  
who hummed your name  
while avoiding sidewalk cracks  
and building tepee cities  
out of the bark  
that the trees threw away  
and late late at night  
when no one could listen  
I would sing to you  
every song I knew  
and all at once  
like a finger painting  
and laying there  
along with the ceiling  
and the night birds  
and eighteen stuffed eyes  
I gently handed you my soul  
to keep for a woman  
still invisible  
and still humming  
who would sit on your doorstep  
and ask for it back.

by Catarina Moreno

In my cream colored room  
with your mirrors  
I am the only thing that moves,  
me and your absence  
which chases me persistently  
from pillow to pillow  
finally mounting me,  
pinning me down  
with hard bony knees...  
I surrender,  
and at that very moment,  
and with those magic words  
Sleep opens her velvet door  
and leads me  
down dimly lit corridors,  
up winding stairs,  
more doors  
thicker silence  
the colors melt slowly  
melting finally into the golds and blues  
of you;  
the warm copper colors of your voice.

It is there that I wallow,  
unleashed by Time's  
damp and cold chains  
yes, wallow, until Morning  
cruel keeper  
steals in all around us  
handcuffs and blinds me  
kicking, cursing behind me  
I stumble down staircases,  
grope through long hallways,  
the door slams  
the last sound  
which echos for hours  
off cream walls and mirrors  
turning at last  
into hard yellow crust  
that I wipe with one finger  
from foggy brown eyes.

by Catarina Moreno

## The Child

Unfolding petals  
tender, reaching, rejoicing-  
a crushing rainfall

Why are there flowers?  
To bring rest for weary eyes.  
Will you take these gifts?

Bouquet of roses,  
delight of the gardener-  
ragweed by the road

The lingering shade-  
the bloom follows a sunbeam-  
the sunbeam darkens

Mother dove cooing-  
babes playing in the branches  
one falls - peering eyes

An onion tuft blooms  
among the purest lilies -  
everybody knows

Search gentle moonbeam  
Spotlight for the moonflowers  
And the toad must hide

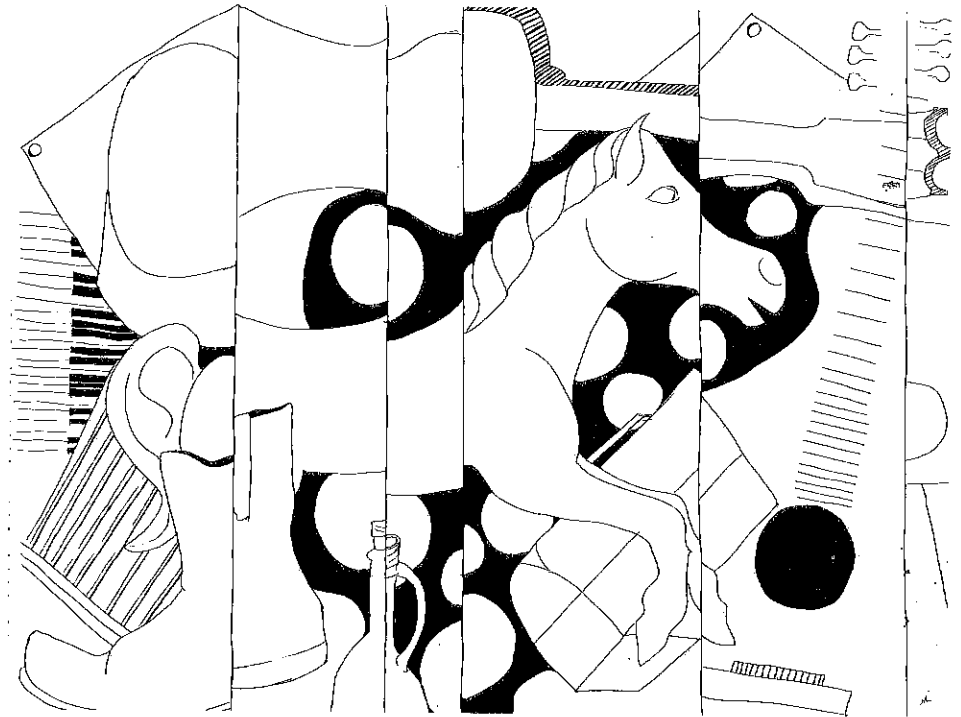
A toad in a boot  
The frightened foot jerks away  
Emptiness again

Tragic avalanche  
The devastated village  
Curse the little rock!

