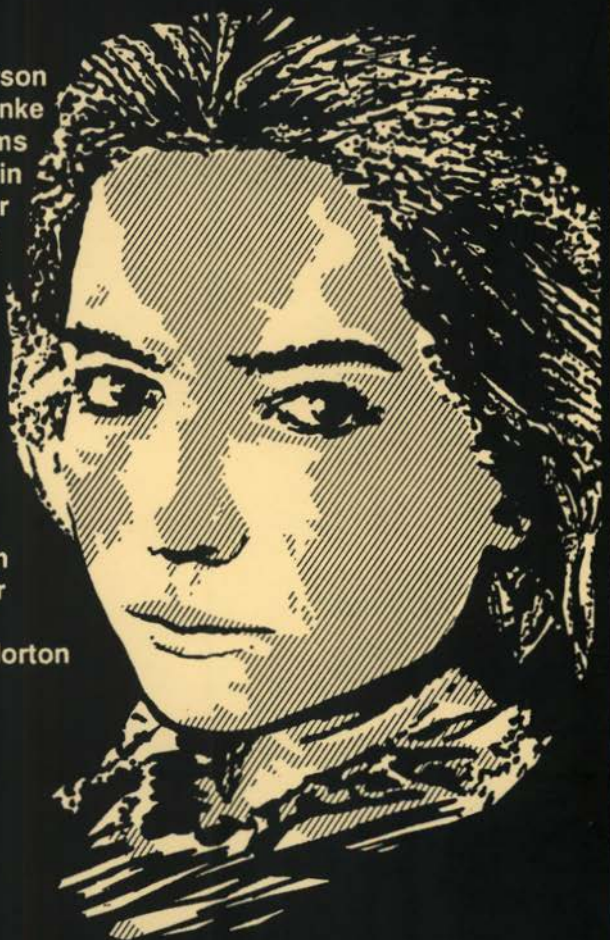


FUGUE

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Jacqueline Larson
Jonathan Sprende
Holly C. Williams
Barbara Baldwin
John Carpenter
Paul Lindholdt
Lorne Rand
J.C. Hendee
Lex Levy
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Rich Wright
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Stories
Vignettes
Poetry
Commentary



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J. C. Hendee

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Literature: We did the best with what we had. If Stephen King had sent us a good story, we'd probably have published it. *Blunders:* We misspelled Mary Heuett's name, and she's one of our editors. *Future:* We didn't go broke and we didn't get sued for libel or obscenity. We must be doing something wrong.

—Ron McFarland
Advisor/Copy Ed.

Libel? Obscenity? Maybe some extremist ethics organization will try to censor the magazine. Yes! Yes! I love to play in the dirt!

Oops... I forget myself. I'm an editor; I'm supposed to say something serious and meaningful. (ha!)

It's here to stay—another issue of *Fugue* is done. And now we're looking at submissions for the next. (Yes, we're doing a Summer issue.)

A special thanks this time goes to Kris Breen, without whom we would not have been able to establish cash gratuities for contributors. She sought out willing merchants in the area to place paid advertisements herein and gave us the extra liquid assets necessary. Of course your thanks should also go to the merchants! We will be fighting hard to see that we not only keep these new pay rates, but perhaps in the future will increase them.

In future issues I'm hoping for a

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wider mix of material. This time around we had some good variety of work—a small leap and bound over the last issue—but it could be better. I'll be expecting to hear from everyone this summer.

The only aspect of our whole process at *Fugue* where I can see a vast need for future improvement is in the area of submission format. If you're going to take the time to prepare a manuscript to send to a magazine you should study how to do it properly. Act like a professional to be treated like a professional.

Besides, if you've already finished creating, then you've done the hard part—paper tricks are the easy stuff. Nuff said.

—J.C. Hendee
Mng. Ed./Production

Appreciation.... That is what it is all about. We (of the *Fugue*) appreciate the quality and variety of submissions from all of the writers. They, in turn, appreciate an outlet for their creative talents, and our readers appreciate the moments of entertainment provided by this digest.

And the list goes on.... *Fugue* signings at the U. of I. bookstore, retail outlets at Bookpeople and Meyer & Meyer Bookstore show the business regards for our writers and

GRAFFITI
NOTES FROM THE STAFF

publication. And we musn't forget the prestige that eventually will be linked with the U. of I. for having a digest similar to those other substantial universities. the spiral rotates upward and outwards touching many areas of interest and ability—ahead lies improvement and an even greater appreciation.

Personally, I appreciate the experience I have gained. As this is but the second issue we had to rely on the wisdom of our advisor, Ron McFarland and Mng. Ed. J. C. Hendee as well as our own instincts. Becoming established will lead to the improvement that is needed and required for the longevity of the *Fugue*.

By no means am I providing excuses for our current edition. I simply am excited about the future evolution of the *Fugue* as well as proud of the headway it has made so far. I hope its impact upon our readers, writers, university and community will be substantial and cause a momentary escape from reality (which after all, is the definition of our name) from which everyone will gain something useful and pleasurable.

—Kris Breen
Assoc. Ed./Advertising

I'm excited by the substantial

increase in submissions we have seen for this edition of *Fugue*. The variety of genres is beginning to expand also, which is another great thing to see. *Fugue*, by its definition, encourages variety and experimentation from the "norms" and that's one aspect of the digest I'm especially eager to have come to life.

Energy for experimentation should be left to the creativity of the works, however, and not for the submission format. All submissions should be in

standard manuscript format—very few editors accept anything less. If you don't know what standard manuscript form is, ask a professor! *Fugue* is beginning to make footprints, and I encourage all you creative types out there to keep at it, and to let us see your work!!

—Leiloni Reed
Exec. Ed.

Reading for the next (Summer '91, Vol.2, No.2) and future issues begins immediately, so it is time to consider what you want to see in print next.

The next issue will be available in Sept. and at Fall Registration.

All submissions should be addressed to: *Fugue*, c/o U. of I., English Dept., Brink Hall Rm. 200, Moscow Idaho 83843.

We'll be waiting. ■

DINOSAUR

John Carpenter

I met Shelly Dawn at the Silver Saddle. I mean, I met her again, eight years after we'd been out of high school. It was a Saturday night, the band was doing the best they could with "Kawliga," and it was so loud the beer glasses and ashtrays were rattling on the tables. There were a dozen or so couples, some doing a kind of tomahawk stomp, and some belly rubbing and holding tight to each other's ass while they skated on bootheels around the salted dance floor. Shelly Dawn came in out of a summer thunderstorm with Cindy Mimms.

Shelly Dawn and Cindy drank a couple of long-necked Budweisers and laughed and visited with some people at the bar until Cindy got to rubbing up against Clayton Dill. Then Clayton and Cindy left holding hands.

I'd had almost half an hour to watch Shelly Dawn and think about how hard I'd tried to get into her pants back when we were in high school, but hadn't because she was such a spacey hippie bitch. The summer before our senior year Shelly Dawn and I went steady—but like I said, I never got any. She'd always say she didn't think she was ready for

that yet. I mean, I tried like hell all summer long, and when we were out necking in my truck on some back road, I could get her to take her top off, and I could play with her tits, but she never did let me go all the way.

I guess we loved each other well enough, but we were like oil and water. She always had those damn peace signs and little daisies embroidered into her jeans, and she wore those John Lennon-type wire-rim glasses, and she was plumb goofy about rock music. I worked the swingshift with a bunch of good old boys down at Bennett Lumber Company my last two years of high school, and I listened to Country and Western, and I hated hippies.

Anyway, I spent a whole summer trying to talk Shelly Dawn out of her tight little flower-power pants until we got into a fight one night and she called me a Potlatch redneck and dumped me for a long-haired dooper who played drums for some rock band in Lewiston.

I'd just started on a fresh Jack Daniels and water and a new pack a cigarettes when Cap Larson, the bartender, said something to Shelly Dawn and pointed in my direction. Shelly Dawn turned around and

squinted at me. Then she made her way across the dance floor to my table. The band was just finishing up on "Rednecks, White Socks, and Blue Ribbon Beer."

"Long time no see, J.D. How you been? Mind if I sit here?" she yelled as she sat down in the other empty chair at my table.

"Well I'll be damned, Shelly Dawn Carter. Hell, I haven't seen you since school. How the hell you been?" I hollered, pretending that I'd just now recognized who she was.

"Good. It ain't Carter anymore though. It's Williams," she hollered.

"Where's your old man?" I yelled. In Potlatch, Idaho, it wasn't a bad idea to keep track of things like that.

"We're divorced. How about you and Mary? Are you and Mary still together?" she yelled, trying to be heard above the band.

I was in one of those moods where I really didn't want to talk about Mary, but I knew I'd end up doing it anyway if I got started. I swallowed some of my drink and chewed a piece of ice before I answered.

"Mary and I are divorced, too."

The band took off on "Swinging Doors, A Jukebox, And A Barstool." Shelly Dawn didn't hear me.

"I SAID MARY AND I ARE DIVORCED."

We hollered small talk back and forth at each other until the band decided to take a break and we didn't have to yell anymore.

"So what brings you to Potlatch? Just visiting?" I asked.

"Bonnie June's getting married this weekend. In Moscow. She's marrying a guy from New York. He's a graduate student at the university," she said.

"The hell you say! Little Bonnie June? Shoot, she can't be big enough to be getting married? Marrying a guy from New York, huh? Jesus, I guess I'm just gettin' old," I said.

"How you been J.D.?" she asked again.

