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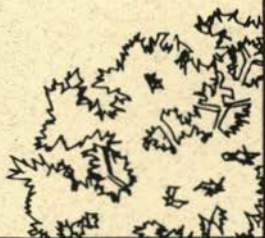
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As I sit here contemplating just how to write this editorial, it strikes me that I am stuck with the same self-consciousness that a lot of writers have. All too often writers get caught up in outward audience and publication and lose sight of what they should really be writing for—themselves. Both the poetry and fiction editors commented that many of the works we receive seem stifled or otherwise inhibited because of this semiconsciousness which manifests itself in weak plots, clichés and stereotyping.

It is all too easy to fall into these common patterns when the focus is on audience rather than expression. As far as the poetry we receive at *FUGUE*, free verse is the most prevalent. Experimentation with different forms to enhance inward expression would be a sight for sore eyes. Inward focus would probably also correct problems with accessibility, clarity and parallelism.

The fiction sent to us also shows general trends through recurring themes. Again, experimentation—this time with different genres—would enhance character development, plot clarity, and add variety to development patterns. In other words, do not be afraid to try something original and be yourself.

As for the rest of what's going on here at *FUGUE*, we are seeing an increase of overall submissions, but still not enough non-fiction. We

are a University of Idaho publication and will always include local writers in our publication, but we need your submissions. We do enjoy seeing works from as far away as New Zealand and Great Britain, as well as New York and Georgia.

There seems to be some confusion about 1stNASR (1st North American Serial Rights) on manuscripts purchased for publication. All this means is that *FUGUE* has purchased and contracted the right to be recognized as the first serial publication the work appeared in. This does not mean that writers whose works have been published in *FUGUE* are restricted from submitting those work elsewhere. They certainly can send the work elsewhere... after the work has appeared in *FUGUE*. All subsidiary rights revert to the creator of the work upon its publication.

Now that my business is done, I'd just like to thank the staff for their organization and efficiency this semester. It's great to walk into a meeting and watch all of my questions being asked and answered without having to say a word.

Thank you.
Leiloni Reed,
Executive Editor



A TALE OF JADE DRAGONS

Joseph M. Shea

Several of us retired men from the neighborhood had gotten into the habit of meeting at the Double Happiness tea house. You may recall the place. It was just off Hennessy Road and was torn down in 1984 to make way for the Wanchai subway.

On one particularly crowded day at the tea house, one of the waiters approached and asked us old fellows if we would mind letting another old gentleman join us at our regular table. We readily agreed and the waiter brought in the stranger.

He thanked us and then said, "My wife and I were shopping, and, you know how it goes, she sent me in here to get me out from under foot." We all smiled and nodded our understanding.

The waiter returned with a tea cup and plate for the newcomer. As he selected a steaming basket of meat dumplings from the dim sum cart that circulated among the tables, we resumed our conversation.

Our talk turned, as the talk of old men often does, to the days of our youth. Between mouthfuls of delicious shrimp crepes and re-

freshing spring rolls, we sipped our Poe Lee tea and spoke of the time of China's sorrow. We told each other once again our familiar tales of cruel warlords and of the horrors of civil war. We spoke of the merciless soldiers of the rising sun laying waste the once proud Celestial Empire. How fitting we all reflected is the ancient curse, "May you live in interesting times."

A silence followed and we turned to the newcomer in the hope that he might offer a diverting story we had not all heard a hundred times or more. Anticipating our desire, he said, "Good Sirs, your tales have brought back a memory that is for me both terrible and wonderful."

"Terrible?" inquired one of the regulars.

"Once I killed a man," he explained.

"Ah," we all acknowledged.

"Wonderful?" inquired another.

"Well," the newcomer answered, "there was a girl you see. A real Soochow beauty. A clever and brave young lady."

"Ah," we all sighed.

"I was very young then and

trying to make my way across the war torn land to join my uncle in the relative security of Hong Kong. I had made it all the way to the coast of the South China Sea and was to go that night to an old abandoned seaside pavilion. You know the type that is built out in the water with its floor several feet above the sea; the type connected to the shore by a stone causeway where poets used to gather on autumn nights to praise the reflected glory of the lovely moon goddess, Sheung Ore. There, in the isolated pavilion, I was to join other refugees in rendezvousing with a boat that would attempt the perilous voyage to the island of Hong Kong.

"I had spent the day hiding in some brush at the edge of a field. About an hour after sunset I cautiously made my way through the rocky defile that gave access to the pavilion's causeway. I paused before proceeding, straining my eyes to see if danger lurked ahead. The outline of the pavilion stood above a low mist caused by the cooling night air touching the still warm sea. All seemed calm. There was nothing for it but to go on.

"As I entered the pavilion, I made out two people, a man and a woman, looking apprehensively at me from the seaward side. They clutched cloth bundles similar to the one that I held containing my few worldly possessions.

"I approached and stood before them. An awkward silence followed as we appraised each other. The man, a youth like myself, and the woman, scarcely more than a girl, wore clothing that, though travel stained, had the look of quality. They had the

bearing and seeming vulnerability of people who had known better times. Who had not in those troubled days?

"The girl, I noted, was a rare beauty indeed. Her close fitting dress displayed her well proportioned figure to good advantage. She wore no jewelry except for an exquisite pair of antique jade pendant earrings carved in the form of dragons. I was a bit surprised to see any valuables openly displayed considering the times.

"We acknowledged the obvious. We were there to meet a boat to take us to Hong Kong. We then exchanged light pleasantries. I learned that he was named Ming and she was Wing Yun. Being so very young, I was irrationally delighted to learn that Wing Yun was Ming's sister and as yet no man's wife. Emboldened to speak by our unusual circumstances, I ventured to suggest that her obviously valuable earrings be hidden away so as not to unduly tempt the weakness of men that was then so much in evidence. While prudently denying that the earrings were of any great value, Ming said that Wing Yun insisted that she wear them.

"These jade dragons,' Wing Yun explained, 'were given to me by my grandmother. They are a powerful talisman. Grandmother said as long as I wear them we will be safe.'

"Foolish girl,' commented Ming.

"Well, these twin dragons have gotten us safely this far, haven't they?' Wing Yun replied defiantly with a charming pout that instantly won my heart.

"We lapsed once again into silence and, although Wing Yun

did not take off her earrings, I did note with a measure of satisfaction that she did let down her beautiful long hair so that they were effectively hidden from view. As the hours of darkness slipped by, our anxiety over the next stage of our journey mounted. There were to be other travellers, we understood, but they had not arrived. More importantly, the boat that was to take us to safety had not arrived. Just as we were beginning to consider the wisdom of returning to our day time hiding places, a bumping noise called our attention to the right side of the pavilion. A hand reached up from outside the pavilion and grasped the first rung of the railing. Our transportation had arrived.

"The burly boatman, whom I dubbed the Ox, quickly vaulted the top railing and caught the end of a rope tossed up to him by his companion in the boat below. With the boat secured, the second boatman climbed up to join us in the pavilion. His clothing hung on him as if he were a stick figure, so I naturally thought of him as the Scarecrow.

"Is this all of you?' the Ox demanded. 'Where are the others?'

"Perhaps some misfortune has befallen them,' I replied.

"Devil take their misfortune!' he exploded. 'What of mine? Just three paying passengers! I could lose my boat, my life. It isn't worth the risk.'

"The night is not yet gone,' Ming implored, 'more passengers may yet arrive.'

"The Ox grunted in disgust but finally said, 'I'll wait a half hour but no longer.' He and his companion settled themselves on the top railing, feet

resting on the railing below, and examined us critically. With our eyes in tune with the night coupled with the light of the bright full moon that had risen reflecting off the now clear water, we could see each other quite well.

"My blood boiled in resentment as I noted the rude fellows' lingering inspection of the girl. After a while, the two boatmen began to speak to each other in whispers we could not make out. Excluded from their conversation, we settled down to await developments.

"No more refugees came and at last the boatmen rose from their perch and announced, 'It's time to go.'

"We should have been more alert, Ming and I, but, in our excitement at the prospect of finally finishing our journey, we failed to exercise the caution that had heretofore carried us safely through. We scrambled to secure our bundles and the next thing I knew the Ox was behind me holding a knife's blade against my throat. At the same moment, Ming felt the sharp point of the Scarecrow's two-edged knife pricking his back.

"We all stood in silent immobility until the Ox laughed and said, 'Oh, we forgot to tell you. We decided you only have enough to pay for one passage.' With that, he turned his attention to Wing Yun and barked, 'Get moving, Princess! Get into my boat!'

"I'm not going anyplace until you two put down those knives!' she retorted angrily. Almost before the words were out of her mouth, the bleakness of our prospects began to sink in. She quickly realized that the boat-

men would have to be distracted if Ming and I were to break free. Her faith in the power of the jade dragon protectors that her grandmother had given to her was such that she knew just what to do.