Little helpless lamb  
Who knows your useless anger?  
The one who caged you!

Mighty thunderstorm  
tiny, wounded mourning dove  
Hollow of a tree

by Brenda Gray



by Dana Keenan

## On The Beach

A black wing gull floats high  
Above in the azure sky;  
So stilly floating, he seems to be  
A dot in the clouds.

The sand scorches our backs  
Through bright and gaily colored  
Towels, through dingy faded blankets,  
Baking us, like clams.

Our silence is as deep  
As the water fifty feet  
From shore; every breath of ours is as  
Choppy as the waves.

Sitting up I shade my eyes  
And peer across the water.  
A lone shrimp boat is rocking along.  
I turn to tell you

And find you fast asleep;  
Your mouth hanging open wide,  
Like a baby's, having just let slip  
His mother's nipple.

by Gwen Whitehead

## Window

The window is a black  
square in this dark room.  
No friendly moonlight.  
streams in past the  
curtains. You move  
through the darkness.

Against the window  
your silhouette appears.  
Your neck looks vul-  
nerable in the shadows  
and I can almost feel  
the texture of your  
bare skin beneath my  
fingers. Your shoulder  
is unyielding to my  
touch, hurling me away  
without a motion.

by Gwen Whitehead



## Unfinished Symphony

### I

I walk down deserted streets  
looking in shadowed windows,  
watching the reflection of lights  
in unmoving puddles.  
I search for an unknown,  
feeling the tug in my heart.

A single sound can start me wandering:  
the croak of a frog,  
the creaking of leafless branches.  
Like a conductor's raised baton  
they signal the beginning.

### II

The porch swing creaks quietly,  
as rhythmically as the beaten drum.  
Crickets chirp in the yard,  
like the tuning of the strings.  
A truck's whining engine  
and grinding gears  
(sounds of my soul)  
compose the symphony.

by Gwen Whitehead

## Hope

Wood burns to ashes, iron reds to rust,  
Seas dry to deserts, flesh turns to dust.

Fossils in clifffaces, paintings in caves,  
Flint-stones in furrowed fields,  
Pot-shards in graves,  
Relics in ruins, old photographs,  
All speak of memories:  
Man's epitaph.

Only thoughts last forever.  
Only dreams never die.  
Though covered with grave-stones,  
Our soul's free to fly.

by Susan Chandler

## Nightmare

Streams of thoughts flow through my brain,  
I toss and turn in sweat-soaked pain.  
The lord of Night rules fey and fell;  
He feeds our dreams from his throne in Hell.  
I remember...

Unbridled horses spooked by pain;  
I smell their sweat, their fire-scorched manes.  
Hooves strike fire on flint-strewn paths;  
Eyes roll madly, great lungs gasp.  
Nostrils flare, and legs pump wild.  
On they run, in Hell's corral.  
On they run, till dawn's doors gape.  
On they run, till I awake.

by Susan Chandler

## Dusk Dance

We danced at dusk a special dance  
Amid tombs of marble and bronze.  
We shed our cares, gave whims to chance.  
Where soldiers fell, we were entranced.  
We danced and reminisced.

Where young men died so long ago,  
Now seems so green to me.  
Where Earth flowed red, where soldiers bled,  
Now seems a tranquil sea.

But shadows and echoes haunt these lanes  
With dim and subtle pain.  
And though, like faded fire, like lost desires...  
They hear our laugh and live again.

by Susan Chandler

## Country Style

Shirley sits in the rope-bottomed chair, fidgeting. Mother is making polite conversation with Granny, and outside the summer day is shimmering with heat. The occasional car that passes on the dirt road that runs in front of Granny's house stirs up dust that slowly settles and drifts across the yard and through the screened windows onto the worn linoleum at Shirley's bare feet.

Granny and Mother are discussing canning and how many pints of tomatoes they have canned this summer. Granny says "termaters", not "maters" as some country folk do; she uses the "t", but it still comes out wrong. Potatoes get the same treatment.

