

Fall 2003

# The Sunset Review



# The Somerset Review

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Fall 2003

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## Editors' Notes

With this issue, we celebrate our First Anniversary on the Internet, and hope that what we have released thus far has been enjoyable and inspiring. It's a bit ironic that the traditional gift for a First Anniversary is paper, and here we are, a modest little literary journal that exists at present only online. (We have, however, provided a downloadable form of the issue in Adobe Acrobat Reader . PDF format, if you'd like to print it out for yourself.)

The results of our Readers' Poll are in. We asked you to name a favorite story, article, or book. Click [here](#) to see the list, and don't be shy to try a few suggestions – there are some wonderful ideas for reading.

We're happy to give you another interview with a fiction editor in our Fall 2003 issue. Our previous interviews were well-received, and so we thought we would do another, this time with Jennifer Spiegel of Hayden's Ferry Review.

Also included in this issue are four brilliant stories we enjoyed very much. Leading us off is Tony O'Brien, whose short "The New Geometry For Girls" uses mathematics to describe a life, a love, a life-long longing.

Although you may never have realized, some interesting parallels between dog breeding and human relationships apparently exist, and these are drawn for us by Susan H. Case, in her story "Breeding and Grooming."

Possibly more of a traditional rather than contemporary piece, Tom Sheehan's "The Idyll of Staff Bickerston" tells the tale of a family and a house that is slowly slipping from them, and the way adversaries sometimes turn into friends.

From Bulgaria, Zdravka Evtimova gives us "The Violin," the story of a mother and an aunt who put on their chiffon dresses each night and recreate Mozart and Schubert for guests and relatives, and their intermingling.

Thanks goes out to our contributors and all those who have submitted for consideration in this issue.

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Joseph Levens – Editor  
Amy Leigh Owen – Assistant Editor  
S. Malkah Cohen – Assistant Editor

The Somerset Review, a literary journal of contemporary short stories and essays, is released quarterly on Mar 15, June 15, Sept 15, and Dec 15.

Founded in 2002 and based in New York, the journal is a non-profit, zero-revenue Internet publication devoted to high-quality literary reading, writing, and publishing. We are a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP).

The journal is located at <http://www.somersetreview.org>. All correspondence and submissions should be sent to [editor@somersetvreview.org](mailto:editor@somersetvreview.org). Guidelines and recommended reading are on the site. All material is copyrighted and republication or redistribution should not be done without written permission granted by the originator.

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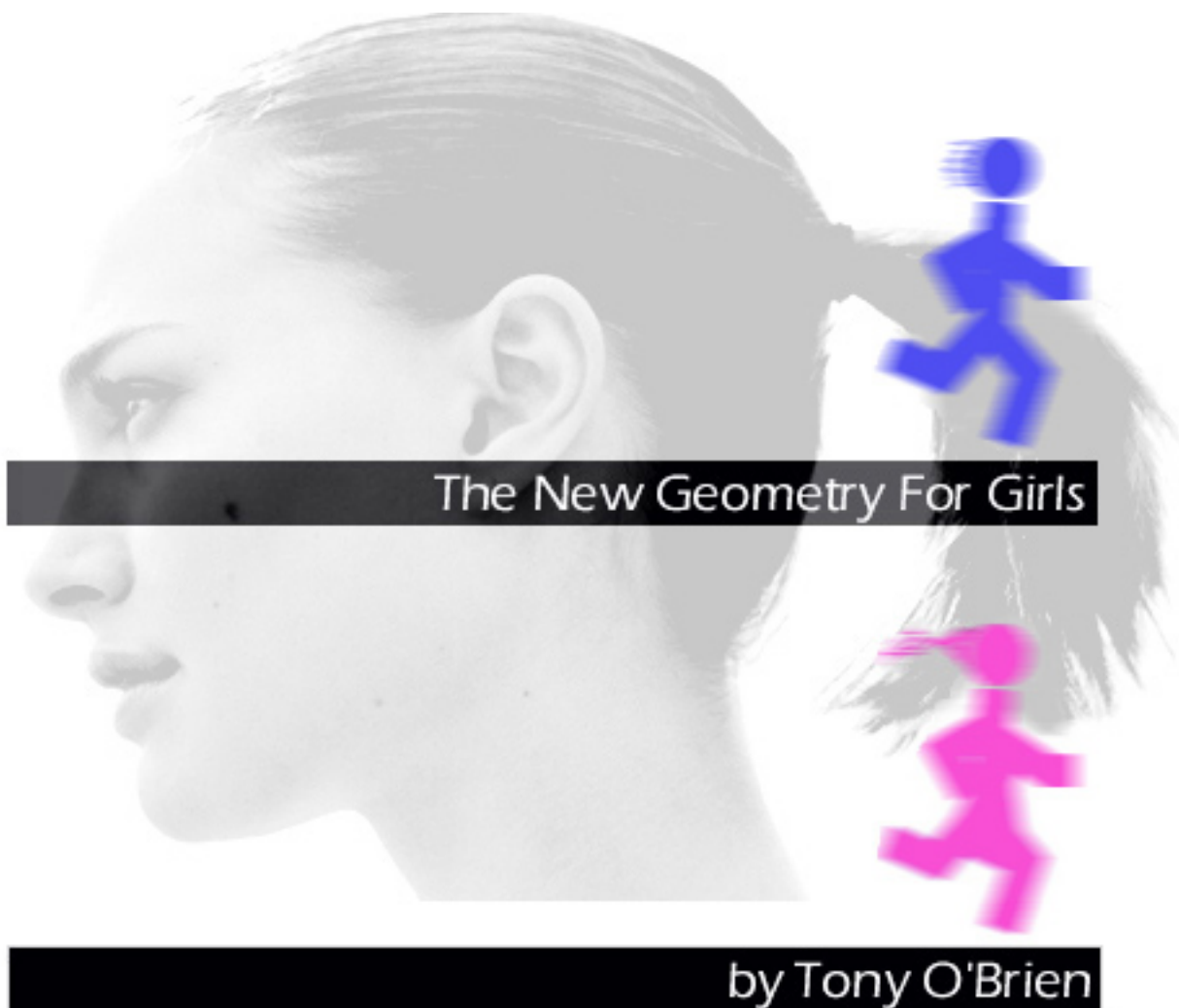
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## The New Geometry For Girls

by Tony O'Brien

'We begin with some fundamental facts. It is upon these facts that the course on the new geometry is based. If we understand the fundamental facts, then the remainder of the course will follow logically. Without that understanding, I fear we are destined for confusion and uncertainty.' Mr. Potter knew his facts; things were proved or disproved, true or false, known or unknown.

You were in my geometry class, one of a small group of girls coaxed into sciences and technology, groomed for the new world. The girls sat together, two by two. Your books were neat, your chatter silenced by Mr. Potter's litany of facts. From my corner of the room your arm made a shifting triangle, your elbow at the apex, cutting an arc across your desk and into the aisle beside you. It was your hand that shot up first for each question, earning an approving nod from Mr. Potter.

