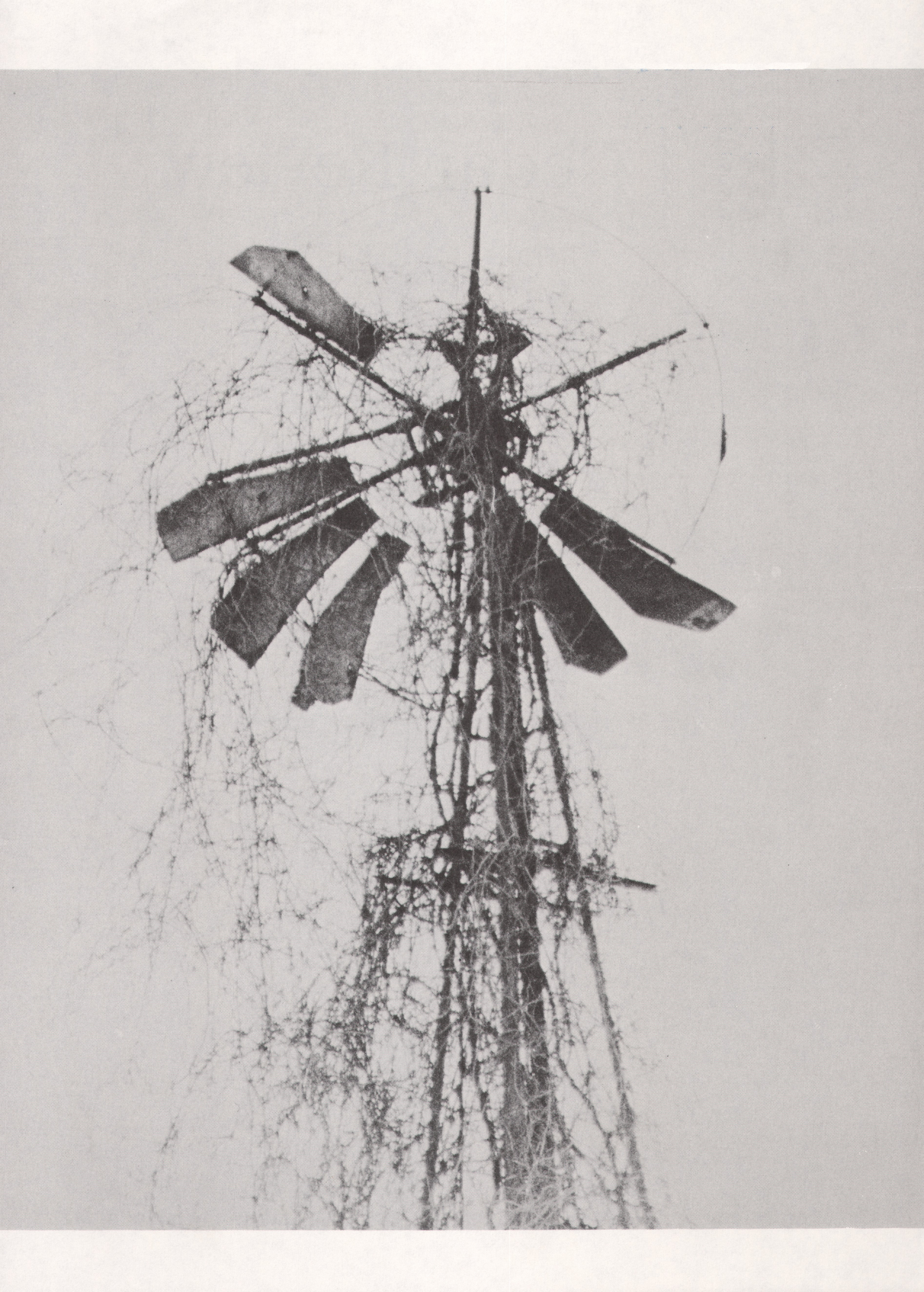


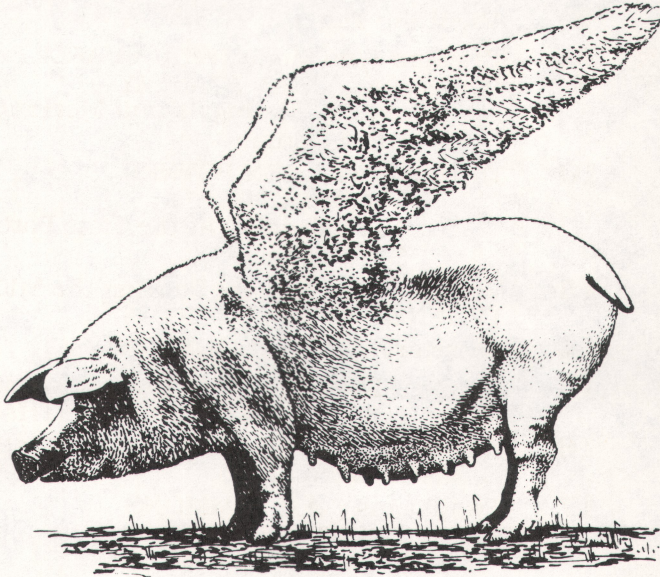
RED CEDAR REVIEW

25





Red Cedar Review



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RCR-25

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CONTENTS / VOLUME 25 : NUMBER ONE / SPRING 1988

INTRODUCTION	1	ALBERT DRAKE
	3	About the Times...
RCR / FICTION	21	The Man Who Made Teeth / MARIA BRUNO
RCR / POETRY	8	Two Poems / JEAN STANLEY
		Motets, Madrigals and Mockingbirds
		Draw Damp
	10	Three Poems / KEN POYNER
		The Elevator
		The Salesman at the Time Portal
		Self-Reliance
	13	Vermeer: Maidservant Pouring the Milk /
		YVONNE YRAGUI
	14	Secretary / BETH HOUSTON
	15	Random Thoughts on Falling out of an
		Office Building / JAY A. BLUMENTHAL
	16	Any Damn Fool Can Buy Electric Trains /
		E. WARD HERLANDS
	17	Two Poems / A.J. SIMMONS
		Untitled
		Loving You, for JR
	20	Self Portrait: A Gift to his Wife Betsy
		on her Sixtieth Birthday / ED ORR
	26	Two Poems / LYN LIFSHIN
		Walden Breezes
		My Thighs Inside Shimmery Black Nylon
	28	Two Poems / ROBERT COOPERMAN
		The Hell of It
		The Cistercian Monks' Vows of Silence
	30	Tiny Wildflower / FRITZ HAMILTON
	31	The Terrible Boundaries of the Body /
		JACKIE BARTLEY

- 32** Three Poems / RALPH HEIBUTZKI
 The Eyes of August
 From Jerusalem to Jericho
 July 5th Came and Went
- 35** The Horse / S. GUTIERREZ
- 36** From a Sociology Paper on a New Phenomenon Called
 Bag Ladies / CORNELIA C. HORNSTY
- 37** Two Poems / MICHAEL J. EMERY
 Dogs
 Aaron Gets His Ph.D. in Writing Poetry
- 38** Tiger Stripe / PATRICK J. BERKLICH

RCR/ JIM CASH CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

- 39** About the winners...
- 40** Midwestern Erotics of Literature /
 CATHERINE KAIKOWSKA
- 43** White Trash / CATHERINE KAIKOWSKA
- 49** Two Poems / DEBORAH DAVIES
 Reflections on a Lost Toenail
 Celebration of Married Lust
- 51** The Wheel / JESSICA DEFOREST
- 58** Two Poems / MARK SHAHEEN
 Maps
 Wave Goodbye Like Hello
- 61** Janey's Fortune / CHRIS HAMMOND
- 67** **Richard Benvenuto Prize**
- 68** About the Authors...
- 70** Staff and Sponsors

Introduction: Riding the Red Cedar

Albert Drake, RCR Faculty advisor, 1967-88.

Literary magazines are ephemeral: they appear, and most quickly die, disappearing when the fuel of enthusiasm is consumed. The Red Cedar Review, Michigan State University's literary magazine, has enjoyed continuous publication for the past 25 years, and that is amazing. Few lit mags can claim that kind of staying power, and those generally have generous endowments from their sponsor, which allows them to have a paid staff and use slick paper.

The Red Cedar Review has, from the beginning, been staffed by undergraduates who devoted time and energy and demanded as payment only the satisfaction of seeing deserving writers get into print. Let me say it early on: without the selfless dedication of a long line of editors and staff, the RCR would have folded back when a quarter would buy you a cup of java and a sinker at Kewpee's.

That the RCR has lasted 25 years is amazing. Also amazing are the conditions of its birth. In the early 1960s several students thought it was appalling that Michigan State University, a Big Ten school with a winning football team and a plethora of programs, here and in Southeast Asia, lacked a literary magazine. They mentioned school pride, but there was a vested interest in their demands. These students were taking creative writing classes, writing furiously and well, and they were frankly looking for a place to publish. They met with the writing faculty, got a small stipend from the College of Arts and Letters and created a lit mag—born Tarot, it soon became the Red Cedar Review.

The students who gave birth to the RCR were a pretty exceptional bunch; it's now apparent that they formed a Literary Renaissance. Most of the group has continued to write, and an unusual number have earned strong literary reputations. Many of us are teaching works written by people who, 25 years ago, were students in those same classrooms in Morrill and Berkey Halls.

Tarot's editor was Tom McGuane, who has published half a dozen novels, collections of short fiction and sports essays, and several film scripts (including *The Missouri Breaks* and *Tom Horn*). The first editor of the RCR was Walt Lockwood, who has published short stories, a novel (*Jones Unbound*) and film scripts (*Finnegan, Begin Again*). His fiction editor was Jim Cash, who has written a dozen film scripts, including *Top Gun*, *Legal Eagles*, and *The Secret of My Success*.

Other writers who worked on, and occasionally published in, the RCR were J.D.Reed, poet (*Expressways*) and now a senior editor at Time magazine; Tom Gatten, poet and essayist; and Peter Nye and Ron English, poets and musicians. Writers who were loosely associated with the magazine include Richard Ford, widely-praised short story writer and novelist; Dan Gerber, poet, fiction and non-fiction writer; and Jim Harrison, a poet, essayist, script writer and novelist (*Wolf, Farmer, Legends of the Fall*, etc.).

Collectively, these writers form an incredible group. Not before nor since have so many student writers gathered at MSU—and seldom, if ever, elsewhere—served an apprenticeship, and gone on to become journeyman writers. The RCR published first work by a number of these writers. It's hard to say whether they became professional writers because of the RCR, but it's a good argument for supporting a lit mag.

The early 1960s seems to me to have been an exciting time at MSU and I'm sorry I missed working with those student writers (see the statements that I gathered here for proof that this was a different world), but their energies gave the RCR a strong push. When I arrived in 1966, the RCR was being ably edited

by Peggy Case and Etta Abrahams; both had been at MSU for several years, and had worked closely with earlier editors like Lockwood and Cash. RCR, like Tarot, had been an annual, and Peggy and Etta decided they wanted the magazine to become a quarterly. The budget was increased by one-quarter, and they were to try to publish four times as many issues! I think they did see three issues through the printers. Since then it has varied from one to four issues a year, with the average being two. The current budget constraints make the publication of two issues a year somethins akin to a miracle!

The RCR has always attracted interesting, intelligent and creative people but there are a couple who stand out in memory. I talked Alan VerPlanck into becoming an editor—coerced him, actually. He did not really want to edit. He used to go fishing around dawn, arrive at the RCR office around noon, and read all the cover letters that accompanied that day's submissions. He felt he could make better literary judgements given the person's cover letter than he could about the attached short story or poem. But he was an excellent editor and turned out fine—edited some very good issues of the RCR, wrote stunning fiction in my classes and became the first Rhodes Scholar at MSU in almost 25 years (he listed his sport as "walking").

Dennis Pace embraced the editorship and he was a natural. In a way he symbolized the terrific student energy on campus in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He made low-budget films, he did printing, editing and writing. Within two terms of his arrival he had keys to all the important places on campus—those places being where the things he needed, the presses, camera, Xerox machines, etc., were stored. This was, after all, the Morrill Land grant philosophy. He might write some poems or a manifesto in the evening, be in Joe Kusza's room in the art school around midnight, using the IBM composer or the old handset type proof press, and by morning he'd have a chapbook of poems or broadsides or posters all finished. He turned all these energies on the RCR, and he did some exciting issues.

Over the years the RCR has appeared in varied formats. There have been special issues, such as the all-Black issue, the two feminist issues and the East Lansing Poets issue. Dennis Pace was responsible for a collection of poetry broadsides in a manila envelope; this issue resulted when the RCR budget was too slim for a regular issue. To get ou ta final issue, Pace initiated a contest; the winner of a single work would see his or her work "published" on a billboard. For a month or more that "issue" of the RCR was seen by every motorist on Grand River.

Some people think of the RCR as a place for MSU writers to publish, but it has always been open to all. It has consistently published known and unknown writers—and it published writers when they were unknown, as was the case with an MSU student named Carolyn Forche, who shortly after graduation went on the win the Yale Younger Poets Award and the Lamont Award. The RCR has also been fortunate in getting work from writers of reputaion, such as Diane Wakoski, William Matthews and Pablo Neruda. Neruda's poem arrived after a staff member, Jim Tipton, sent the Nobel Prize-winning poet a request accompanied by a dollar bill!

The students who edit the RCR do everything—editorial decisions, correspondence, type-setting, layout, past-up, see the issue through the printer and then distribute it. In this way they acquire practical job skills to list on their resume. But within every editor beats the heart of a writer, and it's always exciting, when walking past the RCR office in Morrill Hall, listening to the heated literary debates taking place among the staff, to think that another literary renaissance is in the making.

About the Times...

Jim Cash (Fiction Editor, RCR, 1962-1964; script writer)

One autumn morning in 1962, I met with Walt Lockwood and Bob Elliott at Ralph's Cafeteria (Kewpee's) across the street from Morrill Hall. We wanted to start a new literary magazine to replace *Tarot*. At the time, *Tarot* had taken on the stiff look of an industrial arts manual, and had lost all the energy that had characterized it a few years before when it had featured writers like Tom McGuane, Jim Harrison, J.D. Reed, Ron English and others.

As I recall, the English Department had a new prof that term—Carl Hartman—and we decided to ask him to be the new magazine's faculty rep. We also decided to ask Joe Kusza of the art department to take over as faculty rep. for the drawings, paintings and layout. Then we began to talk about a name for the new magazine.

It was Elliott who came up with the *Red Cedar Review*. Lockwood and I liked it immediately. I think it was inspired by the *Kenyon Review*, but it was definitely Elliott's idea.

Since Elliott was a poet, he assumed the position of Poetry Editor. I became Fiction Editor, and Walt Lockwood was Editor-in-Chief. Howard Shapiro joined our table just in time to become Managing Editor. The titles were basically meaningless, because once we had a full staff of twenty people, everyone read all the submissions, and the content of the magazine was decided on quite democratically—one person, one vote.

People still send me copies of those first two issues of RCR, asking me to autograph them and send them back. I'm always amazed that copies are still floating around after a quarter of a century.

Some pretty fair writers appeared in those early issues of *Tarot* and RCR. I think at least ten of them have gone on to become successful, professional writers. Most of us at that time were very competitive people with youthful streaks of arrogance. We had a sort of gunfighter mentality, with each of us believing we could write better than all the others. At the same time, there was a lot of genuine respect for each other. I thought McGuane, Harrison and Mel Bucholtz were especially talented, and it was always good to see their most recent work.

As for myself, I never talked about writing back then (or now), because I felt it dissolved the urgency to put words on paper. But a lot of the others did talk about it, meeting at Kewpee's or Monty's bar. I usually tried to veer those discussions toward sports or politics or anything but writing. The only exception I ever made was one memorable spring afternoon when Tom McGuane and I walked all over East Lansing for about three hours and had a hell of a good time talking about every writer we had ever read.

Peter Nye (poet, musician, driving instructor for Skip Barber driving school for race car drivers)

At that time (around 1960) there was a mood—we'd all come out of high school and we'd read Kerouac and Ginsberg, the big underground figures, and there was kind of a movement in the country. And so you'd get into college and

you want to write and what do you do—you pass it around on mimeograph sheets, show it to your friends. That's why the RCR got started.

I lived in an apartment over Mac's Bar down on Michigan, with musicians, with Bud Spangler and some other people. I was more into music, as Ron English was. That was one of the scenes—we'd have parties and Jim Harrison would come up there and hold forth on the back porch.

Harrison showed up at some point—he was the wild man, the free spirit. Shoot, Harrison was a good writer when he showed up at MSU, I thought. He was such a wild man, because he had that one eye. This Harrison was a wild man. God knows where he'd gone to high school, somewhere in Northern Michigan, he was a hunter, and he had this crazy eye, and he was kind of crude. He was a hard living son of a gun. He wanted to write, and fuck, and fight, I guess in about that order.

Others were Ron English—also a talented musician—Steve Croner who was here for a year and then committed suicide; J.D. Reed—a high powered guy, he came from a very wealthy family and drove around in a big, black Cadillac or Lincoln, and wore topcoats and hats; he was going to be a curmudgeon. McGuane floated around wearing a black trench coat; he was a mysterious figure. Tom Gatten was a strange guy—boy, he used to drink a lot!