"She stood proudly straightened, almost smiling, raised her left hand and pushed back her long hair over her left shoulder fully exposing the magnificently carved jade earring in her left ear to the Ox's view. He gasped in appreciation and cried out to his companion. 'By thunder, a fortune hangs from her ear!' Wing Yun then repeated her gesture with her right hand giving the Scarecrow a view of the jade dragon that dangled from her right ear.

"It may have been their obvious great value that so riveted the eyes of the crude boatmen on Wing Yun's jade dragons. Perhaps it was just a trick of the moonlight reflecting off the many intricately carved surfaces of the jade dragons that seemed to animate and give life to the ancient chimerical creatures. Perhaps it was just an illusion that the dragons writhed and twisted and glowered at the Ox and the Scarecrow. Perhaps the dragons' miniature feet did not really extend toward the boatmen, expanding and exposing great hooked claws.

"My captor, dazed by greed or stunned by terror, none can know just which, inadvertently allowed his knife's edge to drift away from my throat. Not much, but just enough to give me the chance I had been waiting for. I grabbed his knife hand and pulled it down. At the same time, remembering my kung fu les-

sons, I slammed the back of my head full into the Ox's face. Screaming in agony, he dropped his knife and fell over backwards covering his face with his hands.

"At that moment, Ming also made his move. With a knife point at his back, he extricated himself by throwing himself forward while at the same time he lashed out with a mule kick that crashed into the Scarecrow's groin with devastating force. Instantly the Scarecrow doubled up and collapsed. Completely out of the fight, he lay whimpering on the floor of the pavilion.

"The Ox, however, quickly recovered from the shock of my initial assault and assumed a crouching stance ready for defense or attack. Observing me groping to recover the dropped knife, he decided to launch himself at me hoping to bowl me over by main force. Seeing him hurtling at me, I thrust myself forward, but under his onrushing bulk. When he was directly over me I sprang upward with every ounce of strength in my body. The Ox was deflected up over me. He flipped completely over in the air and crashed the small of his back onto the top railing with such a sickeningly loud crack that it even caused the self-occupied Scarecrow to look up. The Ox seemed to balance on the railing top for an eternity and then slowly he slid feet first down the side of the pavilion and into the water like an obscene parody of a burial at sea.

"The Scarecrow, who had dragged himself to the pavilion's edge, screamed hysterically. 'He's gone! Gone! Sunk like a rock!' Ming responded, 'And so

will you if you don't get your disgusting carcass out of my sight.' He then grabbed the Scarecrow's collar, jerked him to his feet and propelled him forward in a stumbling run down the causeway and into the chaos that was China.

"Fortunately, Ming knew something of boats and I was somewhat familiar with the route from previous trips to Hong Kong. And so with a little help from Ming and myself, as Wing Yun grudgingly conceded, the jade dragons conveyed us safely to our destination. There we began an adventure that would forever change..."

At that moment this divert-

ing narrative of our table guest was interrupted by the approach of a woman loaded down with shopping bags. Although her hair was pure white, her step was firm. Her eyes seemed to radiate an unquenchable confidence, sparkling with what I can only describe as a kind of amused mischief.

With an obvious air of pride and contentment our guest story teller said, "Gentlemen, my wife." As she bowed in acknowledgment of our murmured greetings, twin jade dragon pendants swung at her ear lobes. The rhythm of life. Terrible and wonderful. ○

We stood and stomped
 shivering in the brittle October night
 Smoking from a small hot pipe,
 under the seven sisters
 under mistaken Orion's belt
 under the careless scrutiny of the world.
 You inhaled and laughed and talked,
 I breathed and mumbled to myself,
 removed my shirt and thought myself
 above the black turned earth
 above the crushed and broken chaff.
 I danced and danced and sang
 inside my head,
 But really, just stood uncomfortable
 unclothed and unreal.
 Shifted my weight from foot to foot
 and waited for dawn to break.

—Peter Parisot

OLD PAPERBACKS

Pam Chillemi-Yeager

In the morning she remembered these things: the soft yellow light spilling out of the baby's room, the feel of Ned's breath on her neck when he held her, and the hum of the old furnace deep in the night. She remembered them because she was two hundred miles away from home in a small motel room with faded wallpaper and chintz curtains. She remembered them because she needed to remember.

Clare moved to the window and pulled aside the worn draperies. The morning sky was gray and heavy with the portent of snow. She wondered if the Buick would make it over the mountains.

She went into the bathroom and splashed water on her face. She brushed her teeth and dried her face with the stiff, white hand towel. Looking at her reflection in the chipped mirror she noticed the crease in her brow and the shadows beneath her eyes.

She reached into her suitcase and pulled out a pair of jeans. Please God, she thought, although she was not a religious

person and had long since stopped practicing the faith of her childhood. She caught herself in this small act of divine entreaty and chuckled. Even now, after all these years, she reverted to the overtures of religion in times of trouble.

"Saint Michael be praised!" An old kitchen, her father sitting at the chrome dinette drinking coffee while her mother fluttered about. "This gravy's full of lumps, full of them." Margaret Conner, damp and perspiring, muttering her Irish stew refrain.

Her father drank from a chipped cup and winked at her over the cloud of steam that curled up from his coffee. Clare had giggled and covered her mouth with her hand. A million Sunday dinners, a million Irish stews...

Slipping on a sweater, she winced at the tenderness in her breasts. They were heavy and full of milk, demanding to nurse. Each night that she was away she pumped them with a small mechanical device Ned had bought at the Rite-Aid. She could have brought the baby with her, she supposed, but at seven

months it seemed better to leave her at home with her father. Rather at home than here in a crowded motel room in Bordentown.

It was so difficult. Every evening when Ned called Emma would cry in the background. If she didn't cry or fuss, she made soft, cooing noises that tore at Clare's heart. Either way, it didn't matter. At the sound of her daughter, Clare's breasts would spring to life, the milk would begin to flow, and a sweet, familiar ache would fill her body.

"She's fine, honey. Really. She takes the bottle with hardly any problems now." Ned's calm and reassuring tones, meant to assure her, only made Clare miss them more. And although it was true that Emma was safe and warm and dry, Clare still cried each time she placed the telephone receiver back in its cradle. And she knew it was not just Emma and Ned for whom she wept.

Today might be the day.

She put on her navy pea coat and pulled a beret and mittens from the coat's pockets. It was always so cold in Bordentown this time of year. Clare recalled other winters spent here. She and her father pulling the old rusty sled out of the garage. Bill's broad features wide and open, filled with pure joy in her delight, their breath curling out in front of them in effervescent puffs as they tugged the sled up Blackridge Hill.

Clare had stopped to make a snowball. Father and daughter had laughed and whirled until Clare slipped on an ice patch and turned her ankle. The laughter was cut short as she lay in

the snow crying, the sled pushed aside. Bill Conner had run to his daughter, his plaid hunting jacket a blur of red and his face heavy with concern.

Later, after Doc Weinburg had wrapped her sprained ankle, Clare lay on the couch feeling miserable. While her mother had fussed and fed her soup, her father had read to her from *Gulliver's Travels*. And as the adventure unfolded, Clare forgot the ache in her ankle and the throbbing in her head.

When her mother died, Bill Conner remained characteristically quiet with his grief. Clare had stayed with him for a week after the funeral until he laughingly told her that she was on his nerves and she should go back to that city slicker she had been dating. Clare laughed, shook her head, and knew that it was indeed time to go.

That night, as she sat in bed reading, she heard the scratchy tones of her mother's Glen Miller records drift up the stairs. In the morning she noticed her father's old paperbacks strewn across the coffee table.

She shook her head to clear away the memories. Pulling hard on her beret and mittens, she reached for her keys and grabbed a small, worn book from the bedside table. With one final glance around the shabby motel room, she headed out the door.

Mrs. Bartlett?" Clare addressed the stout, white-haired floor nurse she had come to know during the past week.

"Oh, hello, Clare," she said, looking up from her paperwork. "He had a good night. He rested

comfortably.”

“I’m so glad,” Clare said, flinching from sympathy in the woman’s eyes. Don’t be too kind to me or I’ll break, she thought. She held these thoughts in her heart while she continued to smile at Mrs. Bartlett. Turning, Clare walked down the corridor to the room. The other nurses nodded pleasantly in passing. Clare fought back the bile that rose to her throat.

You’re Bill Conner’s girl, aren’t you?

She breathed deeply, trying to steady herself and uncoil the fear snaked in her belly.

He had a good life, dear. You don’t want him to suffer.

You’re okay, she told herself, spinning a fragile web of words to still the pounding in her brain. You have Ned and Emma to go back to. You can leave this God forsaken town and never look back.

She walked into the room and looked at the bottles and tubes sustaining her father’s life. The oxygen tent hung over him like a grim canopy. Clare pulled off her mittens and stuffed them in her pockets. Although the room was dry and overheated she pulled the pea coat tightly to ward off the chill in her bones.