Shirley wishes they would let her get a word in edgewise; she has something on her mind. She wants to look in Granny's feed sack drawer, and she wants to ask for one. Granny saves feed sacks, she keeps them in a drawer of the marble topped dresser in the spare room---washed, ironed, and folded into stacks. What is more, Shirley's Granny always wears sack dresses, but she doesn't make them or sew them; she "runs" them up. Granny will say:

"I'm going to run me up a new dress." This is a pretty apt description of Granny's method. Granny waits until she gets three sacks that are alike, usually! Chicken feed comes in the bright cotton sacks and Grandad does the shopping, so sometimes it takes a while to get three alike. One of the sacks is for the bodice of Granny's dress and the other two provide the skirt. Sometimes Granny gets flighty and puts a contrasting collar and sleeves on her creations, but usually they are all the same print. Contrast summons to mind dainty, white touches tastefully added, purposefully added, but in Granny's case, a wrong assumption. The prints that she chooses, to embellish the main prints, war with one another and seem to have no artistic reason for their disastrous proximity. Big gaudy roses are enhanced, to Granny's mind, and forever married, to dainty daisy prints. Eye-catching is a word that comes to mind.

Granny never bothers with darts; where would she have put them? As Shirley's mother had once observed in exasperation, "How can you make a dress for a woman who won't wear a brassiere? You have to make the waist big enough for the waist *and* the bosom!" Granny is a very plump person and her bosom (Mother always says "bosom") hangs down into the area where most women only have a waist. Granny decided, way back when she first heard about brassieres, that they were sinful French contraptions and she wasn't going to wear one. Granny wears sensible plain white cotton feed sack slips and allows her bosom to seek its own level.

Sometimes this presents a problem. On summer days, Shirley watches her grandmother trying to adjust her enormous drooping bosom into a more comfortable position. Granny sits reared back in a rope-bottomed chair that balances on two back legs against the wall. Her short legs dangle against the bottom rung of the chair, and her round body hangs off on both sides. Every so often she reaches up and nudges herself in order to get the material of her slip up, under, and between the skin of her main torso and her bosom. Shirley suspects that Granny has a heat rash under all that flesh.

Shirley's plump legs begin to feel the bite of the rope chair. She figures it is time to get down to business. How can she get Granny to let her look at the sacks? She looks up at the quilt that hangs, half finished, above her head. The quilt is made of the coarse cotton feed sacks, a rainbow of color. The quilt covers most of the ceiling because it is stretched on a wooden frame that is raised and lowered by means of thin rope at each corner. When Granny is quilting, she loops up the rope on each side so that the quilt is up and out of the way. Shirley wants one of the bright feed sacks---bad! She is so desperate, she plans to ask for one, and she knows that mother will kill her if she does. Granny quilts for money. People bring their quilt tops to Granny and she quilts them. This is embarrassing to Daddy and Granny's other children because they think that other people will think that Granny needs the money and will blame them for not taking good care of their aged parents. Actually, Granny and Grandad have plenty of money and their needs are small. Granny just likes to quilt.

"Granny," Shirley says in a wheedling voice, "let's look in your feed sack drawer. It's been a long time since I've seen them. It's been about two weeks."

"Oh law, child, I just got set down!" Granny fans her pink face with a cardboard fan from the funeral parlor. There on the back of the fan is a picture of Jesus touching an exposed heart on his chest and looking sadly accusatory. Granny twitches the escaping side tendrils of hair back behind her ears and smoothes her plaited bun. Granny's hair has never been cut; Granny thinks it is a sin for women to cut their hair. Shirley reaches up to finger her own short damp hair and wonders if that's why the Jesus on the fan looks at her like he does.

"Well, come on if you wanna see 'em. It's nearly time to fix supper." With that remark, Granny jerks the chair back onto its four legs and comes to a standing position before Shirley is prepared for it. Granny is fat but she is quick and spry.

Shirley finds it hard to move quickly in this heat. At home, the three main rooms are kept cool with a water cooler and Shirley and her brother move languidly through their summer vacation, but out here in the country, Granny has no water cooler.

Shirley gets up from her rope-bottomed chair like a tired old lady. She pulls the damp cotton shorts into a more comfortable position with a hitch at each leg and runs her hand over the pink rope marks on the backs of her chubby legs. She knows the marks are pink because she looked in the mirror one time and they were. She always tries to get a chair with a soft cotton rope seat instead of a hemp one.