Using the facts from Mr. Potter's geometry book, we calculated all manner of things, the orbits of planets, the true length of a kick at goal, the height of the school flagpole. When we scrambled to our feet at the end of each class, I delayed or hurried my exit so that our paths converged at the door. I stole into your circle of friends to see if there was a common point at which our worlds might meet. When I said you knew all the answers in geometry you said yes, and parallel lines meet at infinity. You had Mary Quant hair, all angles, a straight fringe and sides framing your face. There were others, but when I looked at them I saw only what they lacked.

Every afternoon a group of girls from the Catholic school stood on the steps of the Cathedral. Their brown gym skirts were crisp and prim, pressed into regular pleats, although I noticed that one had

an erratic blue stain at the front. It was like the map of some exotic unexplored island. We always thought the girls had been to Mass, or perhaps to confession. The idea that they must confess their sins, their innermost thoughts, to the grey old priest gave me a hard on, and I wondered if the priest got a hard on too. Years later I married one of the Catholic girls. I learned that the nuns had told them to be careful when standing in the sun, that the slant of its rays could catch a girl's hair and cause boys to become excited. The girls were practising. They wanted to get the position just right, to have the sunlight shatter on their hair, exploding in a burst of color.

On Mondays we had English for first period. Anything was better than geometry or those other subjects that weighed and measured without stopping to admire. We studied Dickens, and the literature of the Industrial Revolution. Mr. Donleavy handed out copies of *Hard Times*.

'Read chapters one and two,' he said. 'They're quite short. Then we can have some discussion. No talking now.' He was glaring at you, and you shot him one of your looks, then he walked around the room, placing the books on the desks, one emphatic thump each.

I opened my copy and studied the jumble of dates stamped on the page stuck to the inside cover. I read the name from last year, then the year before, and the year before that, right back to Lorraine Henderson, 5C2, 1957. When I lifted the page I saw that someone had written 'Donleavy's shit stinks' underneath. When I saw Mr. Donleavy watching, I flicked the page and started reading.

'Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are what's wanted in life. Plant nothing else and root everything else out.'

I checked the cover and the title page. It was *Hard Times* all right. It seemed there was no escape from the world of facts. Even in the Industrial Revolution they had to learn facts. We read for half an hour. Chapter Two was called "Murdering the Innocents," which sounded promising, but it too was riddled with the language of facts. Then Mr. Donleavy asked you to read the part you liked most. You read the bit about Sissy Jupe, how she fancied a floral carpet, but Mr. Gradgrind, the teacher, told her she wouldn't want people walking with heavy boots over flowers, and she mustn't fancy, and then said, 'Fact, fact, fact.' You said Mr. Gradgrind didn't understand what girls liked, that people still didn't understand what girls liked, and then it was me getting the look and I turned the colour of Sissy Jupe's carpet.

On Mufti Day, blazers and school ties gave way to a frenzy of fashion. I stayed up late to iron my shirt. It was black, scattered with yellow polka dots, and sharp button-down collars, then my jeans, white with no cuffs. I cleaned my shoes, then cleaned them again, so that the square toes glinted even in the pale light of my bedroom. I took the early bus, with the office workers and railway clerks. I wanted to keep the sweep of my hair in place, free from the shoving, jostling crush of schoolkids.

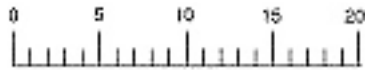
At the interval I found you just as you came out of your drawing class. You were wearing a vivid pink dress that flared from your hips, littered with daisies. Your arms were pale and smooth, swinging slowly as you walked. You stopped to talk to a boy from the sixth form, dismissing me with a sweep of your arm. His stovepipe jeans tapered almost to the width of his ankles, stopping just short enough to show a glimpse of luminous green. The tips of his winkle pickers pierced the air as he walked. When I saw you together I knew I'd seen a different symmetry. In a clash of equals I might have merited comparison, but here I held a subordinate position.

For the rest of the year I found the maximum distance between us, diverging from any course that might cross yours. Sometimes from a remote vantage I saw you with him, perfect opposites, poised in dynamic tension.

On the last day of school Mr. Potter wished us luck, and said the girls had proved that geometry was not the province only of boys, that girls, too, could calculate angles, plot positions, measure the space enclosed by sides. We each followed our own dreams after that, pushed by whatever we could take from our past, pulled by promises that beckoned us on, tripped by things that got in the way.

My marriage failed, then failed again. I had affairs, the first with a woman whose hair was brown and straight. She wore it long so that it brushed the freckles on her shoulders. Then there was a woman with a mass of winding curls, spiraling helices of gold. Her hair was a dense tangle, profuse and thick, becoming fine and yellow closer to the sun. As each day closed her hair faded into the night. In time I too was absorbed by darkness.

I saw you once at the shopping centre. You were trudging down the aisle of shelves, veering this way and that, a jumble of shapes in your trolley. Oranges, the corners of biscuit packets, a bunch of bananas, tins and boxes. The contour of your chin was lost in a soft curve, the apexes of your breasts rounded into some sort of sweeping parabolae. Your hair was short and sharp, unnaturally black, shot with shards of copper and bronze. I followed a looping trajectory to avoid you, but our trolleys intersected somewhere near the personal care shelf. Our eyes met for a moment and we saw a lost infinity, the meeting point of parallel lives.



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## Breeding and Grooming

by  
Susan  
H.  
Case



"You just don't like men," my friend Amanda dismissively says, but that's a distortion she generates out of her own needs.

I just shrug my shoulders, refusing to be drawn in. Then, while we're walking down a crowded Columbus Avenue, sipping skim milk lattes, she moves in for the kill.

"Do you ever – ever at all – give them an even break?"

Well, no, hardly ever, is the answer, but what I say is "Men are dogs."

That's not a bad thing. I love dogs. Who doesn't? Name me one president, even, who didn't show the nation his dog. But not all dogs are the same. Scottish Terriers, for example, to me, are always cute and interesting. Some men, on the other hand, are more like Springer Spaniels or drooling Mastiffs, dull and over bred.

"You need some behavioral therapy," Amanda says, shaking her head. Of course, I happen to know that Amanda's been trying, to no avail, to find someone to marry so that she can get pregnant, before that whole tape runs out.

"Look at the consequence of compromising a standard," I point out. "It's everywhere." This seems especially so on the Upper West Side of New York, where we're walking, a neighborhood filled with couples and their babies, too many with bad conformation. We both glance briefly at a good example, smiling quietly at one another, acknowledging the glorious, sunny day that it is. Amanda smiles at them, but I don't. Clearly, not enough thought was given to matters such as the shape of the hindquarters or the size of the snout, what happens when two non-

champions get together to mix it up. That's where the grooming part can become important. It can downplay, or, if one is really skilled, hide, those kinds of defects.

We've passed by the enraptured couple by now and I've started to refocus on a grumpy looking Kerry Blue, strutting up the block. Walking with the dog is an attractive man, but he looks equally grumpy. And that suggests the basic problem - that even if a man's lines and form were to comply with my prevailing standards, even if the grooming were to be impeccable, there is also the issue of temperament. The ideal dog would excel in all three, but there is no such thing as a perfect dog. And there are, I have discovered, even fewer perfect men.

I have been grooming Scottish Terriers for dog shows for eight years now (as well as other dogs, more for the cash than for love) and breeding them for four. Like the Kerry Blue, the Scottie is a very high maintenance dog when it comes to grooming. My fee of eighty-five dollars just about covers the cost of visiting the stylist who takes care of my own high maintenance, thick black hair.