Clare counted up the hours and minutes that she had been in Bordentown, ever since a stray

blood vessel had burst in Bill Conner’s tired brain. Wearily, she noted that it was only a short time, although it seemed much longer. Her eyes misted as she thought of Emma, the grandchild her father so loved. He would never have the chance to read to her now.

The breathing tube snaked out of her father’s nostrils to join the tangle of wires above him.

They’re keeping him alive, dear.

But Clare knew that Bill Conner’s life was not in those twisted wires and tubes. It was in the books he loved but never had time to read

Today might be the day.

It was at the chrome dinette in front of a bowl of Margaret Conner’s stew.

You don’t want him to suffer, do you?

It was at the crest of Blackridge hill, overlooking the town.

Bill Conner’s girl, aren’t you?

It was in the aroma of pipe tobacco as he sat in his chair, reading.

Clare took off her coat and sat down. She rummaged through her purse until her hand felt the smooth, worn paper. The respirator whirred and hummed the final hours of Bill Conner’s life. She opened *Gulliver’s Travels* and slowly began to read aloud. ○



ABSOLUTES

Life must be killed with life,
 drunk till its sibling rival
 called "Death,"
 wakes from its ashes...
 past its day of wrath,
 past its Davids and Goliaths,
 proffered to witless animals and
 trophied in this memento mori...
 our grave.

I
 do not fear
 these dialectics
 of battered housewives' drug-filled eyes
 sharp knives which cut through dreamless wasting
 contingent truths upon a lie...

I do not fear
 Life's degradations
 of hungry fingers to the mouth,
 its rash which blinds men to starvation's
 one-way outs...

I do not fear
 man's fine traditions
 of tête-à-têtes, and Holy Wars
 why Ten good reasons need subscription
 (believe me Lord)...

I do not fear
 this joy called "Laughter"
 its inward union—language/form,
 the meeting minds on unlit corners
 selling charms...

I do not fear
 our strained relation
 this wayward journey yet begun
 This fall from grace which set our pace
 to different drums.

I do not fear
emasculatation
the tortoisied ego on its back
the shuffled deck whose visionaries
are one-eyed jacks

I am resolved
in means and methods
I am resolved to ways unclear
I am resolved in guilt by lesson
and do not fear
this metamorphosis
of evolution's rampant flow
why prey and quarry
flee your mercy
God only knows....
I'm forgiven
or absolved from anything
(nor do I seek your resolution)
thus, being dead of many things...

the need for life beyond
this stasis
the bliss of wedlock's state of grace
the replications of a family
an unnamed faith.

Life must be killed with life
lost on its trail of redemption
blinders set upon a backward place, whose
graffittied walls are
memory.

I
do not fear
the strange religion
the blasphemous that walk their way
the hell-bent signs, these sacrificials
bureaucrat their God to stay.

[continued on next page]

I do not fear
the mind corrupted
its corpused shell left by disease
the disposed remnants of another
lack of belief.

I do not fear
a hell or heaven
the machinations of the saints
whose purge is little from destruction
if truth can come to go insane.

I fear
the God which let me say this, and more
to think what I begin, to
see as more than vague perception
that in his image we are him.

—David Hunter Sutherland

WATERMELON WOMAN

Fifteen years without you has brought me to this:
I dwell in the sabre-edged bulrushes beyond the city.
The music, sad, slow, works up to scratch.
The tempo will come, come, if I give it time...

The long, aching miasma of your memory:
I will allow it patience, my patience.
I'll remember us however you wanted us to be. And then
I will turn the knobs, all the way, all the way...

And I'll get out, quick. Will I stay the same,
only older, wiser? No, a new brain
will feed: eating you, your dreams,
my dream of you, loving to spit out the seeds.

—Nowick Gray

HOW DOES IT GRAB YOU JACK?

H. J. Cording

Well, Jack, how does it grab you, now that there's an Annual Jack Kerouac Prize, and the Columbia Literary History of the U.S. calls you one of the nine most important authors of the 50s in the same phrase as Malamud Nabokov Barth *et al.*, and you're required reading for students of Modern American Literature who weren't even born yet when you died... Are you out there somewhere in the bardo enjoying a wry chuckle over all this? Or did you come back as somebody who's never heard of you and can't read in hopes of a more peaceful incarnation this time around? Is there a special section of the Great Beyond where broken-hearted winos who died too young can take their rightful place in the cosmos?

You'd be a grand old man by now, an elder statesman of letters with an honorary degree from your old not-quite-*alma mater* Columbia. You might appear on TV or do cameo roles in hip movies. You could have a summer home in Oregon and a winter home in Florida, and between them retrace your legen-

dary cross-country hitchhikes at the wheel of a lovingly restored '52 Chevy. The mayor of your hometown, Lowell, MA, would have given you one of those big garish Keys to the City—at least they like you enough nowadays that they have an annual Lowell Celebrates Kerouac festival—although the good burghers of Lowell would not necessarily welcome you in your prime getting high on the townhall steps with Newal Cassady—poor Neal, who did two years in San Quentin for offering a couple joints in exchange for a ride to work to a pair of beatnik-looking undercover cops, and died Godforsakenly in Mexico the year before your number came up.

Instead there will be Guest Speakers who will explain why you were the voice of your generation in five thousand words or less, who get paid to tell people how you and Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe and Henry Miller influenced the development of American Literature. In return for their fees, accommodation and traveling expenses, they will reveal what you really meant by all those words you

put between covers, now that you're safely dead and therefore can't contradict any of their learned opinions.

But let's face it, Jack, when you're through being controversial and notorious it's either obscurity or welcome to the establishment. It absorbs you slowly, insidiously, in barely perceptible stages, until all your anarchy, rage and madness are rendered harmless and you become suitable fodder for Ph.D. theses and monographs.

And your old fans, Jack, when they stop and think, my God, twenty years you're gone, and they pine for those vanished times when they were young and full of dreams and living your adventures in vicarious paperback, deep down in their subconscious a shameful unvoiced consideration heaves its sneaky little sigh: well, at least he didn't get the chance to shatter any of our few remaining illusions by becoming a Born Again Christian or a talk-show host or an advocate of supply-side economics. And who among them would have opened the door to you unexpectedly pounding on it at 1 a.m. declaiming incomprehensible Zen parables and demanding booze?

As for me, whenever I read a part of the Duluoz saga you're in the room with me, recounting from the paradoxical movie of your life as it unreels, with no need to ask why you should do this or why I could absorb endless episodes and details and still want more—like I once read somewhere that a true artist always leaves his audience wanting more, so they keep coming back... Remembering now

On The Road which I read at sixteen, how it confirmed my secret ambition to be a beatnik and hitchhike across the U.S.A. but also left me wondering if some kind of golden age had been and gone before I ever had a chance to get there. And much later *Big Sur*, found by pure chance in a musty second-hand store—your terrifying honesty in the face of madness and doom, Jack, and the saddest part of the whole heart-rending inebriated tragedy was the little preface paragraph where you said "In my old age I intend to collect all my work and re-insert my pantheon of uniform names, leave the long shelf full of books there, and die happy." It doesn't sound like too big a favor to ask of fate, but I guess I don't need to tell you anything about how fate does people favors.

"I would have like to knowd you, but I was just a kid. The candle burned out long before, the legend never did..." That refrain in Elton John's big sad Marilyn Monroe ballad could just as well have been written about you, Jack. Legends might not last as long as they used to, thanks to universal Andy Warhol fifteen minute fame, but your Zen pot open-road freedom Dharma madness legend still lives for me and thousands more crazy mixed-up babyboomers and even the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission. And when your candle sputtered and died in Orlando, Florida, nobody noticed the ghost in the empty wine bottle and it got taken out with the trash. ○

THE KING

Once you lay below me, red
and screaming between my dynasties.
I instantly became your servant,
bowing to your bassinet, pampering
your royal vulnerableness.
I vowed my life-long devotion.

You might have overpowered me,
testing, testing my patience.
I edged my way toward dethroning you.

Now your smiles recapture my faith.
I bottle them up and place them
on my shelf like pickled joys.
You've made this home your castle.
I give you warm milk and
sing you to your slumbers.

You wail about each failure,
threatening to behead me
with your screams.

In sleepless nights your
fevers burn my heart to ash—
I wipe you with kisses
and hiss to our God.
My lilliputian conqueror,
your presense builds kingdoms.

Your infant armor proves
my faith a hollow fear.
Today your howling draws me nearer.

—Kellie Jo Risk

TUMBLING DICE

The dream passes, leaving me
 breathless in the bed of morning, glad to be alive
 from the nightmare—or sorry to survive a paradise
 (depending on the dream)

And I remember Sarah,
 our fresh, bright new-found life.
 I'm peeling off my old snake's husk.
 Tonight, she'll come.