Across the wobbly little table and up close I got a real good look at Shelly Dawn. She was still damned easy on the eyes. She wore her Wrangler jeans so tight I swear you could read the dates on the dimes in her pockets. She had the same ice-blue eyes and freckled nose and Carly Simon mouth, and the same waist-length, straw-color hair that she had back in high school. And those tits—gawdamn—not so awful big, but firm and high. They pushed out against the fabric of a faded Grateful Dead concert tee-shirt, proud. They had a right to be proud. Shelly Dawn's tits were what wet dreams are made of.

But you could tell by the way she covered her ears and rolled her eyes when the band started back up and played something real twangy that she was still a hippie. I remembered how she wouldn't listen to anything but that hippieshit music back when we went steady. Back then, she hated the good classic C&W that I listened to. Oh sure, she'd listen to, and even liked, some Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt, but I'd never really considered that kind of music proper C&W anyway. Maybe Willie Nelson had brought the cowboys and the hippies together, but I, by golly, didn't want any of it.

"Something wrong with the music?" I asked.

"It's just a little loud is all," she smiled and said.

But I could tell she didn't care for it.

I guess the kind of music some-

body listens to doesn't have much to do with the kind of person they are, but Shelly Dawn had dumped me once because of her bullshit hippie attitude, and I'd be damned if I'd let her burn me like that again.

Still, I had liked her an awful lot back in school, and those were probably the nicest looking tits that had bounced through Potlatch in a long time... so Shelly Dawn and I got to talking about what we'd been doing for the last eight years. She'd been married to some guy in Seattle, a writer or something. She'd had a baby—Bobby she called him. But when she'd got divorced, she'd signed custody over to her ex-husband, and him and the kid lived in Seattle.

I thought to myself if that ain't just like some spacey hippie bitch to give her kid up and let somebody else raise it. But I didn't say anything because I knew Shelly Dawn was just one of those people who will never change no matter how hard you argue with them. If she wanted to be one of those liberated hippie bitches with hairy legs, I suppose it wasn't any hide off my ass. Besides, I hadn't really been with anyone—or for that matter even talked to a woman—since Mary ran off. So I figured I could put up with Shelly Dawn's faults for a while anyway. And after all these years she was still fun to talk to.

"J.D., you haven't changed a bit in eight years," she said. "I'll bet that's the same old cowboy hat you wore all the time back when we were in high school," she said pointing at my hat.

"Naw, it ain't. I've been through a couple since then," I said.

"Bet you still carry one of the bottle-openers—what'd you call

'em? Oh yeah, a 'church-key'—in your wallet. Don't you?"

"Naw, not any more."

"How about that silly three-legged dog—Old Tripod—how's Old Tripod?" she asked. "You still got old Tripod?"

"Old Tripod got run over by a chip-truck a couple years ago," I said. I guess for a moment there we both missed Old Tripod.

I really don't know why but after we'd had a few drinks I got to telling her about how Mary had run off to live in Moscow so she could go to college. How she'd said she'd go crazy if she had to live in Potlatch the rest of her life. I told her about how Mary had had this screwed-up notion about how the timber companies like PFI and Bennett Lumber had convinced folks in Potlatch that there were two kinds of people in this world—the stockholders and the workers—and that Potlatch folks were the workers. I told Shelly Dawn how Mary seemed to think all a person had to do to get out was to walk away from it. I told her about how Mary didn't realize that you couldn't just walk away from the way you were brought up—you can't walk away from everything you believed in. I figured if Bennett Lumber Company was good enough to keep me on their payroll, then I, by golly, ought to be thankful for it. I didn't think working there was anything to be ashamed of.

I told Shelly Dawn about how I hadn't missed a day at the sawmill for going on ten years now, and how I'd buckled down and worked my butt off to make payments on the double-wide and furniture and a car for Mary—how it was me who'd ended up being the one who forked over 200 dollars a month child sup-

port for little J.D. Junior, and how I only got to see him two weekends a month. I told her about how there probably wasn't a single guy in Potlatch or Moscow that Mary hadn't screwed since we'd been divorced.

Then I got to feeling bad, talking about me and Mary so much, and I asked Shelly Dawn if she wanted to go somewhere where the music wasn't so loud. Maybe go for a drive or something.

"Sure, J.D., I think I'd like that very much."

I don't know, just something about the way she said it gave me a funny warm feeling that I hadn't felt for a long time. She just smiled her Carly Simon smile at me when I told her I was going to the bar to buy a six-pack of Bud bottles to go.

"I'll see if Cap can loan us a church-key," I said.

It felt real good to hear her laugh again.

It was raining like a cow pissing on a gym floor when we stepped out of the Silver Saddle. I let Shelly Dawn use my Levi's jacket for an umbrella, and I carried her purse under one arm and the six-pack under the other as we jumped across the puddles in the parking lot. I knew Shelly Dawn would be impressed with all the work I'd done on the Dinosaur. She'd been running a half-step behind me until we were within ten feet or so of it.

"I can't believe it!" she said as she turned to me. "You've still got the Dinosaur!"

I'd just spent four hundred dollars on a new paint job, and the way the raindrops beaded up on the Dinosaur's metallic blue surfaces made it look almost luminous—the diamond plate running boards and chromed

bumpers and trim shining like a brand new nickel, the raised lettering on the tires like ivory. The Dinosaur was the best looking, best cared for, '64 Ford 4-wheel drive on the road.

"Hey old Dinosaur was the last great truck Fo-Mo-Co ever built. Be damned if I'll ever get rid of it. I had to put a new short block and tranny in it a couple of years ago, though. I guess it's kind of an obsession with me anymore," I said.

It was Shelly Dawn who'd named the Dinosaur back when we were going steady. She'd come up with something about the prehistoric dinosaurs dying out and then being turned into gas and oil. She'd said any truck that used as much gas and oil as this one did was something of a dinosaur too—a dinosaur, still hanging around even after all the others of its kind were long gone. She used to tease me about it, saying how much more money we'd have for dates if I'd trade it in on one of those Japanese rice-eater pick-ups like everyone else was buying.

I didn't care if the Dinosaur was a guzzler, I hated rice-eaters.

I put the six-pack in the bed behind the cab and opened the door for Shelly Dawn. She stepped up on the diamond-plate running board and scooted those read the date on the dime Wranglers across the seat—not all the way though—she stopped behind the tranny hump. I climbed in after her, slipped the key in the ignition, and started the engine.

Shelly Dawn wasn't saying much, just giving me little smiles whenever she looked at me, and I knew she was glad I'd hung on to the old truck. Then I got to remembering, and I think maybe Shelly Dawn was remembering too, all those nights eight summers ago when we'd held

on to each other and kissed and diddled around on this very pick-up seat and fogged up this very same windshield—me always trying to talk her into going a little further.

I let the Dinosaur idle for a few minutes while the wiper blades slap-squeech-slapped. I dug around in my tape box, looking for an eight-track I hadn't played for a good many years. I found it finally and plugged Emmylou Harris' "Luxury Liner" into the deck. I fiddled with the choke a bit and reached for the ivory cue-ball gearshift knob. Shelly Dawn's tiny warm hands were already there. I turned and looked into her ice-blue eyes and let my hand rest on hers for a moment. Her hands were still half the size of my own.

Again, I got that warm feeling in the pit of my stomach. I pushed the clutch pedal to the floor and Shelly Dawn pulled the ivory cue-ball down out of first, through neutral, and over-up into reverse. I could feel and hear the gears mesh beneath us. I remembered how well it worked eight summers ago—me clutching, her shifting.

We backed out of the parking space and I cranked the wheel and clutched again and Shelly Dawn slipped it back into first. We pulled out onto the rain-washed street and headed out of town toward the Flanigan Creek rockpit.

The Dinosaur had been driven over the three miles of gravel to the Flanigan Creek rockpit so many times eight summers ago that I think I could have closed my eyes and still got there. Shelly Dawn and Emmylou harmonized: "Luxury Liner, thousand tons of steel / No one in this whole wide world / Knows the way I feel / I've been a long, lost soul / For a long, long time...."

It had stopped raining when the tires scrunched across the broken gravel in the rockpit. The thunder clouds had partially cleared and a full August moon had come out. We could see all the way across the hundred-yard-wide basalt amphitheater. I shut the engine off and we listened to the ticking noises as the clock cooled and contracted. Then Shelly Dawn turned to me and I held her and we kissed, lightly at first, then hard, tongues touching, pushing exploring, suddenly familiar again. Shelly Dawn's mouth tasted like beer and Dentyne—every bit as good as when we were teenagers. I felt Shelly Dawn's taut nipples pressing, hard, into my chest, her fingers digging into my back. After all these years, it was going to happen, right here in the Flanigan Creek rockpit. Right here in the Dinosaur.

After we'd kissed a little while, though, I pulled away from her and fished a cigarette out of my shirt pocket. I lit it, drew long and deep on it. I told her that before things went any further, I'd have to see a man about a horse. She fiddled with something in her purse.

I was standing behind the tailgate, my cigarette clenched in my teeth, staring up at the scudding clouds, thinking about how difficult it was to piss with a hard-on, when the dome-light came on in the Dinosaur. Through the rear window glass I could see Shelly Dawn bent over, doing something with something in her lap. I shook and zipped as best I could, and stumbled over the rock-cobbles back to the driver-side door. It wasn't until I'd stepped up on the running-board that I finally realized what she'd been doing while I

was behind the truck.

Shelly Dawn had rolled a joint.

She was putting her makin's back in her purse when I crawled in beside her. She lit up with the Zippo I kept on the dash, drew deep, held her breath, then offered it to me.