A Scottie's hair has a hard wiry coat that needs to be stripped, not cut. Otherwise, the coat gets ruined. Not only does this require continuous attention, but also a multitude of similar, if not identical, tools to those used on me: stripping knife, scissors, nail clipper, comb, powder, electric clippers for the head and so on.

Usually, the dogs come to me. I don't like to leave my own dogs alone too much, so when I groom for shows, it's mainly local.

The world is full of strange convergences like high maintenance hair. Over these years, I have formulated a small set of rules about what I have seen in my Scottish Terriers. Those same rules also apply to what I have seen in my relationships with men.



**Poor attention to grooming requirements is often a sign that something is wrong.**

Grooming is an ongoing activity. What works best, if possible, is to take the dog's coat down in one session and then work on the coat as it grows back in. That way, the coat stays nicely balanced. You don't want a fluffy Scottie. It means you haven't been properly focused on the requirements of the dog.

I first realized that my relationship with my boyfriend, Jeff, for example, wasn't working when I stopped having waxed the thick dark hairs that appear on my upper thighs, just outside my panty line. Instead, I began to spend my waxing appointment times sitting in the park, where I'd watch the dog walkers enjoy the suddenly warmer weather. Also not a good sign was that I spent my waxing money on sluttish Italian lingerie that I folded and put away in a drawer. I was hoarding my resources for the theoretical next man.

I wasn't sure how I was going to find this next man. Perhaps, I thought, I could spot him as he walked by. Of course, that required that I pay attention not only to his presentation, but that of his dog as well. I was looking for good show ring personality, especially in the man. Now, what if he was appealing, but - horror of horrors - walked a dog I thought a slouch?

The greens of the park were filling in with color and the iris tips were starting to poke out. I began to pack my lunch and bring it to the park each afternoon, positioning myself on a bench for maximum effect. I wanted an immediate replacement for Jeff and took one of my little dogs, rotating each time (I had five), figuring they were better than I was at being overtly friendly. The first week and the following Monday and Tuesday yielded lots more sun, but little else. Wednesday had a distinct possibility.

"Hi," my possibility said. "Nice dog."

I smiled, showing nice, evenly spaced teeth, as I let my female, Beryl, sniff his male. With infinitely fewer resources than my Scottie had at her disposal, I tried to check him out. The man wasn't shy - that was promising, with nice brindle colored hair, a salt and pepper that matched my dog. I had gotten a quick look at his teeth, a nice level, square jaw, with a slight scissor bite. The initial appraisal was positive. He was a much finer looker than Jeff. His dog, a spirited and scrappy Welsh Terrier appeared poorly cut, but it wasn't a fatal flaw. I could do something about that.

"Donald!" A leggy, blond, woman that I hadn't noticed called out, holding a large cardboard cup of soda and ice in each hand, as she walked towards us. Oh well, I thought. I wondered if they were hopelessly mated, or just friends, or, maybe she was his sister. They looked enough alike. It was hard to tell. Men, like dogs, sometimes forget their last partner, at least for a while.

"Where do you have your dog groomed?" he asked, as he started to turn and wave to her, the

soda woman.

I quickly handed him my card, before my potential competition got any closer and I would have to growl.

**Temperament, as important as appearance, should be alert, spirited and steady going.** After all, a dog nicknamed the "Diehard" should have a certain attitude, a certain fire. A Scottish Terrier should not be wishy-washy. Neither should a boyfriend. When I stopped going to my waxing appointments, did Jeff say anything? Not a word. Did he just not notice? I didn't think that he was that unperceptive, just too benign, too much like a lumbering Golden Retriever, without the beautiful coloration. He took no strong positions and that was his problem: no fire. Jeff simply didn't have a heads up, tails up, attitude towards life. I resolved that the next one would have better terrier character.

An example of Jeff's temperament: we couldn't have snarling, drag-out fights. Jeff always caved in because he didn't like conflict. So, I would always win. After a while, this became mega-boring and I found myself picking fights just because I could. Stupid fights. Dogged fights.

"Look, if you aren't sure how much cream I want in my coffee, don't put it in." That was a morning that I was feeling particularly snarly.

Jeff had shrugged. "I just wanted to be helpful." He drew the words out like pizza dough in his not-that-long-in-New-York Louisiana drawl.

"You're not being helpful. You're ruining my coffee."

"Fine."

"Did I ask you to add the cream?"

"I won't make the coffee anymore, O.K.?"

"Good. Don't." No question about it, I could be a top bitch.

Earlier in the century, if a breeder wanted to test a Scottie's mettle, he'd put the dog in a barrel with a badger and see who won. If the dog killed the badger, well then, it was a fine dog. If the badger killed the dog, well, there had been a problematic temperament. Any badger worth his salt would make short shrift out of Jeff. No power or resolve.

Clearly, I was going to be the badger in this barrel. Chivalrous, in a sort of antique, hokey style, Jeff wouldn't have the grit to counter my aggressive inclinations. I was a dirty barrel fighter. There was such a thing as being too sweet. Wasn't there? Give me someone with more stubborn determination! I felt like biting him, I was so disgusted.

Donald, Wednesday's Welsh Terrier man called two weeks later, ostensibly for a grooming appointment for George, his dog.

"I'm pretty busy," I told him, "but I'll do you a favor and squeeze you in."

I then phoned Amanda and we spent a good hour discussing all the subtexts embedded in "nice dog." It was a phrase with complex possibilities.

**Close confinement, via crate training, creates psychological security. But too much time in one leaves an animal bored.** Crates, or enclosures that confine your dog can be very helpful for security, safety and housebreaking. What better way to enjoy peace of mind than to know that, when you leave your dog, it is not going to be able to develop bad habits and get into trouble? It's a nice way to create peace of mind for the dog too. That way, he doesn't get too over-excited or confused. The crate should provide enough space so that the dog is comfortable. Also very important is that the dog not be neglected in the crate. You want him to feel that he's getting enough attention and love. Dog crates are not meant to be used for long hours with adult dogs.

Dogs are den animals, descended from den dwelling ancestors. Sometimes, it seems that we, too, had den dwellers in our past. Why else would we all need to find our place, even if it's only to escape that place? It's partially an artifact of modern times, but I've noticed that my friends, Amanda excluded, are all suddenly busily engaged in the process of fixing up their den. I don't mean a den in terms of a family room, like in a suburban home. After all, we all live in overly cramped apartments here. What I mean is that being closed in, having structure to one's life, actually makes a person happier and psychologically more centered. What looks like a cage one moment, with a slight movement of the mind, becomes home. Of course, with certain problem dogs, another slight movement of the mind turns that special place into a cage again.

All of my Scotties had been crate trained and were proper, serious, well-behaved little creatures, who had made the transition from hanging in their crates to hanging under the furniture from where they could peer out and watch the world while napping and chilling. I was the problem. I'd shifted something and Jeff was no longer part of my center, but just taking up space. He

didn't live in my den, exactly, but he spent a significant number of days and/or nights of the week there – three, usually. He was getting too used to it, doing about the same amount of napping and chilling as my dogs.

"Listen, I need to talk about things with you," I started, one evening after all of the dogs had been fed and walked. We were throwing a latex squeak mouse lazily to the other side of the living room, where Heather, usually the fastest, would catch it before the others tried to grab it and rip it to shreds, gradually bringing it back to one of us to start the whole thing over.