Art Smith was one of the guys who really encouraged Harrison, J.D. Reed and I think McGuane. Art was one of the few professors who was hooked up to that kind of thinking, because everybody was a Rimbaud nut, a Baudelaire nut, and Smith was the one guy who taught courses in that. I know he encouraged Harrison and J.D. Reed a lot.

Etta Abrahams (Fiction Editor, 1965-1967, now professor, American Thought and Language)

...Jim Cash was Fiction Editor of the RCR in 1964, I know, because it was 1964 that this whole incident took place. I was a winner in what was then called the Glendon Swarthout Creative Writing Contest. I'd written a story in Virgil Scott's class—Virgil Scott and Carl Hartman were both faculty advisors for the *Red Cedar Review*. Anyway, I got this phone call from Jim Cash who was then Fiction Editor of the RCR, saying that he wanted to meet me and he wanted to publish my story, and that was very exciting to me. We talked about it, and everything seemed fine, until later Cash called me and said that there was some reluctance to publish the story, and the advisors, particularly I think Carl Hartman, were reluctant because the story dealt with controversial subject matter—homosexuality. I remember running around showing the story (to people), and I showed it to (Professor) Clint Burhans, who said "This is a very moralistic story! I wouldn't publish it because it's too moralistic!"

The story was set in New York City, in Greenwich Village, and it had to do with a guy whose girlfriend was pregnant. He's talking to a friend of his who's kind of a with-it guy in Greenwich Village. and the guy says, well, if you need the money for an abortion you can turn tricks with homosexuals. Against his will, this guy does indeed pick up a homosexual and goes to his apartment with him, but at the last minute decides he's going to marry the girl and leaves the apartment.

This was 1964, right? Jim Cash and I and Fred Piet, who was the RCR Managing Editor, want to see Provost Neville in the old Administration Building. I remember we all looked very, very straight. The two men were in sports jackets, and they were clean. I wore a burgundy pleated skirt, with the white tennis

sweater, and navy knee socks—I looked very, very straight. Neville said, “Well, you can print this but I can’t guarantee that you’ll get funding next year”, because the funding came out of the Provost’s office. “Suppose a student brought this home,” he said,” and left this on the coffee table, and her mother accidentally picked it up. What would she think? This is a state university!” I can still remember that conversation!

So we left there and I of course felt that I had done something wrong. This became front page news stuff in the *State News*, and a number of people approached me and just wanted to mimeo the story and pass it around outside Berkey Hall, and I refused to. I felt I didn’t want to prostitute my art!—bad enough the story dealt with a male prostitute!

Then Jim Cash resigned in one of those impassioned editorials about which I’m sure he’s still embarrassed. Jim Cash was writing a novel at the time. A novel that must’ve been around 800,900, maybe 1,200 pages long. I remember reading parts of it—I remember a scene in a carnival—and it was very heavy stuff.

He lived in a studio apartment above what was then Cunningham’s Drug Store—kind of above the alley near where Beggar’s is now. He had a picture of Papa Hemingway, and he had a chianti bottle with a candle in it of course, and the apartment stank. He worked in the parking lot behind Jacobson’s for money. He spent most of his spare time writing or bemoaning the loss of some girlfriend. I was more like a kid sister to him, but we were very close.

There was a group of people who hung around at Kewpee’s—some of them were writers and some of them weren’t; Peggy Case Bucholtz who was the RCR Editor when I was Fiction Editor; also her husband, Mel Bucholtz; a woman named Judy Smith; a guy named Jim McKenzie. There was the writing group, there was also the civil rights group, there was a journalistic group, and there were pretty separate. Jim (Cash) really wrote independently, so he didn’t seem that much involved (with any group.)

At MSU we worked mainly with the old timers—Carson Hamilton, Virgil Scott, Clara Laidlaw. Clara was allergic to smoke, and people used to do things deliberately, to be cruel, and one of the things there did was to blow cigar smoke in the room before she entered it!

And there was A.J.M.Smith, who was Poet-in-Residence, who really didn’t have anything to do with promoting (RCR)—anything but A.J.M.Smith!

But there were definitely things I learned from each of my writing professors. There was a kind of freedom that I learned from Carl Hartman, and a trusting of myself. With Virgil (Scott) I learned the basics of writing, how to build a dramatic scene, how to create a conflict. Very, very practical. I don’t know how he would be with someone who was experimental, but he was very good with practical suggestions, with dialogue.

Carson Hamilton was extraordinary. He gave me two pieces of advice; one, get out of Kewpee’s, they just talk about writing over there, they don’t do it; and the other was, if you have a man here eating soup, a man doesn’t just eat soup, he eats Campbell’s Cream of Tomato, or Vegetable Beef—you know, you describe both the room and the character at the same time. He was marvelous.

Maury Crane (Professor, Humanities; Director, G.Robert Vincent Voice Library, MSU)

I had an office in Morrill Hall (in the late 1950's), I taught in Berkey Hall, and it seemed to me that we never came straight back—we went over to Kewpee's where the world met. Kewpee's made Michigan State University a small college, because the faculty and students gathered there. The guys who were the writers, like Jim Harrison and Tom McGuane, they were always there. Well, everybody was always there. Bill McCann, Russ Nye, Madison Kuhn and a dozen other guys used to meet there every Saturday morning. All the guys who did their writing at the office on Saturday had a kind of breakfast club there.

It had nothing to offer at all except location. The food was always outlandishly bad, the coffee was terrible but it was cheap, and it was there, and everybody went at least once a day.

Walter Lockwood (Editor, Red Cedar Review, 19963-64; Novelist and Script Writer; English Instructor, Grand Rapids Junior College)

I was the first editor of the Red Cedar Review, and Jim (Cash) was the first Fiction Editor. Actually, it had been Tarot magazine before then and we re-named it.

Jim and I stumbled into it at the same time. We were roommates. Actually, we were living in complete squallor. I adapted very easily to situations, and he was a complete pig! I inherited from my father's business—he had a night club business and had been in the food business—about 80 plates; I mean we had enough dishes to go a month without washing them, and we did. One month would be his turn to wash them, the next would be mine.

It was (Clint) Burhans who prompted us to write. We both point to Clint as the beginning of it. I was in Engineering, and I stumbled into an essay writing course with Clint. We met in what at the time was the Pizza Pit, which was a basement pizza place on M.A.C. It was great, first of all, that we were meeting down there; I thought that was a great way to run a class, completely different from mechanical drawing and calculus. I learned there that I could write a very decent sentence if I took a couple of hours on it. Clint was very supportive, and that was the start of it.

I took a course also from Virgil Scott, and that began the association with the magazine. When I began working on it it was Tarot, and Tom McGuane was the editor. J.D. Reed was on it. There were some very good people—a guy named Stephen Groner, who died very young, and John Thompson, a poet, and people who were writing stuff so far beyond what I was doing I was amazed they allowed me in their company.

Jim (Cash) got associated with it too, and the next year we changed the name of it. I remember somebody saying Tarot sounded like a small town newspaper. But probably because Tarot was so esoteric, it seemed to literary, that we decided to make it something a little more down-to-earth. We changed the concept and the size, and what few things you can change in a literary magazine. We apparently had a very good budget that year, because we did a handsome kind of thing. (Professor) Joe Kusza took over the art editing and there were some nice looking pages, and covers that folded out a little bit—it was fancy!

There were some very good people being published in those early issues, and it kind of amazes me to look back and see how many have made it as writers. The magazine was a great motivation for all of us. We needed an outlet, and it drove us to achieve.

We had some good teachers. There was Carson Hamilton, the old curmudgeon who wrote his own book on creative writing and hated things that were "precious." I loved him! Carson was very fine, very blunt—he was good. He pitched a manuscript of mine right into the wastebasket. Just where it belonged. One of the first stories I wrote won a second prize at MSU, so I thought everything that came out of me from then on was going to be terrific. It took about 12 stories before I wrote another one that was halfway decent. Carson was one of the people who helped me see that. He didn't mince words at all. We was very good, very sweet guy, very blunt. If you were serious about writing he was serious about you. If you weren't, he didn't have much to do with you.

Carl Hartman was a fanatic about point of view. He taught me about point of view—probably more than I needed to know about it. Carl was good. And I had Virgil Scott too; he was very helpful.

Clyde Henson was good at teaching literature, I never had him for writing. He used to make these classic gestures in class. He purportedly was reading a book of Edgar Guest, and suddenly slapped it shut and threw it out the window! I liked him a lot. We were on a softball team called The Paper backs, they let several of us who worked on the magazine join the English Department team—Hazard Adams, Jim Calderwood, Burhans, Sam Baskett was on the team; Henson kind of cheered for us.

But it was Burhans who got it going. No doubt about it. He was a very big force in the writing lives of the two of us (he and Cash), and, I suspect, in the lives of other people as well. It was Burhans' enthusiasm and energy—Jim and I took independent studies with him again and again. He was brutal. We'd take out stuff to him and he'd go over it a word at a time. We'd learn an awful lot.

Burhans was experimenting with the teaching of writing, and he would bring in his own sentences and show us how he'd worked on them, what kind of transformations they'd gone through. I learned something about writing right then. It'd always been something I always did, I'd do it quickly and hand it in and it was always fairly competent. But I struggled with an essay with him. It was the usual sophomoric thing about the first funeral I went to, but I remember sitting in the lounge at the dorm and working and working on sentences until they said exactly what I wanted them to say. Boy, that was a revelation. And he acknowledged it—he knew I'd worked on them.

MOTETS MADRIGALS AND MOCKINGBIRDS

If we think of form as sitting on a wire
or uttermost treetop or church spire
and having absolute balance true
as perfect pitch, and remembering all things

stored in a computer big as a
pea and miraculous as one for
sprouting forth all sorts of greenery,
and granting that we are limited mightily

to a few already ordained notes, notes
numbered, fixed as our days are numbered,
then with such appropriate attitudes, superior
position, hoarded wealth, and the miracle

of something coming from almost nowhere
we might have it: we might open
up our throats and burst our little

heads out with giant-steps-may-I-
simon-says pure liquid that
pours into anything and fits.

DRAW DAMP

Mama you always said, "Don't leave
the clothes on the line too late or
they'll draw damp." You were right:
if they didn't come in long before
sunset we would either have to
leave them out all night to
dry in a new morning's heat or
bring them in damp and lay them
on beds and chairs all over the house.
That seems the nature of things:
they catch a darkness ahead of time,
draw its wet breath before it comes.

Other things too take on the very bane
they should have been rid of.
Caves dispel their bats and then
agape, they attract them back
much like a man haunted: his own
fears call up the ghosts again.
To be clean, as the wash, is a virtue;
to be dry a fortune, luxury
and a precarious condition.

The heart. It requires care.
In a virtue of give, how it seeks
the sun, the precarious condition!
Mine hung on too long and
drew to it the dew of--never
mind, enough to say it's wet
damp damn damn
oh Mama Mama can the heart
stay out the night and still survive?
I don't know where to hang it;
it's already all over the house!

Three Poems / KEN POYNER

The Elevator

If you wait long enough
It will go down.
The button is still lit.
Sand blows in through the open doors
And no one answers the emergency phone.
The sun barely touches the horizon
Of a wasteland that runs the distance of sight ahead,
Yet by the watch it is one o'clock.
Push the stop button in.
Pull the stop button out.
The alarm bell does not sound.
A half dozen office workers late for lunch
Wait on the first floor wondering why
The elevator takes so long.
Some take the stairs.
While remaining yet mostly inside the elevator
You peer around the retracted barrier guards —
Finding more of the desert, and a patch of green
Spooted far to the right. Two repairmen
Run their palms along the elevator's cables,
Guess competitively on which floor the car is stuck.
Sand collects in the stainless steel corners.
For the wind that blows heat and idleness
In swirls through the elevator, you would
If you could close the doors. Downstairs
Those who have waited long are advising those who arrive
That something is broken, and the stairs are best.
In the cab you think more of that patch of green,
That if there is anywhere near a working phone booth
That is the likely place. Repairmen
Check relays, replace switches in full blocks.
You write on the back of an appointment card
If you fix the elevator, send it back.
With only one lift in the building
It won't stay busted for long.

The Salesman at the Time Portal

I've not been through.
Some people end up in the center
Of midwestern towns, walking the street
Towards a gunfight with no one they know.
Others find themselves at the back
Of a dog sled, rush and terror covering them.
It depends on the time of day,
The day of week, how
The portal is transgressed, and the individual.
Not everyone comes back.
Maybe some like it better there.
One man went straight to the bed
Of one of the period's more energetic
And available ladies, and tried eventually
To bring her back; when he stepped through
All he had was bone and an outfit
With a week of coaxing his wife might wear.
I still wouldn't go through myself.
As much of a home-body as I am I'd end up
A mouth in a lizard's nest.
But you go if you like, the cost is the same.
All I charge you for is parking,
And if you're not back in ten days,
The car is mine. It is a natural phenomenon,
So I'm not liable. I'm not even sure
It's real time travel. One day the opening in space
Showed up by the garden, and I knew
Fairly quick my planting season would be shot to hell.
I've got no control; you will be on your own.
One man claims he left perhaps
Twenty of his bastard children
Screaming in history. I nearly had his car:
He was on the tenth day. He paid in cash
And told me nothing of the women,
Or how in ten days he seduced so many.
Go through, if you've got curiosity and the courage,
Come back to tell us all how, by the short hairs,
You took the other side. Here,
I've got the parking business to run.
Except for that, maybe I'd go myself.

Self-Reliance

He comes up flush to the bar, lays his hand on it,
And I know it's not going to be as bad as it could.
All I can do is smile at him, and hope he knows
From the smile that I know he could have made it worse.
You need two hands to get a really good grip on the legs;
And the head will never come away from the trunk
Without both palms on the hold. I once saw a man
Who could take off his head with a single hand.
He grabbed himself by the hair, but had arms the size
Of most men's thighs. Only he could do it.
Already, half a dozen men have their hands on my bar.
I abhor this ritual. I shouldn't catch myself doing it,
But these men are rather pathetic—half
Disassembled and beginning to understand
How much help that other hand would be.

I start with the feet and legs. The head,
The left hand, the right. The arms
By rolling the weight of the trunk. When the police
Come, everyone has begun to gather parts
And make for the backdoor. But with me
Assembling is going to take a real professional,
Someone with hands as deft as water.

Yes, for a while afterwards I'll admit that the truly good men,
The ones with families behind them and tongues
That can work sense out of nothing ness, don't do this.
Their joints are as solid as heartwood,
They are more than pieces functioning together.
But it's my bar. And soon enough,
A Saturday, with a good crowd on borrowed money,
There'll be another one come cocky in
And smirk like this one handed bastard here.

VERMEER: MAIDSERVANT POURING THE MILK

Yvonne Yragui

The milk trickles over
The pitcher's lip into the bowl,
Its network of thinly etched lines,
Glazed branches of blue enamel glisten.
Fully awake, I hear the morning's precise design.

Unaware of March dripping from the roof
And the window sills' thinning icicles,
Blue veined, clicking in the vines,
Finches are pecking oats in the snow.

The kitchen door swings open, free of winter,
No differently than in November.
So I remember our double-dare.
He walked out onto the icy pond for me,
The fresh snow creaking underfoot
Foamed like a bowl of milk.
He promised to release the crane,
Stuck in ice, its webbed feet thrashing underwater,
Its enormous blue gray wings
Scraping in a helpless panic.

I handed him buckets of boiling water
To pour through the fishing holes,
Where earlier Father had gulped down
Whiskey and pulled in Tiger Musky.
Leaning at a dangerous angle, he shouted,
Amazed at the crane staggering to fly.
It screamed out, escaping the rim
Of a pond whose fire-chipped ice
Was like my heart.

I left the door unlatched for him
To climb the kitchen stairs.
How cold his hands were on my breasts,
His cheek was quivering as if afraid.
When our skins beaded in sweat,
It was like the branches dripping
In ones, in twos. The hoot owl called
To us, to the mountain.

I doubted he would return
After starting work at the bank.
I doubted he would drive to the burial.
That day I burned my hand on the coffee urn
And wrapped it in the white gauze
I wrapped the stillborn in. The cadaverous
Duty I never spoke of
Whispered in my breath, my bones.

Today, tired of the familys' tears,
I long for the pattern of cranes
Migrating through the blue morning
Transparent in the trees. They'll fly to me,
Having nested long enough, the stiff wings
Splash, nibble, cry—
Tell me of all the life—
Waterstrider, sleep silver bass
Concealed in the mountain shadow
Adrift on the pond.

Secretary

BETH HOUSTON

Kept after hours
without explanation,
she reflects on the silent
panes of the building,
regarding the boldface stars
typing out on the blackandblue
carbon paper sky
without reply.

Thirty stories below,
cars flicker like keyed letters
across inked ribbons of freeway
winding off the page.

The eggshell moon ovulating
through the dark business
of the city's margins
spills her red ink
on the blank page of dusk
spills her milk
into a cup of cold coffee.

He clears his throat;
she reproduces precisely
the droned message
dictated to her fingertips,
down to the last period
dark as his shadow hovering
over her numb desire
for anything.

