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 Diagrepont

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

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

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
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 tides 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 deceptively 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
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-lifes, 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 rhythm
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
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." Budget Director David Stockman reportedly wanted to cut cultural funds to zero, calling the NEA the "National Endowment of Frills." 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."

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." 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." 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.

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.

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 curbs 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.

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." 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."

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. 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." 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."

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."

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...nobody questions are riding high."

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.

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."

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 prestigious 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 $10,000.18

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.19

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."20 Chairman Hodsell’s attitude is a step in the right direction.

NOTES

3Adler, p. 28.
6"Guide to the National Endowment for the Arts," p. 3.
8Adler, p. 31.
9Adler, p. 28.
10Adler, p. 28.
12Adler, p. 57.

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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,
groping through long hallways,
the door slams
the last sound
which echoes 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
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

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
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 locus 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 smooths her plaied 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 sly.

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 prickling 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 living room, 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 chiffereau as Granny calls it, stands against the wall, and a big ugly dresser with a marble top and a specled cloudy mirror occupies the space between the two windows. Shirley plans to ask Granny for a feed sack while mother is in the living room. 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 picture 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 kaleidoscope, 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 living room. 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 dress dress away from her legs. She reaches down for her purse and takes Shirley by the arm, at the same time administering a slow, excaerating 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 maternal 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 trifled nonsense of time wasted on drinking 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's not 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
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, muttering 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. Pare
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.

Where are we going?

I prefer knowing,

or at least

thinking that I know.

You erect a facade.

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!

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 together 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

arc;

I play with order and

make works of art.

But is it not our

focus that is different,

not our knowledge.

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