I stared hard, angry, into her ice-blue eyes through a scorched rope-smell swirl of smoke that burned into my throat and nostrils. I didn't want to spoil everything, especially now, and I guessed there were more and more people all the time smoking that crap, and I thought to myself, well hell, just let it be. But then I guess my pride got the better of me. By God, nobody had ever smoked any of that shit in the Dinosaur, least not while I owned it and by God, I wasn't about to let somebody do it now. I guess I figured a man's got to draw the line somewhere.

A silence hung between us, like the smoke, until I couldn't stand it any longer.

"I don't do that shit," I said finally, and I supposed I said it with a good deal more contempt than was necessary.

"Jesus J.D.... it ain't like... trying something... different... would kill you," she said as she tried to hold the smoke in her lungs and speak at the same time.

"Gawdammit, Shelly Dawn. What the hell's the matter with you? You know I don't go for that shit. Get that fuckin' weed outta my truck!"

I'd lost my temper.

Then Shelly Dawn lost hers, too. Suddenly there was fire in her eyes. "You damn right J.D. I'll get it outta your truck!" She opened the passenger door and threw her doobie into a pile of basalt rubble. She grabbed her purse, jumped out, and started back across the rockpit to the road.

I sat there a while and watched her go. Then I pounded my fist on the steering wheel and cursed her. I turned the key, and the engine caught and I gunned it. I'd catch her before she made it to the road.

But when I rammed it into first and dumped the clutch and spun up a roostertall of gravel there was a clang-bang underneath me that sounded sickeningly like a drive-line clattering in the rocks. I immediately killed the engine and got out, squatted and looked, and sure enough I'd twisted a front universal off.

I cursed her again and took out on foot across the rockpit after her, but had only gone twenty feet or so when the toe of my cowboy boot caught between two big cobbles. I went down, hands and knees first, into a pile of scree.

Shelly Dawn stopped to look back when she made it to the road. She watched me pick the gravel out of my bloody palms. I screamed at her.

"You'll never change, Shelly Dawn. You'll always be a gawdamned hippie bitch!"

The words echoed off the walls of the rockpit a couple of times. When they died away she shook her head at me, slowly.

"You're the one that'll never change, J.D.," she said. Then she turned and started walking the three miles back to Potlatch.

After she'd gone out of sight, I sat there, on the rocky ground, staring up at the Dinosaur. In the moonlight it hunched there, crippled, like some monstrous metallic-blue animal on four deep-lug, rubber-tire legs. Its useless drive-line dangled like a broken penis from its underside. A few feet

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away a spiral of marijuana smoke
curled up out of a heap of basalt
rubble.

Just before daylight, I bounced

another fist-sized rock off the hood. I
wondered if maybe Mary was right.
Maybe a person could just walk away
from it. ■

THE GLARE OF HER AWARENESS

(for Anne Hutchinson)

At my trial
Increase Nowell
Demanded how I knew I heard the Spirit.
The courtroom murmurs
Rose to a buzz.
Then I asked him back—
How did Abraham know it was God
Who charged him to offer Isaac?

I led my friends in prayer.
I spurned to hear the sermons
By those who found my wit more fit
For nursery rhymes.
No man of cloth shall ever stand
Between me and my heaven.

Before they rode me off to jail
I kneaded wheat bread
On my porch
And watched bees
Fumble among the honeysuckle.
The flour I puffed
From the breadboard settled
Lightly on the leaves.

Where is the tender child I bore
Throughout the trial?
She lies in bits
Beneath the Massachusetts dirt.
Will you wake her?
No, not I. She may rise
Like dragon teeth
To seek out my detractors where they sleep.

—Paul Lindholdt

YOU CAN SEE THE LIGHTS

Lorne Rand

you can see the lights from the city at night, the old man picking raspberries replied - why aren't you married, old man? i asked politely as i could - i am too old, said the man, now all i want to do is pick cherries and watch the lights from the city at night - you're picking raspberries, old man, i said - am i? i forget sometimes the birds don't care why should i? - why aren't you married, old man? i asked again not so politely - pears apples dates have you ever lain beside a woman and watched her sleep? is she thinking of you? you can never know have you ever professed love for a woman? that is as far as it will ever go your life with her will only get more and more and more comfortable you will lose her warmth in the end surely as she or you will just grow more and more and more tired of her - not if you truly love her, i rebutted boldly - i never have met a woman my equal it is difficult to respect anything less and too disconcerting respecting anything more i never was particularly fond of that particular game anyway unless both parties were drunken in which case both are blibberblabbering idiots have you ever picked grapes in the moonlight? have you ever made soft talk with a dying june-bug? how old are you, old man? the wind sweeps up a bowl of dry leaves not much older than you i killed my father when i was your age my mother killed herself before i could get to her so did my father i watched them both die slow agonizing ot they live in the city - why are you here, old man? i asked disregarding his cryptic talk - because i am sad and sadness is the only thing that truly makes me happy you can see the lights form the city at night the cherries and the grapes and the or-

anges the strawberries the raspberries and the pear all so sweet so life should taste there are no mirrors or sliding doors or appliances here - why are you so sad, old man? i asked - i flipped a rather unique avocado unscathed=happy bruised=sad i bruised it to the pit on the linoleum pity i couldn't think of a better way to decide at the time - i don't think i understand, old man—then you probably never will - why not? i demanded - relativity and oranges don't have any answers and even if they did people would just go on asking the same old mundane questions it's like getting three wishes and on the third not being able to come up with anything better than patio furniture do you understand that you are all alone? - but you're here - hmphhh i am here because i am sad why are you here? - because i am lost and i want to get back to the city - The City Of Things why? - what? i asked bewildered - there is a house not a house in a tide of houses in front there is a little girl in the street weeping for a small dog who got smashed by a big relatively car the dog is not her dog but she is her father's to whap! and console as he pleases and listens to the fat relatively woman upstairs singing and waiting for the mailman to deliver while everyone in every other room is gone to the mall for a discount today only you are on one hand right you are on one hand wrong you are lost the city will always be with you unless and everyday at four o'clock two large relatively black birds come to steal my berries i must bash them with my heaviest stick one calls itself Passion he is the blackest by far the other calls itself Regret he is just as black but can't remember very well sometimes you are on one had right you are on one had wrong i am mad but i am not as mad as you - can i stay and pick berries then? can i stay and bash birds then, old man? i inquired softly - why on earth would you want to do that for? - to be not quite so mad? i replied half-asking - therein lies the root of all man's trouble! you choose to look to me for answers and strength instead of to yourself you will stagnate that way, fool! you will die a fool as well if you fear striking out on your own blazing new frontiers forgetting dead fathers there is only so much time to get out of the city no one can help you you have been misled if you believe otherwise - let me stay here and think on this a while then, old man, i said - i can hardly criticize a man who would use his brain, he said and returned to picking raspberries - i sat in the grass a while, you can see the lights from the city at night, i said after a time ■

ONE & TWO

J. C. Hendee

One day down by the stream a couple of the children began to fight. By the time anyone noticed, it was impossible to tell exactly what had started the brawl. As often happens, harsh words were followed by small flailing fists, and then more words, until no one really remembered what it was all about.

Adult Number One stepped in, grabbed both of the small squabblers and tossed them to either side of the green lawn that spread out down to the stream. The children tumbled and flopped to a halt on the soft grass. A few bruises and scrapes were evident, but neither appeared to be seriously injured.

Adult Number Two, appalled at the sight of children flopping across the grass like rag dolls, ran out of the little plain house just up the hill. "It is one thing to halt violence, but it is another to use violence to do so!"

Number One stared back at Number Two. "What are you talking about? These children must learn what is right and what is wrong. This is what matters."

Number One took a quick step toward Number Two and delivered a threatening glare. "Do not interfere with their learning!"

Number Two said nothing, but

merely watched as Number One walked away.

Number Two did not want to fight—that would have been wrong. Even Number One had the right to a differing ideal.

Number Two did not want to be a party to conflict—that would have been wrong.

Number One followed the children out to play, as did Number Two. It was important to maintain the steady process of learning at all times. And the World was as suitable a subject as any available. But then children's minds do wander.

Two of them began wrestling over a long stick they found in the dirt at the edge of the lawn. Number Two was immediate to the situation.

Stepping between the children Number Two asked them to stop... and was accidentally stabbed in the back with the point of the stick.

A quick startled turn with a small gasp of pain and Number Two was facing the child behind. But Number Two did not get angry, nor raise a hand. Not so for Number One.

Number One grabbed the child with the stick, turned the child over a bent knee and beat repeatedly with the stick on the hind quarters of the

little one.

Number Two screamed, "Stop!"

Number One did so... long enough to strike Number Two across the face with the stick, leaving a long red welt across a cheek.

"Do not interfere with correction! They must be taught!" snapped Number One.

Number Two did not raise a hand or say anything. Number Two backed away slowly toward the stream to wash the welt in cool water. Fortunately, the child involved escaped further attention, and Number Two returned to attending the children who were watching silently with wide curious eyes.

Days went by. And weeks. The children made mistakes, misbehaved, or outright disobeyed as all children do at one time or another. And Number One would correct them and teach them.

The bark of the stick had long since broken away and the wood shone with clean brilliance in the morning light—shiny and smooth, without flaw. At times Number Two would be present when Number One was teaching. Number Two did not approve and would always attempt to reason with Number One. Not once did Number Two lose control of anger or enter into conflict. Violence in any form was a grave mistake.

The child would escape, and Number Two would go to the stream for more cool water, and then return to the children playing upon the smooth lawn. And each time Number One would sit there and watch Number Two, without blinking.

One morning, before any of the others had awakened, one of the smallest of the children

stumbled out of the house in the early dawn.

The child rubbed at its eyes with stubby fingers, pushing tangles of soft tawny hair out of the way. In soft light, the child saw Number One crouched down by the stream and immediately went to see what Number One found so interesting. The stick hung in the air out over the stream, gripped in Number One's hand.