Somewhere in a dream
the cruising moon
shines her headlights
on every dark face,
amd spiked heels
of uptown women perforate
the sky with stars.

The flourescent lights graon
and burn cool as the moon
in her grooved orbit.
When he is satisfied,
filed neatly in the back elevator,
she slumps with the moon
to the street where dawn
stars abort like typos
from the carbon copy twilight
sopping white-out sun.

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON FALLING OUT OF AN OFFICE BUILDING

Jay A. Blumenthal

In the first 1 to 1.5 seconds I flapped furiously, almost comically, then spread my great wings to defy Earth and, in so doing, recalled only those campers who had gathered like mourners to watch me dive off the high board. Of the billions of incidents that belong to my childhood, that precise moment of triumph (for I had proven them forever wrong) augmented my sensation of free fall until I felt the strong, unremittent pull of gravity and began to spin and whirl and then rush like a fallen star toward my future.

This was already the onset of middle age, in all its hoary turbulence: the recognition of the end, the unraveling of the dream (my Jewish mother had thought me a physicist), the clear perception of figures on the ground, my wife among them, the prolonged efforts to get right side up, land on my feet, perhaps rebuke the heavens. Taking no more

than 1.2 seconds, this was a necessary prelude to the final .75 seconds, where the man-child, the swan, the swimmer, the dreamer, the victim (after all, hadn't I been pushed?), the accountant's son, and the artist were gone--casualties of the descent. It had been snowing all day, and I knew the sky could not hold me much longer. Undeterred, I set to work on my final poem, composing lines I had never heard before. I was dying, of course, but my form, my gift for light verse--in a word, my prospects never seemed better as I decelerated gently into the soft blanket of the universe.

Any Damn Fool Can Buy Electric Trains

E.Ward Herlands

I gave them everything they ever really needed
Eugenia would mumble I gave them everything
& more I gave them the nonessential things
the so-called little unimportant things
I gave them the small things like
their very own pencil sharpeners one on
every kid's bedroom closet door you know
the kind the kind you crank by hand & I gave
them address books not just a family address
book no each of my kids had his own &
I made sure they had their own birthday books
it didn't matter that theirs was the free kind
the giveaway Hallmark kind I wanted to be
certain that each one had a birthday book to
make sure they would remember I think
that's important you know the little things
the so-called trivial things any damn fool
Eugenia would say can buy electric trains &
VCRs & even ten-speed English bikes but
that's just spoiling kids then what can
we adults expect I believe in those little
things things my mother used to call
crib-training things I believe in address books
& birthday books the just plain & simple things
so where Eugenia would blanch & say where with
my giving them all those little extra things
those so-called unimportant things where
were my birthday cards this year?

Two Poems/ A.J. SIMMONS

Untitled

...la morte atroce pour les fideles et les amantes.

I venture into the Harari boy
without compass, unarmed—
I am not at war, my mind
is swollen with roosting birds. I travel
his darkness like a salesman
of perfumes and reverie,
striking conversation at every door;
the promise of love and perverse devotion.
I fill his unlit purity
with bursts of poison, spraying
the white light of madness
into the coils of his gut.
We dream together: scrawny men
offer oranges, pomegranates, young girls.
But we are filled with the sweet perfumes
of our curtained love.

The sticky smell
of carnivorous plants.

Loving You

for JR

I am the last one left
who knows you. Soon,
the last goodbye
that leaves you nothing.

Remember this?
We rode our motorcycles
out to Notom,
then crossed the desert
toward the Henrys
rising bluer than sky.
I caught you beside your motorcycle
with that look on your face.
No one will know what happened before
nor because of that dreaming smile.
They'll perceive, perhaps
you wanted out of the picture,
wanted to walk beyond the white frame
and leave the red machine and orange rock
against the darkening mountains.
I am the last one left
who knows what that smile meant.
I am the last one
who will remember
the curve of your breast
like a white sand dune
beneath your white silk blouse.
That will not be known by anyone
who sees this little photograph.

At night, when the purpling, repentant sky
slouches against me,
I hear your voice, tiny with distance,
tracing through the canyons
of my heart. There is no marker
by which to know your course.

I go into Cohab Canyon
whenever I am near—I know how much you loved
the time we lay in sand and kissed
beside the water tank
in storm-carved rock.
There is a photograph of you
in denim jeans and running shoes
inside a water pocket
in the Kayenta sandstone.
I alone know the words
to the private tragedy
you were whispering
from your cocoon of stone.
I must confess how much I loved
the time we lay in sand and kissed.
I must confess how much I left unsaid.
How much I loved you
standing beside your motorcycle
in a photograph you didn't want.
How much sandstone
has been eroded
from the walls of my soul
by the storms of your sorrow.
No one else will know this.
I speak to you at night,
not in words, but those private moments
only two can know: hear me whistle
the descending notes of the canyon wren.

Soon, my son will be the last
to know me, when you and I have spoken
the last goodbyes
that seal these canyons
and still the sand-scouring waters
we knew, forever;
that leave you nothing
but a woman
loved by a man
who photographed you
in time,
some time,
but could not capture
any words you felt.

SELF PORTRAIT: A GIFT TO HIS WIFE BETSY ON HER SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

Ed Orr

For love, he wanted to bare himself,
not his soul, something more palpable
than those airy increments that saints
aspire to. Water—he has always been
mystified by its ability to suddenly
change properties—like Anna between
farmhouse and barn, barn and farmhouse—
its reflective quality, which only a man
who keeps coming back to the same thing
to find something different can understand.
He's a hard man to know, and that's how
he chooses to be, as one who will not
be tracked down like moose or deer
for meat or trophy to be hung. His subjects
are chosen with equal care: a door latch "sharp
with the feeling of the sound it has made for generations,"
dead sea gulls hung to scare off other gulls
from a field full of ripe blueberries, swallows
through broken window panes in the loft, seed corn,
chicken mash, the strong lines of a house.

THE MAN WHO MADE TEETH

MARIA BRUNO

It was at a party that I met the man who made teeth. He was standing in a dark corner, wearing shaded glasses. I could not see his eyes. But I saw his teeth. White and clean and perfect - gleaming like diamonds in the darkness. I stepped closer to him, seeing my reflection in the black glass that covered his eyes. I smiled. He smiled. I looked at his teeth. They were like nothing I had ever seen before. I always remembered teeth. Like Billy Xavier's in fifth hour high school French. His teeth wore little yellow cardigans, each and every one. When he turned around to face me, his pimpled nose scrubbed raw, his thin, purple lips slanted over his yellow mouth, he'd say something he thought was particularly pithy, like "voulez-vous couchez avec moi?" and I'd frown, and think how I'd like to get into that mouth with some of those Playtex rubber gloves, unbutton those sweaters with a stiff wire brush, and set his teeth free, but of course I didn't, on account of I was always thinking of something equally pithy to say back to him in French, like "I'd rather sleep with cow dung", only I never could find the word dung in my French/English/English/French dictionary fast enough. And I remember Mindy Marinelli's teeth from my early years playing on the Detroit streets. The boys would tease her and call her dog mouth. Her teeth were all jagged and misshapen and hung like mottled stalactites from her swollen gums. She would never smile, on account of the boys would bank when she walked by, and she would grip her teeth together like a workman's vise. And I told her when she grew up she would have new teeth and no one would laugh at her, but she would laugh, a rich full laugh, with her mouth wide open. And then I thought of my lover Richard's teeth. He was still wearing braces at thirty years of age, braces he would have tightened every week, braces that would trap strands of my long hair, that would cut into my tongue, make me bleed.

"I can't see your eyes," I said, staring at his silver hair instead.

"That's the way I like it," he said and sipped slowly on his drink.

I really wanted to ask if they were real and all, his teeth, if he had made them himself to sit so perfectly like white knights in his mouth, but I didn't. I talked other teeth instead. I told him how I didn't have a cavity until I was twenty-seven, how my dentist had told me I had "masculine bicuspid" and then proceeded to file them away with his drill, letting the shattered bone jet from my mouth like demons, until he had whittled them into "feminine bicuspid"; rounder, smoother, the teeth of complacent Polynesian goddesses. I told him about how I saw George Washington's teeth, all wooden and disfigured, sitting in a glass case at Mount Vernon, how I liked to watch Richard slip the tiny rubber bands onto the hooks of his braces, how Billy Xavier's yellow mouth was right

out of *Les Miserables*, how I hoped Mindy Marinelli's teeth had turned out all right.

"I could fix her teeth," he said smiling again. "I'm very good at what I do."

He talked teeth too. He told me he could make anything for anybody. Porcelain teeth, like your toilet bowl, he chuckled. Teeth with diamonds, teeth with gold, teeth the color of eggshells or warm cream or tusks. He smiled.

I imagined him biting into my neck as if it were a piece of delicious cake.

He talked about Consuelo from Caracas, the prostitute he hired when he was in Venezuela making teeth for a prince. She could do a backbend, he said, while she was screwing, a regular Nadia Comenici, with a perfect score of 10. She could go on TV, he said, eat wheaties, smile for the camera. And when he looked into her mouth, he whispered, "Gold crowns. A high priced whore." I envisioned myself doing a coital backbend, my tapioca thighs locked in some primal battle with gravity and age, my unexceptional third molars bruxing together like knives. I thought of how my back might go out, or I'd be screaming for Jesus, or my boyfriend, who was convinced that the male-superior position was the only game in town, would pout, letting his pink swollen lips press into his braces and maybe he'd even flick a few used rubber bands at me, calling me a whore too.

The man who made teeth told me how he did it with the Roma triplets, Vene, Vidi and Vici, all at once. He told me how they would each take turns doing the tarantella on his back, sharp toenails etching his skin, and how they nibbled his smooth buns like little rats with their ninety six perfect teeth nurtured all their lives on wine and pasta. And he told me about the seventy-five women, read my lips, seventy-five, he said, he had had in the last ten years, some with chipped teeth, impinging overbites, discolored teeth from well water and antibiotics, women with peridontal disease, retruded mandibles, pegged laterals.

"David's car is in the fast lane," said my friend John, sliding into the darkness next to me. I watched the man who made teeth move through the shadows toward another woman.

"So?" I asked.

"Yours is parked on the shoulder waiting for a tow truck," he said, laughing at the brilliance of his metaphor. He had long brown hair that fell over his ears, and his Albanian-wide face wrinkled as he smiled. He was protecting me, I knew. He looked like a Buddha standing there all plump and swollen with beer.

"Oh, real funny," I said. "I was just talking to him."

"You wear your heart on your sleeve," he said, pushing his wirerims up off his small nose, taking a sip of his beer. "And men, more often than not, come round and wipe their noses on it."

"John, it's okay. I'm all grown up. He didn't misrepresent himself. He's a wild boy, plain and simple."

"It's a defense," he said, "like anything else."

"Don't worry about me, Johnny," I said, hugging him. "I'm very good at reading between the lines."

That night Richard slept inside of me. I could feel his full weight on top of me, like one of those crushers you see in action movies ready to flatten the hero who struggles to push free. I could not breathe. I felt like a beached baby whale suffocating under a human protector that only wanted to save me. Making love to Richard had no sound to it. He didn't like to make any noise. He explained it to me once, how he always thought of a certain sequence of images to achieve orgasm. I never knew the precise order, but he somehow always had to think of the eating scene in the Tom Jones movie, black net lace against moist skin, the Stones singing "Under My Thumb," split figs, kiwis, avacadoes, and Catherine the Great riding her equine pal, Trigger, and if I even said something as muted as a "Yes. Yes," or an "I'm coming, I'm coming," I'd destroy his concentration and he'd have to start all over again envisioning a wine sogged Albert Finney sucking on a chicken thigh. I felt, for the most part, that I didn't have to be there, like it could be anyone lying next to him, anyone who silently mirrored his rhythms.

Listening to Richard's heavy breathing, I thought of the man who made teeth, and I was suddenly in Venezuela, the clacking of castanets somewhere in the background; and I was doing somersaults, double axles, and silky backbends, as he urged me on, until I became a regular Mary Lou Retton, going for the Olympic gold, pirouetting in the air with my lover by my side, urging me to scream, to bite, with my still pointed bicuspid, into his neck which tasted rich and moist like a guava or a mango

"Are you awake?" asked Richard, as he lithely removed himself.

"Hmmm," I said.

"I love you," he whispered, kissing me.

"Me too," I replied. And then I felt the silence, the inextricable silence before you ask the question, "What's wrong with this picture?"

A few days later I had lunch with an old high school friend, LaWanda Peters. LaWanda and I had been lab partners our senior year in high school and we had worked diligently dissecting a male cat that we christened Duane, after her ex-boyfriend. Boys were a mystery to both of us then--it seemed like we did everything in our power to win their approval. I ironed my kinky curls with a steam 'n' press to wear my hair in a smooth pageboy, pinking my nose, scorching my cheeks. I bought those pointy cotton bras at Kresge's that all the fast girls wore to make my breasts perkier, like iced cupcakes. I bought Passion Fruit lipstick, Maybelline everything, and I lisped on every date to appear more vulnerable. LaWanda learned to blow smoke rings through her thick lips so the boys who owned motorcycles would exclaim "Bitchen"; she inhaled and exhaled allowing her padded chest to expand like chimney bellows. She said she knew a special way to French kiss that would make the boys think they had died and gone to heaven, ratted her hair into black flames that spiraled from her head, and wore those leather mini skirts like Gracie Slick and Marianne Faithful. Her boyfriend Duane had gotten a girl at the Catholic school pregnant, and he had to quit school and work in the Vlasic pickle factory. LaWanda had wanted to

name our cat Duane, because she wanted the pleasure of dissecting him, piece by piece.

When I looked at Duane's retractable penis, all flaccid and the color of snot, I was reminded of the sea lampreys pictured on page 257 of our text, *You and the Universe*. I imagined a boy's penis to be like the blind lamprey, sheathed in a phlegmy skin, groping for some aquatic cavern of light.

"I've got news for you," I remembered LaWanda telling me. "Someday you'll have to touch one of those."

"We have to touch it?" It really hadn't occurred to me. I suddenly felt queasy.

"And if you're real good," she whispered, "you'll have to..." and she pointed to her mouth with her lacquered fingernail.

"Gross," I exclaimed. "You cut today."

So that day at lunch, I told her about Richard and about how I knew he loved me but how I felt I couldn't breathe, and then I told her about the man who made teeth, and about Consuelo and her gold crowns, the Roma triumverate, the seventy-five women, and my Mary Lou Retton Olympic fantasy of flight. I also mentioned I felt the man who made teeth was imbued with a certain power, a certain mystery.

"The only thing that a boy is imbued with is a dick, Rosalie," she said, still blowing perfect smoke rings into the air. "He sounds like a 'Fuck and Run' to me."

LaWanda had several categories for men. She placed them in neat little boxes, like the "Fuck and Runs," the "Love Me, Love My Dicks," the "Vacillators," and the "Ambivalents," and the "Possible Significant Others." It was a way to protect herself, I guess, and besides, she said, men do that to us all the time. "They've got their basic Bitch, Whore, Virgin, Ball-Buster," she told me once. "And then they say they can turn us all upside down and we all look alike to them. Hah!"

"What am I?" I asked at the end of our lunch. "What category do men put me in?"

"You're real, Rosalie. You expect too much," she said. "You cost way too much for most men."

Making love to him, how can I explain it? It's like being in the jungles of Venezuela with Robert DeNiro. DeNiro's in a white suit. You're doing the fandango. There's all this green—large leafed trees, hot crimson flowers that sply open, tendrils of vines scrape your neck, DeNiro dips you, you shout "Yes," and you roll together in the lush weeds, dodging snakes and lizards. There's always a danger, a darkness, and it's never really over.

"Who are you?" I asked the man who made teeth after we made love.

"You'll never meet anyone like me," he said, turning toward me, his dark glasses still placed steadily on his nose.

"That doesn't answer my question," I said.

"Who are you?" he asked, smiling.

"Rosalie. My name is Rosalie. I bet you didn't even know that."

"I know everything I need to know about you," he said, as he pulled me towards him. I could not see his eyes, but his teeth, I could see them in the darkness, and he bit into my neck as if it was sweet dough before the hot oil.

"Why don't you take them off?" I asked him after we made love again. There was a silence. "Why do you wear them anyway?"

"A defense," he said, "like anything else."

"Or something like, if you can't see me, you can't hurt me? That sort of thing?"

"If you want to think so," he said. "But everything doesn't always fit so neatly into categories."

"Do you take them off for any of the women you're with?"

"Once. Maybe twice. There have been times."

"What does it take?"

He turned towards me and I removed his glasses to reveal very ordinary blue eyes. He pulled me on top of him and wrapped his legs around me as if he wanted to squeeze the life from me and make it his own. "David," I said. It was the first time I had ever spoken his name. "I feel you have given me something."

"I haven't given you anything, Rosalie," he said, stroking my hair. "You've had it all along."