"O.K." Jeff rolled onto his back and began to scratch behind his ears. I noticed that he was starting to get soft around the middle.

"I think seeing each other three times every week might be a little too much."

Jeff just shrugged. "O.K."

Worse than a Golden Retriever, I thought. An Irish Setter. We were silent for a while.

"Don't you want to know why?" It was my hunting instinct, zeroing in on someone with no defenses.

"No," he said, avoiding eye contact, and threw the mouse to the other end of the room again. He had been the one gradually increasing the time we spent together, sometimes just showing up, "to check on the dogs."

Maggie couldn't stand it anymore and, growling with fake menace, grabbed the mouse a split minute later than Heather and wouldn't stop growling and wouldn't let go, whereupon Stuart, my champion stud dog started barking without end, trying to get into the fray, ignored by all the girls. Beryl and Fiona, eyes riveted on the mouse, waited for the next interesting thing to happen.

Jeff sighed, walked over to separate the dogs, whereupon they all followed him back, eyes still focused upwards on the mouse.

"I thought this was maybe going somewhere," he whined. "Marriage, kids..."

"What?" I was being tactless, but his comment came out of nowhere. What was he talking about? We hadn't had a single conversation that contained those words. I'm sure that I would have remembered.

"Well, you know, something – some movement towards something." Jeff tried to formulate a rationale for why he was going to miss his crate, when what he really needed was to get out and exercise more.

"Maybe just living together." Jeff tried again to explain. "I don't know."

I stayed dumbfounded and when I didn't say anything more, he reached into his pocket.

"Here," he said, and handed me back his copies of my keys. "I don't want to be where I'm not wanted." Then he turned and went off to pack up his things in a couple of Pet Wonderland shopping bags, patted all the dogs goodbye, and left. It was the only thing that Jeff had ever done that surprised me. He was completely gone, like a cat, not like a dog at all.

**When considering which two dogs to mate, use the strengths of one to balance out the weaknesses of the other. Still, it's a crap shoot.** If a dog has a negative characteristic, the prospective mate should not share that same negative. When evaluating breeding stock, for example, it's important to keep in mind that a Scottie's eyes should be wide apart, small, dark and almond-shaped. It can mean the sacrifice of points if they are not up to the standard. So, say you have a dog that has a great general appearance, but round eyes, instead of almond-shaped ones. You should try to find a mate with better-shaped eyes and keep your fingers crossed about the puppies. Still, once your puppies open their eyes, somewhere between the tenth and fourteenth day, anything is possible.

On the morning that George was scheduled to come in, I was trying to decide what to do about Heather's next season in two months, whether to mate her to Stuart again, which had produced my youngest, Beryl, among others, or to look for a dog from another ancestral line and, if so, which one. So, although I was thinking mostly about that as I thumbed through The Bagpiper and looked at photos of recent winning dogs, I was also hoping that Donald, and not the woman with the sodas, would be the one to drop George off for his appointment. To my good fortune, or so I thought at the time, that's what happened.

Welsh Terriers, like other Terriers, can be scrappy and independent and I talked myself into the belief that the choice of breed reflected something positive in Donald. Scotties are ordinarily rather aloof, but very devoted to their own family and home. Since my last conversation with Jeff, followed by several with Amanda, I needed to feel that I wasn't entirely dysfunctional. I looked to find that devotion to someone myself.

Upon second evaluation, I still liked Donald's look – his wheaten coloration, his thinness – very different from my own, as I was squatter, much like my dogs and had the same tendency to become barrel-like and put on weight. I applied my makeup a little more carefully that morning, to help demonstrate my receptiveness. Needless to say, I had also begun to keep an appointment again at the waxing salon.

"Hi," I was all smiles, having decided that sunny disposition was the way to go.

He smiled back and I could sense in that smile an inquisitorial sniff for availability. George wasn't interested in spending the day with me and stiffened his legs to put on his brakes, which forced Donald to pick him up and place him in my arms.

"I have a suggestion," he offered.

"O.K." I waited, holding George.

"How about if I pick up George right before you close and then we go to dinner after I drop him off?"

Bingo, I thought, he's decisive and focused. Casually, I said, "Sure, why not?" Temporarily, I decided to put aside concerns about the soda woman.

George, of course, looked wonderful at seven o'clock, when Donald came back for him, and jumped around excitedly at the thought of never seeing me again. Donald suggested that he first drop George off and then return for me, which gave me an hour to shower, change, and call Amanda to strategize. Dinner was at a nearby Thai restaurant, where we split various sorts of dumplings and chicken Satay, followed by Pad Thai with shrimp. We talked about food, travel, our dogs and our lives, both conveniently skipping over our most recent mating attempts.

"So," I tried to sound casual, not really being able to stand it any longer, "are you – divorced, or what?"

Stuart, my stud dog, is a real gentleman, tolerant, but indifferent in the street to strangers, children and yappy dogs. If you respect his rights, he respects yours. But, like other true gentlemen, he is purposeful. Aimless behavior doesn't interest him. If he tries to rip up a squeak mouse, it's because he's honing his finely tuned hunting instincts. If he's going for a walk in the park, he's checking the place out for vermin. I didn't yet realize it, his scent being off, but Donald was not entirely purposeful in this way. He was out for an amble.

Donald smiled, giving me another look at his bright white teeth. "Are you proposing already?" he asked. And that's when he put his hand over mine on the table, where I had put down my chopsticks.

"See? No ring," Donald pointed out. His hand felt dry and warm and solid. Just goes to show you how much information you lose when you depend solely upon sight, sound, and touch.

**When engaged in training, praise is more effective than punishment.** In spite of an independence of spirit, the Scottie does want your approval. Stubborn as the breed is, strong language or punishment probably will not work. A Scottie dog doesn't like to be blamed for anything by his human and may respond by ignoring you or becoming sulky. No one wants to have a dog moping about, especially one that by his nature is game and perky. Showing that you are happy with your dog's actions will make him feel secure and a whole lot better. After all, your happiness is essential to his happiness.

Donald started coming around once or twice a week, after work, whereupon we'd go out for dinner to a variety of ethnic restaurants, which he would choose – Indian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Mexican - and then back to my apartment where I'd successfully try out my new lacey lingerie. I wanted him to stay over though – for the whole night.

"It presents certain logistical problems," he'd explain, showing those great teeth again.

"What logistics?"

"Well, George, and all your little dogs. I don't know, I think it would be too much for him. He'd feel outnumbered."

I wasn't in the mood to argue. Not with Heather going into season soon, which would mean that George couldn't stay with me anyway. So we continued to have our dates and I continued to fall asleep without him. He clearly was being spooked by my den, but I thought that to push the issue would be self-defeating.

"Remember, you catch more flies with honey," had been my mother's philosophy and it would be mine, although I had somewhat modified it to "you train more dogs with treats." I would be the fearless one, but I wouldn't be demanding about it. I would remain pleasant, I would let him know how wonderful he was and, eventually, Heather's breeding situation would be resolved

and Donald would be more tractable.

"Too bad there's nothing similar to liver snacks for training men," Amanda told me.