Number One dipped the stick into the water and scrubbed its stained surface. The water turned cloudy and dark, red fading to wispy browns as the stream carried the stain away. The child did not interrupt Number One's work — that would have been wrong.

As the rest of the children awakened and emerged from the little house, Number One gathered them together in an orderly fashion and escorted them out to the lawn.

To their surprise the lawn had developed a small, oblong mound, and the children spent hours laughing and giggling as they rolled down its sides or jumped from its crest to tumble in the soft grass. With their small size it was a virtual mountain awaiting discovery. The mound was something new and therefore very exciting.

But one child noticed another difference, and went to Number One and asked about it.

"It is nothing for you to worry about," said Number One. "A mistake was made. It has been corrected."

The child was confused, but thought that it would be wrong to bother Number One with questions.

Number One was left to teach the children, so they might grow up correctly and teach the next group of little ones in their place. ■

MY FIRST PETE ROSE DIVE

With a thirteen run lead I rounded
third and saw the second baseman,
Adrian Carson, just on the edge
of the outfield grass, about to catch
the relay throw.

In that split second I saw it all,
my dash home ending in a glorious
high-flying dive of dust just like
Charlie Hustle, and my teammates,
awed congratulations.

But Adrian had a good arm and turned
quick to throw. I felt the plate slide
under my stomach and a second later
the tag on my back. "Out!" cried the ump
and I just cried.

I spit the dirt from my mouth, followed
by some cuss words unbecoming to a twelve
year old, and sat crying on the bench,
betrayed by the umpire, our second baseman's
father.

I tried to be like a winner, like we'd all
been told and I had failed. At twelve it
wasn't just a game, it was what I did,
what every summer meant to me, to sweat
and cry, to be like Charlie Hustle.

—Lex Levy

EMPTYING THE AIR

—When Lord Ripon died in
1923, records showed he had
killed over 500,000 birds.

Ripon moved
In a reign of blood,
His final afternoon
Squandered in the fields.
Servants and skeptics
Watched the staging
Of the hunt,
As flushed prey
Covered him beneath
A living roof of wings.

He brought down sixty grouse—
Twice missing a lone snipe,
Erasing her seconds later
From the leaden sky,
With the first shot
From his second gun.

He dropped dead at 3:15—
His body at rest
On his ancestral bed.
40 brace of pheasant
Hung in the pantry
Of his shooting lodge,
Blood still fell
From the open beaks.

—Barbara Baldwin

DISNEY'S GREATEST HIT

Jonathan Sprenke

You meet your girlfriend's mother.

The white door stares at you from its petite brick surroundings, moonlight causing an irritating incandescence. You tap the wood softly, it speaks and quiet echos scurry off to inform the residents. Your girlfriend's mother answers the door with a large, squinting smile and a booming hello. You respond with a polite greeting, barely audible, and a restrained grin.

Your girlfriend's mother invites you inside, lavishly embarrassed at the state of her household. Listening to her "Please excuse us's" and "I don't know where my head's been's," you examine the spotless living room and conclude that she refers to the one small jacket neatly laid on the burgundy couch. She quickly removes the black stain to the closet which hides beside the door.

You stand facing your girlfriend's mother. She fiddles with her hair which encroaches on the outer portion of each cheekbone. The staircase, stretching up into the distant light of the upstairs hall, is centered between you and your girlfriend's mother.

Your smile, still fixed in its original position, remains focused on

your girlfriend's mother while you attempt to stare at anything but her. But such is impossible to achieve because of the blinding harsh light, originating in the gothic chandelier hanging above, reflecting off your girlfriend's mother's bold smile.

"Is she ready?" you ask.

"She is still dressing," replies your girlfriend's mother. You groan inwardly. You think of proper responses to the anticipated questions.

"How is school?"

"Wonderful; delightful; couldn't be better; it'll be a shame to graduate." You keep your eyes downcast. After all, a little humility never hurts.

"What are you two doing tonight?"

A rise of dreamy courage causes an outlandish thought. You think of responding to your girlfriend's mother in an entirely truthful manner.

No, that would be silly.

"To a movie," you say while attempting to suppress any outward sign of what you and your girlfriend's mother's daughter are actually going to engage in tonight. That's difficult, since your persistent erection caught awkwardly, and somewhat painfully, on your zipper is hard to ignore.

"Oh that sounds nice, which movie?"

You fight the unpleasant sensation emanating from your groin in order to look straight into your girlfriend's mother's eyes with your best version of "the innocent choir boy."

"*Bambi*," you reply.

Such a direct glance at your girlfriend's mother affords you the more detailed aspects of her appearance. A large, pinned mob of white streaked hair lies above a face of frequent, narrow lines. Her eyes contain a pigment very closely related to mud. She holds a dishtowel.

"Just like my mom," you think.

"I think *Bambi* is a wonderful film," she says.

"Yeah, wonderful."

Silence crowds in between you and your girlfriend's mother. You welcome it; she does not. Your girlfriend's mother's smile recedes and her mouth tightens. She looks toward the stairs. She looks toward the floor. She looks at you. She lifts her towel slightly and it drops to the spongy carpet.

You kneel to retrieve the towel.

"No, don't. I can get it."

Your girlfriend's mother follows you down.

You reach for the towel. She reaches for the towel. Your index finger rubs up, gently, against her pinky finger. Your eyes meet her eyes. Her expression changes as her face reacts to the small upward lift occurring at both ends of her thin lips.

Your eyes grow wide. You stand upright releasing your girlfriend's mother's dishtowel. Your eyes escape into the brilliance of the chandelier.

A small tug at your cotton trousers causes your eyes to stop their flight. You slowly look down toward

your girlfriend's mother who now holds a pinch of Bugle Boys between her thumb and forefinger. She questions you with her eyes and then, sitting back on her heels, smiles shyly.

You're frozen; eyes set on this event taking place on her knees before you. You explore her body in amazement. From the long fingers, up the arm to the short sleeve of her white blouse, to the eruption of the neck, and down to the skin revealed by two released buttons.

She follows your gaze. Her smile increases its confidence, lips grasping for each ear. She floats upward toward you, releasing the third, then fourth, button. The blouse falls open generously.

Your erection jumps an inch. You look down, surprised. You look back up, awed.

You don't think this is your girlfriend's mother anymore.

She removes several pins from her hair and allows them to slip from her fingers. Silk falls about her shoulders.

A restrained and sputtering giggle bursts from inside you. A smile sneaks onto your face.

Her smile explodes, teeth gleaming once more.

You marvel at the radiance of her teeth and how the brown of her eyes contains such a marvelous golden tinge. And the quiet dignity conveyed by the white in her hair, and the wrinkles on her face, fills you with an awed passion.

She giggles, musically, beautifully, not like her daughter at all. She tosses her hair.

You retrieve her dishtowel and hold it out to her. Instead of receiving it, she chooses to explore the short hairs on the back of your hand with the tip of her index finger. Your heart

thunders and goose bumps roar down your spine.

She looks up, smile gone, serious. She cups your cheeks in her hands. You take one step closer. Her breath cascades across your neck.

"Hello," you say.

"Hello," she says. "My name is Clarice."

"Clarice," you think. "Cool!"

Clarice places her hand on her chest while resting the other on the top of your shoulder. She takes a deep breath.

"It's been a long time since I've done this," she says.

"What exactly are we doing?"

She pinches your cheek lightly. Her hands grasp your neck and she pulls your body to hers. Your lips reach downward, hers upward.

"MOTHER!"

Giant step back. You look toward the pinnacle of the stairs—no one is there. Clarice frantically re-buttons her blouse. You toss her the dishtowel. She presses it to her flushed face.

Clarice's daughter appears off in the distance. A blonde contrast to her mother. She bounces down the stairs.

"Boy, what a silly looking person," you think.

Clarice's daughter lands with a wump underneath the chandelier.

"Mom," she asks, "where's my coat? The black one."

"It's in the closet, honey."

Clarice's daughter spreads herself over the floor and pulls on her socks. You notice Clarice is barefoot and her big toes are perfectly shaped.

"Well, let's go."

Clarice's daughter grabs her coat and drags you out the door.

"Come back soon," Clarice says.

"You can count on it," you say.

You open the passenger door and Clarice's daughter clambers in, pulling the door shut after her. She looks up at you, through the open window, with big, puppy dog eyes.

"Are you ready for a good time?" she says while attempting a seductive wink.

You turn back toward Clarice, who stands on the raised porch, lit by moonlight. It dances in her hair and upon her face.

Angelic.

Pristine.

Perfect.

She raises her hand in farewell. You smile, wave and then pause for a few moments to record her image for later use.

You walk around the nose of the short, red compact and enter.

Clarice's daughter studies her mother's expression then turns to stare at you. Your smile turns inward. You look at your watch.

"Only 7:15. We can still make the 7:30 show." ■

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MARIANNE'S QUARTERS

Father's floggings
Stung less than his tongue.
He swung, he swung
Till my young will to love fell numb.

By the time I was fourteen I knew
No man should please me.
I smeared honey
Between my thighs
And helped the pup's nose find it.
The left hand crept
Without me down the belly spout.

Soon beneath men
I could clench and let go
Before breath
Whistled in my teeth
And made them think surrender.
Wind shivered the elm leaves but not me.

On a wharf in London
He bought my time,
This second sullen master of mine
And I became his
Five-years' bonded servant.
He looked like Luther,
Smelled of ham
And obliged me to display my thanks
In his cabin on hands and knees.

He is magistrate in the New England town.
He has more power than the law allows.

