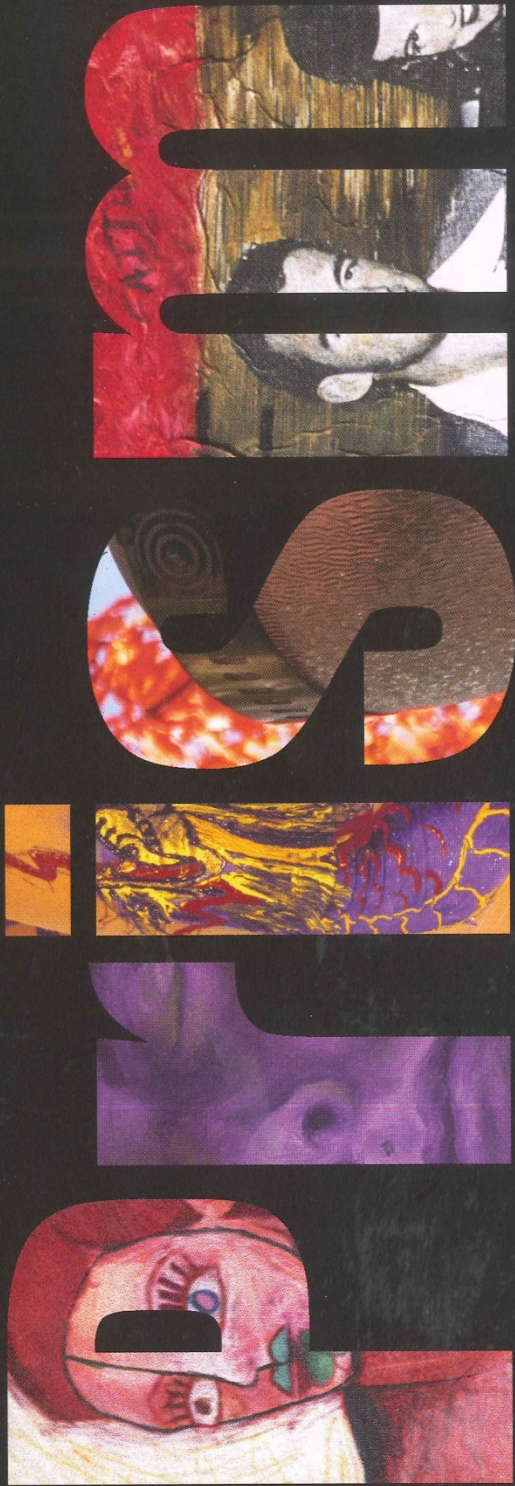


Spring '04



Winner of the 2004 Provost Literary Award

# A Dream

Kevin Hockett

Young college ladies, wearing faded jeans  
and loud heels, keep themselves for other men.

Their cheeks are ripe and red, they're snowy at  
the edge. Each set of eyes against the rest

of the room remind me of times wasted—  
I acted like I wasn't interested

in seeing them dress their skin in my sheets  
and hands. Now in my room they sit quiet

like winter afternoons: sunny but cold  
and motionless. One begins humming old

songs Gypsies might sing, filled out in colors  
and greed. I'm poor and asking kindly for

some charity. They seem not to notice.  
Outside the street is vacant, light and iced

in afternoon air stirring confetti  
over manholes, soft blue and pale bone white.

Through every closed shop winter crawls: a small  
yet muting draft. If they are there, they're dull

around the eyes and numb in feet, the old  
patrons of bars and hardware stores, not dead.

They will be soon. Their mouths stay shut as clam  
shells: quiet and hard. I remember my room;

the young ladies, the white curtains  
the desk, bolted to the floor, their small feet, scents

of cheap peach perfume, button-up  
thin blouses, pink and flowered, darkened lips.

Camphor and talc thicken the air like flour.  
The women cough and hold white lace and sour

small napkins to their mouths. They look to me  
as if to say I was too safe, I came

too late and younger men with arched  
feet took less time. They sit and watch

me fumble arthritic knuckles in bed.  
They watch and smile, they laugh and turn their heads.