She was joking, but I thought it was a need tragically unmet. Liver snacks could definitely speed things up.

Still, I wondered why I wanted this to happen. It was the middle of the night, long after Donald had left. One or another of my girls chased rabbits in her dreams, and I could hear the whimpering, knew her paws were twitching. (Stuart, wheezing quietly, but not dreaming, was on the bed with me.) I had just gotten myself out of a situation that felt too confined. And Jeff really was gone, not even a "phoning because I left one of my socks there and, by the way, I wondered how you were doing without me" call. Was I so institutionalized that I felt insecure now with absolute freedom? Maybe I was the one who needed to be retrained.

No, I decided after a while, it wasn't me. It was him. I needed to borrow a page from my dogs and think about this in terms of how to effectively pursue my quarry. This could be a rough hunt and, so, it should be a strategic one. I opened an eye and looked at my little guy breathing deeply on the pillow in the ambient light from the outside streetlamp. He might look like a clown, but he was nobody's door mat. I would have to think like him.

Just then, Stuart rolled onto his back and looked at me with his beautifully piercing eyes.

"Rub my belly," he seemed to be asking me and so I did.

The thing was, I didn't want to sound whiney with Donald, the way Jeff did with me at the end. That sort of pursuit would work against me. It was important to keep the tone of things on a more lighthearted and fun level. Maybe I could be more inventive about our sex together, move beyond the lacey props.

I finally realized that I wasn't going to fall asleep again, no matter how long I lay in bed. So I got up and, with a mug of coffee and the correct amount of cream, pulled out my old *The Joy of Sex*. Skipping over the preachy don't-shave-your-legs-girl text which, considering my rules, I thought best to ignore, I searched through the illustrations looking for some new ideas.

**Even with the best of training, character and personality ultimately reflect origin.** It's hard to transcend basic nature. Scottish Terriers originated in the gray, rainy, moors of the Highlands and the best dogs, the dogs that were the foundation stock of the breed, were the ones that were adapted genetically to a rather bleak and rigorous existence. They needed to be tenacious, hardy and rough, not pampered lap dogs. Today, the best ones continue to exude power and keenness in a very compact package.

My planned breeding of Heather, who was now late coming into season, had come down to two potential stud dogs. One was Stuart. Also under consideration was a dog from another line, one to balance out Heather's (and Stuart's) slightly too short heads and slightly too long ears. Heather and Stuart were both products of in-line breeding and I was tempted to try something else. But the dog I had interest in for his looks was more high strung than Stuart and Heather both were, and so I was hesitant about the genetics of personality. I did not want my puppies to be too snippy. I leaned towards the prettier and more pugnacious dog, and had approached his owners, but, knowing that Stuart's temperament was all around superior, I hadn't made a final decision.

Meanwhile, Donald and I were doing whatever it was that we were doing, but there continued to be a vagueness about the whole thing. He continued to rely upon George as a reason not to stay overnight and I began to ignore warning signs that usually would have caused my ears to prick up: I never went to his apartment. I never met any of his friends, other than George, who had been brought around for another grooming by this time. But George didn't have much to say and wasn't any more glad to see me the second time around. It's hard to get to know someone well when the only friend of theirs that you ever meet doesn't like you, doesn't have language capacity and can't tell you funny stories about all of that someone's historical quirks and foibles.

So there were a lot of question marks. But even though I had a strong desire to dig, there was an inner voice in my head that kept sharply shouting "No! No dig! Bad dog!" So I didn't for a while. Instead, I continued to attempt to demonstrate the wonderful quality of my temperament, grooming and appearance and to train him to be responsive towards my attributes. And despite the fact that I really should have known better, I continue to believe that I had found someone near to perfect. Except for the parts that weren't so perfect, all of that evasiveness that I tried to ignore.

I mean, what did I actually know about Donald? I knew more about my dogs and they couldn't talk. I'd met more of their relatives. Come to think about it, I probably knew more about his dog than I knew about him. Whenever a politician is quoted in the media as having said something really stupid, he or she always complains that the quote was taken out of context. That context could really be important. I had no context for Donald, not home, not workplace, not parents

nor friends (human). He was a photograph against a plain white wall and I was getting snarky and trying not to let it show.

Fundamental truths about character can reveal themselves in odd ways - the friend I thought gracious who then spoke rudely to a cleaning lady, the neighbor I would have sworn up and down was a yuppie narcissist, until I ran into him on the street after his weekly night volunteering at a soup kitchen, the seemingly dour and unmanageable Scottie who ended up as an adult with an obedience title.

One evening, I just decided. I was on my way to drop off Fiona's stool sample at her vet. It looked like she might have hemorrhoids. Donald's brownstone apartment was only three blocks from there and I conveniently was walking by when he came home from work.

"Surprise," I said, as Fiona wagged her tail, oblivious of the impending disarray.

"What are you doing here?" He put down his briefcase on the stoop, but, I noticed, not before he glanced up at the parlor level windows.

"Oh, is that the one that's your apartment?" I asked and turned around in time to see the soda woman from that first day in the park looking through the curtains. George then apparently jumped up onto something like an ottoman and looked through the curtains too, giving a sharp bark when he saw Donald. Fiona thought this was meant for her and necessitated a sharp yip in turn. The blond from the park moved further back.

Donald grimaced, then sat down on the stoop, looking beat. "So, what did you say you were doing here?"

I didn't want to get into Fiona's hemorrhoids with him. "Looking for context," I replied.

He nodded and looked at his hands. Yeah, I knew those hands.

"So," I asked, "is she your wife or something?"

He took awhile to answer. "It's complicated," was all that he could finally come up with.

"I guess that's a 'yes'."

"It's like, we're together, we split up, we're together again. It's complicated," he repeated. "Plus, she travels a lot too."

"So," the last thing I wanted to know was, "how many times did you split up and get back together in the last few months?"

When he finally looked at me, I noticed that his eyes weren't as bright and attractive after all.

"Twice," he answered and I got up, as Fiona quickly did too, and left, but not before I handed him the plastic bag with Fiona's stool.

"I think you'd better get someone else to groom George," was the last thing I said to him.

When I quickly glanced back a half a block later from across the street, he was still sitting on the stoop. I couldn't tell any longer if he still had that startled look at my final gesture.



I continued to rotate my dogs on outings to the park, and I began to size up the dog owners again, but the kind of good presentation that I was looking for either wasn't there or I wasn't yet at a point where I could judge it. Meanwhile, I decided that Stuart would be the sire of Heather's next litter of puppies and when she finally came into season, the mating went forward, with only a little bit of help on my part. The more I thought about it, the less I wanted to gamble with the possibility of aggressive puppies. And the more I thought about that, while I watched the litter grow, the more I began to think that I had been right in my decision about Heather. But, perhaps I had been looking at my own relationships in a distorted way.

"Behavioral therapy," Amanda continued to prod. I continued to ignore any advice from her that I didn't want to hear.

Heather was a really sweet mother. Stuart, bold and confident, a true Scottish Terrier, when the situation required it, was nevertheless also a really sweet guy. O.K., so the ears and heads probably wouldn't be perfect. What was?