In my quarters the flue won't draw.
The pitch pine smoke collects
And by the sideboard
I pour his beer, dish out meals,
Two more short years
And I'll be free.
The loaves of bread I baked
Are steaming
And the butter is caking on ice.

—Paul Lindholdt

MY SILENCE IS DEAFENING

"Things must change," I say
aware that most of my time is spent
 sitting
 Indian-style in the center of a candle-lit room
 the smoke from an untouched cigarette
 lingers
in the air like a selective fog.
 My glasses are on, but I am not using my eyes.
I attempt to stand,
 first by wiggling my toes
 waking them from a life-long slumber
Gradually I work up my legs,
my creaking bones screaming to life
 I slowly rise.
My body shudders as if hit
 by a primordial orgasm
 and my legs begin to straighten.
The sensation is unexplainable—
 rising to new heights
 my head unaccustomed to the lack of fog
that so often surrounds it.
Then, as quickly as a gunshot, I am extended—
 my ancient eyes are reborn
 watching all that is around me.
A weak smile cracks my face
as a new light fills my body.
Confidently
 I take a new look at my, new life
 slowly emerging before me
 as the fog clears.

My eyes suddenly snap shut
 my face is again clay
 and the fog again solidifies as I realize
I am still lying down.

—Rich Wright

REVERSE GEAR

Maybe we liked sampling his madness.
Eighteen and his father just died,
a heart attack that seized his hope
and justified his anger.

You can't tell a kid to be adult
and handle grief when you're only
a kid and have had no grief.

So it made sense to help him
do his drugs while we let him suffer.
It was a ride to us, a trip
we knew we could back out of,
while he never had reverse gear.

He had reason to smash out the windows
and blow out walls that held him.
We watched, scared, knowing it was easy
for us to never understand what we couldn't.

Now years later, He still gropes
through a darkness that won't lift.
We're all intact, still backing
away from fears.

(for M.M.M.)

—Lex Levy

AT TIMES THE OCEAN

At times the ocean
is sunlight; glittering
soft haze,
water and sky,
kisses on white sand;
a receding, quiet sigh.

Sometimes the ocean
is thunder; towering,
brooding,
rushing turmoil;
a thousand tons of rage,
crushing boundaries.

—Doug Porter

SHOOTING STAR

The last memory to dance
over this charred valley
falls shrieking
from the sky
searing the desert sand.
Burning through the night till dawn
comes creeping, bearing the smouldering bread of peace.
This is the final rhythm
This is the only chance.
And I sit in the darkness of the Cap
watching you
watch the beat spiral down the bartop
Closer, closer, flowing full and sharp
exploding in the violence of the birth of yet
another bloody day.
Caught in the static spiderweb
net of the nation
Dolphins bleed on the shore
seeing nothing but his hands.
What do they sow, those hands
in the stinging mist of mourning
and the bombs in the desert
As the final crumbs of countless mountains
rolling lifeless like the dolphins
seek the bottom of the sea.

—Holly C. Williams

Some writers' market newsletters have Letters sections in which writers and editors work out their problems (or simply vent their frustrations) concerning the "opposing" side of the publishing industry. Writers complain about the butchering of their masterpieces, and editors berate the lack of quality in submissions. All in all, being both a writer and an editor, and from the current surge in the area of anti-censorship, I would have to say that Editors might be getting the short end of the stick.

Editors walk the line between responsible publishing and the fearful (often misused) battle cry of "censorship" coupled with the flag of "artistic integrity." It would seem, with the present attitudes portrayed in many Letters columns, that the job of an editor is to dance on eggshells, and when one of them breaks, to swallow the pieces.

Actually, not every editor has ended up in this position, and a few who have may have deserved it for their business practices. However, I've read of it often enough that it amazes me—not that they have this problem, but that they do nothing to find a solution and standardize it for use. Furthermore, not one of them has resorted to authoritative text on the subject to support and defend their position, should it be neces-

sary to do so.

I've heard it argued that no manuscript should be accepted unless it is publishable in its present format; this is a fallacy. Professional writers appreciate an editor with a judicious eye for solidifying the continuity of their prose, and they realize that no one is perfect—perfection is subjective. Editors operating in a professional manner handle manuscripts with care and

consideration, for even those of long-standing in the industry realize that there is an element called "artistic integrity" to be considered in all works. But nothing is perfect, and some details may need to be attended to.

There are many resources available that cover the subject of what is acceptable in the editing process and how that process should be conducted.

It is truly dumb-founding how many writers, as well as editors, are unaware of such texts. One of my personal favorites, concise but perhaps not thoroughly encompassing, is *Webster's Standard American Style Manual*. In accordance with this text I propose the following basic, and perhaps obvious, guidelines in a step-by-step process for editing manuscripts accepted for publication, and for specifics that *writers should pay attention to!* Not all these details apply to every maga-

EATING YOUR EGG SHELLS

*What Writers
should remember
about Editing*

J. C. Hendee

zine. Some are too costly and time-consuming for smaller magazines. But the list should provide a rough guideline for what should be expected from an editor should any of these particular processes be used and will give the beginning writer an overview of technical criteria by which a submission is judged.

These details very closely relate to those found on page 293 of the aforementioned text, but I intend to elaborate upon them with some attention to current contention points between editors and writers.

The first thing to be checked for is *Consistency*. The entire manuscript should be carefully reviewed with regards to punctuation, capital letters, abbreviations, numbers, hyphenation, M-dashes, etc., to see if the pattern of use is consistent and syntactically correct. Some consideration should be given to stylistics; that is, if the use of one of the above does not conform to standard rules, then check to see if the deviation is consistent throughout the work. If so, the author may have made a stylistic choice to emphasize some element of the story. If the deviation is inconsistent throughout the piece, it should be corrected. The handling of dates should also be in a consistent format, and names should be specifically checked for spelling.

The next thing to check for, and

the detail which causes the most conflicts between editor and writer, is *Clarity*—of both content and style. Any section of text which is unclear in content or focus should be changed to facilitate comprehension for the reader. This is a delicate subject and must be handled judiciously by the editor. Two approaches can be taken: the section may be re-written and submitted to the author for consideration, or the author may be contacted for a re-write. In this manner the author is given majority control over the final content of the manuscript. Similar steps should be taken where the "style" (of narrative, dialogue, etc.) is concerned. I had to request a changed paragraph from Kristine Kathryn Rusch (now the editor of *The Magazine Fantasy & Science Fiction*) for her story "Light Through Mist" (in

Figment #4) due to a character action that didn't work with the story. She responded with a concise paragraph to fit the needs of the story, and our editorial viewpoint, and because she handled the re-write she was able to consider the integrity of the story from her own perspective.

It should be remembered that each author has a narrative/prose voice to be considered. If a section's style is incongruous with the rest of the text, the author should be contacted about, or approached

Consistency
Clarity
Text Structure
Verification
Bias
Legalities
Proof Sheets
—
Professionalism

with, a re-write. In the case of style, if the author's intent is clear, in a style deviation correctly creating an effect in the story, then that deviation should be maintained. In the case of content, the reader's needs take precedent. Any lack of clarity should be corrected. If the author refuses, ask why, then try to come to an agreement. If the author still refuses—unlikely with a writer concerned with professionalism—then the manuscript should be immediately returned and another text sought for publication.

Text Structure must be considered with an eye to the publication's format. In some cases paragraph indentation, word or sentence order, and/or sequencing of clauses within a sentence need to be altered to facilitate clarity, rhythm, or perhaps accommodate the format of the publication. The handling of dialogue, quotations, and tags can be a sticky subject in this area. Once again, the reader's needs take precedent. All should be considered from the viewpoint of a readable and comprehensible text. I recently made some changes to the structuring of John Forbes' story "Jeremy," (*Figment #4*) to facilitate prose clarity. (John had already done an extensive re-write at my request.) I then sent proof sheets to John well ahead of the press deadline so that he would have time to review them. John was understanding, and returned the proof sheets with a few clarifying changes of his own. This kind of professionalism and good business manners makes a writer well thought of by any editor, and the reverse is likewise.

Verification should always be done in order to protect the writer, the editor, and the publication. Trademarks named in the text should be checked for correct spelling and capitalization. It is recommended, where it does not affect the plot, that generic names be used instead of trademarks. Facts should be verified when possible. Quoted passages, referenced sources, and foreign terminology should always be accurately represented—this of course should be checked by the writer before submitting, but it doesn't hurt to have the editor double-check; everyone makes mistakes. P. D. Cacek's story "Contract Incorporis" (*Figment #3*) originally had another Latin name. Upon investigation we could not find a translation for it after consulting two professors in the Classics. A list of alternative titles, along with translations, representing accurate Romanic Latin was compiled, and she chose the one that was closest to her original concept.

Any accidental misrepresentation is a potential embarrassment to both the writer and the editor, and no writer should take offense when an editor has a question of validity. S/he is simply making sure neither of you ends up with egg on your face.

Bias should be eliminated. Occasionally such is found in an otherwise excellent story, though the occurrence is rare in work by writers approaching their craft in a professional manner. This refers to sections of the text which display sexual/racial/religious/etc. bias in the *writer's approach to the story*. This

does not mean altering character or environmental elements which portray bias; such may be a contention point integral to the plot. Any section of text which is demeaning or slanderous according to sex, religion, race, etc., and is not a necessary trait of a character or premise of conflict in the plot, should be cut or altered. No exceptions. Any resistance to such from the writer should bring about the immediate return of the manuscript. This is a quintessential element of responsible editing and publishing, and of responsible writing.