I had this dream. I was in the jungles of Venezuela again only Robert DeNiro was doing the fandango with Consuelo who was wearing three Olympic gold medals. Billy Xavier had grown up, he still had his sweetered teeth and he still wanted to "...couchez avec moi," but I was too busy standing there braless, wearing Passion Fruit lipstick, my hair in ringlets, communicating with the iguanas and the rubber trees. Richard was in the corner of the dream, braces gleaming in the tropical sun, standing with a muzzled horse and a black negligeeed woman who looked an awful lot like Catherine the Great. Richard was sucking on a chicken thigh, motioning to the Roma triplets to join him. David appeared, silver hair springing from his head like an aura, his glasses were off, his blue eyes shining. He said he had two porcelain central incisors that would make me look like Farrah Fawcett or Christie Brinkley or Jacqueline Bisset. I declined. He understood. And right when David was telling me to quit making men into such mysteries, I could hear the sound of castanets, the ticking of lizard's tongues, wild petals silking against soft bark, sea lampreys winding through the clear pools of water, and I could hear, at last, my own rhythms, strong and fluid like the Amazon River. In the distance LaWanda came towards me bringing a resurrected Duane as an offering, and further on I could see Mindy Marinelli, laughing, a rich full laugh, with her mouth wide open.

"Are you sleeping?" David asked.

"Hmmm," I said.

"Who are you?" he asked, licking my eyelids.

I felt strong, energized. I took a deep breath.

"You'll never meet anyone like me," I said, and turned towards him.

WALDEN BREEZES

another trailer hauled
away leaving a pale
rectangle of dead
leaves in the earth
like a new grave. For
a minute, everybody's
silent. "They don't
bring in anybody to
clean up the empty
spots anymore," a 92
year old retired
nurse says, nine
hundred yards down
wind of Thoreau's
pond, her rake
poised for the depart
ure of the 4th trailer
whose occupant, a
widower in his 80's
was borne away this
afternoon in his
pajamas, when the
last die or leave,
they'll knock down
the laundry shack,
break the asphalt,
turn the dump into a
green hill the way
it was when Thoreau
walked in the woods.

"If Thoreau was alive
today," one resident
says, "he'd be living
in a trailer." The
trailers are like
the leaves on the
trees one says
rasping from his
sick bed, falling,
falling, little by
little as Walden
Breeze hovers an aqua
apparition, pale
Landolas, ghostly
Homettes, porcelain
chipmunks, plastic
flamingos in a wreath
of spongy earth and
weeping willows, the
moan of a tv set to
Wheel of Fortune

My Thighs Inside Shimmery Black Nylon

on the way to ballet
long and seductive
under hot pants,
so the tall Italian
blocks my way to the
bank with his "Baby,
I don't believe,
Jesus, beautiful"
In the mall, nobody
doesn't look, as if
there were magnets
riding just out of
reach. Even women
get whip lash. My
legs are the me
you usually see in
what I write or
across the table
under plum lights
I'm in tighter
leather with a
double whatever won't
make me sick flashy
and startling grabbing
you so you leave
your happy poem.
Immediately you're
hooked or dazed or
startled. At least
you notice. But
not what's under
neath, less together,
falling apart from
what its carried a
round and tried to
reshape, camouflaged
moving fast enough
to keep up the illusion.

Two Poems / ROBERT COOPERMAN

THE HELL OF IT

for Bill Brennan

"Bum," they called you,
"trouble maker," certain
to end up in prison.
They never saw the whimsey
in your mischief:
the time you hog-tied
your younger brother
and let him dangle
from a neighbor's door knob
while you rang the bell
then hid, watched the people inside
tug at the door,
shocked by its resistance,
hearing their gasps at seeing Neal,
his face an apple ripe to fall,
his wavy hair drooping
like snakes draped from limbs.
You counted how long
it took to maneuver him
off and cut the cords;
he leaped away like a deer,
too mortified to explain
or even to thank them,
joining you in the fits
of laughter your mother
would later beat out of you
when Neal told all,
his revenge--and insurance
you would do it again.

THE CISTERCIAN MONKS' VOWS OF SILENCE
ABBAY NORLAC, 1315

Fifteen minutes a day for conversation;
they stored up all they had seen or heard:
a brother sleeping through matins,
swallows nesting in the abbey's rafters,
the cook dropping a mouse into the gruel
over a slight he had suffered from the abbot.
Then a quarter hour explosion, if only
in whispers, hands wild as pigeons in nets.
Fifteen minutes to pour out their souls
and spleens, to speak fear, hate, love,
the joy of watching barn swallows circle
their heads at vespers--a sign from God
despite the chilblains and racking coughs
that brothers from nobler families scowled at.
Fifteen minutes, then silence, prayer,
meditation, copying manuscripts, quick meals
with the muted scraping of spoons on bowls
while a brother read Scriptures aloud--oh blessed
voice of God! All repeated for years:
until death gathered them to the ground
and the hope of souls rising to the bliss
of speaking with men and angels,
perhaps murmur a tiny word to the Lord,
who had called all into being to praise Him.

Tiny Wildflower (for Jan)

Fritz Hamilton

4 yrs old &
raped
by your mother's
boyfriend holding

a pillow over your face &
now
with insides all
torn up you

lie near death in
Charlotte Memorial still
the infant flower but
ripped of your petals beyond

much hope &
I
dream of bringing you the
biggest teddybear in

Charlotte to
pick you up &
carry you back to some
great California forest of

giant redwood & eucalyptus in
a valley deep & quiet but
for a squirrel leaping
tree to tree & the

song of a white crown sparrow
that
you might lie upon a
soft thick mat of

pine needles & pungent leaves to
grow as the tiny
wildflower that you are
in

all that warmth &
stillness to
be happy &
forget

THE TERRIBLE BOUNDARIES OF THE BODY

Jackie Bartley

With all the obdurate
mysticism of the heart,
man named the constellations,
fractured the night sky
as if it were a child's globe,
its continents crosshatched
by the boundaries of countries.

When I was young my mother
taught me their names.
I learned to connect
the blue-white dots, the order
of an animal cracker sky.
But beyond order . . .
how does it go?

The fear
of falling is really
a desire to fly.
One night in Atlantic City,
standing on a pier, staring
into sand-churned waves
the fingers of an unfamiliar
dimension touched my shoulders
and I would have jumped
but for the swiftness
of the moment.

Physicists imagine
something as unbearable
as twenty-three dimensions,
a haploid number of
human chromosomes,
worlds within worlds
so tempting Einstein himself
would shriek with delight.

Once I carried a sleeping bag
down onto the bank of a river
and fell asleep listening
to the water's chant.
Sometime later, when night
was its darkest, I woke
into a sky heavy with stars.
Deprived for that instant
of all sense but sight,
I have never since
felt so alive.

Einstein's descendants have
named the forces: gravity,
electromagnetism, the weak, the strong.
There may be others; for now
we can only guess their nature.

My mother spends her days
sitting in a chair
at a nursing home.
No one knows exactly how
her dying goes, what disarray
the mind can endure,
but looking out onto a night sky
littered with stars,
few would deny
the honesty that such a death
might hold -- the slow shedding
of the senses a flight
from the terrible boundaries
of the body
for the chaos of stars.

Three Poems / RALPH HEIBUTKZI

THE EYES OF AUGUST

The eyes of August burn blind behind silence
The eyes of August never set you free
The eyes of August reside behind
domestic quarrels, dead bolt doors
 (Ivory hands held in self-defense
 Praying for an end before
 His fire renews itself
 Counting calendars & rosary beads
 Till death does its part)

The eyes of August break another rose
The eyes of August always roll your bones
The eyes of August break your face
 (of flesh & bone her back splashed
 against wet cement
 His fists sung poison telegrams
 Between cracked lips & blister kisses
 She only found broken promises
 Strewn under another sunset)

The eyes of August recognize no Holy Ghost
The eyes of August slam curtains shut
across your breath
The eyes of August hide behind frontlines
 (At birth he called himself virgin killer
 At marriage he declared
 "I'm a fighter not a lover"
 She tastes the backs of his hands,
 both sides of his mouth
 "This is love?" you ask)

The eyes of August carry a big stick
The eyes of August crush another rose
The eyes of August rule
with hands of stone—

FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO

From Jerusalem to Jericho
Ghost trains waltz under my brow
Rebels melt when they tilt their peaked caps
Sunrise swaps places with sunset
for a midnight changing of the guard
Angels unlock their faces,
ready for a crap game or two
waiting for them walls to tumble
Hell's Angels swallow switchblades
When Sodom & Gomorrah
loses its exit ramp: no gleaming black
motorcycle colors leak down Route 11264
Iron Crosses rust in the sun's claws
From Jerusalem to Jericho
St. Anthony turns drag queen
Bumming Jimmy Dean's dimes
(God's head shakes dismayed)
Satan hosts the *Newlywed Game*
Beelzebub steals the morning train
selling door-to-door (the American Way)
From Jerusalem to Jericho
Dylan packs away unused aftershave
Watching his disciples join all-night
domino games & wager their souls
Sliding between stars
zigzagging dice & smiles
rolling snake-eyes in their lives
From Jerusalem to Jericho
I paint this town blue
Praying a Hell's Angels helmeted throwaway
will blow down this pauper's paradise
in his crosshair sights:
But my shadow's suitcase
limps across clay Mohave daylight
& a billboard blinds me
spilling jellybean kernals of truth—

"THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THIS COUNTRY!
EVERYTHING'S NEGOTIABLE!"

The preacher in me demanded holy war
But the prophet new better.

JULY 5TH CAME AND WENT

(If I fall for you, catch me)
My school boy crush is an unexploded cherry bomb
Awaiting orders like any good soldier
July 5th leftover shadowing your porch
Love under the gun
whispers a different lie each time
(If I lean too hard, prop me up:)
Your pearl-handled .32-caliber love
Hangs low over my shoulder
Trench warfare crashes my prom,
long after dark, tangled up in
Fishnet flags & peasant dress broadsides
& lace garter snakes & your
Black eyes hoarding too many lies
(If I shiver, let me in:)
We blink down each others' barrels
trigger fingers armed and ready
Our minds form a love triangle
with only one corner
My infatuation means
unsent letters & unlisted numbers
(If I hug too tight, release me:)
Nothing feels worse than
Slouching in a supermarket parking lot
after 2:00 a.m., rejected all over again
Sour coffee grounds choking my mouth:
Today's bathroom stall initials
are yesterday's dreams
Run this under your gun

When you see my sunken neck
the back of my mind
the whites of your lies
the fun we never had.

The Horse

S. Gutierrez

I removed the bridle from my horse today.
Then I stripped it of its skin with a pair of pruning shears.
It looked at me calmly as I snipped and peeled
The warm, hairy flesh from its body.
Once it shuddered and a fold of glistening skin
Drooped off its wet haunches.
I placed the skin by my horse's feet. It looked at the steaming
Pile and flared its nostrils slightly.

I removed the large muscles by cutting the tendons with lopers.
Late at night I snapped the last muscle from my horse's body.
With my fingers I carefully tore the blood vessels from its frame.
The organs I spilled into a bucket.

At dawn my horse looked at me with deep brown eyes
I scooped into a wooden bowl.
From my horse's jaw I pulled each tooth.
Then I leaped onto the spine of my horse and rode it to the meadow of life.
When we galloped the wind whistled through my horse's bones.

**from a sociology paper
on a new phenomenon
called bag ladies
(in honour of Hesse's Steppenwolf)**

an endangered species
near extinction most days
but we can extinguish her
make her the cigarette butt of our time;
she's not tethered, not at home anywhere--
selecting stuff from garbage cans
real treasures people have jettisoned
into the space trip of our age

Cornelia C.
Hornosty

she frightens us, we scatter--
Good Samaritans with secret fears
about the wanderers and strays,
especially when they are women;
we build shelters for her,
provide hot meals and racks of clothing
washrooms, showers, beds with clean linen
to make her seem like us, make her fit in

bag lady,
your mind is not money blunted
not careering around corners of job markets
or entangled in household chores
wrestled down by neatness, comfort
philodendrons, araucarias
your brain encompasses
all perverse possibilities

there could be a wildness somewhere
in that junk you carry around
as good as the anarchy in your head

bag lady, you keep going,
we need you to covet and care
for the seemingly useless
to wear old clothes, be out of fashion
not in step, wear no makeup
not to read Cosmo or Better Homes & Gardens
not to be better, but worse
better at worse
we need you to insist on
not Good Housekeeping

Two Poems/MICHAEL J. EMERY

Dogs

all summer I looked down
from my new apartment
at 3 beagles pacing
2 square yards of wire cage,
pawing at clear plastic
flooring 3 feet off the ground.
they barked as one at cars,
at birds, at postmen, at me.
in the fall, when it turned
too cool for the fan
whose high whine
blurred their noise,
I crossed the street
& caught the man who
fed them, but I found
that he limped &
stuttered his words
& didn't complain again.
now it is winter.
lying on my bed,
I listen to the dogs
bark at the snow
& feel the floor turn clear
below me.

Aaron Gets His Ph.D. in Writing Poetry

the day before the oral
Aaron stands at his locker in
the gym, opening his padlock
over & over,
the 3 numbers ticking into place
each time.
he shuts the door on
his damp towel & jock
& sets off for the real world.
just at its edge, he sees
the grind of a concrete mixer
burning over newly buried ground.
Aaron bursts into tears
because what he's been doing
the last 5 years
suddenly all makes sense.
walking straight back to his off
campus apartment, he puts his
Norton Anthology of Poetry
out of its misery, tearing
each white leaf of it limb
from screaming limb.

TIGER STRIPE

Patrick J. Berklich

I think she wanted to
Toughen me
My skin, soft and thin
Child of ten

My Grandmother
Promised me
Ten Dollars
To drown a litter of kittens

A fist still clenches
My heart
Tight in my chest
Ten years later

I remember them
Mewing dissonance
In an old mesh grapefruit bag
Undulating warm ball of fur
Weighted with a dead stone

I have a hole burned
Ragged in my soul
Image of a yellow tiger stripe
Frantic in silent green depths
In the bottom of the water trough

Panic and flowing tears
I tried vainly
Pulling at the plastic cord
To revive the cold lump

I never told my grandmother
About the time I cried
Hunched and shivering
Behind the barn
Over a bag of dead kittens

On the farm
Skin gets tough and thick



Michelle Melis



Michelle Melis will receive her BA in English this year from MSU.

About the winners...

Just a little about the winners of the 1988 Annual Jim Cash/Red Cedar Review Creative Writing Contest:

1st Place Poetry and Fiction: Catherine Kaikowska grew up in southern Ohio--which likes to think of itself as part of the South --and received her BA in English from Kalamazoo College in 1983. After working she came to Michigan State University in 1986 for the Master's Program in Creative Writing/Poetry with Diane Wakoski. Here she teaches and will begin working toward her Ph.D in English at MSU in the fall.

2nd Place Poetry: Deb Davies teaches developmental education at Jackson Community College in Jackson, Michigan and is in the Ph.D program in Creative Writing at MSU.

2nd Place Fiction: Jessica DeForest teaches developmental writing in the American Thought and Language Program at MSU. She did her undergraduate work in humanities and is working toward her Ph.D in American History. She plans to teach history and write.

3rd Place Poetry: Mark Shaheen has squeezed four years into five (in his father's words) and will graduate with his BA in June. Aside from living, Mark enjoys tap dance and music composition and performance. He is the current roadie/groupie for the rock and roll love couple of the year Crippled Hippo. Mark lives by the railroad tracks in Lansing where he is happy sometimes and one day he would like to take a train across the united states to see it all.

3rd Place Fiction: Christine Hammond is a graduate student in Creative Writing at MSU. She has lived a schizoid existence because of a BA in journalism from that "other" Michigan university in Ann Arbor. She is a wife and mother of two who left corporate America for the world of letters. This is her first publication.

A MIDWESTERN EROTICS OF LITERATURE

Catherine Kaikowska

"Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea." — Ezra Pound

Not that it had to have happened there
but I was living in the Midwest that summer
with KD in her rented two-story Victorian house
Resident Madwoman in the Attic
she called me. But KD was an English professor
so I was used to her
saying things like that.

We'd been sitting around the kitchen table
in our underwear and eating late afternoon tuna salad
what KD liked to call *salade Nicoise*
although I was pretty sure that had to be fresh
and this was Chicken of the Sea
my favorite because of the mermaid but still
not fresh. The telephone rang and KD groaned
and hauled herself up against the heat.
By the tone of her voice after hello I could tell
this was one of her colleagues. I'd known KD for years
so by now I was aware of her different voices
one each for colleague student family ex-husband
lover friend.

KD came back into the kitchen
pulling her sweat-damp bra and underpants
away from her skin with both hands.
She said we had to get dressed because it was Sid.
He was on his way with Tanqueray and shaved ice
and lemons and limes. And Schweppes
she added after a breath and snapping the elastic
of her underpants against her belly.
Sid wanted to sit in the back garden where it was cool
anyway cooler because of the river.
I asked did we have to get dressed
and she said she didn't know Sid
that well and anyway the neighbors.
I said I'd just as soon go up to my attic with the fan
at the foot of my bed. But KD said no.
Sid wanted to meet me.

