

1969

## The Fat Giraffe, volume 1, number 3 (1969)

Fat Giraffe

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# THE FAT GIRAFFE

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The Fat Giraffe, an independent, non-profit publication of poetry and other creative writing, encourages contributions from all interested students and faculty. Our editorial policy is liberal (no censorship, since The Fat Giraffe is completely independent of MSC funds and facilities), and printing will be as frequent as possible, depending on the amount of available writing.

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## AFTER HER MORNING

Driving in midnight rain,  
the streets covered with a glistening sound,  
past the day house on Second Street,  
I have thrown on my old cripple's shawl of silence.

The hotel restaurant is filled  
with dry lovers.  
Parents searching for their son  
in the glad bars.

Even the whores on Main look good tonight.

Green through yellow to red--  
lights wavering in soft puddles.  
Clean wind.

I turn off the radio,  
and listen to the dripping trees  
tapping with their strange dew  
upon the roof of the car.

When I stop,  
I look through the window  
beaded like an Oriental curtain--  
broken by the sweep of a familiar hand--  
at the transparent reflection  
of a turning face.  
I've seen it like this before,  
lost and wondering.

It is because she is sleeping  
in the Second Street bed I never found  
that I go looking now for someone to talk to.

- Keith A. Heller



On the turning tide  
 of quilted morning,  
 when kittens stalk my single bed,  
 I drift beneath your absent hands,  
     back again,  
 from the summer house  
 to a green winter room  
     where your eyes hold me still.

In the honey-suckle evening  
 when the bees  
 have returned to their hives,  
 and I light the candles  
 to ward off shadowed fears--  
     turning  
     I glimpse your face  
 crying in the deepening pools  
 of a frightened spring.

Calling soft  
     in the darkness of a strangled  
 and half-forgotten past,  
 I hear your voice beneath the lilacs  
     that murmur to the moon.

Are the curses you made  
     of a winter night  
     strong enough to claim me still  
 from a thousand  
     dappled cat-tailed days?

- Linda McDonnell

TWO HAIKU

--for Carol

Lost young dove crying  
 Wind-cleft from her cedar nest:  
     Begin in darkness.

Shimmering star spectacle  
 Above dark guardian spruce:  
     We, small puzzle parts.

- Rich Callender



IMPRESSIONS OF OUR FIRST GOODBYE  
(for Mauray)

"Molly," I said  
to the little person attached  
to my knees this morning,  
"can you understand I'm not  
sending you away?"

But your two blue eyes had spied  
the Balloonman  
and the words were  
just now drifting up past  
the bright globes of red and yellow.

"Can you see," I asked,  
kneeling to tie the tiny tennis shoe  
that rested on my knee,  
"I think this is best?"

But now  
a fuzzy gold bumblebee  
enthroned on a velvet dandelion  
was most important.

"You'll have to be a big girl," I said  
and prayed  
you would come back  
the same.

But when you have a button nose  
that can smell popcorn  
from one end  
of the park  
to the other,  
you just have to follow it.

And so, looking up from the place  
you should have been,  
I saw the Balloon man's last balloon  
was black.

- Marilyn Tontloff



You were sleepy warm that morning  
 and still were when we discovered the brook  
 and touched our feet to the glass  
 thinking that perhaps we were enchanted  
 and could reassure the surface  
 of its virginity  
 And as you reached  
 a hundred thoughts went through my mind  
 but never that you would touch me  
 The trees were singing, the animals cardboard still  
 and the sun, vibrating with its full strength  
 wished a thousand impossible things without a shadow  
 Running was forbidden so we languished,  
 I and you also  
 and we peeled back memories of time to a finer state  
 and a richer green  
 and all that was left was inscrutable history  
 winding a long pebbled track  
 aware of the sun

- Greer Cummings

#### A SLIGHT SONNET

Had I been she, in that lost time and place,  
 I'd make the fall's dull sin the chance of spring.  
 --Or did sad seasons then so surely pace  
 And follow each the other in a ring?  
 There must have been at least a sooner time,  
 For fruit at last is but the end of bloom.  
 To cut and eat that fruit I count a crime  
 That well might call down everlasting doom.

But if a naked girl by sunshine pressed  
 Should with her own hands hold a broken bough  
 Of palest apple blossoms to her breast  
 And breathing in their promise, turn and know  
 That Eden dies in fat Adam's happy bed  
 --Had I been she, I should have laughed and fled.