Legalities are an absolute must in final verification. Copyrights of previous publication should be checked and appropriately noted. Potentially libelous passages (yes, they can occur in fiction) should be verified, supported, possibly annotated, and sources of facts supporting such statements archived for future defense (even so, it is better to simply edit the material out.) A specific and legal contract should be signed and dated (by editor/publisher and the writer), and should include the creator's SSN if cash payment is made for the rights. The contract should include specific details pertaining to rights purchased, compensation and payment, date of payment, longevity, terms of reversion if the text is unused by the end of longevity, potential options, and reversion rights after publication, obligation clauses, "kill fee" and "kill clauses" if used, etc., etc. (If as a writer you don't know what most of these are, then you have no business submitting work for publication. Learn the business *before* you

do business.) Anything less is a foolish waste of time for both the author and editor/publisher.

The last detail of the editorial process between acceptance and publication is the one which would eliminate half of the hostilities between editors and writers over the content of a published story: *Proof Sheets*.

When any of the above steps which require alteration of a text are used, some type of proofing should be done with the writer involved. (Not necessary when the changes are only random grammatical/punctuation errors.) Proof sheets (rough copy of the final text) should be sent to the author and returned *with approval* before publication. Any editor who does otherwise is operating outside the professional arena—and will eventually end up chewing on eggshells! All professional publications use proof sheets when required, or some process which fulfills the same objective.

Information and knowledge are the key tools of *any* writer. Without such you might as well be eating in a 4-star restaurant without knowing how to use a fork. (You would be thrown out!) The details I've listed are only the rudimentary basics. There are others, but if the editor follows these... if the writer keeps them in mind when composing and submitting... everyone should end up with a lot less calcium between their teeth. Not to mention the establishment of a truly professional reputation which will carry the writer/editor into a prosperous future, and specifically into the next acceptance and/or publication. ■

A LITTLE RAIN

Mark Perison

I think it's going to rain. I can feel it."

"Yeah, I can feel it too."

"I sure do like a good rain storm sometimes."

"Yea, me too."

At this moment there is no rain. There is the spirit of rain, the hint of rain, the ghost of rain lingering over the grave of the day, but there is not yet rain. From the two chairs the men can see out the window into the backyard of the home. The trees stand randomly on the grass, and the clouds hang above, waiting for a signal to drop.

"I love this, waiting for the rain. I used to hate the rain. It was really horrible to work in."

"But nice to sleep in, I think."

"Yes, but working was hard. Everything got soaked and all the tools were hard to handle. When one of those pick handles got wet it was like trying to keep hold of a snake."

"I really love snow, too."

"But I guess you've got to have the rain, to get everything to grow."

"I had three heifers die in a blizzard, but I still love the snow."

"Yeah."

Like the stillness that builds behind an invisible dam outside, there is a stillness in this room. But this

stillness covers the room like a sheet over furniture in an abandoned house. The stillness sits on the two beds, it waits patiently in the drawers, it smiles with the occupants of photos on the dresser and hides behind the open curtains.

"Where's your son?"

"I don't have one."

"My son sure is a fine boy. Just got married, you know. Fine looking woman, too. They're going to have some fine looking kids. How's your son?"

"You pay for the wedding or did her parents?"

"I helped out a little but they paid for most of it. In a big church, they had a fine caterer, too. The whole affair was quite nice."

"Good, they should've paid for it. When I got married, I had to pay for it all myself, her parents didn't have a dime."

"Do you think they'll ever get some comfortable chairs in this place? This one makes me sore."

"No, I doubt it. This whole place makes me sore."

"What say you and I get out of here, you know, get an apartment of our own. Live like a couple of bachelors."

"Did you see what was for dinner

tonight?"

"On Saturday nights we could get slicked up and go on over to Mabel's. They play *real* music at Mabel's."

"I hope it's not that damn stew, I really hate that damn stew. Margaret used to make some stew, some real stew. Boy that woman can cook."

On the smooth glass of the window a few small dots of water have appeared. The darkness of the storm has chased away the afternoon and made an early evening. In the distance, thunder rumbles, the roar of

hunger from deep in the earth.

More and more drops slowly collect on the window, filling the open spaces and crowding each other. Finally in a panic of gravity, one drop makes a run for it and pulls others down with it in its mad, spiralling crash to the sill.

"I knew it would rain, I could feel it. I sure do love the rain."

"Yeah, me too."

"Nothing quite like a good rain storm."

"Nope, nothing like it."



CORNERS

Corners and wombs
safe places or traps
depending on the situation.

When I retreat to heal or
to look inward and upward
I choose a quiet, uninterrupted place
with walls pushed back.
I hate being jailed.

The corners of my physical world
need to stay put and they do.

The corners of my life
move out as my vision expands.

The trick is not to get trapped.

—Judy Jack

OPERATION REBUILD

Someone once said,
if you drive through
Kansas in the middle of the day,
it'll drain your soul.
Maybe that's what happened
when she went to see him—
First time since he'd been
trap-shot like a helicopter-pigeon
from the sky,
by his own patriotic shells.
Maybe that's why, after more than a month,
she suddenly nightmares,
of bunks in grocery aisles,
widows reading Shakespeare in the pasta section,
old women with pregnant bellies and kittens,
dead soldiers in with frozen shrimp and porkchops.

—Janet Carter

WALKING ON THE WATER

All the Jesus people have gone south.
Drop-outs in Bic-pen tattoos
Lounge against concrete lions.
Their sneakered feet stamp asphalt
Dusted with snow. The Sonshine Inn
Down the hill is closed. The wooden
Crossbars tracked with black read:
Sig Hile, Sig Hile, letters seared deep
Into the grain. The little e's appear
As rattlesnakes, tails whipping along the wall

Left Bank Books displays back issues
Of *Ramparts*. A velvet backdrop pinned
With buttons glitters in the window.
All the shiny circles warn
Against sex with strangers. The clerk's
Badge announces The Meek Are Getting Ready.
Customers tote cloth bags,
In deference to all the trees cut
For toothpicks and double-strength sacks.
Children lure their parents out
To hear Dr. Dobson's one-man band.

Blinking in the angled rain,
The old man stands placidly
On the corner of Fourth and Pike.
He holds a single copy of *Awake!*
Wave upon wave of the unsaved pass,
Watching the red and green.
Jehovah's basket contains exactly
Three quaters and one dime.
Still, the watchman stays, nailed
In place by faith.

At dusk, shoppers gather
For carrot cake and Starbuck's
Coffe at the third level cafe.
The man with the Martin
Sings in light for a change.
Savoring caffeine, sea and sky,
The diners watch barges sail
From square to square,
Across the windows
Facing Elliott Bay.

—Barbara Baldwin

COTTON MATHER

To quell Henry's captive soul I read
From Isaiah, fed him tea
Brewed of valerian root
And loosed the clenched sheet
From his hands. In the fire
An andiron reared
And we spied the figure of a cat.

I could not rise. The animal flew
Across the counterpane and clung
To Henry's neck, who gasped
And thrashed and forsook all sense
Till God's name cleft his lips
And all was hush. The air smelled
Of snakes; I doused the fire.

Still in my study or on the sea
That creature's nails shrewdly cleave
And I fall faint, heart
Faltering. I doubt if Peter
When his mockers cursed him suffered more
Than I from Henry's prayer. His eyes
Possess me though I bid them cease.

—Paul Lindholdt

ORACLE JUNCTION

Jacqueline Larson

I read in the paper this morning about a man who was found not far from here, crushed to death by a fallen saguaro cactus, his shotgun still clutched in one hand. The paper said the man probably didn't die right away, that he was most likely slowly suffocated under the spiny indifference of his victim.

Something a few of the locals like to do when they're liquored up is to walk up to a giant cactus and a pump round after round of bullets into its fleshy torso until all support is gone and it falls under its own weight. It's not unusual for accidents to occur. If you look closely at a saguaro, you might see scars, bullet-holes put there by men driven to this crime out of boredom and drink. It's illegal, of course, this maiming of the saguaro. They grow all throughout this part of Arizona, many of them thirty feet tall and hundreds of years old. Some of the people I know here in Oracle Junction might say that this man deserved to die this way. I am still a newcomer to this place and do not as yet feel such a fierce devotion to the desert.

My mother used to say that, of her three children, Tom was the quiet one, Ellie was the boldest, and I was

the one who could never be satisfied.

"You never were happy with anything we ever gave you," she said, when I called her to tell her I was looking for a new car. I knew even then where I would be going and that my present car would not be adequate. "It's because you're the youngest, I suppose. We spoiled you." She sounded hurt, and I tried not to imagine her gingerly adjusting a crown of thorns placed carefully on her smooth, pale hair.

"Mom," I tried to explain, "it isn't that I don't appreciate that you guys gave me a car, it's just that it's worn out. It's time for a new one."

"Do what you want," she said, "you will anyway."

I couldn't keep the sarcasm out of my voice, "Gee thanks, mom, I knew you'd understand."

"Watch your mouth," she snapped, "you sound like Ellie." It was a long, painful moment before she spoke again, this time in a softer voice, "How's work going?"

The subject change was how my family dealt with questions about my sister, who had been missing for nearly six months. When her name came up, you could see a cloud form over their features and watch the shadows of pain and grief run their

course.

The police had dropped the investigation after six weeks without a single clue. Her car had been found parked at a meter two blocks from the Greyhound bus terminal with the keys still in it. Her apartment was undisturbed, there were no signs of a struggle. Her boyfriend, with whom she had recently broken up, was taken in for questioning and released when it was proven that he had been in Chicago on business during her disappearance. There was simply no trace of her.

"She most likely took off somewhere to cool her jets," one of the detectives assured us, "you know, to get her head together. She'll come back when she figures everything out." And my grief turned to rage at this police officer who would presume to know my sister better than we could. Someone as level and calm and even as Ellie didn't need to "cool her jets"; she would never leave her family without telling us.