I walked out alone to the back garden
after changing my underwear
for my only summer dress. Obviously off-the-rack
Goodwill but 40's and flattering
and I sank myself full length onto a lawn chair
no shoes no stockings no underwear
but still sweating like a pig
in the 90-degree midwestern sidsummer heat.
I heard KD and Sid on their way down from the house
talking the latest departmental talk
his voice that New York-quick-intellectual
that always intrigued me
before I could even tell what the words were
and punctuated by KD's flat midwestern vowels.
And then there Sid stood at the foot of my chaise lounge
extending his hand and making the introductions himself.
I said absolutely nothing after that. Except once
KD and Sid were arguing Northrup Frye against Derrida
and Sid asked me what I thought. I thought Sontag
had not gone far enough in calling for an erotics of art
and I myself wanted a sexual theory of literary criticism
whose overriding question would be "Can you fuck
this book?" And that's what I said.
After that they left me alone
so that I sat listening to the music of their two voices
we all drinking gins and tonic while sucking on lemons
and limes and I smoking an occasional cigarette
whenever Sid would get up to light it
with his silver Ronson. Sid was extremely thoughtful
even bringing chilled glasses in a red cooler
with the gin and tonic and lemons and limes and ice.
So there was no reason to get up for anything
until dusk the mosquitoes by the river were so bad
KD said she'd go back up to the house
for citronella candles.

As KD got up she sighed big
and she said it sure was hot. I said it was too hot
for literature but KD said no
that books burn at Farenheir 451 or anyway paper does
and it wasn't that hot.

I said I wonderwed what the melting point
of literature was because if I was a novel
I'd be about lost forever. KD laughed
and went on up to the house and I laid my head back
and closed my eyes. And then Sid's voice at my ear
asking and what novel was I
his breath hot across my face. I said *Wuthering Heights*
not even opening my eyes
and he said he would have thought *Jane Eyre*
and I said only if it had been called *The First*
Mrs. Rochester. Sid's hand up under my dress and up
and spreading my legs
as he said then I was *Wide Sargasso Sea*
wasn't I.

When KD came back with the candles Sid lit them.
They two went right on deconstructing literature
until the gin was gone and the Schweppes was gone.
KD said she'd walk Sid to his car
and then they were gone.
I fell asleep until the last citronella candle
burned out
and the mosquitoes came back.

It was beautifully cool at last
walking through the ankle-deep grass to the dark house.
At the top of the first flight of stairs
on my way to the attic
I heard the New York-quick-intellectual
and the flat midwestern vowels together
coming from KD's room. Signifying something.
The anatomy of criticism
indeed.

WHITE TRASH

Catherine Kaikowska

You'd think after you'd been gone

from a place longer than you'd been there the memories would let up on you some. I wonder why that's not true because it's eighteen years since I left. Still some mornings I wake up and I don't know where I am just I'm not there.

The month I decided to leave it was a new moon a dark night in July and I was six months pregnant. And tense. Tense as a cat Charley's mother kept saying and she never was a woman who liked cats.

I had a lot of trouble sleeping that sixth month. I'd lie down naked against Charley and fall right to sleep but wake back up in a few hours our two skins sticking together and my breath quick my heart racing. I'd listen to Charley breathe, matching his rhythm until I was dizzy until I'd give up and poke him, say please. Please. He'd roll to the side of the oak bed specially made for his grandfather. Sit a minute. Then he'd grab his jeans off the chair and slide his feet in. Stand pulling his jeans up over his hips. Charley stood as tall as his grandfather at six and a half feet, and lying in bed watching the steelworker muscles of him as he zipped himself into his jeans I knew perfectly well what I was doing here.

Charley'd go get the car out of the garage and I'd put on a nightgown meet him downstairs and we'd drive out from the city into the country where the air was cooler. Out by my great-grandaddy's hundred acres and the dark windows of the farmhouse and all Granny Lou's parakeets and African violets asleep in her big kitchen off the back verandah. Past Charley's mother and father sleeping in their Victorian house full of Victorian antiques, the old collie dog Cindy sprawled under the wicker divan on the front porch, their fields at night empty of horses and giving up clover smell as we drove by. A few hundred yards farther and across to the other side of the road was the little white clapboard with wild roses growing all up and over the side of it and always a light in Mama Daisy's front room. She got up every night for insomnia she said *for her insomnia* and sat doing embroidery work until five when Papa Marion got up with her and she'd fry him his eggs and pack him his lunch and kiss him as he left her for his shift at the steel mill.

And all the time Charley was driving he'd be singing in that molasses baritone *Amazing Grace* and *(I'm Just a Poor) Wayfaring Stranger* and *Morning Has Broken*. Everything he could think of from all those Sundays in church. Not that we spent much time in church the two of us. We got married there of course and then we spent most of our Sundays after that holding on to each other in bed, and I could be sure of a telephone call at quarter past noon from my ma's Mama Daisy or Charley's mother, back from church and wanting to know was I under the weather before even looking in their ovens to check the Sunday hen. On the Sunday I was spending my morning not in bed with Charley but kneeling over the toilet there were two calls which Charley answered and when I tried calling back both lines were busy. I told Charley those two old ladies were already planning the baptism to get us back to church.

And so there we'd be in the middle of the night driving, Charley singing out loud and I lying back with my eyes closed and every so often Charley reaching his hand over to lay it low on my belly. Charley's the only man who ever called me honey called me dear called me darling and with his hand on me he'd say honey is it okay dear, darling I love you. All those words. I never told any man not to call me those words just no one ever did after

Charley they call me my name and that's all. So Charley'd say honey and drive on out to the other side of my great-grandparents' farm on the south edge to the two acres they gave my ma and her sister and their kids and I'd squeeze my eyes tight and see them all cool and safe in the dark and in their beds asleep. And usually that was enough. I'd be lulled by Charley's voice and Morning Has Broken and the hum of the car's engine and just the idea of all those sleeping people. But sometimes we had to go farther. Away from the farmland and deeper into the country out to Clinton and into the valley the river cut through. Where the cool cold rush of wind coming off the Tusky brought all my attention to the surface of my skin and away from getting all mixed around with what was happening inside of me. Some nights I made Charley crazy stopping his singing with questions like would God let our baby be born with its spine split or water on its brain or an extra finger like the six-fingered Amish. Or what if the baby were an albino or had brown eyes Charley knew I'd never seen my daddy and my ma wouldn't open her mouth on that subject so would he just trust me even if our baby had brown eyes. Charley's hand on my belly his voice saying dear. Yes honey. And back to *Praise for the sweetness. Of the wet garden.*

Some nights we'd stop by the river on the bridge and listen not even look to see it just stop there and listen to the river and then that would be enough. Charley'd back the car off the bridge, turn us around and head back into the city not singing not talking and then he'd carry me up the stairs and lay me down in that big oak bed and crawl in beside me and say honey sleep.

The night I decided to leave it was real dark like I said a new moon and Charley was backing off the wooden bridge to turn us around and get us home, and out from nowhere he said there came a pickup and old yellow Dodge and it caught us in its lights and it swung around the bend to come onto the bridge so that to stop without hitting us the driver had to run it into the ditch and up against a tree. This is when I woke up. I heard a noise and I woke up as I was being dragged from the car and a gun put to my head.

And then there I was I was standing with my back to this man's soft belly his hot beery breath huffing past my ear. His cock got hard at the small of my back and he grabbed me closer but the gun was still to my head and at first it felt really good to me the gun did. This whole sixth month in the middle of the summer I had been so hot and I always have loved to be cold. Always. The winter I was twelve I went out one morning into the woods and took off all my clothes even my boots and socks and I rolled into a snowbank and lay there until I got cold colder than I ever thought I could get. Lippy Smith who later hanged my cat and who had no business in my great-granddaddy's woods crossed over the creek to me. And when I saw him I stood up staring at him too until he crossed back over and let me alone. That day he didn't say a word to me but later he told everybody how he'd seen me naked in the snow and that there was something wrong with a girl who stood stark naked in front of you but you couldn't get it up. This was the second time ma sent me to stay with Mama Daisy and Papa Marion. My ma was so scared I was crazy. But I just loved to be cold and so that soothin coolness of the gun at my temple at first felt like a blessing after being so hot for so long.

Besides the man who held the gun there were two others and they stood with Charley in front of our car with the headlights like a spotlight in the middle of the dark. I could see them all talking Charley and these two men, their mouths were moving and the other two men kept jerking their hands toward the pickup but I couldn't hear what they said the river so loud and the truck's engine still running. One of the men the bigger one as tall as Charley and heavier stepped around like he was going over to the truck but instead grabbed Charley's left arm from behind and forced him down to the ground kneeling. Charley's back was to me so he couldn't see what was happening with me and every time he tried to turn his head the man in front of him hit his head back around with his fist.

Blood started from his nose and from the corner of his mouth on the right side that I could see when he did try and he kept trying to turn toward me. Then the man stopped hitting and stepped closer to Charley until Charley's head was level with the man's crotch and then the man unzipped himself and took his cock out and wagged it in Charley's face and then he got down real close to Charley's face with his face and said something which I found out later was that if Charley didn't suck him off the man who was holding me would put a bullet through my pretty brain. Charley said the man said *her pretty brain* and somehow this has stayed with me all these years and I must confess I like it. My pretty brain.

And all this time with Charley on his knees and this man's cock in Charley's mouth the man was standing with his legs spread apart and his hands behind his head and his head thrown back and he was laughing his own mouth wide open, and that fat belly jiggling. And the other man who got Charley big as he was to the ground because he was bigger was whispering into his ear. Charley told me that part later the man whispered how lucky he Charley was that they respected pregnant women or he'd be the one standing with the gun to his head and it wouldn't be my mouth full of cock. The man who held the gun to my head with his right hand started running his left hand over my belly kind of absentminded and then up to my breasts while this was all happening with Charley and I just kept thinking about poor Mama Daisy's embroidery work on my nightgown the violets and greeny vines swirled out from a spiral over my belly and this man's calloused hand tearing at the careful stitches as he rubbed over my belly and clutched up at my breasts until Charley spat on the ground and the hand stopped moving at my left breast pinching at my nipple. The other man came over to us then and said Otice wants the gun Gawain, and Gawain said no it's mine, it's my gun Merlin and he lifted it away from my head and shot it. Up into the air. Then Otice yelled and was laughing again and I saw Charley on his hands and knees throwing up all over the ground and Otice came over and said you scared the shit out of him Gawain and I think he pissed himself too. Then he said boy's lets go and he half picked me up and pushed me toward the car. Hard.

When they left it was so still and cold it was like nothing had happened. There was the sound of the river and all the cool dark. And I was sprawled against the cold steel front of the car. Then I heard Charley gagging and sobbing. Then I felt so hot between my legs liquid hot and real hot lightning pains in my belly. And this was the night I decided to leave but I didn't go anywhere. Until December.

It all started with Charley

the day we were talking about *King Lear* in Miss Ditmer's English class. Miss Ditmer had asked what it meant that relationship with Gloucester's bastard son what was a bastard anyway and Merlina Kaylor reached across the aisle to Dreama Casto and jostled her arm and they both looked back at me sideways out of their eyes and giggled *bastard* and I got hot and shaking, so dizzy then stood up and ran right out of the room. At the back door of the high school parking lot I stood holding myself up at the railing on the stairs breathing real fast and I heard footsteps coming behind me and they stopped. After a little while his voice said Cathy, said Miss Ditmer sent me to drive you home. And I laughed. This boy. He. Talking to me. Of course I knew all about him as a matter of fact he probably knew all about me too. Everybody did. I took a deep breath and laughed again because I couldn't let him take me home let him see. And I said well Charley, and I thanked him very much and said it was okay truly it was because I didn't live far just a little way. And Charley said Cathy I know where you live you're Marlys Sparks's girl my mother goes to church with your grandma Sparks. And then I stopped looking down the stairs my head came up and I said she's not Marlys Sparks you know she's married. Charley shrugged

and said but everybody calls her Marlys Sparks. I looked him straight in the face then and I said well and tell me Charley what does everybody call me you know so much where I live and what everybody calls my ma. And then I started down the stairs but I was dizzy and Charley was quick there with his arms around me. We just stood like that a minute and he whispered in my ear Cathy now cut that out let me drive you home you know damn well it's three miles down the road, you'd never make it crawling the way you are right now.

And so that's when it started. We pulled in the driveway and I sat quiet. Humiliated in front of the cement block cellar sunk half into the ground our basement home *basement home* Marlys called it. But Charley said well Cathy Cathy aren't you gonna ask me in after I went to all this trouble. And of course CJ was there it being the middle of the week and his train crew going out for over the weekend to Norfolk and so he said Charley sit down sit right down boy, and hey Cat get me and Charley here a couple of beers. And they sat talking about football and Charley going off next year on scholarship up to Ohio State while I listened and peeled potatoes and floured the pork chops to fry. And we all so nice and homey CJ there cleaning his guns at the table and Charley all polite saying yes Mr. Honeysett, no sir. And I thinking Mr. for God's sake and *str.* Then Mick and Juney came yelling and fighting just off the school bus and slamming the door but stopped in stark silent amazement to see this football hero in their kitchen. When Juney dashed through to the bedroom and came back with his football Charley finished off his beer and took Juney and Mick out back to throw a few passes. I stood at the window just watching that beautiful boy move, the grace of him taking my breath away and CJ came up next to me watching too and he put his arm around me and squeezed me close and said what are you thinking now just what. I still looking out the window pushed him away, and I said I'm thinking. I'm thinking. About whether to have lima beans for supper or peas and CJ said I hate lima beans. And peas. And I said yes I know I know you do. Then the door opened and CJ said Marlys honey. Ma ignored him and said to me it's about time you had you a boy around here and one of the Cassaday's at that he's staying to supper. I said oh ma no and CJ said Marlys don't you push her our Cat here she's still just a kitten don't you push her. And Marlys walked through the kitchen to change out of her high-heel shoes that killed her feet that's usually the first thing she said every night *these shoes just kill my feet Jesus*. She pushed right through the curtain hung between the kitchen and the hall to the bedrooms and didn't answer either one of us. I took down a can of lima beans from the shelf over the sink and slammed the can opener into the top.

That Friday

CJ was supposed to be gone to Norfolk but the crew was late starting out some trouble or other in the yard so CJ came late home to pack and get himself ready to be gone a week. I was cleaning the house Marlys not yet home from work and Mick and Juney off somewhere with Lippy Smith to talk about a trapline. CJ came walking into his and Marlys' bedroom where I was dusting off the dresser came walking up behind me our eyes locking in the mirror as he real gentle laid his hand on my ass at just about the same time as my elbow poking back into his belly. He grunted and then he grabbed my arm spinning me around facing him, bending my arm back behind me and up while his face came close those green green eyes squinched up because he was smiling, scratching his face across mine to get that smiling mouth on my mouth all the while I trying to twist away from him but backed up to the dresser and he right up against me pushing low at my belly his breath rasping hard and hot all over my face his left hand digging its way up under my shirt up under my bra, and my right hand leaving go the feather duster, grasping all over the top of the dresser until my fingers clutched around the gun and got it sitting in my hand as his mouth got to my mouth and I shot the gun toward the bed CJ jumping back away from me at the sound of the shot his hand kind of catching under my bra keeping

him from jumping too far too fast just enough so I could swing the gun around in front of me and point it right at him with both my hands. CJ's eyes wide and looking straight at the gun aimed between his legs scared I guess he was to look at me, into my eyes. Then I heard the kitchen door fly open slamming against the wall heard Marlys' high heels clicking on the linoleum clicking fast down the hall. Then she was in the doorway stopped at the door both hands on the frame she just stood there panting, her face chalky white as I looked at her and away from CJ and he took that time to go at the gun trying to get it up and away from pointing at him so that when it went off he was shot in the arm and not where I had been aiming. The gun dropped down but stayed in my hands as CJ let go, he was pushed back by the shot and around a little clutching at his arm and swearing Jesus you little bitch Christ. I stood there unbelieving. I had always thought it I shot him he'd be dead and now I'd shot him and he just sat there on the edge of the bed cursing me. Marlys took the gun uncurling my fingers from it and set it back down behind me on the dresser. Then she went over to CJ ripping his sleeve from his shirt and I just staring couldn't believe those squinchy green eyes still open and looking at me. Marlys looked up at me too and she said baby. She said get me some towels. CJ flinched as Marlys pulled some more of his shirt away from his arm.

I turned and walked out of the room across the hall but got stopped right inside the bathroom stopped by my face in the mirror Marlys' eyes looking out of my face cold and hard they were Marlys' eyes. I came closer. Closer to the mirror to those blue eyes so cold staring back out of my face and back into me, my hands up against the cold hard mirror tightened into fists and something took in me too to screaming a no no and no the mirror shattering, my fists pounding against it again again and Marlys there grabbing at me yanking me back from the glass blood stringing out all over her and she said Lord. Lord I cannot do you both, I cannot.