Shirley avoids her mother's eyes as she follows Granny. She can feel her mother's look and can almost feel the pinch she would receive if she dared to pass close enough to her chair. Shirley knows better. She tucks in her bottom while executing a crab-like maneuver that gets her out of the room, quick. But the feel of mother's eyes sends little goose bumps pricking up her back.

She follows Granny through the old fashioned kitchen with its oil-cloth-covered table and its big old wood-burning cook stove. This is one of the reasons why Granny's is so hot in the summer.

The ancient Frigidaire kicks on as they pass. This is Granny's one pleased concession to modern life. A few years ago, Daddy had electricity installed in Granny's house. Granny complained loud and long and told Daddy that she was going to "yank it out as soon as the electricians leave." Daddy told her she had better leave it alone; that it would "knock her socks off," so Granny shows her displeasure by wearing a sunbonnet in the house at night. She says that the electricity hurts her eyes. Shirley admires Granny for her strong will and is slightly disappointed that Granny likes the old refrigerator. One of her other five sons paid five dollars for it and gave it to her. Daddy gets all the fussing, and Uncle Larman gets the thanks.

Padding on bare feet across the gritty, warm linoleum floor, she follows Granny into the spare room. Though it is only two doors away from the livingroom, it has a disused odor, mingled with the heavy, warm smells of dust and the leaves of the runty peach tree that grows on this side of the house.

The room is filled with an odd assortment of out-of-style furniture. A white painted metal bed, flaking, sits in the middle of the room covered with a pieced quilt. A heavy mud-brown wardrobe, or chifferobe as Granny calls it, stands against the wall, and a big ugly dresser with a marble top and a speckled cloudy mirror occupies the space between the two windows. Shirley plans to ask Granny for a feed sack while mother is in the livingroom. Mother can hear, but Shirley is out of pinching distance, and what can her mother say after Gran has already given her a sack? Actually, Gran has few of the world's approved articles for gift-giving, by her own choice, yet she probably is not so stingy as mother implies.

Granny opens the drawer with a sharp wrench, and Shirley stares down at the gaudy colors. Even a twelve year old knows that the designs are tacky, but there is a certain appeal, the gaiety of the colors and the profusion, the sheer abundance!

Shirley reaches out her hand and pulls up a stack of the gaily colored materials. She lets the different pieces thumb by like pages of a magazine. Bright splashy flowers in hideous shades that would make mother nature vomit--tacky stripes and checks made of dyes that the designer got cheap, a primitive keleidoscope, dazzling to the undiscerning eye. She stops. One has caught her eye. It is white with black line drawings of a mailbox twined with green ivy. For some inexplicable reason, it appeals to Shirley. She hesitates a second, a big choice, then she says:

"Granny, could I have this sack so Mama could make me something?"

Granny looks pleased. "Why land, I have more than I have use for. You're welcome to it, child."

Shirley lifts the piece out of the drawer, smooths the other pieces neatly down, and Gran closes the drawer with a screech.

Gran and Shirley go back to the livingroom. Mother is looking daggers at Shirley, but Shirley pretends not to notice and says brightly, holding up the feed sack:

"See the material Granny gave me? Isn't it pretty?"

Mother stares steadily at Shirley and demonstrates her talent for speaking while maintaining almost completely clenched lips. "Very nice, I hope you thanked your grandmother, Shirley." Shirley's name is pronounced with a rising

inflection in mother's voice, a tone that hints, darkly, at more to come. "It's time we got home and fixed supper," she says as she rises from the chair and pulls her damp dress away from her legs. She reaches down for her purse and takes Shirley by the arm, at the same time administering a slow, excruciating pinch that Shirley thinks mother invented and perfected. It consists of a small piece of flesh that is pinched and TWISTED at the same time! It has the curious effect of making the pinched child walk on his or her toes for a few exhilarating seconds. With a flourish, mother's fingers finish executing the complete twist that goes with the pressure of the pinch, the relief to Shirley feels so good that the pain was almost worth it!

There is never any question of staying at Granny's for supper. Granny is Shirley's paternal grandmother, and Mother does not approve of Granny. Along with not believing in cutting her hair, Granny does not believe in germs and so she does not wash her dishes in soap. She says that the soap makes the food taste funny. Shirley is amazed! The whole world fears germs, and Granny just refuses to believe in them.