"People do funny things sometimes," the detective offered, "you think you know someone, and they surprise hell out of you. You'll see, she'll turn up." But she didn't. We, her family, did not allow ourselves to believe that she might be dead. To do so would be to give up on her. We preferred to think of her as lost, because that was something we could deal with.

My father was in the Air Force and we moved around so much that we never had a chance to put down any roots. My brother and sister and I attended fourteen schools in nine different states in eighteen years. My mother knew more about moving a household than the Mayflower Company. She could, with her children's help, step into a completely empty

two story house at eight o'clock in the morning and have it liveable by dinnertime. She would look around her, sweat gleaming on her round face, and push a tendril of pale, limp hair from her forehead.

"Won't your dad be pleased?" she'd say.

He always was.

The first day of school after a move was especially traumatic, and one we dreaded. Meeting the principal and the school counselor to be evaluated and placed in the proper grade was positively nerve-racking. Inevitably, by the time we were finally shown to a classroom, class was already in progress and had to be interrupted.

"I hate this part," Ellie used to say. "They always stare like you're some kind of freak or something. And then, the first chance they get, they start making fun of your clothes or your accent. It's the worst thing."

We actually had no accents. We hadn't lived in any one place long enough to acquire one, but many of the places we lived were in the South or the Northeast, and to the children there, we sounded strange.

"It's worse when you get older," Tom, the oldest, would always say. "Just wait till you get to be my age, then they really hack on you."

"That's what you said when we moved to Richmond, and you were the same age I am now," Ellie said.

"Well, it keeps getting worse," Tom insisted, "just wait."

"Did we ever live in Richmond?" I asked, "Richmond where?"

"It's in Virginia," Ellie answered, "Richmond-fucking-Virginia."

We hated moving, but it was something beyond our control, even

beyond our parents' control. It always seemed that my father would get transferred just as we'd begun to settle in and make friends, a slow, painful process for us, since our transient lifestyle has made us all shy and mistrustful of strangers. Once, when I was in the second grade, the three of us got lost walking home after school. We wandered for an hour or so, looking for a familiar landmark and trying to remember what our new house looked like. Our mother found us, exhausted and crying, a block from home.

The unfamiliarity of new places plagued us well into our teens. It helped that our mother arranged every living room of each of the fourteen houses in exactly the same way: the sofa here, the grandfather clock there, the tall brass floorlamp always to the right of my father's favorite chair. This consistency provided us with the illusion that we were coming home to the same house, if not the same town, be it in Buffalo, Biloxi, or Gainesville. This singular gesture was probably due to a lack of imagination on our mother's part, rather than a wish to provide us with a sense of security, but we appreciated it nonetheless.

When I was fourteen, my father's car engine exploded one hot day, blinding him in one eye. He was released from the hospital and given his medical discharge on the same day. My father was devastated at the thought of leaving the Air Force, but his family was delighted. Our mother moved us one last time to Seattle to be near her family. She had always hated the South and was never able to get used to the heat and humidity there, and she said that the mountain air refreshed her. She never grew tired of seeing the water and moun-

tains and trees all piled together in one glorious, scenic heap. After the sinister, steamy heat of cities like Gainesville and Birmingham, Seattle seemed cool and clean, washed by the rain and protected by nearby mountains. Ellie, who had always seemed to thrive on the heat, hated Washington. She complained constantly of feeling cold and damp.

"I'm going to move to the desert someday," she would say. "I'll live in a little house and grow cactus and flowers." She was dark, like our father, the only one of us who was. With her olive skin and mahogany hair, it was easy to imagine her living in such a place.

"What kind of flowers?" I would ask. She was, after all, my big sister. Her dreams were my fantasies.

"Bougainvillea," she's say, "and roses."

"Will roses grow in the desert?" I asked.

"They'll grow if you water them enough."

But Ellie stayed in Seattle. She earned her college degree with honors and got into law school, and I had just begun the graduate art program at the University of Washington when she disappeared.

The desert was a place that I never thought I'd like. When moved here from Seattle six months ago, I was only passing through, looking for something. What I found was that I hated Seattle. I was raised in big cities, hot, muggy, and smelling of car exhaust, anger and filth, but there was something there, something tangible. Maybe it was the noise, the feeling that people were all around me, making me feel constantly reassured, not alone. The desert is like that, except that the noises you hear aren't people noises. They're more

real than that. And the smell is different, of course. Even in Seattle: if you take a deep breath you can smell the death through the rain. The Pacific Northwest has the highest rate of serial murders per capita of anywhere in the U.S. Most people don't know this, but it's true. Some sociologists attribute this to the damp, rainy climate. They say it depresses people, makes them edgy and nervous. The most it ever did to me was to make me feel a little restless.

My friend Laura was depressed by the rain. She didn't answer her phone for a few days and when her boyfriend broke down the door he found her on the kitchen floor. She'd swallowed a teacup full of drain cleaner mixed with cooking sherry. There was so much blood, that at first he thought she'd cut her throat. It was later discovered that she must have started clawing at her neck when the burning started. I once thought that the rain made everything clean, but now I know that it is heat that purifies. The rain just makes mud.

Six months and three weeks after Ellie disappeared, I decided to go looking for her. I knew she was in the desert. I didn't tell anyone what I was going to do, leaving, instead, a note of explanation for my brother Tom. I packed up my things and left late one afternoon, headed east to Idaho, then south, driving all night. Through Boise and Twin Falls, past sagebrush and blasted, barren landscape, and on to Utah, the wide open prairies and desert lending a warmth to my skin and a lightness to my soul I had not felt in years.

Eighteen hours from Seattle, I found myself after nightfall in a campground in Zion National Park in the southwest corner of Utah. I spent the night there, setting up camp with

my small two-person tent and down bag to guard against the chill. Since I'd arrived after dark, I had to gather firewood by flashlight. As I wandered off a path towards a great dead-fall something caught in the beam of my flashlight. I flipped it back and caught my breath as I stared into the eyes of a large buck nestled in the dense thicket. He stared back, mesmerized by the light, his nostrils flaring at my scent. I looked for a long time, memorizing his colors and the way the hair grew on his face, the way the rack of horns branched from his sleek head. I marveled that his delicate-looking neck could support anything so massive. Finally, ashamed of my invasion of his world, I turned my light back in the direction I'd come. I heard the crackle of twigs and the soft sounds of his body moving through the brush as he fled from me. I shined my light back over anyway, but he was gone; only a matted-down oval in the grass and quivering branches indicated that he had ever been there at all. I made my way over to the spot and knelt down to feel. The place where he had been lying was still warm from his body, and I sat in the center of it, turning myself to face the path. I switched off the light and sat in the silence. Far away, I heard a dog bark and a woman's faint voice calling from one of the campsites near the entrance to the campground. I looked up at the sky, clearer and blacker than it ever had been in Seattle, or Newark, or Pensacola, and at that moment, pushed out the last of the niggling worries that I might be making a mistake. I was finding my sister, going to bring her home.

I started out early the next morning and drove south on Highway 89, shivering in the early morning chill.

My legs, clad in cotton shorts protested their contact with the cold carseat: I wore them because I knew that in a few short hours I would be melting under the blazing Arizona sun, but for the time being, I was happy enough just to drive.

So I drove through the narrow winding mountain roads, past the saguaro and yucca plants, past acres and acres of hot stone shot through with pale crossbeds of lighter rock. I drove with the secure ease of someone carrying out a task. I felt no pressure to go anywhere in particular, and I was dimly aware that for the first time in half a year, I was breathing without a weight on my chest. Plugging tape after tape into the cassette deck, I'd sing the lyrics when I knew them, and hum along when I didn't. I drove as far as I could that day, stopping only to investigate whatever struck my fancy. I pulled off at roadside stands advertising authentic Navajo jewelry and pottery. I bought a beaded concha belt because I liked it, and because I thought it would make Ellie laugh when she saw it. I spent an hour at the Grand Canyon's South rim, and then moved on.

I stopped for gas in Oracle Junction. I got out of the car and was stretching my legs when it hit me, the name: Oracle Junction. To me it sounded magical, a place where miracles could be performed and spirits could be healed, a crossroad where the mortal body could come into contact with deities. I looked around at the expanse of clean, blue sky and felt the good desert heat already beginning to purify my soul, and I knew that I had found a holy place. I said to myself, "This is it, this is where she is." I went in to find a phone and called home. Tom answered.

"Where are you, Katie?"

"In Arizona. Listen, Tommy, I have to tell you about—"

"They found her, Kate. She's dead."

"Dead." I repeated. The word had no meaning for me.

"They found her body near Snohomish, there are others. They think they might know who did it."

I did not speak. There was nothing for me to say.

"Katie, are you listening? Did you hear what I said? You have to come home. We need you to help decide things."

I hung up the phone.

The winter has passed and it is spring. My house sits about twenty yards from the road, and from there it is a two mile trip into town. The road is unpaved, but there's not as much dust as one might imagine, unless the wind blows. It hasn't rained yet, although often in the evening the clouds gather in the west and the sky takes on an angry, bruised look. Sometimes there is a flashing behind those clouds, but the rain won't touch this magical place.

I will stay here for a while, I think. The sun rises outside my kitchen window each morning. Violet and indigo flush to shades of copper and vermilion as the sun creeps higher in the sky, and I stand over the sink, sipping hot coffee, wondering if they can see the sun today in Seattle, but not really caring if they can't. I follow the sun's progress all day long until evening, when I sit on my front porch to watch it set.