I was sprawled out across the bed

on my back and sweating like a stuck pig I thought then no that's bleeding you bleed like a stuck pig. I tried to think of what you sweat like but there was this whining buzz in my ears this chainsaw in my brain slicing it and spinning bits of it off so that pictures kept rising in front of my eyes like a movie shown on the ceiling. The morning light bright too bright but I couldn't shut my eyes I'd tried that and got dizzy and sick. And so I lay there eyes wide open dreaming onto the ceiling faces melting away, Mama Daisy into Marlys into Mick and Juney into CJ, then CJ sitting in a tree grinning at me became BlueSky Grandpa Joe's hound dog. And Black the cat with him too leaping out of the tree at a bird and the tree became trees and I was away above all the trees so high up with birds spinning all around me red-wing blackbirds and jackdaws and crows yelling out at me we all spinning into this dizzying dive that left me shaking and swallowing and I started to cry she was screaming. She must hurt real bad and who. Who hurt who was screaming. I had to try to open my eyes to see but so heavy I felt pushed hard and deep into the ground like I'd been falling from so high so long my body still kept pushing down from the fall down into the ground the ground that kept trying to stop me and I fought back hard and my eyes came open into little tiny slits and Marlys' face was there over me with all her black mascara and blue eyeshadow streaking down in teary tracks and her red mouth open and yelling but now I could barely hear her this little whisper shriek that got louder real fast as my eyes came wide open. And I heard her scream what are you doing what have you done what. And I said Marlys. Mama. And she slapped me real hard and then I knew she'd been slapping me for a long time before I could feel it but I felt it then and it hurt so bad my stomach clenched up and I started to vomit, and choke because I was on my back and I couldn't move. Marlys wrenched me up and whacked me across the shoulders until the choking stopped and then she hauled me over to the

window and opened it and the cold came so fast over this fever heat that my teeth cracked together. Marlys picked up a handful of snow from the sill and mashed it into my face and she said she ought to kill me she just really ought to kill me. Then she started to laughing and let me slide to the floor and she hunched down beside me and the laughing became crying like her heart was breaking and I leaning away from the wall toward her I said mama mama please it's okay. And Marlys lifted up her head and those icy blue eyes looked out at me through all those tears mixed with make-up that whole scarey mask and she lifted up her arm and she smacked me so hard my head bounced against the wall.

She got up and left me and went out into the kitchen and I could hear her dialing the telephone them talking for awhile before I slumped to the floor and I didn't hear anything until she was there again trying to get me to drink something hot hot and salty. I spit it back out all over her and that's when she took me by the shoulders and shook me so hard my neck snapped and she said okay baby this is the way it is the way it's gonna be Doc says no sleep no sleep for eight hours, we're gonna walk and you're gonna drink coffee hot coffee and hot salt water and you are gonna puke until there's nothing in that belly of yours but pain, and now. Now we're gonna get you in the shower. And she pulled off my nightgown ripping it under the arms and hauled me up and dragged me to the bathroom and laid me down on my back in the tub and turned on the shower cold and full force so that I huddled up against the side of the tub and cried little cries no no no, no no. Marlys said I better feel it better feel it good I was lucky I was feeling at all. When my brothers and CJ came home Marlys sent them to Mama Daisy's for supper and then came to get me out of the shower, wrapping me up in a blanket and a towel around my head a cup of black hot coffee in my hands slopping all over the blanket I was shaking that hard and she forced the cup to my mouth and poured the coffee scalding down my throat and then a glass of salt water. This is what we did all this time alone Marlys and I with me kneeling over the toilet and her fingers down my throat until she was right there was nothing in my belly but stabbing pain and a pounding in my head through my whole body and that shrill whine in my ears that made me wish I was dead, but Marlys. Marlys wouldn't let me die.

Later she eased me down still hot and sweating

on cool clean sheets and just stood there a minute staring at me naked she just stood there shaking her head and biting her lip between her teeth. Then she cracked a clean top sheet out over me and settled it down cool so cool and billowing soft over my body. And Marlys switched off the light and sat on the bed beside me in the dark never the whole night saying a word not holding my hand or anything. Nothing until grey filled up the room at dawn. I woke up and I could see her still sitting there staring at the wall above my head. When I tried to sit up she pushed me back down, and then she stood up. Standing at the door with her hand on the doorknob she said to me you know. You know you're just thirteen years old and you got a hell of a long time to live with this shit. And then she slammed the door behind her. I heard CJ swear out loud and Marlys said just shut up I don't wanna hear it I don't wanna hear a goddam thing from you. Marlys knew something had happened between me and CJ she didn't know what. But she knew something.

Two Poems / DEBORAH DAVIES

REFLECTIONS ON A LOST TOENAIL

It's finally gone: the nail the ten-year-old stepped on.
For weeks it hung on
First purple, than pale as potato sprouts
White as the skin that peels back when the carving knife
slips.
Half attached, it hurt.
It wasn't one of those familiar hurts
Skinned knees, a headache.
The nail jabbed when I walked.
Caught in blankets, when I turned over.
My friend said, yank it.
Give it one good tug, like a tooth.

So I did.
Hurt? Like the pain when the dentist says,
Oh, isn't that numb yet?
A dumb, sick stomach-wrenching hurt
That hung on, and the nail hung on
It didn't budge a hair's breadth.
I thought how, physically, how are
Fingernails and toenails pulled out?
Pliers, they say. I'll swear
It would take more than pliers.
It must have taken pullies, winches, horse drawn moving gears.
How, how, physically
Could you pull out someone's toenails?
At night when I turned over
The thought caught in my mind.

The nail's gone now. I tucked it in with a plaid Bandaid
But it slid away silent, like a launched boat, while I was
swimming at the Y.
It's too big for the filter.
It's still there;
a chitinous amoeba, a husk, a nudge, a toenail ghost
Drifting in pearly water
like a translucent beetle back.

CELEBRATION OF MARRIED LUST

It's been one of those weeks,
One of those months
Your father sick; a friend, divorcing,
Stopping by, drunk at eleven,
Calling at three a.m.
Children's homework projects
Tyranny of Elmer's glue, construction paper,
And, as always,
Your work, my work.

Just like fasting, the first few days of celibacy are worst.
Nuns and prisoners lose the urge
After prolonged denial. The body shuts down,
Forgets what it cannot have
And swims unthinking through fatigue, a tepid, never-never
sea.
This morning, though, I woke and saw the world turned sexual.
Birds bragging from fenceposts
Clematis opening, like white perfumed stars
Inside the house, my blue china teapot spout, gone phallic;
In the still-full tub, the children's waterballoons nestle,
nipples breasts.

There's a place on the corner,
Darby's Tourist Lodge.
"Lodgers" the sign says, "by the day or by the week."
It's an old red brick building rimmed by spirea bushes,
A white front porch, and an asphalt parking lot.
I think Darby's has
Double beds and no room service.
Let's my darling, overpay an overnight sitter,
Buy paperback books and papers, for the morning,
Stock a cooler,
Book a room at Darby's;
Turn down the white sheets
And fuck incessantly.

The Wheel

Jessica DeForest

They sat in a dark corner of Lenny's, a bar near the theater that was frequented by actors and bohemian types from the University. Zeana was talking about her part in the play they were rehearsing. There was something about the character she was playing, a woman trapped in a sado-masochistic relationship, that she could not understand. She was trying to figure out who had trapped the woman, the lover or herself.

"I don't know how to play it, to make it believable. The woman is strong in everything else. Why would she let him do all these things to her?"

"Maybe she's not strong. Or maybe is but doesn't want to be." Peter suspected she had something else on her mind. She seemed to him perfectly capable of playing this part, if only she would let herself. She was here with him for some other reason, and he knew what it was, had known it since the first time they'd met. She seemed to sense that he had seen through her and the strangest thing was happening to her. She had bowed her head and was smiling uncontrollably and shifting in her seat like a nervous fifteen year old. He had never seen her like this before. In fact he could not remember ever having seen a woman over thirty act this way. "Oh, well, I just don't know..." and her sentence just died there. She leaned toward him over the table. She picked up a napkin, unfolded it, spread it out on the center of the oak table and began to smooth its creases. He put his hand over hers and felt triumph when, instead of retreating, she took his hand in hers and turned it over. She stared at his palm, her other hand tracing the lines on it as if she were reading him. He noticed that her hands were larger than his, which were almost feminine in their delicacy. A tiny voice in his mind whispered "Small hands, small cock." He ignored the voice and resisted the impulse to pull his hand back and hide it on his lap under the table.

"I'd better be getting home now. It's almost dark," she said, leaning back and running her hands down her skirt as if to make sure her knees were covered.

"I'll walk you."

"No. If you walk me home, you'll want to come in."

"You don't have to let me."

"But I would."

"Well, that would be nice, but you wouldn't have to," he assured her.

"What about Sue Ann?" she asked.

"What about her?"

"Aren't you and she..."

"Lovers? We were, but we're just friends now. She's just not convinced of it yet."

"Have you actually said that to her...that you want to be just friends?"

"Yes. She knows that's how it has to be. It's just taking her some time to accept it. She's a bit crazy right now."

"I think I'd better walk alone. It's only a few blocks."

But in the end, she had allowed him to walk her home, and invited him in. Her apartment was in a converted Victorian mansion. The living room had been the master bedroom long ago. She made a fire in the fireplace and put on some dreamy music he pretended to like. She looked like a goddess in that light. She arranged her long arms and legs as if she were posing for a painter. The fire pulled a golden redness out of her hair. And now that silly shyness was gone. She seemed in control of herself again, almost as if she had everything planned out. They talked, and kissed, and touched for hours and gradually, all their clothes fell to the floor.

Zeana stood up and led him into her bedroom. She turned on a dim lamp that stood on her dressing table, went to the bed and stood there just staring at him. Peter pushed her down against the pillows and was quickly inside of her. He kissed her face and neck and saw that her face looked different now, better, as if she had been created

for the sole purpose of lying on her back with a man above her. Her eyes had narrowed to slits, and her eyeballs turned up so that he could just see the bottom curve of the irises. She looked almost as if she were dying. He touched her breast and her skin felt softer almost than anything he had ever felt before, softer certainly than Sue Ann's. Then he noticed he was losing his erection. He tried to will himself hard again. Mind over matter he thought. This can't be happening. She'll think I'm a wimp. He tried but failed to think of his failure with generosity. It was the voice of an idiot adolescent that prevailed.

Finally, he rolled onto his back, casting about desperately for an excuse. He could tell her that as a child, when he had finally gotten tall enough to pee in the toilet, the toilet seat had fallen on his unsuspecting little penis and that the first time with any woman always reminded him of it. He could tell her that he had had a sudden premonition that one of his friends, a manic-depressive lumberyard owner, had gone suicidal and even now was standing over a buzzing table saw, trying to get up the nerve to cast himself down upon it.

"I'm sorry. This has never happened before," he lied.

"It's all right. It happens," she said and kissed him. She went into the living room and put on another stupid tape. She returned and lay down beside him, throwing an arm and a leg over him as if she were completely sated and began talking, touching him occasionally, but mostly just talking. He forgot about sex long enough to get hard again, and this time, they made love until dawn.

When he got home, the phone was ringing.

"Where were you?" Sue Ann said trying to sound calm.

"What do you mean?"

"We had a date last night. Rhea's party, remember? I've been trying to call you since seven last night. I didn't sleep a wink all night."

"I didn't think it would matter if I didn't go. All your friends were there. You weren't alone."

"I was humiliated. I told everyone you were coming. When you didn't show up, people knew you'd stood me up. They were probably all thinking you were with someone else."

"What do you care what they think? Anyway, can't you enjoy yourself without me?"

"That's not the point..."

"Sure it is. If I had been you, I would have forgotten about it and had a good time anyway."

"Who were you with?"

"I ran into some people I hadn't seen in a long time. We had a few drinks and I forgot about the time." He answered, allowing anger into his voice.

"What time did you get home?" Sue Ann pressed.

"I don't know. What does it matter? It was late. When I got up this morning, I noticed the phone was unplugged," he said, anticipating her next question. He was glad he was talking to her on the phone, not in person. He could just see her, what she must look like right now. Her fingers working anxiously through her dull blonde hair. He let the image develop and saw fleshy folds appearing above her upturned nose, which was sinking into her face, her teeth bared, yap, yap, yapping, like one of those little dogs that barked shrilly at everything and peed on the floor when they got nervous. He tried to shake the image.

"You were with a woman. Who was she?"

"Control yourself, Sue Ann. Don't you think you're being a little paranoid?" Maybe he should just tell her the truth. But it would destroy her if she knew, he told himself. And it wouldn't do her any good at all.

"If you are...if you were...I just need to know," she said.

"Look, I have a lot of work to do today. I can't deal with your insecurities now. We'll talk about it later."

"When?"

"I'll call you," he said, and hung up.

Sue Ann was boring him. Why couldn't she just accept things the way they were? If she kept it up, she would drive him into therapy. She needed some herself, obviously. They had been lovers for three years, practically ever since she accepted the administrative position at the theater. He had turned to her in loneliness and before he knew what was happening, she was washing his clothes and cooking his meals, trying to convince him that they should live together. He had resisted her domestic favors and refused to let her move in, but she kept leaving things at his apartment. At first, just cosmetics, nighties, and that sort of thing. But gradually, she had moved more and more of her belongings into his place, trying to make it hers. She had stopped just short of moving actual furniture in.

He should never have gotten involved with her. Now he couldn't get away from her. He would be talking to one of the actors or stage-hands and suddenly she would be there. She had the ability to appear suddenly, without warning, as if materializing from some miasma. She spoke so softly, one had to lean forward to catch a complete sentence. In fact, it seemed that most of the sentences she uttered were fragments. Quite often, when she appeared to be talking to him, she was actually carrying on a conversation with and about herself. He had trained himself to ignore these soliloquies. She didn't seem to notice.

She walked quietly. She actually shambled. It was as if she had died a day or two ago and still refused to lie down. She moved without sudden motions or sounds, barely lifting her feet, as if to keep pieces of decaying flesh from falling to the floor, forcing her to admit that she was, in fact, deceased. But all this seemed to have advantages for her. She was the human fly on the wall. Overhearing conversations, seeing acts not intended for her eyes. Soundless, almost invisible, like a good spy, she saw and heard much more than she would.

She was scary sometimes. The way she had held that carving knife in the kitchen, her eyes wide, that time when he was explaining to her why she couldn't move in with him. She looked like *Crime Comics* cover art. But he knew she loved him too much to actually kill him, though she might kill herself, probably by accident. It wouldn't be long before she figured out what was going on with Zeana. Then things would really get weird. He pushed that thought out of his mind, picked up the phone and dialed. Zeana's line was busy.

An hour later he tried again. "I tried to call you earlier but your line was busy," he said.

"I was talking to Sue Ann."

"You called her?"

"She called me."

"What did she want?"

"I don't know. She seemed to want to talk about some problem with the scripts, but she kept mentioning you. None of it made much sense."

"That's really strange. She must have called you right after she talked to me. She called me this morning. She wanted to know where I was last night."

"Did you tell her?"

"No. It's none of her business."

"How did she know you were out?"

"Oh, we got our signals crossed. She expected me to meet her at some party."

"You stood her up?" She sounded shocked.

"No. We had talked about the party, but I never actually said I would go. She just expected me to be there. She was trying to reach me all night. The phone was ringing when I got home." He moved her on to other subjects, made a date for next Friday and hung up.

Over the next few months, he became so involved with Zeana he almost felt like he was losing himself. Sue Ann actually appeared to accept the situation. She didn't call him and even kept out of his way at the theater, only speaking to him when it was absolutely necessary. That didn't last long. In the spring, she started calling him and dropping by unexpectedly. Then it got worse.

Zeana had gone to answer the phone almost a half hour ago. He was lying on her bed waiting, when she came in. "That was Sue Ann."

"Really? What did she say?"

"Well, it was just like the first time. She talked about things at the theater, but kept mentioning you, asking me questions about you. I had the feeling she knew you were here. She's called me three times this week. And somebody keeps calling me. They just listen, say nothing, then hang up."

"She's obsessed. It's like a nightmare. She calls me all the time now. She won't leave me alone. She has no right to call here."

"It sounds like you haven't made it clear to her that it's over."

"I have. We've been over it time and time again. She just gets crazy sometimes. She's having trouble figuring out how to deal with it. She needs time."

"Maybe is you just admitted you were seeing me..."

"No. She's too dependent. It would destroy her if she knew."

"But it sounds like she already knows."

"If I tell her I'm seeing you, she'll blame you for everything. She'll just bother you."

"She's already bothering me."

"I'll talk to her."

And finally he had talked to her, though he had managed to keep things vague, never really admitting anything, allowing her to believe what she wanted, he had made it clear that they had no future. Not the kind of future she imagined, anyway. She had calmed down and begun to accept him as a friend, expecting nothing more. She went back to doing his laundry. She would let herself into his apartment, using the key he had never got around to asking her to return. He would come home early in the morning and find clean clothes stacked neatly on his bed. Sometimes she would leave notes, mentioning stains she had not been able to get out of his sheets and underpants. It was almost like having a maid, but better. He could call her anytime he wished and tell her his problems. She always took his side in any dispute. Somehow, they both seemed to hate all the same people.

He resented her persistent helpfulness and resisted her symbiotic lure. He never asked her for anything, not wanting to be obligated. But she was always there for him, and sometimes he needed her. Sometimes she would accuse him of using her and mope or become hysterical, but most of the time she just met him with canine loyalty. He couldn't give that up. Most of the time, Zeana didn't seem to mind his being with Sue Ann. He had reassured her that they were "just friends." He began to wonder if this were not the perfect situation, having both of them. Sue Ann was completely devoted to him, made him feel accepted. With Zeana he felt something else. Something he couldn't define, something that made him ache to see her.