Mother will be mad at Shirley for asking for a sack. Mother, of course, buys all her material at the department store in town, usually JC Penney's. The real reason her Mother will be mad is rather obscure to Shirley and probably to Mother. Granny is an opinionated, bossy, old lady and not given to gift-giving. None of the grandchildren ever ask Granny for anything, though Granny sometimes offers freshly churned butter (which Mother won't use because of Granny's aversion to soap in the dish water). Granny and Mother have a long standing competition about who does the most work. Granny calls early every morning and boasts of how many pints of vegetables she has canned, how she can milked the cows and fed the hogs, swept the house, etc. Mother always loses; she can't claim the time spent in waxing the floor or getting her family up and fed, because, first, Granny would scoff at the citified nonsense of time wasted on waxing a floor and, second, she would scoff at the easy life mother has of getting only two children up and fed--Granny had seven. Anything mother can do, Granny could do better or more of. Since Mother starts every day a loser to the triumphant old lady, Shirley wonders why Mother keeps trying to out-do her.

Out in the car, headed toward town on the winding country road, Mother angrily asks Shirley, "Why did you ask your grandmother for that feed sack? You know better than to ask for things."

"Well, she is my grandmother and she has so many." The wind from the open car window blows Shirley's wispy brown hair across her face and into her eyes. Brushing it repeatedly out of her eyes gives her something to do so that Mother can't expect her full attention. Mother is not deceived.

"That doesn't matter--you know she isn't like your Granny Means (Mama's mother). Besides, now I have to make the tacky stuff up!"

"It's not tacky. I like it!" Shirley looks down at the folded material in her lap, now getting a bit damp and dusty. Suddenly she sees how it really looks. She knows her mother tries hard to dress her tastefully. She spends long hours choosing materials and patterns that are becoming to her chubby daughter and

now, here she is, committed to making a feed sack creation.

Shirley won't admit Mother is right. She continues to look down at the ugly-designed material lying in her lap and as the car gets nearer to town and home, it looks uglier and uglier. The closer she gets to town, the uglier it looks, but Shirley won't admit it, and Mother keeps up a tight-lipped grumble all the way, mumbling about Shirley's lack of manners, and her own ill luck at having to sew the sack into something for Granny to see. Granny is sure to want to see the results.

Tears come into Shirley's eyes, partly from self pity and partly from the hot wind tearing through the open car window. Stubbornly she sets her lip and wills the tears not to roll over the rims of her eyes. It almost works. Through blurry eyes, the green ivy twines around the mailbox and seems to grow bigger and greener--a jungle growth choking and threatening--out of keeping with the homey, country mailbox. And why in the world had she ever thought she would want to go around wearing little mailboxes all over her body?

They drive up the drive way to Shirley's home, and Mother slams the car door getting out. Then she slams the kitchen door.

Slowly Shirley brings up the rear and enters the warm kitchen, loud with the sound of the water cooler that Mother has just switched on. It had been turned off to save electricity in their absence.

Shirley goes to her room and stands before the mirror and holds the material up to her shoulders the way she has seen Mother do in order to judge whether a color is becoming to her or not. Her brown, scabby and scarred knees stick out. There is clearly not enough material to make a dress. Shirley is relieved--Mother would probably make her wear it to church for spite! Only enough, then, for a shorts suit like the one she has on. A sleeveless short cropped blouse and shorts to match. That might not be so bad.

Suddenly, Mother appears in the mirror. She wears a tight little "I told you so" smile and she is waiting.