Every day I am finding new things to see. One morning, I found a rattlesnake sunning its dusty coils on my back porch, and there is a family of sparrows living in my attic. I buy my groceries at the tiny market in

town. The owner's son says he will let me set up some of my paintings to sell at his roadside stand. I've made friends with the desert and the people in it, and I've come to rely on the sunrises.

I went down to the nursery in town yesterday and bought roses to plant.

"Will they grow out here?" I asked the man.

"They'll grow if you water 'em."



THE SUNLIGHT IN WHICH WE DWELL

Still clean this morning the respiring leaves
shift gears, the air we breathe lifts
from Lake Shoshone with a sound like geese
finding the flyways, their magnetic hearts
tuned to the same cords that bind our own.

And were it not for fire these trees
that interpose could tell us how DeLacy
took notes by firelight on the same beach
where we slept last night to make the maps
and charts we follow each year when we return

to Yellowstone. The river may be less pure.
We can't tell. The pollens we resist still
find our lives vulnerable. We shield our eyes
from the glare of this sunlight in which we dwell,
from these choices we make that reverberate

in dreams and tell our children to believe
the only dreams worth dreaming are their own.

—Donnell Hunter

UNCLE TIM'S LAP

Hands high: run, bump!
Can I sit up there on your lap Uncle Popsickle?
Oh boy. Lift (ooof) giggle.
Slurp drool sticky wiggle.
Splatter talk red, sputter wet.
Drip-drip-drip-*drip-plop!*
Uh-oh. Grandma's rug.
Better get a rag.
Wipe, rub, water, scrub. Oh well.
Climb back on Uncle Storybook's lap.
Tickle teeter bobble—*thud!*
Lookit I falled off! Silly.
Pull, bumble, climb, (puff) fumble—*rrrip!*
Ooops. Grandma's book.
Let's go find tape.
Ereech-k. Sticky pink, press, pound. Crooked.
Okay, hop up again.
Warm sweaty rhyme. Fidget.
Snuggle, rhythm, nuzzle, rest.
Some day I'll be big
Like you, Uncle Pal.

—Marian McDonnell Horton

A CONTINUAL LETTER TO FRIENDS

Part I.

do you know?:
I don't hardly ever think
about howling at the moon anymore.
and I don't dream
about endless stretches of perfect desert highway.
can I really be?:
so much satisfied with so little;
or haven't I no longer the time to think in terms
of clever paradox.

intolerant?
hell yes,
but no longer cynical.
is it my fault?:
the world is full of idiots.
can I help?:
the eventual crush of greedy fat men in polyester suits
and their stupid girls in click click clicking heels.

could it be I have a life?
am I content?
or simply overwhelmed;
I don't have time to care.

do you know?:
it's hard to find matches
in this house.
and I don't even know
if we have any beer.
where is the corkscrew?
where are all the things?:
we used to have
tok hide
from the cops
that finally never came.

Part II.

of course!
you could always
go to india and sit
and sit.
but you'd have to return to this
and this.
and some day you'll have to give in

to the mediocrity
of happiness.

or better yet!
you could split into the air
and drop your pants laughing.
or shave your head and dye
your scalp.
but I'll still know
your only
face.

go out and save the world!
or destroy it.
I'll be
here
when you get back.
we'll drive around
and shoot
some pool.

Part III.

I can't laugh anymore,
it's true
that for having done and undone
so many stupid
things,
I am wiser yet but in no position
to judge
or be judged by anyone
of the few that don't even pretend
they know what I don't.
(when it's really clear they don't and I do)

how could I?:
laugh
when the moon needs howling
and I'm so much satisfied
with so very little.

—Tom Drake

(Untitled)

Pulling open one of the
Big heavy doors, and stepping onto the wood floor
That welcomes you with its old and ailing creak,
The feeling is much like that of when entering a church.
You are almost
Overwhelmed with an attitude of reverence toward it,
Especially when no one is around.

Saying your last creaky adieu
To the wooden floor, you place your foot
In the indentation on the
First cool marble step. You don't know if the marble is
Actually cold since you have never walked barefoot on it, but you
Imagine it to be so.

You focus on the deep dips
In the right side of the staircase opposed to the
Shallow sways on the left. You imagine all of the people who
Trudged up these steps many years before you were even born and
Made their mark in the place by helping to make those
Dents a little deeper.

You pause
For a minute to
Consider the fact that one must place one's foot much
Harder on a step when
Going up than going down.

—Tricia Borgman

THE GENDER GAP

Under six feet of paper ground she lies
penciled in a clear cold coffin
Above ground where the breeze breaks
into the toxic air
and the birds sing innocently
that tombstone reads
Rest in Peace Mrs.
Henry Smith
The sign she is holding
pokes out of the earth
six feet above the paper coffin
When my aunt saw the caption in bold
she laughed
until her husband came into the kitchen
then
she said softly "You'd better
not let your uncle see that."
I showed it to my best friend and
she laughed, crying so hard she fell off the couch.
When my lover saw the
cartoon he
said "What is that
supposed to mean,
'my name was Helen!'
I don't get it..."

—Holly C. Williams

STRONG WINDS

Hurricane winds raged, uprooting trees long standing,
ravaging branches and weaker structures in their paths.

I look now with sadness at the space
where a majestic tree once reigned.

I note with dismay the scars left
where branches were torn from trunks.

I wonder at the fury and power,
the erratic paths of the destructive winds.

If we are honest with ourselves, we know
that the strongest of trees with the deepest of roots
is not safe if destruction chooses it.

Vulnerable as trees, some of us are damaged
or even uprooted in life.

None is wholly secure.

By grace, we may survive or escape violent storms.

By a stranger grace, some of us will not.

I wish to consider, before judging,
whether the damaged person before me
was hurt by self-choice
or by winds of destruction ripping through a vulnerable life.

—Judy Jack

FUGUE
GUIDELINES
FOR
SUBMISSIONS

Fugue is a triannual digest of multi-genre fiction, poetry, and non-fiction. Issues are published at the end of the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters at the University of Idaho. Each issue contains vignettes, poetry, stories and commentary chosen to satisfy a wide variety of tastes in literary entertainment. The magazine is staffed entirely by English majors presently attending the University and is funded by the ASUI, the English Dept., and advertising by local merchants. A single issue of *Fugue* is only \$3.00 retail, US funds.

Submission Format: Use a cover sheet with the following information on it (*no exceptions*): name, address, phone number, *word count* (fiction) or *line count* (poetry), title. Do not put your name on the manuscript. Manuscripts must be typed with one-inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, with title and page number in the upper right corner of each page. Include a #10 SASE with your submission for a response. Make a copy of the manuscript for yourself—the manuscript will not be returned. Submissions should be delivered to: FUGUE c/o University of Idaho, English Dept., Brink Hall Rm. 200, Moscow, Idaho 83843. Response time is 12 weeks. No simultaneous, reprint or disk submissions. Payment is one copy.

Editorial Process: Each submission is read by several staff members who critique it, then pass it on to the managing and executive editors for final decisions. All readings are done "blind." Staff readers will not be aware of the identity of the creator. *Fugue* is looking for a wide range of genres—the wider the better: Mainstream, Experimental, Fantasy, Mystery/Suspense, Metafiction, Historical, Science Fiction, Magical Realism, Horror, Fantasy, Western, Cultural,

Speculative, etc. *Fugue* is a showcase for all types of *entertaining* literature. Based upon the overall critique of the staff, material will be chosen for the upcoming issue. In some cases, we may contact a contributor for a re-write, clarification of text, or notification of necessary editorial changes.

Stories: These must be complete and concluded, with good characterization and plotting. You must make the reader *feel* without resorting to standard cliché tricks. Endings should have a foundation in the plot and not simply pop out of nowhere. Experimental formats are acceptable, but we do not cater to an elite readership—the story must be comprehensible and enjoyable for anyone. Average word count is 3000 words, but we consider any length up to 7000. Book excerpts, chapters,

and serializations will not be considered. Payment is \$10-\$20 according to length.

Novelettes: Any story with a length of 7500 words or more. We are twice as critical in this category of literature. The length must be justified by superior content. Payment: \$35.

Vignettes: Many of today's published short-short stories are actually vignettes—stylishly rendered scenes/events that emphasize imagery and impression over plot. This type of work is sometimes referred to as "sudden fiction." A mood of "endlessness"—scene carries forward/backward beyond the text—should be maintained. This is perhaps the most difficult type of fiction to write and still maintain as engaging for the reader. Maximum word count is approximately 1000 words. Payment: \$5.

Poems: The modern standard is "free verse," but we would like to see a wide range of other forms as well. We consider all premise and non-premise themes without restriction, from the serious to the utterly whimsical. Payment: \$2-\$5 depending on length and content.

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GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

All articles, essays, and commentary must relate to *contemporary* works, authors, or issues relating to the writing business, or to a generally well-known, widely read work of literature. The maximum word count is 1000 words, but longer works maybe considered if exceptional. Payment: \$5.

Fugue Staff Submissions: The staff is allowed to submit work for publication in the magazine. Such submissions will be read "blind," as for any submission, with readers

chosen by the executive editor. No special consideration will be given to any submission by a staff member of *Fugue*.

Final Note: If you have further questions, write to: Exec. Ed., FUGUE, University of Idaho, English Dept., Brink Hall, Rm. 200, Moscow, Idaho 83843. Include a #10 SASE for response. All queries will be answered within two weeks.

If necessary, for resolving a problem or answering a question not covered herein, you may contact the Executive or Managing Editor locally by phone. Do not call us about the status of your submission—no information concerning the status of any submission will be distributed under any circumstances, except via your SASE after the submissions has been fully reviewed by the staff. ■

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