It's called "falling in love."
 I watch it happen, accepting: the plummeting sensation
 of fate, of being thrust headlong—
 and leaving everything

else behind.... Of course,
 in the meantime there are things to do: life,
 this willing flesh, goes on. My truck, hung
 up on the edge

of the slushy switchback bank
 sits waiting for me, patient, while I get Dick's
 come-along to pull the damn thing up.
 Inch by inch

I crank the errant wheel back up on the road.
 It's getting dark. I think it's good enough.
 I get in, throw it into four-wheel drive. It lurches
 forward, off

the bank, careens
 down and rolls over in gathering momentum
 (me with it weightless, out of time)
 now crashes

upside down onto
 a stump shattering the windshield crushing the passenger
 side roof and the back bottom
 WHAM! against

a tree and the front swings
 round again down, nose first
 diving into dirt. I feel for blood on my head—
 think myself dying

or dead, brains pitched
 through the windshield. My angel smiles.
 Only a couple of bumps. A deep, deep
 breath.

Then, a quick survey:
 a stunned finger, bruised leg, strained
 muscle in my back: nothing serious.
 I turn on the light

in the growing dusk; look
 for my hat and pack. See rags, hatchet, a banged-
 up tool-kit... then hear
 a hissing tire,

smell gas—and try to
 get out. The doors are jammed shut.
 I roll my window down, climb out.
 Clamber past the birch

the door so tightly embraces...
 walk through swampy brush to the road, and just
 like that, as if only in a dream,
 walk on to the mail.

Wet snow falls
 cool on my hatless, bruised, humble head,
 spinning in the dark my stupidity and shame, my shame-
 less thankfulness.

My leg aches, back
 stings, up the road to the post office.
 Why go on? Just come along..
 the mail must

come through, to the end.
 I get a package—oh—walking shoes!
 One lesson is coming in clearer. I walk on.
 A car passes;

Was that Sarah, back
 from town? The car backs up—it's Eric.
 He tells me Sarah has gone off the road
 with two others

[continued on next page]

this morning. No
one is hurt, but the car.... Once again,
I'm alive, breathing. I keep walking. The truck
is behind me now

dead loss of a former
life.... This dream, so fragile,
so tenuous, a gift of precious birth,
us tumbling dice.

—Nowick Gray

IDENTITY

The endless road stretches for miles
in front of us.
Pounding away,
our feet feel like they might fall off.
Still we plunge ahead
smashing anything in our path.
That makes us men.

The wheatfield passes like a memory.
Life at our sides
really doesn't matter.
All that does matter is the road in front of us.
He's the enemy.

"Take no prisoners" we bellow
not caring who hears us.
We are men.
We beat those too weak to defend themselves.
So we go screaming off into the night,
Leaving the wheat behind.

Later that night,
the wheat will speak its laughter
about what it takes to be men.

—Rich Wright

THE DUKE'S "RED RIVER"

We sit in the dark,
in skirts and lipstick stains
watching Duke's handiwork.
The disputes pile up the dead
at the righteous end of the old quick draw
in the west that never was.
"There was an agreement you made
when you signed on," he says.
"We'll finish the drive," he says.
"I don't like quitters," he says.

I'm a quitter, Duke.
We're all quitters, Duke,
all us women, all us Indians.
All us pale-skinned men
who are lesser mortals.
We don't like this dream, Duke,
despite a lifetime of playing it out.
In Vietnam.
In the Persian Gulf.
In the Hollywood of your dreams.

We're all quitters, Duke. You
lived on one lung, yet remained
twice the man we were.
With our skirts and stained lips
we were the girls you left behind,
stuck in the saloons and whore's cribs,
stuck with your babies
in homes closed off by four walls
while you ran the herds and the crews
through the wide open spaces.

We couldn't keep up.
That was the agreement we made
when we signed on.

—Sandra Haarsager

ROADKILLS

Lance Olsen

I bumped into Al Bodine, our writer-in-residence, at McQuik King during the 2-4-1 McLunchtime Special three days before the fall semester commenced at Central Kentucky University. Al was always at McQuik King during the 2-4-1 McLunchtime Special. I was looking for him so I could ask him just what all this creative expression business was about. I thought he'd know if anyone did. His long greasy gray-streaked hair was slicked straight back and tucked under his collar. He had more yellowish crimson pustules on his forehead alone than most people have on their whole bodies during an average lifespan. His camouflage shirt, two sizes too small for him, wouldn't stay in his camouflage pants. I understand he once threatened a fiction writing student of his in the middle of class by pulling an oily blue .38 on him so the young man, given to writing story after story about senseless melancholic young men, could experience what real fear and potential loss felt like. The gun, it turned out during the investi-

gation by the Ethics Committee that followed, had been loaded with blanks.

You couldn't help liking a guy like Al.

He was smacking away at a thin cholesterol patty when I strolled up. He looked right through me, studying the cute coed in a pink tanktop, pink tennis skirt and pink Reeboks with purple pompoms who stood at the counter nibbling a lime popsicle. She was busy gabbing with a girlfriend in a pink tanktop, pink tennis skirt and pink Reeboks with purple pompoms who was nibbling a grape popsicle. Al meditated on both of them for a few seconds. Then, slowly, he brought me into his world.

"The Murph," he said and smiled.

His mouth was full. Bright red and blue flecks beamed at me from between his front teeth. Gesturing to the seat opposite his he gulped, hacked, hiccupped, stuck out his violet tongue and hunched his shoulders like a bear. I sat. He continued clearing his throat. I

fingered my McQuik Clown Cup filled with McQuik Clown Cola and peered through the plate-glass window at students beginning to collect in the humid summer heat on Clydesdale Street, an antiseptically tidy strip of fast-food arches and giant plaster harlequins. Like cicadas, undergraduates appear from nowhere the Monday before classes begin. They scabble out of their out of their dormancy with chemistry and calculus books clutched tight to chests and creep through Geldington in their dented Hondas and junky Isuzu pickups with colorful high school graduation tassels dangling from their rearview mirrors like paper octopi.

"Whoah," Al said. "What's new?"

"I just did this paper for the narrative theory conference in Aspen. 'The Disjuncted Feminist Narratology in Twisted Sister.' It snowed. How can it snow in Aspen in August?"

"Some good bars in Aspen. I once got so fucking drunk there I couldn't stand up for two days. I thought I'd gone blind. You ever seen those Delite Dicer ads on TV?"

I pulled the straw from my lips.

"What?"

"You ever seen those Delite Dicer ads on TV? You know, around two in the morning. With that Dr. Wong guy. Chink with the big teeth and cigar and spatula. 'Vewy honahed to hah you kooking wi' me tonight.'"

If you were a popular culturalist you had to stay on your toes, always alert to the transcendental reflex in contemporary society that could trip

into trend. My scholarship and my tenure were based on the premise that this happened at a much greater rate than most imagined.

"I've been staying up for the last two weeks just to watch them," he said.

He leaned back in the orange plastic chair sculpted to his body and fingered the knotty bellybutton peeping through the gap in his camouflage shirt. Al was an Outtie.

"I'm trying to decide whether I should buy one or not. The more I watch, the more I get this impression Dr. Wong is, you know, talking to me. Talking to me. Al Bodine himself. Telling me I'd be better off as a human-being if I simply understood a fundamental truth about the cosmos. 'Al Bodine,' Dr. Wong says, 'the Delite Dicer is the *only* dicer that can dice an egg with its shell on.'"

I leaned forward, interested, cradling my large plastic cup.

"You're a writer, Al. Maybe you can help me with something I've been wondering about lately."

"Shoot."

"Well, I've been thinking about trying my hand at a book or something one of these days. And I've been wondering what it's like. The actual process of writing, I mean. All that creative stuff."

Al took another bite of his McQuik Healthburger and stared out the window at several students skateboarding up the sidewalks of Clydesdale Street and down the sidewalks of Lipizan Lane, undeclared in their majors and despondent in their souls because they didn't get into

their first-choice schools, or their second-choice ones, or, for that matter, their third-, fourth-, or fifth-choice ones. They'd stripped to their wildly beflowered Hawaiian shorts and taken to terrifying unsuspecting pedestrians by zooming up behind them and rocketing past at the speed of frustration. Back at their dorms, monstrous windowless cement pods in the shapes of various vitamin pills lurching out of hot tar and brittle grass and sickly trees, they cranked up their CDs, took out their Frisbees and rollerskates and desire and tennis rackets, and lived like a small planet of immortals seeking revenge on the rest of the solar system.