- Constance Reed



White headlights and human forms  
 pass quietly  
 through the cool rain darkness of the Red River Valley.  
 Across town, the sound of dogs barking.  
 Soft shadows of dark, moist trees  
 press urgently  
 against yellow street lamps of glass  
 and the aloneness  
 of their night light bodies.  
 The smell of blue-red lilacs in the stillness of moon drape.  
 Resisting the dawn and her clear beads of dew,  
 gently positioned on green, crisp bushes,  
 the world  
 breaks out into candleland.  
 Perhaps, this time,  
 my body will blend with the damp and the flame.

- Michael Moos

poem after cummings

when the trees  
 to almost  
 Autumn turn  
  
 redbrown, changing,  
 gone summer away  
  
 and chill-biting winds  
 are close  
 over cracking (still) ground  
  
 when late morning  
 comes white  
 on the window  
 panes  
  
 May seems a thousand  
 (distant) years  
  
 (and where are you  
 when I need your Majesty,  
 Mr. Sun?)

- Bernel Bayliss



## A DEVONIAN SHORELINE

I gaze at a pool where Lungfish play  
That pool,

    And those fish,  
Are two hundred fifty million years away;  
Today an artist's conception.

What does it mean or matter?

Nothing, the eons echo.

The triumphal roar of the ages

    Is distilled

To the timeless drip of water into a stagnant pool

    Where Lungfish frolic.

I ask the fish,

    Who was Moses?

        Christ?

        Or Mohammed?

And the fish answer--clay,  
Primeval mud.

This is a world without didactics,

        Socrates,

        Plato,

        And Greek theatrics;

The Great Thinkers are a Scorpion and a Worm,

        And will be for ages.

What does it mean or matter?

Nothing, the eons echo.

Fins to Feet

    Nodocord to Spine

        The wonder of it all,

Glorious man is the child of Ancient Slime.

Let no one forget his origin,

        Or The Climb.

The sea is in our blood;

        The beast lurks in our brain;

We are the child

    Of Change,

        Tides,

        And Time.

Control, we may, three dimensions of the world,

But inexorable Change, the fathered all, shall sweep us finally from  
the field.

What does it mean or matter?

        The eons grow dumb and cease their answer.

- John Schlattman



## ESSAY: BEING BLACK IN AMERICA

Despite the absence of a classical culture, the American Negro is a people. There is now a tie that binds us all, while yet allowing for the variegated lives we live. We call each other "soul brother" and we congregate together to eat "soul food" and listen to "soul music." We are, from Muslim leader Malcolm X to the United Nations' Ralph J. Bunche, "Lodge Members." Ask a Negro about soul music, soul food, his soul brother, and what a Lodge Member is, and chances are he will laugh and walk away. But while laughing and walking, he will probably bump into a fellow soul brother and they will take off to the snack bar to eat some soul food and listen to some soul music.

All American Negroes "pay dues." Dues is the fee one pays for being black in America. If you are a black musician, dues is the price you pay when you see white musicians take tunes and concepts you created and make millions while you tramp the country on one-nighters; if you are a writer, dues is the price you pay for being relegated to Negro themes when your real interest could very well lie somewhere else; if you are a college professor, dues is what you pay for being confined, for the most part, to Negro colleges which don't afford you the academic challenge every scholar wants; if you are a college professor on an integrated campus, dues is what you pay when students make you a specialist on the Negro and approach you with sympathetic condescension; if you are just a common man--and that is what all of us are--dues is what you pay when rents are high, apartments are filthy, credit interest is exorbitant, and white policemen patrol your community ready to crack heads at any moment.

In a phrase, "dues" is the day to day outlay, psychological and economic, every black American must make simply because he is black. And a "Lodge Member," as anyone who stopped laughing at Amos and Andy long enough to think should realize, is a fellow Negro who, of course, also pays dues. Soul music and soul food are the mystical oneness with certain rhythms and the cooking we have enjoyed while forging ourselves into a people welded together by a common suffering.

Dues, then, is catching hell, and we all catch hell for the same reason: not because we are Republican or Democrat, not because we are educated or uneducated, and certainly not because we are Americans, because if we were Americans we wouldn't catch hell. We all catch hell for being black!!

- James Anderson