Shirley stares back at her mother's reflection; she continues to hold the ugly material to her chin and presses it into her flesh as hard as she can as she says, "I love it."

by Beverley Benham

## Mirage

I'm drifting back into emptiness  
I remember those days and  
I remember the way  
I stumbled down that road  
slipped on the stones and  
took the wrong way  
that road took me nowhere

And mama wants to know  
what was it like but mama  
it takes a fool  
and how can I tell you  
I am the fool

I sang rainbows  
painted songs and  
tripped over the sun  
trying to catch the moon  
it all seemed so real and  
still I feel it was just  
An illusion A mirage

And I drifted into emptiness  
running a race with the Hollowmen  
living in a mist outside myself  
trying to escape from what's not real  
to capture what is and  
not being able to tell  
The difference

And papa want to know  
did I like it there but papa  
how can you like a nightmare  
it takes a clown and  
I am the clown

by Kerry L. Fare

## Twenty-seven

It was supposed to be the magic age  
But it's just another failure  
No glitter no gold  
Only unachieved goals  
They do not see the severity  
They do not see the pain  
They only see shadows of what I  
Used to be and do not understand  
The changes  
The anger  
The desire  
They cannot see beyond their eyes  
They cannot hear the silent cries  
Dreams are just a dime a dozen  
When they belong to someone else

by Kerry L. Fare

## Cave Dwellers

In my corner, which is the  
darkest corner of the world,  
we live by touch, by  
feel and make imagined  
pictures for ourselves to see  
our selves, and in the night we  
touch each other's faces and hands and  
bodies with our faces and hands and bodies,  
and sometimes we are so close,  
it almost seems as though we  
see each other, striving through our eyes,  
groping for things we almost see  
out of the corners of our eyes

in my corner we live by feeling and by  
straining our eyes, and sometimes we

lie awake, staring for hours without  
blinking then  
closing our eyes and  
pressing them with each other's  
fingertips, making false colors for a moment,  
knowing for certain only the close  
darkness, trying to feel, almost feeling  
safe in each other's arms

by Andrew Preslar

# The Magic Theatre

## I. The Invocation

Follow me!

You'll see.

or at least  
thinking that I know.

What do you know?  
That there is no God?  
Or that there is?  
Or how to run a business?  
To read a book,  
and know what the author knows?  
Petrarch writes that his  
heart doth ache

for love, and  
because he needs a cook and  
an inflatable doll.

Pah! You prefer a fantasy.  
Follow me!  
I can show  
what you know.

Follow!

## II. The Tavern

Doors strain to rending, then  
relax; living  
lumps of deadened flesh in  
cubes fall on the  
sawdust floor as they  
all turn out to dance!

Lamp askew, window  
sills with dew follow  
the fire on the hearth down to  
ice that burns your fingers:

shoes with  
cracked mud and  
black blood remain  
shoes, sitting by the stair up  
and out, out

subject without lord or object-  
Amen!

Dance, dance with the  
witch! with the witch!

Where are we going?

I prefer knowing,

You erect a facade.

yes, Satan taught them  
a great many things,  
and perhaps after, the  
sacrificial wine will sweeten this  
incongruity of cubic men in  
lumps without bone.

A sing-a-long!  
Blood song voiced in frosty tongue--  
the screams of  
Polyphemus  
shake the mountains!  
spake the fountains of our  
ancient songs, but the  
tender voice of the blind bard  
was all we heard.

## III. The Schism

Are you surprised  
you recognize the  
fragments of a world?

They seemed to  
fit to-  
gether better  
the way they were before:  
Organization is the key,  
don't you agree?  
The universe of knowledge  
is a puzzle, see?  
The pieces fit together properly  
in just this certain way.

You merely play  
with sets, arrays,  
and abstract grids of order,  
but all the borders  
are straight, all the  
pieces are square, or  
increments of squares and cubes and  
arcs;  
I play with order and  
make works of art.

But is is our  
focus that is different,  
not our knowlege.