Three years ago some shot burning arrows through the chancellor's bedroom window while the chancellor performed his nightly deep-breathing exercises. Two years ago some slipped a burlap bag full of angry lamprey into the pool at the Narragansett Natatorium while the women's swim team dutifully swam laps. And last spring some built a gigantic maze out of bundles of hay behind the Morgan Biology Building. They imported two cows from the Ag Center to navigate it. When the cows refused to move the students tied strings of firecrackers to their tails and lit them. The cows charged. But not towards the maze. Instead they went for the biology building. They shattered one student's leg and the glass entrance doors. One heifer died of a heart attack on the podium in the lecture hall. The other went insane and had to be put down. Our president, not know-

ing exactly what to do in such circumstances, ordered all flags on campus to be flown at half-staff for a week because of what he called "this heinous and cowardly tragedy."

The next day the flags were stolen.

Writing is like driving alone along a winding gravel road late at night," Al told me.

His tiny pink eyes turned wistful.

Al'd taught studio art for one year at the University of Virginia before coming to CKU. He'd been hired by UVa because he said he was the leader of Catatonic Expressionism, a revolutionary new movement in the arts. The problem, it later developed, was that he was the only member of the group. He went on to be a rat exterminator, a worker in a pit crew on the southern racing circuit and a certified beautician who was paid \$350 an hour to spruce up corpses in a Louisville funeral parlor before writing four short stories about weightlifters and an experimental novel called *Tear Off Your Face* about the torrid lives of men and women involved in the universe of tractor-pulls. It was published by a small press in Okieokie, Alabama, that also specialized in child pornography and ecological tracts.

"It is?" I said.

"You're doing seventy. Seventy-five. Trees're flashing past. Gravel's snapping out from under your tires. Your car fishtails around corners. You're feeling great. You're in control. Your nerves are all in tune. It's a

THE LAST PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSE

Ron McFarland

It is the end of the semester, but as usual he does not feel good about it. The courses are wrapped up, the final grades submitted: the stamps of approval, disapproval, or uncertainty, of his success or their success. of his failure or theirs, or of mutual ambivalence, "Here's to that," he tells himself, hoisting a glass of locally brewed ale. After almost thirty years in the classroom he feels none of the elation he used to feel when he was a student, but plummeting depression. Almost thirty years, and if he orders another ale, he will not be back to his office till after two, by which time a certain acrimonious sophomore will have left in a huff. But she will leave tacked to his door a vitriolic note in which she assails him as both teacher and human being, and he will remember it, gnawingly in the gut, just as she hoped, not for the rest of his life, but for years to come. "I would not take another course from you if you were the last professor in the universe," she will write. He will recall her bitterness and sense of injustice much longer than she will resent the C. In fact, after a few months she may see that "he was right, in a way"—she may even say as much to a friend—and besides, she learned a great deal in that course, so it was "worth it." But he will never know that. If he hurries up and does not order a second ale, he can get back to his office before she arrives and is prompted to write her angry note. They will exchange some unpleasantries, and she will be somewhat mollified by his sincerity and sympathy. He is a fine talker. He can persuade of the justice of his grade. This would be if he does not order a second beer, which he does. □

A MEETING IN TIME

J. P. McLaughlin

When I was an undergraduate I wanted a degree in Natural Philosophy. I've always liked the sound of it. It has a certain *loftiness* about it." Quinn leaned back against the marble wall and stared at the image of Porphyry. No, he reminded himself, not an image Porphyry himself. The Greek man cocked his head to the side, puzzled. At first Quinn thought he didn't understand, that something had gone wrong, but then he could see the puzzlement came from his statement, not a lack of comprehension.

"Do I take it," responded Porphyry in perfect English, "that your father wished for you to study something *respectable* rather than ponder the questions of the elements?"

Quinn chuckled, still feeling uncomfortable conversing with the Greek philosopher. He motioned to a nearby stone bench and both men walked toward it. "I was never pressured into a career," he responded. He eased himself onto the cold stone of the bench. "The

problem was this: there was no institution that would teach me. And, had I found the teachers, there would have been no place for me in science anyway."

Porphyry sat down beside him, drawing his robes about him in the mid-morning chill. "I do not understand." He motioned to the hillside behind them and the sky above. "Who are these souls that they deny us the chance to understand the Creation?"

"I'm sorry, I'm not being clear. You see, the study of the physical realm has been split into numerous branches, each branch highly specialized. The academic credentials needed to enter into any of the branches are so rigorous as to preclude much of a background in any of the others."

Porphyry's eyebrows creased at the thought of the concept. "So to undertake advanced study you must obtain credentials within a certain discipline and then work only within that area?"

"That's a simplistic way to put it, but it's essentially correct."

"Then I do not understand

why you have chosen to study one of these branches." The philosopher leaned back, folded his hands in his lap, and exhaled with an audible *humph*.

"I chose to be what I am because I want to unravel the secrets of the universe and to understand my place in it."

"I am disappointed," said Porphyry, shaking his head. "I thought in coming here I would find great masters singing to the music of the spheres"

"But that's what we long for," cried Quinn. "We have an unquenchable thirst for knowing!"

"But does *knowing* mean comprehension of the whole? I do not believe so. And that must be the ultimate goal of the Natural Philosopher." Porphyry turned on the bench to face Quinn directly. "A friend of mine from my days in Alexandria, Plotinus, has a peculiar habit. When he is in need of solving some puzzle he goes about making a tapestry. Whenever he is contemplating his problem he works on his weaving. He claims that when it is done and he can look at the whole of it from a distance, he also unfaillingly finds the answer he seeks. Knowledge works the same way. There is little comprehension without the whole of it placed before the eyes. For certain there is no beauty in it."

Quinn slumped back on the bench, coming to rest against the cold marble wall. Porphyry turned back to look at him. "Answer me this," he continued.

"How is it you hope to obtain an understanding of the unity that is the universe if you only study the smallest portions of it? What reasons are there to pursue such a limited undertaking? To me it seems you are closing off the only true motivation for inquiry understanding!"

"But we do understand," replied Quinn, but without conviction. "The sum of our knowledge and our understanding is mind-boggling. It is more than one single person could hope to comprehend"

"You see," interrupted Porphyry, "your endeavor is hopeless if it is more than the *individual* can comprehend."

"But all of us together can exceed the limitations of the individual; we improve ourselves by working together toward singular goals."

"I do not dispute that the sum of your knowledge is beyond my comprehending. That is self-evident. What is also self-evident is the state such a situation has left you in. Where is the purpose in this thirst for knowledge? What does it leave you with? More questions? An endless circle! Questions and answers, and then more questions."

Porphyry smiled broadly, making Quinn feel as the acolyte before the master. The Greek man continued. "If I understand correctly what you have told me about your universe, I believe that if I thought as you, I would now be

undergoing a severe test of my faith and I use that word for lack of a better one in my understanding. That I should be here, talking with you face to face, was not possible based on the universe as I knew it yesterday. But that is not true today. Here I am, there you are; these facts are not deniable. Therefore, this is a plausible event. Yet, for some of your compartmentalized students of Nature, this event in itself would spell near-disaster, for it would utterly destroy their own isolated universes, the ones they know of and live in, the ones that are but a subset of the whole. Without the perspective of the entire tapestry you and your fellow discoverers are subject to a constant crisis of faith. I cannot imagine living as you do."

Quinn got up and walked a few steps in contemplation, then turned around. "I wanted a degree in Natural Philosophy because I sensed a richer, more energetic universe than my fellow students of Nature. Yet I am a product of my own epoch. I must qualify and quantify every statement I make, every conjecture I throw out to the world, every idea that I explore. I can't help it, it's what breathes life into it for me. I had hoped you would show me how to fuse the old and the new together to make something that was more than the sum of the parts."

"My friend," answered Porphyry, "mixing our worlds would yield oil and vinegar. We can co-

exist, but I doubt we could ever dissolve into each other."

Quinn looked to the azure sky above as if seeking answers from the heavens. "Then I shall never become a Natural Philosopher."

"It would not be possible. Natural Philosophy would seem not to exist in this realm. But please take notice that yours is not the only despair here. I, too, will leave this meeting disenchanted. All my remaining days will be colored by the knowledge that the universe as I know it will someday become hidden under a cloak of facts and numbers, lost to even the most acute of eyes."

"I'm sorry Porphyry."

"No need. Such knowledge is only the barest thread of the tapestry. A small blemish does not ruin the appreciation of the whole." Without saying another word Porphyry stood up and bowed gracefully to Quinn, then walked slowly away from the bench and dissolved in a shimmer, the only sound a gentle *whoosh* as air filled the space the Greek philosopher formerly displaced.