When the four puppies were out of the whelping box after four weeks and in the process of

getting weaned from Heather, I began to cast longer and more wistful glances at the telephone. Sure, some of it was cabin fever, the overwhelming work and captivity of being a mother's aide. But, some of it was also a re-evaluation. Maybe following some rules meant breaking others. Maybe men weren't always directly comparable to dogs. I wasn't sure, but I thought that I might have made a mistake.

At six weeks, when the puppies could be handled by strangers, I finally picked up the phone and dialed, but not before picking the idea apart for hours with Amanda.

"Better the devil or dog you know," she had finally concluded, and I agreed.

"Jeff?" I began tentatively. "How would you like to see the new puppies?"



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## The Summerset Review

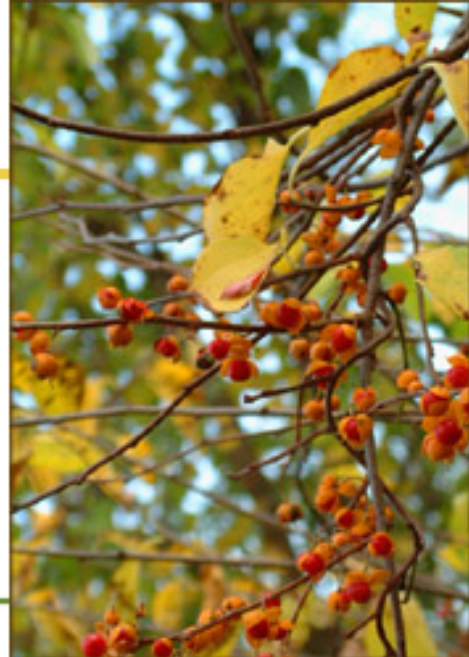
# The Sunnerset Review

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An Interview with

Jennifer Spiegel  
of

Hayden's Ferry  
Review



Continuing our streak of interviewing editors of prominent literary journals in the United States, this time we break away from Illinois and venture into one coming from the Southwest, namely Hayden's Ferry Review, where Fiction Editor Jennifer Spiegel gives us more wonderful insight into the world of reading, writing, and publishing contemporary fiction.

Hayden's Ferry Review was established in 1986, is ranked within the top fifty markets for fiction writers, and stories originally appearing there have gone on to be included in Pushcart Prize anthologies.

We are grateful to Jennifer for the time she spent here, and we also thank Salima Keegan, Managing Editor of HFR, in helping to make this interview happen. The Hayden's Ferry Review web site is at [www.haydensferryreview.org](http://www.haydensferryreview.org).

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The Sunnerset Review: Firstly, we'd like to say we loved the short stories in #31. We are used to reading journals such as StoryQuarterly and Other Voices, dedicated completely to fiction and containing from fifteen to forty stories per issue, but we felt all five in HFR #31 were very compelling.

Jennifer Spiegel: Thank you - I'm a little impressed when I read it too. We had a truly wonderful staff working on this issue, including my co-editor in fiction, Robert Johnson, Jr. Salima, our Managing Editor, has a lengthy history of making this journal work.

Can you talk about your role on the staff of HFR and how long you have been there? Do you work closely with other members and do you get involved with any of the work that goes into an issue other than the fiction?

I began working on the staff at the same time that I began my MFA at Arizona State. That was in the fall of 1999. I began as an Associate Editor and then, for the 2002-2003 academic year, I was the Fiction Editor (along with Robert). So, in some capacity, I've been working on HFR for over four years.

As Fiction Editor, I do work closely with other members of the staff. We rely heavily on our Associate Editors, trusting their "aesthetic sensibility," if you will. We trust in our Copy Editors'

keen eyes for details. We work closely with the Poetry and Art Editors to create a solid and unified issue. And our Managing Editor is a regular Renaissance woman, who manages to really keep it all together.

One of the best parts about working on HFR is having the opportunity to delve into other areas. I've really enjoyed the behind-the-scenes look at a literary journal. I'm not sure how I once regarded the literary landscape, but I would imagine I had this notion that I was sending off my stories to some very mysterious entity. Turns out, it's normal people running the show.

In putting together an issue, the Fiction Editors have a voice in other arenas. The Art Editor, for instance, presents artwork to the entire staff, and then we come to some decisions together. We also try to give the Associate Editors the opportunity to decide on the final fiction selection. We aim for democracy.

**Do you have readers who take the first cut at the slush pile, and if so, are there some general rules that have been set up to help identify a piece worthy of further consideration?**

Actually, we all take the first cut at the slush pile. And it's terribly subjective. This should be very encouraging to emerging writers, I hope. And, I suppose, faith is required. Some people may love your stuff; others may not. We're all taking our turns at the stories. Stories are dismissed or passed on to the next level for different reasons. One person, for instance, may tolerate typos. Another may not. You gotta keep trying, I guess.

**How do you yourself contribute to the decision-making process on story submissions? What would be some of the things you particularly like to see in a story?**

Hmmm. Well, O.K., if I were to just blurt out my own likes and dislikes I'd have to list a few things. I don't have a huge tolerance for typos and grammatical/mechanical errors. I think the best stories are submitted in an ultra-professional way. Aesthetically, I like fast-paced, sometimes quirky or eccentric writing. I like pop cultural references. I like stories that expose the underbelly of contemporary culture - that sounds ominous and melodramatic. I don't know. I loved the movies "Pulp Fiction" and "American Beauty," if that gives any indication of my tastes. I like the darkly comic, the absurdly tragic.

Of course, another editor will have entirely different preferences. Again, this should be encouraging to emerging writers. A good friend of mine is interested in eco-criticism. A concern for landscape and the environment is much more pronounced in her tastes. It's tough to say what any individual will value.

I'm really excited about issue #32's fiction selections. In this upcoming issue, we have the quirky, the comic, and the profound. My favorite things.

**We noticed a Flash Fiction section in the latest issue. Can you tell us a little on how this came about? Has HFR published a lot of short-short fiction in the past, and do you plan to in the future?**

To be honest, I think it was Robert Johnson's idea! Bob expressed an interest in short fiction, and we followed through. I don't think HFR has published a lot of it, but I don't think it's been excluded from consideration either. As with any submission, we just want the writing to be excellent. I don't know how much word count has to do with that.

**How different is the review process for shorter works?**

For the special section, Bob and I took a look at all submissions. That's one difference. But, really, we made our decisions in the same way we would make them for longer works.

**Tell us a little about the last story you read that really impressed you. What was so incredible about it?**

You know, I see from my previous answers that I've ignored one of the biggest standout features of any great short story: Language. A short story that impresses me has that something special in terms of language - a flair, a finesse. It may be poetic like "The English Patient" (Michael Ondaatje); perhaps it's a dynamism as in "The Feast of Love" (Charles Baxter). But that attracts me immensely.

So, off the top of my head, there are three stories that recently impressed me. "Malachi the Filigree" by Christian Michener, which appeared in #31, was a standout story. The language instantly drew me in. I believe that Bob felt the same way. It's playful - but also controlled. One gets the sense that the author knew what he was doing. Julie Hensley's "Landfall," which will be included in #32, impressed me. It's written in the second person, and it's not uncommon to hear about all the pratfalls of writing in the second person. Hensley, however, writes a compelling and rich story that instantly dispels the myths surrounding this point of view. Michael Davis's "Call Me Mr. Lucky," also scheduled for publication in #32, is another favorite. The language pulled me in. It's a matter of balance, I think. It's quirky - lots of goofy detail included that I love. It's funny - part of the quiriness. But, again, it's a control thing. The author controls the language. The

laughs are by design. That's important. I like to know that an author hasn't necessarily just stumbled into a great story; it's nice to see the work in its stitchery, in its brush strokes.