He and Sue Ann went out occasionally. She was comfortable to be with. She would stand there looking quietly up at him, while he searched the crowds for familiar faces. Once she had said, "Why don't you ever look at me the way you look at her. I've seen you with her. You laugh. You always look excited, like you can barely keep from touching her. You never look at me that way. You hardly look at me at all."

"Stop torturing yourself," he said staring into the distance.

And so it had gone for awhile, for two years, in fact. Then, in January, Zeana gave in to her suspicions.

"She's been calling me again. I think it's time you made a clean break with her. Why do you keep going out with her?"

"I've told you. We're friends. She's been having a hard time. She's in therapy now. She's got this pattern of falling in love with men who treat her like dirt."

"Do you treat her like dirt?"

"No. I'm just part of a pattern for her. She's always been attracted to men who don't want her. She just keeps suffering. She has to learn to let go."

"She'll never let go unless you make her. Have you ever really told her the truth?"

"I don't have to. She knows."

"How do you know she knows?"

"She talks about you all the time. She can see that I love you."

"Have you ever told her that, precisely?"

"Sure."

"She told me that you two were still lovers."

"That's just what she wants to believe."

"But why would she tell me?"

"I do feel betrayed. I think you've been lying to me. I love you, but I can't live like this. I don't believe you anymore. If you love her why do you need me?" She was crying. He watched her, gauging her mood.

"I love you. You just have to trust me. She's on tranquilizers now. Sometimes she drinks on top of it. She doesn't know what she's doing half the time. She needs my support while she works things out."

"How can she work things out if you don't tell her the truth? Why don't you tell her to leave us alone. You're lying to one of us...or both of us."

"I just can't right now. She's handling auditions for the new play. I need her half-way sane or she'll screw everything up."

They's had similar conversations before, but this time, she was not convinced. She stopped crying. She was sitting on a wooden chair across the room from him; sitting like a schoolmistress, judging him.

"If this is the best you can do," she said, "just go away."

He didn't try to defend himself. That would have required promises he was not ready to make. He just sat on her big couch looking at her, keeping his face blank as possible. He felt himself shrinking. He noticed that his knees and toes were together, pigeon toed, just like a kid.

Finally he got up and left, trying to look dignified, but feeling arthritic. Why couldn't she have done this over the phone? What was she hoping to see?" He slogged home through the snow, shrugging against the cold, feeling both old and infantile. He remembered last spring, parading around her bedroom in his underwear. He glanced in her mirror to admire himself and noticed a two foot toilet paper tail hanging from the waistband of his Calvin Kleins. He yanked it out, balling it up in his hand and looked to see if she had noticed. She was looking away but he was never sure she had not seen that tail. If he never saw her again, maybe he would be able to forget that incident.

When he got home, he made himself a drink. He thought back to his college days, when he had starred in an adaptation of the Nibelungen Ring. He had been Siegfried. The best role he had ever had. He remembered how he had worn lifts. He had filled the crotch of his tights with latex foam so that even in death, being carried down the river on the funeral raft, he could embody perfect virility. Sue Ann and Zeana kept harping on the truth. But he knew they didn't really want that, no one did. He could

only think of a few people in his life who he was sure had always told the truth about important things, and they were friends, not lovers. Lovers always had to lie to keep on loving. They had to put their feelings on their face like a mask to cover all the gaps in their emotions. They acted love and pain, and sometimes, to keep from feeling hurt, had to act steel. Was it his fault he did steel better than they? They were soft, so often crying. They were good at it, born for it. But they knew the truth as well as he—they must.

Zeana's performance was nearly perfect, finely nuanced. She never allowed the audience to awake from the drama. She knew instinctively that the essence of a good performance was belief. Complete faith that you were who you said you were. But he knew that if he believed, fully, if he accepted it as reality, she might suddenly rip off the mask and betray him. And his surrender would be a joke.

She had range, but lacked true commitment. Offstage, she was always shifting roles, without his permission. Sometimes, she would stop, mid-line, helpless and confused, tears of rage streaming down her face, and call out over her script, over the footlights into the darkness, "What is my motivation for this?" And he, sitting there in the darkness could only say, "I can't help you. You must suffer for yourself." And for me.

It was a terrible burden those two forced on him. To be keeper of the mystery. They demanded that he tell the truth, but the truth was that their truth was a lie, a drama. If he told it, they would all awake from the dream, walk away and lose everything. They must know it deep inside. And if they didn't, it was just too bad, because he needed the drama. To tell the truth would be to violate the conventions of the form, and this he could not do. Not yet. Only the performance allowed him the grandeur he desired. Only this could fill him and make him a hero. He was intoxicated with the play, and would make it run as long as possible.

And he was quite sure Zeana would take him back when he was ready. Meanwhile, he continued the drama in his fantasies. He called her occasionally, just to hear her voice. He said nothing, just listened to her voice. He listened for suffering, or the presence of another man, feeding his fantasies with any information he gathered.

He'd had three months to think about everything. Three months alone. Even Sue Ann had miraculously faded away, gone to nurse a sick aunt, she said, leaving him to think about Zeana. He remembered how she constantly changed. Even in his fantasies, he had no control over her image. He tried to imagine her in Brunhilda's sharp leather bodice, a horned helmet on her head, and then she would instantly be dressed in silk, reclining on brothel pillows, a rose in her hair; betraying him with a stranger. When she lay on her back, her arms thrown wide, palms up clutching the bedpost, she seemed at those times, and those times only, to be completely his. Brunhilda was a prisoner of love but even her strength and divinity didn't save her from betrayal. And he knew that Siegfried would have betrayed her without the magic potion. That was just an excuse. Heroes had to betray their women. He wondered what she had died for. Why had she engineered his own death, and flung their ring to the river women? He should know, he had studied these myths, but it seemed that the real meaning of Brunhilda's sacrifice was just there on the periphery of his mind, a shadow. If he thought hard enough he might catch it, see it. The more he thought, the dimmer the vision became. Brunhilda had slept on a rock surrounded by fire, waiting for him, only him. The Zeana would always insist upon sleeping on the courtesan's silken bed. She seemed to have no resistance, until she stood up, looked at him with an irony that made me nervous, and walked out of the room, out of his life.

When she wasn't on stage, she could only for a few moments embody fully a dramatic principle. Once Brunhilda, another time Epigenia, sometimes, frighten-

ingly, Diana. Once, in the beginning, she had even been Helen. But she would always seem to remember that she was just playing a role. If she could shake herself free, she did not have to kill or die for love, or for someone's glory. She always shrank from the ultimate tragedy and became again, only herself, a person not too dramatic after all. He could see in her eyes that she was capable of great tragedy not tragicomedy, like Sue Ann, but the real thing. But she had always stubbornly refused to share it with him, as if he were unworthy.

He had been glad for the time alone. He had needed time to think. They had all suffered, he as much as anyone else. But now he knew what he had to do. He hoped she would forgive him and take him back. Was there really any doubt? Didn't she believe in love above everything? And he paused for a moment, looking at the phone to think of her. He was confused. He wanted to vomit.

"Hello?"

"It's me."

"Oh, it's been a long time."

"I know. I've been thinking. I really need you. I'm sorry about everything."

"Yes?" she said coolly.

"Do you want to marry me?"

"You know I do!" said Sue Ann.

That night he dreamed.

Zeana is strapped to a wheel. It is turning slowly. He is a sword thrower. It is a meditation. She is the mantra. He falls into deep contemplation while he aims the swords at the places near her body. He contemplates not his target, but is inner universe, searching for union, a perfect oneness that will lift him high, make him large. He throws with his left hand. His right hand fondles his penis, trying to make it grow. The wheel spins. One by one the swords thwack! into the wood and jitter there. Then, finally, she is impaled. Right between the eyes. Her eyeballs shoot upward and seem to look at the steel wall between them, but they see nothing. Only the lower curve of the iris is visible. She would look absurdly beautiful, like a kewpie doll, if it weren't for all that blood.

Still dreaming, he giggles nervously, feeling somewhat disgusted with himself. He invites this feeling to depart and instantly reaches the perfect oneness he aims for. An orgasm of the body and the soul. The corpse of his lover, clothed in the garish satin and sequins he has made her wear, twirls gaily on the wheel. The perfection begins to subside. He is waking.

"Let me explain..." he mumbles and falls back into the dream.

"Never mind. It's a small thing," says the wheel.

Two Poems / MARK SHAHEEN

maps

Jim says
he doesn't like
places
with flourescent light
when
flourescent light
has a tendency
to make facial blemishes
look
more like a map
of the moon

But Jim I say
You don't have
acne
There are days
when anyplace
but my bed
is no place
at all
for me

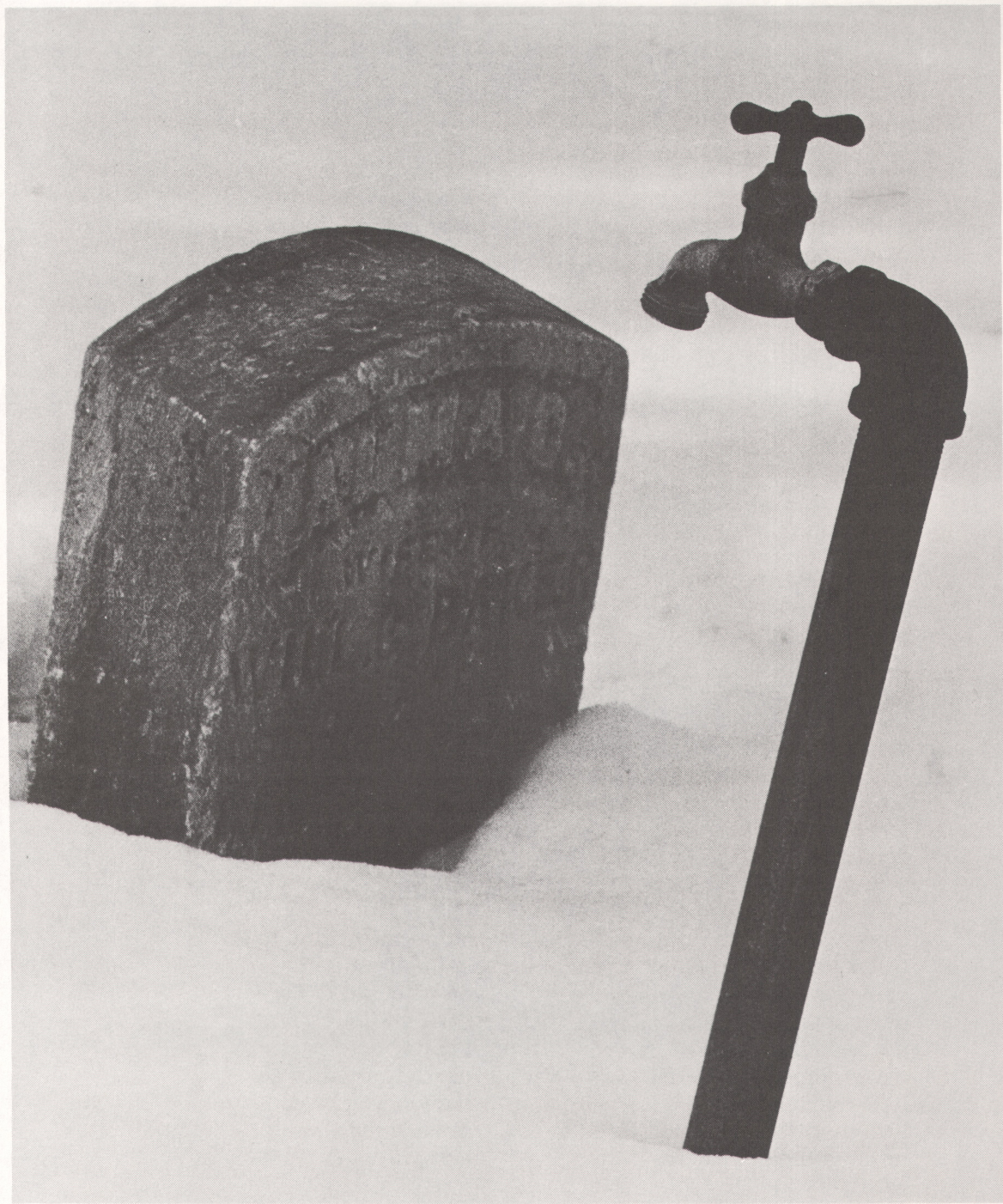
Where I wait
for daytime
to die
so at night
like a new moon
you cannot map me

WAVE GOODBYE LIKE HELLO

He asks me How many days
and I say How many? I
say I
stop counting I
stop listening I
don't much care after
20 or 30 days thinking
how many days since I've
gone without
since I've been
well you know
since I've been
dry
you know
straight

He asks me
No.
How many days
you know
how many days
HOW MANY DAYS TILL YOU LEAVE
I say LEAVE?
I say I
stopped wanting to go I
love the new butcher
on the block I
feel this push I
don't much care
5 or 10 days drinking
how many days till
I say LEAVE? I'm
never leaving you
baby never I
never wanted to go I
never could I'm
never going anywhere I
hate leaving I
love that deli-sandwich face I'm
never going anywhere
without you.

He says Then
why you know
why do you shake
why do you shake in your sleep?
you know you shake in your sleep
I say I
Shake? Me shake?
I say I
sleep with my eyes open my
sockets get dry I
see you tickle my
feet shake anyway
I say I
don't much care
18 or 20 months pinching
the folds of my ass I
shake when I say
Me? Leave?
Sweetheart baby I've
already left I
hate leaving I
love being gone I
stopped listening I
hope you're not upset I
shake when I don't drink
I've gone without
and you know I've gone without
I say I
stopped wanting to go
baby never I
never could I've
gone without
I say I
never wanted to go
baby never I've
already left
without you



JANEY'S FORTUNE

Chris Hammond

The day began for Janey like all the other long hot Saturdays in July. She heard Grady drive slowly down Frederick Street in his produce truck. His old panel truck had been painted and repainted many layers of blue. The paint chipping here and there, created an iridescence not intended. Loaded with tomatoes, melons, peaches, beans, greens, cabbage, potatoes and corn, the truck was a small, dilapidated farm on wheels.

"Fresh watermelons! Melons! Get your fresh melllloons!"

Grady's cries reached Janey and she went to her kitchen cupboards for her spare change. She felt the rusting Hillsboro coffee can hidden from Rufus, and she had to reach high and stretch far for the money. Janey hoped there was enough change for fresh peaches. She wanted to make a cobbler. There were two quarters, a nickel and a dime in the can. Janey used the big tin can to save her money in because it sounded like so much more when she dropped the coins in. The sixty-five cents would buy just enough peaches for a cobbler if she sliced each one extra thin. Janey balled the coins in her hand and headed for Grady's truck.

She was usually the first to greet Grady on Saturday monings, but today someone was there ahead of her, a woman waving her arms, talking loud and pointing to the watermelons. When she got closer, Janey realized the new woman was complaining about Grady's price for the watermelons.

Janey couldn't remember more than a mild grumble from anyone about Grady's prices, and here was this woman screaming at Grady and calling him a cheat. Janey reached the truck just as she was stomping off, hands empty.

Janey could tell Grady was hopping mad. He was so angry he couldn't stand still. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, and turned in little half circles, trying to contain his rage.

"Who was that?"

"That's Ed's cousin from Memphis. That woman is nothing but trouble. They sent her on away from there just ahead of the law, I heard. Told me I'm trying to cheat people! Say my prices too high! I told her to get on away from my truck. I don't want her business!"

Janey hadn't heard that part, but she just said, "You got some good looking peaches today, Grady. That's all I want. Gonna make a cobbler."

Grady calmed down right away. "Beautiful peaches, Janey, straight from Georgia. Sweet and juicy. How much you want?"

Janey opened her hand, showing Grady her coins, silent.

"Let's see," said Grady.

With one hand he snapped open a brown paper sack as the other hand began picking over the tender, yellow-orange fruit. Janey watched as one peach after another disappeared into the bag, until finally, Grady turned to Janey and said, "Okay, Janey, that will be sixty-five cents."

Janey started to protest.

"You're one of my best customers, Janey, take these, take these."

Janey backed away from Grady's truck, and turned up the street for home, pleased and confused in turn. Good fortune was so often a stranger to Janey she wasn't sure whether to be happy or sad.

As she busied herself in the kitchen making the cobbler, she wondered what kind of trouble Ed's cousin had gotten into that made her have to run to Detroit. Her husband Rufus had had to escape from Bruce, Mississippi in a hurry. He hit a white man with a spade. Rufus liked to brag about this to Janey when he was drunk and crazy. She had heard a dozen versions of this tale, and the facts, whatever they were, were lost in a maze of half-truths and exaggerations. But Big Mama had told Janey long ago that Rufus was wanted by the law in Mississippi and he could never go back. Janey believed Rufus' mother.

She put the peaches in a wire basket and lowered them into boiling water while she tried hard to imagine what kind of thing a woman would do to be run out of town. Had she shot somebody? Stolen money? How did they let her get away then?