Quinn, engulfed in silence, walked back to the bench and sat down. Briefly, he considered following Porphyry, but then he recalled the warning from him about the mixing of paradigms and felt the truth of it. Quinn closed his eyes and let the sun caress his face. The mid-morning air felt suddenly colder to him, as if the sunlight had abruptly lost some of its brilliance. □

FISHING WITH ERIC

Last summer, Eric and I
went fishing
up on the St. Joe River.
It was hot, even the altitude
refused to abate the heat.
The forest was beautiful
and Private.
We drove in my Blue Grenada,
the dust hanging over the road

like a misplaced cloud.
We waded into the river.
"It's not deep," he said,
"Only up to my thighs."
My shorts and shirt got wet
and clung to my body,
soggy paper towels.
And Eric laughed.
It was the most fun

I had all summer.
And we didn't bring anything home.
I caught two, but they got away,
and he wouldn't acknowledge them

as real.
We went home and he cooked supper:
Barbecued hamburgers,
new potatoes and diced onions in butter,
and cheap beer.
It was good,

I didn't even mind the onions.

—Janet Carter

HALF A HOUSE

I visited you that summer
And met your parents
And slept in the house that was only
Half a house

We sat amongst the two-by-fours
And draped plastic and sawdust
Enduring kitchen table smiles
Munching polite toast

And did they know? Had they heard
My careful feet creeping
Through their hall
At 2:00 am?

When the summer ended
And the house was done
We said goodbye because
There was nothing left

Now in December I sit alone
The warm summer breeze in your dark room
And the taste of your shoulder
Forever out of reach

—Mark Perison

Each day comes and goes so slowly, as you hang on your mailbox like a vulture. One day you open the hatch, and your pulse starts to race; there's an envelope waiting with a publisher's return address on it! You snatch it out and tear it open.

What is that faint chemical smell coming from inside? The paper feels unusually smooth. You unfold the letter and there it is—a rejection slip. Not just a rejection, but a photo-copied rejection slip! No contract, no check, not even a checklist or a rude suggestion as to what to do with your manuscript. It's just a photo-copied "Thank you for your submission, but it does not meet our needs at this time." That snobbish editor probably didn't even read your manuscript! Right now some prima-donna has filled your slot with the publisher, just because he or she is a known writer! Your life is over. You sent in the product of your blood and sweat to a publisher, and this is the thanks...

Wait a minute.

You sent your manuscript to a publisher? Oh, perhaps you've sent it to three or four, maybe ten, and they've all rejected you. Your life as a writer is over. You just can't make it.

Well, you know what? You just might be right.

You can't make it, because you don't have what it takes. And I'm not talking about talent or skill. A lot of people have more talent than they ever imagined was possible, and skill is something you develop through time and work. No one is born with skill.

I'm talking about something nine out of ten of the wanna-be writers out there don't have: *perseverance!*

Of course it's not your fault you don't get published. There are just too many editors out there printing only what they personally like, and not what the public wants. (Which is exactly what you write. Right?) They give preferential treatment to established writers and ignore the talented new-comers! The publishers are even worse. They don't care a

SO YOU
THINK
YOU'VE
BEEN
REJECTED
ONE TOO
MANY
TIMES,
EH?

J. C. Hendee

whit about anything but money.

I won't tell you that there are no editors or publishers out there who are just like that. There are some who won't give you the time of day. However, if you stop feeling depressed for a minute you might realize they are the exception, and not the rule.

All editors (as human beings) have their personal preferences in literature, but if they didn't have a damn good idea of what their particular readers wanted, their magazine or book line wouldn't sell; they'd be out of a job, and the publisher would be out of business, because no one would be buying the magazine or books.

As to publishers, they are not charitable, artistic institutions existing to honor the budding writer. They're in business to make money (and in turn make money for you, the writer). And that's life in black and white.

Lastly, preferential treatment for established individuals in a field has always been the way things work. No, it's not the fairest system, but it's the one being used—get used to it. Besides, those writers have done their time and paid their dues, just like you're doing now. They've perfected their craft. They deserve the extra consideration. The same consid-

eration you'll be expecting when you get there. Oh yes, you will be expecting it, and it will feel great when you get it!

But the only way to get preferred status is by getting published, and you don't get published by giving up after ten, fifty, or even a hundred rejection slips. You do it by keeping the manuscripts in the mail. No matter what

anyone says, the *writer* is still the mainstay of the publishing industry, and s/he is the *editor's* bread and butter.

Editors are only as good as the writers they work with. Perhaps Oscar Collier states it more clearly:

"Editors are judged by their 'track records' of picking good selling books, and attracting

and putting under contract books that sell." (Collier 119)

The editor is not your enemy if he's that concerned with getting your books or stories printed and sold. The editor is the one person who can make your ambition a reality: to be a published writer. The only way s/he can do this is if your manuscripts are submitted so often that s/he can't help but take an interest in them (and in you). S/he is your only avenue to the publisher, and success, so you must keep the manuscripts in the mail, and on the editor's desk. You must keep up

**Six-
hundred
and forty
rejections
before he
was finally
published**

your perseverance!

One particular writer of present day truly maintained his perseverance. According to Oscar Collier and Frances S. Leighton:

"He survived the pain of having four novels and about sixty short stories shot down before he was finally anointed and given the keys to the kingdom of his chosen genre." (Collier 137)

If you use a little math and estimate each manuscript as receiving the low amount of ten rejections, then this individual received six hundred and forty rejections before he was finally published, not to mention the immense amount of blood, sweat and tears poured out into four complete

novels! This author is now known as Stephen King (alias Richard Bachman), well-known in the genres of Horror (*Carrie*, *Skeleton Crew*, *The Shining*), Science Fiction (*The Running Man*), and lately Fantasy (*The Dark Tower*).

Even when you have sold that first story, it's no guarantee for success. It may be a while before you sell the one that really grabs the Editor's attention. Ray Bradbury, who began serious writing at about the age of twelve, relates the following milestone in his career.

**A major sale
—ten years
after he'd begun
to take
writing
seriously!**

"I finally found it one afternoon when I was twenty-two years old. I wrote the title 'The Lake' on the first page of a story that finished itself two hours later. Two hours after that I was sitting at my typewriter out on a porch in the sun, with tears running off the tip of my nose, and the hair on my neck standing up.... I realized I had at last written a really fine story.

The first, in ten years of writing." (Williamson 13)

Ray Bradbury succeeded in selling "The Lake" at the age of 22 to *Weird Tales* — a major sale—ten years after he'd begun to take writing seriously!

According to last spring's writers' survey, conducted by *Guidelines Magazine*,

100% of all writers polled thought that everything they sent out was publishable; ie, "a really fine story." Are we really all that much better than Ray Bradbury and his ten year internship? I think not. Though he had sold other stories before his major sale to *Weird Tales*, who knows for sure how many rejection slips he accumulated in a decade of writing. No one may ever know, but you can be sure it was more than ten or twenty, and perhaps more than a couple of hundred. None of us would have ever heard of *Fahren-*

heit 451, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, or *The Martian Chronicles* if he had given up. All of these works are now being used in collegiate and private writing seminars and workshops across the nation and overseas.

Both these writers, King and Bradbury, and many others, would never have been known to the general public without the one basic

quality of perseverance, and a considerable amount of honesty in self-appraisal. A writer must have the drive to tell a tale, write it down, and finish it, then craft it to its finest quality. All of this takes a fair amount of perseverance. You must simply remember to carry this drive over to the final step, which is getting published! It will happen if you keep writing and keep submitting.

The rejection slip you receive doesn't matter. If that letter doesn't say anything specific about your story, then all it counts for is another certificate of time served and dues paid. It takes time and effort (and more time) to get to the point where your writing is good enough for an editor to at least make a comment, or give you advice. From that point it's a short hop to publication.

How much time and effort

does it take to get to that point? I won't lie to you—a long time and a lot of work. If you want an easy road to fame and fortune, get out of writing. If you intend to stay in the field, then we're back to the final detail on how to get published.

John W. Campbell, who is quoted and hailed in *On Writing Science Fiction* as one of SF's greatest editors, gives the same advice I have tried to relate in so many paragraphs:

"The reason 99% of all stories written are not bought by editors is very simple. Editors never buy manuscripts that are left on the closet shelf at home. If you take the time to write a yarn,... send it in!" (Scithers 10)

And that's what all successful writers have done, and are doing!

**"If you take
the time
to write
a yarn,...
send
it in!"**

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LOVE RULE NO.3

How am I supposed to feel
what goes on around me when
I don't know how I'm supposed to feel
when I'm only me and how
am I supposed to feel
when I can listen—hear
that I am set in my ways
but I don't know how to feel
until someone doesn't like my
dreams—accepting me until I feel
accepted and I don't know how
I'm supposed to feel when
acceptance is thrown in my
face and I can't feel, I am
blind, I need help,
I need your help
because who
I am
dreams to
someday
know
how to
feel.

—Tasche Streib

INCIDENT AT THE SATELLITE SUB

The spray of creamed coffee filled the air and spattered the floor as the erstwhile consumer leapt away from the liquid descending.

'Til then, a quietly humming fan had underlined the still of summer in the college snack bar.

The one on center stage caught me watching as she looked round, still stunned by the event.

I chose to smile rather than to pretend I hadn't noticed.