What are a few of your personal favorite literary fiction journals (whether they be print or web-based)? Why exactly is each one a favorite?

You know, this is tough to say because there really is a lot of good work out there. I genuinely like the look of HFR because a lot of attention is paid to the art, as well as the fiction and poetry. It's nice when the cover is a big deal. I like Image because there's a "unity" present - the parts work together. I enjoy Puerto del Sol because they wrote me a nice rejection note. I heard the editor of Creative Nonfiction speak at AWP in Baltimore, and I agreed with his philosophy on that genre. I think that Hunger Mountain is a great name for a literary journal, and it's a pleasure to spend time reading Witness, Meridian, Black Warrior Review, and The Georgia Review. I like journals that give long short stories a chance, journals that take their artwork seriously, and journals that operate according to the highest aesthetic values. Many do, too.

What literary events does HFR sponsor or take part in? Perhaps staff members have participated in fiction panel discussions in writers' workshops, or have held readings at local libraries, colleges, or bookstores? Have there been any recent fiction writing contests or awards?

Actually, HFR is pretty active on the literary scene. With each issue's publication, we hold a reading at Changing Hands, a fabulous bookstore in Tempe. Those are well attended, and we feature writers and artists from each issue. Most recently, fiction writer Ron Carlson and poet Norman Dubie read their work for us. Everyone loved it.

HFR is generally a participant at the annual Associated Writing Programs (AWP) conferences. We usually are somewhere at the book fair. I think it's safe to say we're alive and well among the university literary landscape.

HFR was one of the participants in this past year's conference sponsored by Arizona State in Tempe - "Desert Nights, Rising Stars." I know that Salima Keegan, Robert Johnson, Jr., and I were all involved in panel discussions. Also, we can claim poet Alberto Rios as one of our own. He's HFR's Editorial Advisor, and - along with Salima - he conducted several workshops for ASU's grad students on the nuts and bolts of the writing life.

Also, HFR conducts the annual Prentice Hall fiction contest, publishing the winners in its issues.

On the submissions we personally have made to HFR, we've noticed that along with the rejection notice we received back was a complimentary bookmark having the current issue's artwork on it. Is there any significance to this? (We are secretly hoping that you'll say if a writer gets a bookmark, it means the story got further along in the review process than most.)

Well, I can't confirm your secret suspicions - sadly. However, we do have snazzy bookmarks. They're all over my house. It's true. One of our big strengths is the way we make use of the visual arts. We've got the bookmarks.

Are you at liberty to say what percentage of rejections are accompanied with comments beyond the standard message?

I'm at liberty. But I'm not sure what that percentage is! If you get one, though, it's a big deal. Someone went out of his or her way to write it. If you don't get one, I wouldn't freak out. Sometimes, a reader only has ten minutes to drop the story off at the HFR offices, and there wasn't time for the personal touch.

Last year we stumbled on the Premier Issue of HFR in a used bookshop in Sag Harbor, New York. Needless to say, we bought it (\$2) and read it (our favorite story being Cynthia Frederick's "Traveling to a Land We Cannot See"). What do you recommend we do with it now? Where do you see HFR in the years ahead?

Sag Harbor is a lovely place, isn't it? I was there once . . .

HFR will be an important part of the literary landscape for a while. I keep my favorite journals on a special shelf. Admittedly, HFR is among my favorites. As a creative writing teacher, it's a wonderful resource. When one hears experienced writers talking about the importance of reading widely, one should perk up. It's true. Read widely. Try to figure out if a journal has thematic preoccupations, or adheres to a particular aesthetic. Hold onto several issues of one journal, and try to notice what makes them the same. HFR started off well and I bet we'll continue demonstrating the highest standards.

Before I take off, there's a great story in our history books: In an early issue of HFR, we published an early story of Catherine Ryan Hyde's - she's the author of Pay It Forward. When we did our tenth anniversary issue (a "best of" issue), we sent a note to ask her for recent work. This resulted in the publication of another one of her stories in HFR. Years later, when her second novel The Electric God came out, she sent Salima a copy of the book along with a note saying that when she had received HFR's "best of" solicitation, she was going through a career slump of sorts. She

credited HFR's interest with her career picking up - and she thanked us by naming her novel's protagonist, "Hayden." We love this story.

So, it's probably a good idea to hold onto our early issues!

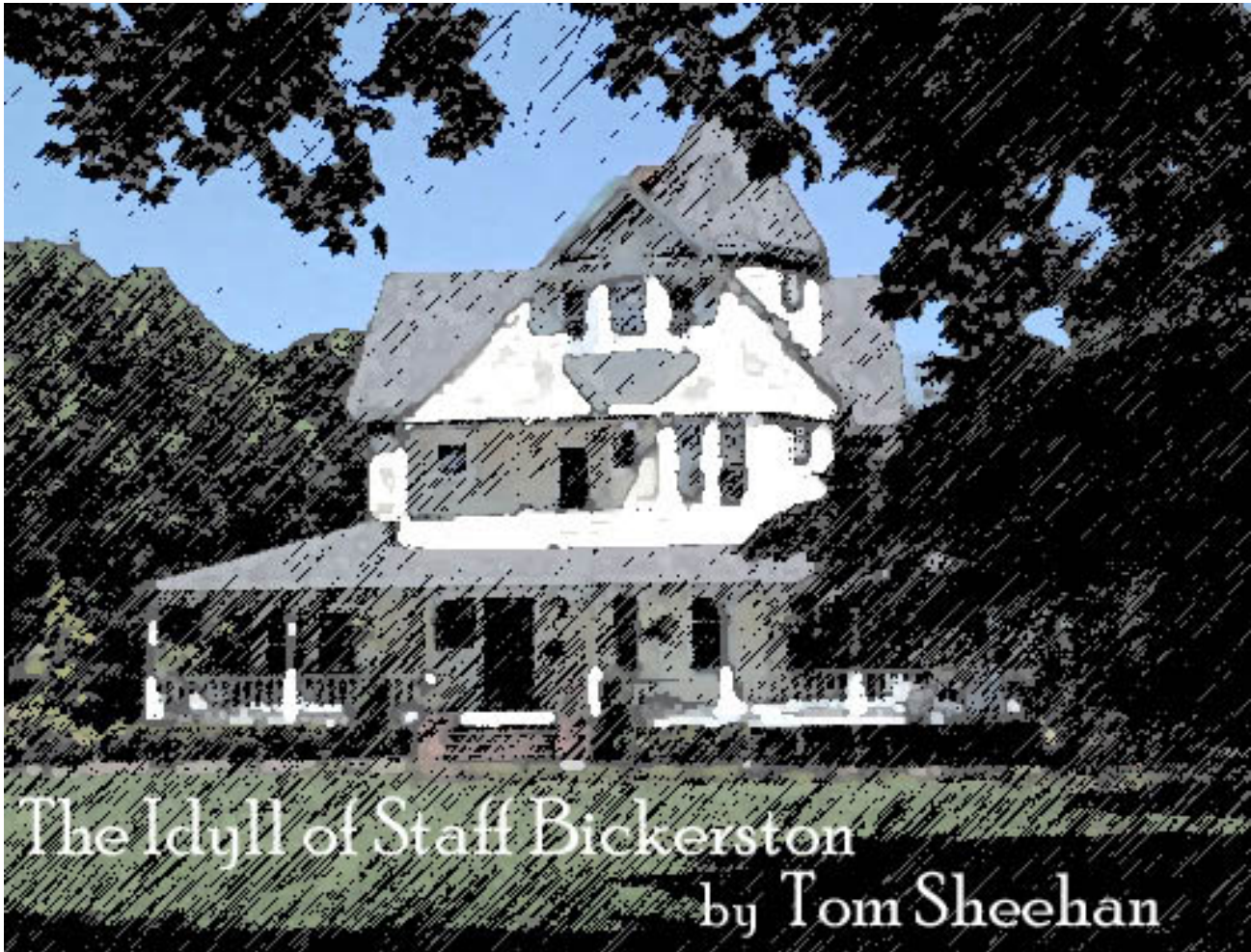
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# The Summerset Review