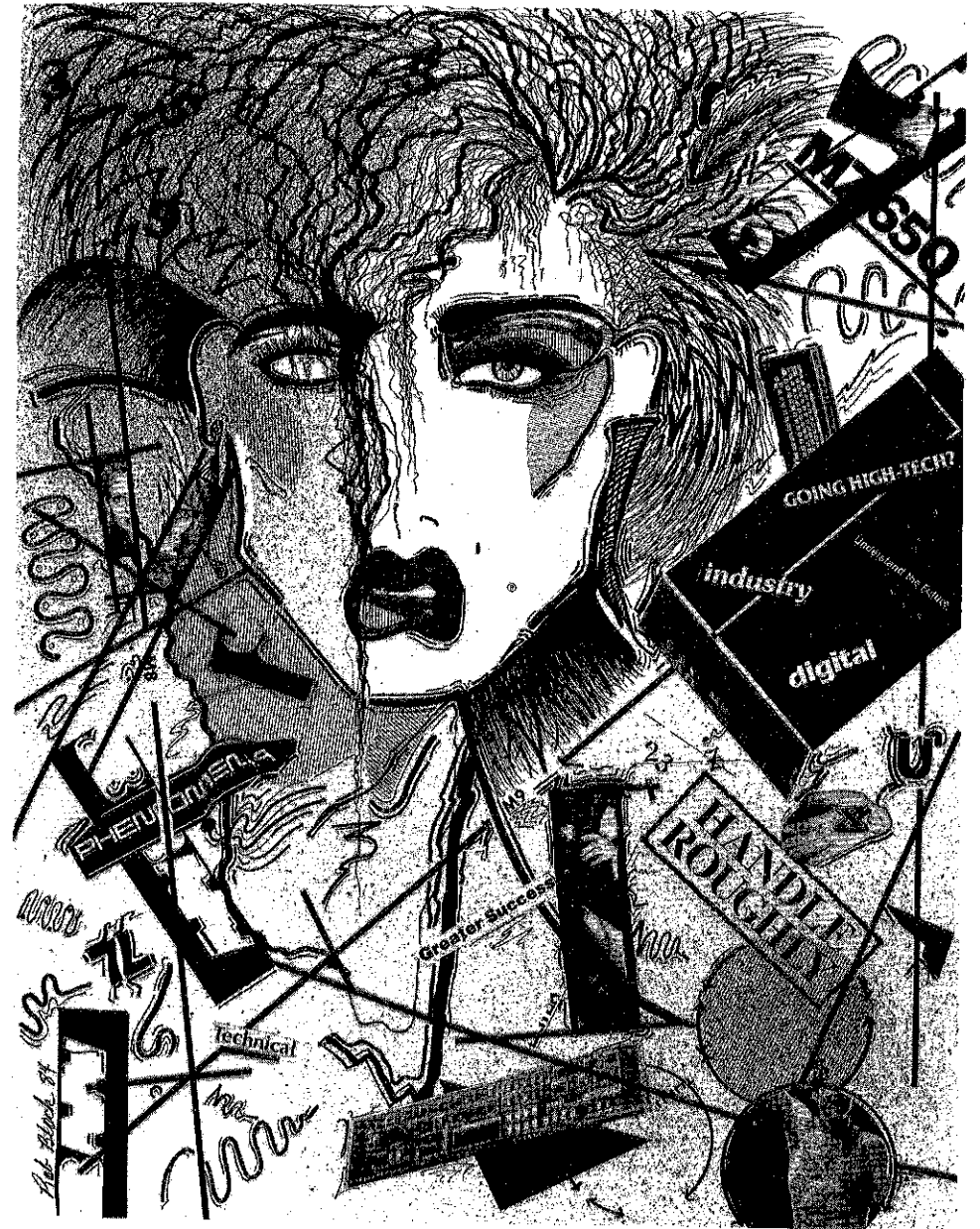
And I say  
it is our vision.

by Andrew Preslar

## Silence

Silence, golden in its rapture,  
creeps into my world and  
suddenly, I am afraid.  
instantly I become aware  
of all that is around me;  
the pictures, which were once  
just a vague darkness, become  
almost visible, the heater  
creaks as though weary,  
and across the room, my  
roommate's slumbering body  
becomes a silhouette offering  
no consolation to my fear.  
somewhere far away a horn  
blows and abruptly I am  
jolted back into reality,  
listening for other sounds,  
outside of my world.  
voices fill the air, laughter,  
high and empty, envelopes  
my capsule, smothering me,  
not allowing me to become  
a part, when suddenly,  
it recedes and all  
is silent once again.

by Anita Holloway



by Rob Block

## STAFF

Editor	Gwen Whitehead
Assistant Editor	Kada Soffes
Editorial Board	Vicki Burnell Laura Harris Flora Lutz Annette Martinez <sup>sm</sup> Julie Stewart Sharyn Streety Kelly Weaver
PULSE Logo	Jane Hill
Advisor	R. S. Gwynn
Department Head	Annette Platt

We wish to thank  
Eleanor Perlstein Weinbaum  
for her constant support of  
PULSE and the  
liberal arts