Her ways of coping included mouthing a common expletive, releasing some tension and disclosing her dismay. As an employee, she may have felt the need to restrain her outburst.

Later, I asked if she knew how it happened. She didn't, but reflected on a childhood jerkiness in her right hand that sometimes spilled pop.

Kindness prevailed. Co-workers mopped while she found a clean smock.

They say getting on a horse soon after a fall is best. She poured another cup and left for her break.

I wonder if her inner self has settled down. Mine would take some hours had I been the central character instead of the observer today.

—Judy Jack

VIII

i took a chance by jumping
 off that cliff
in that south american country.
i just held my breath
 closed my eyes
 and jumped.
up into the air i went
 flapping my arms wildly.
i felt totally out of
 control,
but i knew i'd be
safe—
everyone else was who took
 the same plunge as i.

feeling the air against my face,
 i realized i was totally
alone
flying my course downward
 toward the blue ocean waters.
the rock cliffs surrounded me
 and the wind blew through
 my hair,
what a rush!

although uneasy, i felt safe,
like the free-falling
wouldn't last forever,
like it would soon end in
a splash.

i took a chance by jumping
 off that cliff
at the south american beach
and permitted free-falling
 but didn't expect to miss the water
 and splat all over the rocks.

—Lara Therese Mac Connell

WRAPPED UP

I hear the call to dance
My body beckons me to break
Free
and feel the tribal
rhythms
pulsing
From within the Saran Wrap
Of this world.
I gasp for air,
Clarity
A few tentative steps
Drums patter pound a song
I chant and dance and fall down
all wrapped up and no place to go.

—Christi Rucker

Why read Small Press? Considering the amount of short fiction published in the industry every month, Small Press faces incredibly stiff competition from major magazines and anthologies. The quality of production is sometimes questionable, the fiction is often inconsistent, and issues can be highly irregular. All this aside, many small magazines are doing a better job of serving their clientele—both readers and writers—than many of the Big Guns do. The reason is *service*.

One of the greatest ills of our time is the abuse of higher education by the business world. Business schools have cropped up like weeds in a vacant lot. It used to be that MBAs were for CEOs (excuse the acronyms, I hate them, but you appear so anachronistic if you don't use them), but now you practically need an advanced degree to work in the mail-room. A single undergraduate degree is near-worthless.

Once upon a time, masters

would teach apprentices, and we'd build a huge volume of empirical knowledge through experience and hard work. Have you ever been handed the old "no experience, no job" line? The fact that most

businesses are unwilling to take time to teach someone to do a job, to hand down experience and knowledge to others, is indicative of how little they are willing to give back to the rest of us. That's not good when you consider that people—that's you and I—are the only reason any business is *in* business. I recall a lunch last year with a Seattle business executive who bemoaned the fact that he had been left in the lurch when his technical writer left suddenly and without notice.

"Why," I asked, "didn't you have anyone else working with the tech writer?"

"He was the only one on staff with writing experience," he replied. "It's not our job to *teach* people. There must be a school for that somewhere."

Businesses in this country

J. P.
McLaughlin

WHY
READ
SMALL
PRESS
???

have gotten just plain lazy. They fob off on society the job of preparing people for careers on the pretense they don't have the time or money. So instead, we underwrite massive programs through public higher education and financial programs at literally tens of thousands of schools. Who pays for this? You and I. Whatever happened to hiring somebody with potential and showing them the ropes?

Unfortunately, that's the problem now confronting publishing in the 1990s. The past decade has been an era of mergers, acquisitions and leveraged buyouts. Publishing concerns are no longer owned or even run by publishers, and editorial staffs are frequently faced with owners that consider their product to be just another widget. Worse yet, these are almost invariably publicly held corporations that must answer to stockholders. Gut decisions are replaced by risk analysis, trends are weighed against the stockholder's reactions, editorial staffs are trimmed to pad the bottom line, and personal attention, which was once used to nurture talent, is lost in the Sea of Competitiveness.

Picture yourself as the publisher of a monthly magazine. You sell around 100,000 copies per issue. You don't make a lot of money, but everybody gets paid on time, and you've watched the staff dis-

cover three literary award winners in the past five years. Your reputation is solid, you're well respected by your peers, but those New York winters are beginning to wear you down. Enter the conglomerate.

They eye your 100,000 loyal readers as a potential market for a dozen products and services. They look at your balance sheet and notice how labor-intensive it appears. Think of the cash flow if the "fat" were trimmed from the operation! You've worked hard all your life,

time to enjoy, right? You take their juicy offer; it's more than you ever thought you'd see! Off to the blue and white Caribbean.

Back home, however, things are not looking so well. In order to pay the interest on all the debt taken to acquire your magazine, the budget's being trimmed. Frills like enough staff to accept

unsolicited submission of manuscripts, enough moxie to take risks with your product, and enough concern for the future of literature to help along struggling but promising writers are swiftly axed with the stroke of a <delete> key.

It may be hard for the indifferent products of MBA factories to comprehend, but literature is not and never will be categorized as a widget. When I reflect about something I've read, something that's moved me and changed forever my perception of the universe, or

**Publishing
concerns
are no
longer
owned or
even run by
publishers...**

called into question some basic precept I've held since childhood, I do not approach it in the same manner in which I reflect about my toaster or my toothbrush. Literature has no identifiable boundaries, no limit in its applicability to everyday life, and no firm handles for publicists to grasp or stockbrokers to wield. When people try to squeeze it into such a form the result is homogenous and unsatisfying.

That the major magazines actually manage to put out interesting and imaginative work is a testimonial to the dedication of their respective staffs. But the constant decline in the number of publications that give *real* consideration to the slushpile (all those submissions from unknown writers) only increases their dependence on Small Press to discover, nurture, and train new writers. Getting published in one of the Big Guns increasingly requires experience, and we're back to the "no job without experience" scenario.

The editorial decision-makers at major magazines have fallen upon the same idiotic logic that has invaded the rest of the business world. This kind of gutless, risk-free decision making is the principle malady of business today, and it leaves little hope for the aspiring writer to break in. The reasoning says that if there are enough estab-

lished pro-writers to fill the pages, why bother with the slushpile? Well, let me tell you there's only one reason why there are enough professional-quality writers out there to fill the in-baskets with agented submissions: Small Press.

Small Press carries the fire of creativity. Small Press magazines have little money, few resources, not enough hours in the day, and too many outside commitments. They make up for that with courage, determination, a commitment

**If there are
enough
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to literature that stems from a labor of love, and deep conviction that the next envelope that's opened might very well be the new writer, poet, or artist of the 1990s. Small Press editors and publishers put their hearts and souls, and sometimes their livelihoods, on the line every time they publish their magazine.

They are the proving ground of new writers, new trends, and new genres. Their reward is often obscurity, living in the shadows of the giants that tower above them. But, as in all well-built structures, you'll find the foundation at the bottom, the anchor that holds the entire structure in place. Without a foundation, a building will blow away with the first little breeze.

Why read Small Press? To borrow a tired cliché, it gets you in on the ground floor—the foundation. It's there you'll find a little bit of the future. □

Hollow corridors

A Lilac clock—trial to a tranquil screaming
Meadow painted a distant central horizon
Sunset fell—a symphony: south in
clockwork
dreamt

Boat—perhaps just a thought in absent motion

Dream—sailing the nighttime marine:
under sail and soul

White moon echo of the sky—before
reflected in the after sea,

snowflake—finding its goddess
on the grass ground
without searching skyward
first.

sunflake—pilgrimage through
windows of perception,

In the still water it fell—
the sea knew its name.

Lilac—the shadow of distant air
an embryonic ghost

Rain... through serpent eyes
the sunrise finds

its sleep,

Eve's forest pool—womb to eternal re-birth
and the earth burnt scent of dark
forest wind.

September sonnet moves tree branches
upward, crackling to a south—distant—wing.

Waves crashed against a cold harbor
of thought and vision,

Iconoclast ascetics revolt against
the angels & instead

inviting prayers and songs for
tomorrows phantoms &
flower deep cathedrals.
Night air invites wings to shatter
the quiet hour
stars beckon to fly south for the winter
wings flutter, cold mist against the soul's reason.
The cave... shore of death born laughing
shadows rejoice in pain
whisper & steam enter...

Not rain—nor rainbow—rather
dew: on morning lit gravestone
ashes of the dying phoenix.
Gothic: a ruin tells a proverb
day to follow night
death to breathe in life
tomb to awaken a lilac field
& time reads aloud the diary of a clock.

Night flies—free—through a daydream, thus,
morning stalled;
teardrop from the flatlands
woven into sunrise
Autumn clouds envy the rippling sky
Soft eyes vision eternity—unbroken
silent lips breathe—hymns, unheard by dust & roots,
A valley pays reckoning to its bridge
An echo of laughter hears its voice;
and cries,
A tear remembers all—sees nothing,
Our lips moist with holy water,
rippling from our eyes... acid rain.