Janey realized with a start that daydreaming had almost made her leave the peaches in too long. The skins were brilliant yellow and red. She took two potholders from above the stove, grabbed the handles of the wire basket and carried it, dripping, to the sink. She became engrossed in her task and didn't think about the new woman anymore. Every now and then her thoughts fluttered around Rufus —when he would come home, what kind of mood he would be in, how long he would stay.

Janey was taking the cobbler from the oven when she heard Rufus' key in the lock. The door slammed back against the wall with a bang and she heard Rufus' muttered, "damn" as he staggered down the hallway on his way to the kitchen. Rufus, mumbling angry incoherent phrases, was drunk and mean.

It was early afternoon and Janey hadn't seen Rufus since Friday morning when he left for work. He'd been drinking and gambling all night, and judging from his mood, he had lost big. She would have a bad afternoon before he fell into a drunken sleep. Rufus appeared in the kitchen doorway, weaving slightly and reeking of gin. Janey looked at her husband of eight years and tried to remember when she had ever loved him.

"Fix me somethinaeat...fix me some eggs, Janey honey."

Janey hurried to do his bidding. "Sure, Rufus, I'll scramble you some right now."

"I don't want no goddamn scrambled eggs, I want my eggs sunny-side up!"

"All right, Rufus."

"And hurry up. You move so goddamn slow you make me sick!"

Rufus slumped in a chair at the kitchen table while Janey moved quickly, trying to anticipate his demands.

"Sons-a-bitches think they can shoot some craps. Show 'em. I'll show 'em who know how to roll some dice. Eddie think he know so goddamn much. Think he can do any goddamn thing. Don't know shit. Don't know who shoulda won ...make me a winner...myself. He the best! Ain' that some shit! I can make em sing...sing...Janey! Janey! Where is mah dinner!"

Janey hurriedly placed the food before Rufus and got the salt, pepper and ketchup for him.

"I want some toast, goddamit! Where is the bread?"

Janey had it ready for him as soon as he yelled.

Rufus fell on the food hungrily, shoveling food into his mouth with the fork in his right and the fingers of his left. His eyes were half closed, and Janey hoped that he would fall asleep from the meal rather than find new energy. She got lucky. As she watched, his left hand fell into his plate and his right arm dropped heavily by his side. Janey stood perfectly still near the doorway with her fingers crossed until she heard Rufus snore softly. Then she removed the plate from under his arm to the counter and left him. Janey's good fortune was still holding.

Janey hurried to close the front door. She hadn't dared leave Rufus' sight before, even though she worried about who would hear them fighting. She stepped out on the front porch to breathe some fresh air, and several doors down, spotted the new woman watching her. She smiled at Janey and waved. Janey did not wave back. Instead she slipped back inside and closed the front door.

Janey hurried upstairs to geather her Keno chips and good luck charms to go to Lucille's for Saturday night card games. She wanted to be out of the house before Rufus woke up.

On the way to Lucille Montgomery's house, Janey thought about her ladies' night out. Many of the wives on Frederick's Street went to Lucille's on Saturday nights. Not everyone got away from home every Saturday, but most weeks seven or eight of the ladies were there. Janey was a regular. She and Rufus had fought about it often, but Janey was stubborn and Rufus had backed off and let her alone about it. Lucille's house was

the logical place for the ladies to gather. She was a widow with no children who could plan her days any way she wanted.

Janey wondered what stories the ladies would tell. Anna Cartwright would have a new tale about something her twins had done. Joyce Blackmun would have some outrageous story about the people on her job, and Linda Davenport would probably drink too much Old Grandd again, and they would have to try and sneak her home before Jack got in. Tonight, she even had her own story, about the new woman and old Grady.

Janey raced up the steps, and Lucille snatched open the front door before Janey could knock.

"Come on in, chile. Me and Anna and Linda been waitin' for you so we could set up the first Keno table."

Lucille threw a meaty arm around Janey's shoulders and squeezed her tight. It warmed Janey to be at Lucille's. She was unlike anyone Janey had ever known. Lucille appeared to be about her mother's age; she would never say for sure. She was loud, and not just loud talking. Janey didn't know anyone except Lucille who had a purple, and a red, and a gold lame dress. And her furniture! Lucille had a red velvet chair and settee in her living room with red and gold crushed velvet drapes at her windows. She laughed loud too, and slapped people on the back. Her hair was orange, and she painted her long, pointed nails a vivid red. If Janey met Lucille on the street or in the neighborhood, at the market, or the laundromat, she was reserved and correct, but sometimes she winked. Lucille was something else.

Anna and Linda were already seated, thumbing through the Keno boards. Janey greeted both the ladies warmly. She was especially glad to see Linda, who had missed the last two Saturday nights. Janey sat down and began setting up her lucky charms on the table. First she pulled her lucky coin out of her Keno bag. She had found this coin on the beach at Atlantic City years ago. It had some foreign writing on it that Janey couldn't read, but that didn't matter. She never played Keno without her lucky coin. She put the coin on her right. Next she pulled out the tiny elephant her Aunt Esther had given her. Aunt Esther, dead now, had told Janey the elephant was lucky and wise. This conversation was one of Janey's oldest memories and she treasured the elephant. She put it on her left. Now she was ready to play. The ladies always teased Janey about her superstitions. None of them knew she also kept a lucky Roosevelt dime in her shoe.

"Girl, that tired old elephant ain't going to help you beat me," said Anna.

Janey didn't care about the teasing. She felt safe in her routines. Before they could rib her anymore about it, she said, "Guess what? I saw Ed's cousin this morning and she was giving old Grady the business about is melons!"

"What you talkin' about, girl?" Anna asked.

"Who?" said Linda.

Even Lucille was surprised.

Janey had everybody's attention, and was delighted to be first with news.

"Girl, this morning the woman was givin' Grady the down in the country about his prices. Called him a cheat, do you hear me! Grady was fit to be tied! She didn't buy nothin' either. Said she'd go to the Wrigley! I didn't know Grady sould get so mad. He said she was the crook. Got run off from her hometown with the law right in after her!"

"What she look like?"

"A big woman, I know that, wearing blue jeans, overalls, if you can believe it! That's all I can remember she was moving away from that truck so fast!"

"She sound like Sam's sister Eva," interrupted Linda. "She wear Sam's pants to do her housework in."

Janey gladly let Linda take over the conversation. She was more accustomed to listening.

In the next hour several more women joined the group. Flo Ellis came, and Lula Evans and Stella Gibbs. Stella brought a huge pot of spaghetti. Stella never went

anywhere without bringing food. By eight o'clock the women had two spirited Kenô games going. They played cards, and sipped whiskey, ate spaghetti, and told stories and laughed until near midnight, when the party began breaking up. Janey tried to remember when she'd had a better time at Lucille's. She hated to leave, so she lingered, helping Lucille clean up, until nearly one o'clock. Finally, she collected her charms and went home.

When she got to her front door, Janey slipped the key into the lock and tried to ease the front door open. Suddenly, strong hands snatched the door from Janey and threw it wide open. Rufus grabbed Janey's arm, pulled her inside and shoved her against the wall.

"Where the fuck you been!" he screamed.

"At Lucille's," Janey said softly.

"I told you to stay away from that bitch!"

Rufus held Janey against the wall with fists gripping her upper arms while he screamed threats and obscenities. The heat of his breath, and the stench, and the hate rushed out and engulfed Janey, numbed her.

"Answer me! Answer me, bitch! he raged and slapped Janey, knocking her to the floor.

Trying desperately to give him what he wanted, to make him stop, Janey looked up at him and said again, "I was at Lucille's, Rufus."

It only enraged him further. Janey sensed rather than saw the upraised boot poised to strike. She scrambled along the floor trying to escape. Rufus' boot crashed down on Janey's ankle and she screamed. Rufus was off balance from the blow, allowing Janey a chance to get up and run, limping, into the kitchen. Rufus recovered quickly and followed her into the kitchen bellowing. Janey didn't have time to open the back door and escape. There was nothing between her and Rufus' rage but the kitchen table. She spotted the fork she had used for the eggs earlier in the day. She snatched it up, and just as Rufus lunged across the table, grabbing, she raked his face from temple to chin with all her strength. Rufus' hands went up to grab his cheek, and Janey ran past him out of the house, his screams following her into the street.

Janey ran to Lucille's. She flew up the steps and Lucille pulled her inside and quickly closed the door. Confused and disoriented, she struggled to tell Lucille what had happened.

"Shush...shush...chile, it's alright...everything's going to be all right."

Janey knew Lucille was talking to her but couldn't understand what she was saying. She nodded, vaguely certain a response was called for, and a glass of brandy appeared in her hand. Somewhere off in the distance Janey could hear Lucille talking on the phone,

"That's right, officer. 213 Frederick Street. And they better send an ambulance. There's been some cuttin' and bleedin'."

"Not the police!" screamed Janey. "They'll take me to jail, Lucille!" Janey ran to the kitchen and grabbed Lucille's arm as she was hanging up the phone.

"You can't go back home without them, Janey. Rufus is liable to be killing mad."

They sat on Lucille's red settee and waited. For the first time, Janey thought plainly about what she had done. She saw Rufus' face a bloody pulp and knew her fortune was changed forever.

The women could hear sirens in the distance, coming closer.

"Now you don't be scared. You was protecting yourself and you tell it like that. Show 'em how he tried to stomp you and tore up your leg."

Janey looked down and realized for the first time that her calf and ankle were bleeding and raw, the skin open in a deep, six-inch gash along her leg.

Just then the wailing stopped and flashing red lights flickered on and off the windows and walls of Lucille's living room. The effect of all the red, walls, furniture, faces,

so much red made Janey want to scream, but she regained control when Lucille squeezed her hand and hugged her just as they heard the sound of the officer's boots on the steps.

Lucille went to the front door and returned almost immediately with two police officers. "I'll go and get something to fix up that leg, Janey. These her officers need to ask you some questions."

Janey couldn't look at their faces. She only saw the uniforms and their badges.

"Are you Janey Neals?"

"Are you Janey Neals of 201 Frederick Street?" the officer repeated.

Janey then told the officer how she had stabbed her husband. As Janey talked he scribbled in his notebook.

Lucille returned with a basin of water and bandages.

"And you're Lucille Watkins?" asked the officer.

"That's right, a friend of Janey's."

After a few more questions, the officer stood up, snapped his book shut, glanced at his partner and strode out of the room.

Lucille followed them to the door. When she came back she told Janey, "You won't see them no more. You're staying here tonight. Tomorrow we will see what there is to see."

Janey offered her no resistance as Lucille led her upstairs. Janey sat on the side of the bed while Lucille went to find one of her nightgowns that wouldn't swallow Janey up. While she waited, she glanced around the room. She had to smile a little at the style of Lucille. The walls were lilac, the ceiling, rug and drapes, purple. There was a massive pink comforter on the bed, and mounds of pillows, pink, purple and lilac. On one wall was a large portrait of a beautiful young woman with sad eyes and a gentle smile. Janey was getting up for a closer look at the portrait when Lucille came back.

"That was me a long time ago. Good looker. Looks like you a little, Janey. I've seen some things since then. Here's your gown. You go on and get some rest. This mess is not quite over yet."

Janey was asleep almost before she could undress and crawl under the covers.

The next day Lucille went home with Janey. When they walked through the front door, a chill swept through Janey and she wanted to turn and run. But she kept going into the hallway, through to the kitchen. Blood was everywhere, dried now, on the floor, the table, bloody handprints on the countertops and the sink. Janey was appalled.

"Is he dead, Lucille? He should be dead, all this blood!"

"No, he's not dead, Janey. Bled like a pig, but he's going to be all right. Let's clean this mess up."

In a daze, Janey went to the cupboard under the sink to get rags and cleanser. She spied the peach cobbler on the counter, just as she had left it a lifetime ago. Silent tears began as she and Lucille set to work scrubbing the kitchen, washing away the pain and dirt and fear.

Janey didn't visit Rufus in the hospital. She didn't want to see him all bandaged up, and she didn't want to say she was sorry. She heard that Rufus blamed Lucille for everything. He told everyone it was Lucille's fault he'd had to stay in the hospital and almost lost his eye. Lucille's fault that his face would be scarred for life. Her fault that he couldn't go home anymore. Because, he said, Lucille was a witch who poisoned the minds of women. Proved she was no good when she took up hanging around with that Barbara Jean woman from Memphis. It was all Rufus wanted to talk about.

Now that he was out of the hospital, he was staying with Big Mama. She blamed Janey that Rufus as always drunk now and had lost his job. Janey tried telling Big Mama that she hadn't told Rufus to stay away from home. She was still his wife. But Big Mama had siad, "He's ashamed. Can't you see that?"

Janey and Lucille and Barbara Jean talked about all this one Saturday while they waited for the other ladies to come and play cards.

"I been called much worse than witch, you can believe it," said Lucille. "There

surely are a few spells I'd cast if I could, though, sure'nuf."

"Maybe I should see Rufus, talk to him," Janey said. "If our marriage is over I want us to end it, not Big Mama or anyone else."

Since Janey stabbed him, she had not seen or talked to Rufus once. The odd thing was she heard more about what he was thinking and feeling now from other people than she ever had from Rufus himself when they were together. She wondered if it was the same for him.

Someone knocked at the door. Lucille went to answer it and came back with one of the others. "Now we have a foursome. Deal those cards Janey," said Barbara Jean.

"I can't stay, Lucille," said Anna, still standing. "I just came to tell you not to count on me. Lucas is raising hell about me being gone all the time and I'm going to have to stay in for awhile to keep the peace."

"I understand, Anna," Lucille spoke in a voice softer than Janey had ever heard her use. She walked Anna to the front door. She was gone for a long while and when she came back, Lucille said, "Joyce and Linda are staying in too. All the other ladies. Some scared of me and some scared of their husbands."

"You mean they believe that stuff Rufus is talkin' about? About you being a witch.?" Janey was shocked.

"Don't matter whether they believe it or not Janey. It's all the same. They can't take chances," said Barbara Jean.

The three ladies sat together drinking, and talking late into the night, about all manner of things such as pride and shame, witches and warlocks, freedom and fortune. The other women of Frederick street did not speak to them after that, It hurt but it could not be changed.

Janey saw Rufus only once more. They met by accident when she went to Ed's to visit Barbara Jean. He was coming out of the house and they met on the steps. She gasped when she saw him. His face was lined with raised red welts, his right eye shot through with red. What hurt Janey most was how Rufus had shrunk. He was still a big man, tall and wide, but he was folded in on himself somehow. It was something Janey felt rather than something she could see. They didn't speak. He halted only for a moment then hurried past, trying to pretend he had not seen her or been seen.

At home that night, Janey slept very little. The next morning she gathered her good luck charms in her Keno bag, closed the door on 201 Frederick, and left town.

As this special issue of the Red Cedar Review celebrates years of tradition, it also marks the beginning of a new tradition. In 1987, the MSU English Department lost an invaluable teacher and educator, Richard Benvenuto. In his honor, a fund has been established to award a prize each year for the best poem, short story, and graphic art from that year's issues of the Red Cedar Review. Each author or artist will receive twenty-five dollars and will be recognized on this page, set aside every year in memorium of the late Professor Benvenuto.

The winners of the Benvenuto Prize for the year 1987 are:

Rod Murphy for "My Time at Aunt Sandy's" in the winter issue
Cherylee Finney for "The Hut" from the winter issue
Michelle Melis for the cover of the winter issue

RICHARD BENVENUTO (1938-1987)

Emilio De Grazia

When Benny died he ran his first marathon,
Benny, who jogged between words,
His naps caesurae in the long poem
He dreamed day and night.

He broke too soon, his stride that day
A rhythm too strong carrying him
Away, words sprinting stumbling ahead
As if afraid of being
Unheard.

We say for Benny at the end:
"You did it. You finished, not first or last,
Somewhere in the middle of the pack, you alone,
Who shared wine and bread,
The music of sentences with us,
You, moved by that rhythm, those words,
That long poem still in your head."

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Lyn Lifshin has just recently published *Raw Opals* and *Many Madonnas* and *Red Hair and the Jesuit*. She recently edited *Unsealed Lips*, a collection of women's memoirs to be published by Capra Press. Forthcoming books include *Rubbed Silk* and *Dance Poems* and a collection of political poems.

Ed Orr teaches, plays tennis, and is currently working toward a first degree brown belt in Okinawan Karate where he lives in Peoria. His most recent book, *Enigmas: after de Chirco* was published by Ommation Press. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Yankee*, *Christian Science Monitor*, to name just a few, plus work forthcoming in *Southern Review*, *Oyez*, and *Mississippi Valley Review*.

Ken Poyner has published a chapbook, *Cordwood*, and has appeared most recently in *Blue Unicorn*, *West Branch*, and *Antietam Review*. He has published over 300 poems over 14 years, and says it is still hard to find a good publisher for his working manuscript, *The Open Land* (hey small presses, that means you!).

A.J. Simmons has published quite widely, including *Ann Arbor Review*, *Fiddlehead*, *West Coast Review*, as well as being broadcast on KRAB Seattle and CBC Canada. He has also published *Wilderness Images* (1984) and *Driving the Angels Out* (1987).

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RED CEDAR REVIEW

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We are all tradition bearers.*



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