

The 2007 Editors' Prize Contest Winners

Judged by Philip Brady

I chose "The Rape of Chrysippus" among a remarkable field of finalists for three reasons. The poem displays both wildness and restraint, and arranges the tension between these impulses through the clean elegance of its prosody. It makes me think of Yeats's ambition to write a poem "as cold and passionate as the dawn." The poem also displays great breadth, making us feel both the particularity and the universality of the brutal acts it recounts. And finally, "The Rape of Chrysippus" recalls one of poetry's prime functions: to curse. Appalled by the occasion of the poem, I'm entranced by its ambition to transcend accusation. "The Rape of Chrysippus" is no less than a spell, calling upon elusive powers to enter the human world.

Author of three books of poems, a memoir, and an essay collection, Philip Brady directs the Youngstown State University Poetry Center. He also directs Etruscan Press and plays in the New-Celtic band, Brady's Leap.

M. B. McLatchey
First Place

The Rape of Chrysippus

"She came home bone by bone. First her shin bone, then her skull. In the end, 26 of Molly's bones came home to us."

—Mother of 16-year-old Molly Bish, whose remains were found 3 years after she was abducted and murdered in June 2000.

For the rape of Chrysippus, King Laius suffered.

The gods saw what he took

—a young boy's chance

to play in the Nemean Games, to make his offerings

to Zeus, to win his wreath

of wild celery leaves, advance

the Greek way: piety, honor, and strength. He raided

their heaven, not just a small boy's frame.

Their justice

was what Laius came to dread: a son who would take

his mother to bed,

a champion of the gods, an *Oedipus*.

We called on the same gods on your behalf, asked

for their twisted best:

disease like a Chimera to eat

your Laius piece by piece; a Harpy, who might wrap

her tongue around his neck

and play his game of breathing

and not-breathing that he made you play.

Medusa's curse in stone—and a Golden Ram

to put you back together bone by bone.