—Paul Greenwood

THE SNAIL AND THE GADFLY

Ron McFarland

Once there was a professorial snail, and he was happy even though he lived in an ill-tended garden, which was worse than just badly weeded, for the gardeners occasionally employed Kill-A-Slug and other such noxious and fatal products, so the snail had to be very wise in order to survive, let alone prosper. "But after all," he told a colleague one day, "it could be worse. As long as they use these poisons, we don't have to worry about being scooped up for escargots." On his more melancholy days the snail supposed he was not really "happy," so much as he was "contented," but that was enough for him.

One day an attractive young professorial gadfly buzzed into the garden. She zig-zagged crazily among the cabbage and squash, did some lovely loops among the tomatoes, and finally landed right on top

of the snail. "People like you make me sick," she sizzled. "You are intelligent, educated, healthy, and smug. You live in a corrupt and corrupting, dangerous, sick and dying world, and you do nothing about it." Her wings shivered with righteous indignation. "You treat your students as containers to be filled with intellectual stuff, not as people to be educated, people who must learn to act responsibly in the world. What is the purpose of your fancy Stanford Ph.D. in lit if not to improve society and to change the world for the better?" Tears rolled down the thorax of the sincere, impassioned gadfly.

"Hey!" shouted the snail. "Get off my back! I mean this literally, dammit! You're about to drown me."

The gadfly reluctantly fluttered onto a broad cucumber leaf.

"Besides," the snail continued, "I majored in lit for myself, because

I liked it. Hell, I love it! I didn't study literature to change the world. I mean, if my teaching somehow changes the world, that's okay with me, but it's strictly coincidental. You didn't happen to major in political science by any chance? Philosophy maybe?"

"Certainly not," shrilled the embittered fly. "I majored in lit. I specialized in Romantic Poetry—Keats, Shelley—and I'm well read in all the Black, feminist, Hispanic, and Gay writers."

"What about the Indians?"

The *Native Americans*, too," she responded, emphasizing her correction. "We must empower the wretched of the earth! We must subvert the machinations of nationalistic, capitalistic, imperialistic, bourgeois hegemony. We must enable..."

"Good grief," snorted the snail, and he sucked his head back deep into his shell.

Exasperated, the gadfly buzzed off. But before long she had disseminated her vision in the form of an elaborate and noble Statement of Goals and Values for the Study and Promulgation of Literature. Appended to the Statement was a hefty list of policies intended to effect the Goals and Values, to disenfranchise the "old canon," which she regarded as sexist, racist, outmoded, and dull, and to promote the tenuring of all like-minded gadflies.

Time passed. the gadflies gaddled about and were certain that their teaching had reached the students and had radically reformed the world, though they had to confess (privately) that the garden was still badly tended. In fact, three previously undetected varieties of weeds

had cropped up, and while the gardeners no longer used Kill-A-Slug, they had turned to an even more noxious substance called Slug-Death. The snails spent much of their time curled up in their shells, as usual, but they seemed happy enough. On the other hand what they referred to as "contentment" the gadflies were wont to call "complacency."

In short, everyone got along, more or less, but the gadflies were not really satisfied, so they called a meeting, not just of the faculty, but of the students as well. Everyone was there: snails and slugs, gadflies and cabbage moths, earwigs, even the lowly aphids. The gorgeous young gadfly presented her case in a paper entitled "Teaching for Action, or Profs to the Barricades!" She spoke of social action, reform and if necessary even revolution. The students applauded vigorously.

Then the sonorous snail shuffled up with his paper, "They Also Serve Who Stand and Wait": What Every Student Needs to Know." The snail's rather lengthy treatise quietly urged the teaching of literature in the name of self-improvement, understanding of the world (emphasizing that change of the world starts with change of oneself), and personal gratification. The students applauded vigorously.

Both the snail and the gadfly were bewildered, for there was no clear mandate from the audience. The snail shook his dewlaps and the gadfly wibbled her wings in mutual confusion. At last it was one of the lowly aphids who arose. Her voice was so soft and her demeanor so self-effacing that everyone had to listen very closely. "We learn a lot from both of you," she said, "and we

respect you both." She paused. "Some of us would like to be just like you, Professor Snail."

At that the snail reared from his shell in goeey pride, reared so far, in fact, that he nearly unhoused himself.

"And some of us," the young aphid continued demurely, "would like to be just like you, Professor Gadfly."

At that the good-looking gadfly whirred so high from her seat on a yellow tomato blossom that she nearly disappeared from sight.

"But," the aphid added, raising her voice and suddenly sounding more than a little professorial herself, "most of us don't want to be like *either* of you. Most of us want to be something like one of you and somewhat like the other, but most of all like ourselves. Studying lit helps us a lot with that, and the great thing about learning with you two in this garden is..."

The snail and the gadfly edged forward eagerly.

"...is that neither of you seem to get in our way all that much." □

THE GODDESS OF SAX

Giver of Beauty
Cause of envy,
Sound to us your brass.

Controller of fate
Purpose of life,
Play to me my hope.

Force a tune
From your lungs,
Blow the wind of happiness.

You are the tempest
Swaying my emotions,
Noting the changes of my passion.

—Alisa Stoffel

FUGUE: a triannual digest highlighting the literary works of the University of Idaho students. One issue is published for each semester: Fall, Spring, and Summer. Each issue contains stories, vignettes, poems, and non-fiction chosen to satisfy a wide variety of tastes in literary entertainment. The magazine is staffed entirely by English majors at the Univ. of Idaho, and is funded by the ASUI and the U. of Idaho English Department, and advertising. A single issue of *Fugue* is only \$3 [\$3.65 by mail in the USA]; a subscription by mail anywhere in the USA is \$9.

Submission Format: Use a cover sheet with the following information: Name, local address, phone number, ID number & college (if student), word count (lines for poetry), time/room/instructor of any U.I. English classes presently being taken (so we can contact you quickly, if need be). Include a #10 SASE with each submission. Manuscripts must be typed, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins on all sides, title and page numbers in the upper right corner. *Do not put your name on the manuscript!* All manuscripts must be disposable—make a copy for yourself. We will be responding via your SASE—manuscripts will not be returned.

SEND THE BEST STORIES
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Editorial Process: Each submission will be read by several staff members who briefly critique it before passing it on to the managing editors. All readings will be done "blind"—the readers will not be aware of the identity of the author. We will be looking for a wide range of genres for each issue: Mainstream, Mystery, Fantasy, Magical-Realism, Science Fiction, Suspense, Historical, etc.; the journal is a showcase for *all* types of entertaining literature. Based upon the overall critique of staff readers, manuscripts will be chosen to be published in an upcoming issue of *Fugue*. In some cases, we may contact a contributor for a re-write, clarification of particular passages, or notification of necessary editorial changes. All contributors receive a free copy of any issue in which their work appears.

Stories: These must be complete and concluded with good characterization and plotting. You must make the reader feel without resorting to standard clichés. 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 any elite readership—the story must still be comprehensible and entertaining for the average reader. Our preferred word count is 1-3000 words, but longer works will be considered. If you wish to submit a novella length manuscript (7000 words) you should be aware that it will be carefully scrutinized for exceptional control of plot, characterization and pace. A padded story is not a novelette. Book excerpts, chapters, and serializations will not be considered.

Vignettes: Many published short stories, especially short-shorts (1000 words or less), are actually Vignettes: stylishly rendered scenes/events that emphasize imagery over plot. A mood of “endlessness”—the scene carries forward and backward beyond the text—should be maintained. However, it must have a definitive ending and beginning. This is perhaps the most difficult type of fiction to write and still maintain as engaging for the reader. Max. count of 1000 words.

Poems: The standard of our time is Free Verse, but we like to see some traditional forms as well—tercets, sonnets, limericks, ballads, hybrids, etc. We are open

FOR SUBMISSIONS TO FUGUE.....

to all premise and non-premise themes without restriction, from the serious and moving to the utterly whimsical. Try some of the formal structures; expand your repertoire of styles and themes.

Non-fiction: We are considering well-constructed articles, essays, reviews, etc., written in a style that anyone, not just English/Lit. enthusiasts, could comprehend and enjoy. All submissions should relate to contemporary works, authors, and issues of literature, or to a well-known, well-read piece of classic fiction familiar to most serious readers. 1000 words.

Teaching Staff Submissions: We are looking to publish one poem, one work of fiction, and one work of non-fiction, by members of the teaching staff, in each issue of *Fugue*. Submissions in this category will be considered separately from those of the students—students will not be competing with instructors for publication in *Fugue*.

Staff Submissions: the staff members of *Fugue* may submit work to the magazine. Their work is read “blind,” with readers designated by the Exec. Editor. No special considerations will be given to any submission by a staff member of *Fugue*.

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