# The Summerset Review

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This is such an old story with me, about Staff and his rules in life, how they were never formed but came of themselves, like up out of the ground along the lake, perhaps like frost heaves, not belonging but suddenly there. I am compelled to tell you about him. Once there was a man, his name was Staff, and I came upon him one day, fully live, marveling at the lot given him in this life.

It was a tall, sunny day in Spofford, New Hampshire, a breeze off the Northeast, the few clouds in the sky moving like boats out on a vast ocean. Porched, comfortable, knowing the breeze as fresh as a sassy child as it punched through the screen, Staff Bickerston watched his seven-year old son Marco fire pellets of some sort from a crude slingshot at the last few panes of glass in an old hen house. Like an after-thought, the hen house sat out alongside the house, and back from the road, eyesore of eyesores to many but tolerable to Staff. It had been, when he was Marco's age, his clubhouse, rendezvous, lair, and "trysting place with the angels," as he had once told his own father. That clutch of wood, he currently assessed, leaning now, awry, its right angles at elsewhere, would soon be a pile of dust and debris heading back into the earth again, going as it always had at its own speed, first gear, down low, birth to oblivion. He could nearly measure the pace of that journey.

There were readable parallels, or contrasts. Now, too, the grip on his own home was threatened, with a near unbreakable string tied to the local bank and its chief administrator and old acquaintance, Lowell Stratton. Lowell was long-faced and Yankee, cut out of an old black-and-white picture of early America, Colonial early; Staff was somewhat of a redhead, blue-eyed, medium height, medium weight, but broad-smiled. Somewhere along the line he was an import. One shake of his head and the quiet but consistent threat that was Lowell puffed away, and Lowell's long Yankee face disappeared. Oh, he could always drink like that. Oh, that he could!

Earlier in the week, Staff had examined a pellet of Marco's ammunition, then also attracted by its sheen in flight. Bringing the sun over his left shoulder, he spoke aloud, nobody around him, his voice steady but quizzical; "Here I am. I'm peering at it, shining it up on my pants, holding it up at the perfect angle to catch the sunlight glint of its polish, but boring through that rich exterior for the core, the stone's essence, the beauty of its exterior aside. Where is it from? What has it to tell us? What has Marco taken from it? What has it given to him?" Pausing, the small stone still aloft, blessing all that had come unto him, he added, "Have another drink, son."

Staff marveled at his son's skill, for the shiny pellets hit with unerring accuracy some of the remaining panes. Marco was both an impish and inventive child, having - Staff much earlier had determined - much of his father's graces for entertainment. As the pellets flew in their near flat trajectory, they gave off a shine or quick luster. Staff wondered what the material was. Enriched mica, he said to himself, fully satisfied with that assumption, and felt again the near-potable breath of breeze on his face. I could get soon inebriated on that stuff, he thought. Not a whiff of preservative or toxic crap in it. Just a drink off the top layer of the lake.

To all but a few people in Spofford, plunked precariously around a small New England lake, Minot "Staff" Bickerston was a loser in more ways than one. The first thing, they would say, was the little grasp he had on the art of maintenance, the art that most Europeans brought with them when they came here across the span of nearly four centuries. Give a structure a good footing, take care of it by some rules of order, and it might last unto eternity. Much of Europe still stood tall, though its roots had traversed more than twice as many centuries, but Staff Bickerston had neither the sense of planning nor the energy or aptitude, others would say, to preserve what had become his, the big house on the lake, with a goodly spread of ground about it. That he was an idler or a loafer from his earliest days had earned him the nickname of Staff, always at hand to lean on. Acquaintances said he was lazy, an out-and-out idler, a leaner in life. His best friend, Nathan Hawkinns, only nodded and said, "Staff's a dreamer. We all dream, but he goes places the rest of us can't get to. Or don't dare." Nate's insider's smile used to drive people crazy when he'd say things like, "Staff pays more attention to a sawbuck in his wallet than a hundred bucks in the bank, because the sawbuck has presence."

Countless times, though not at harangue, neighbors had heard Staff's wife Mathis say, "The grass needs cutting, Staff. It's getting to be too seedy. And the porch needs painting." "You're apt to be right on both accounts, Mathy," he'd say, a chuckle evident in his voice, "and one of these days I might accord some attention to your observations, though I possess serious reconsideration on the matter." The neighbors would smile, as they knew Mathis smiled, for Staff Bickerston was, as Nate had said, more dreamer than doer. It was his cut in life, and he paid it a due course of honor. It was pointed out that Staff didn't paint much or well, nor handle wood's qualities or potentials any better. "Grass," he might have said, "as well as bush and brush, have as much right to grow as the trees in the forest. We keep trimming and cutting back and what we really achieve is the reduction of oxygen production in this world floating through the stars." Long before the Rain Forest perils had come upon us with the huge slashing of South American forests, Staff had blown the whistle on loggers. "Our last gasp at air might be from the last leaf left, the final pittance of osmosis. God forbid you have to live on the air your lawn gives off. Talk about troubles at your own due."

Most people didn't listen to a Staff Bickerston. It would admit too much for both sides of the equation.

From the eighth grade on he had worked in Leon Culbertson's grocery store, never going any place else in the intervening years, never hoping to go, missing one day in all the time, the day his son Marco was born. The pace of groceries was his speed, braced to fit merely three meals in a day, and never a continuous onslaught. People seemed to tolerate him at times, as if it were a sly brand of pity; a few loved him, none disliked him with any fervor or vengeance.

But the bank had come at him. The bank had ceased to listen to him, as he fell behind in partial or total payments, rushing at the last minute to save his equity, to buy a purchase of time. "Oh, Mathy," he'd say, "one day it'll be over. It will be ours again, to give to the boy, to give him a start."

"You know what he will do with it, Staff," Mathis countered, the smile at her mouth even as she spoke. "That's the only thing stops me from going out of my mind... he'll own up to it just as you do."

"You love us both?"

For a moment she mused, a piece of sunlight falling across her face, giving her eyes a touch of shadow, and a sense of the old beauty he had always seen in her: cheekbones shiny as new coins, one small scar over her left eye granting perpetual youth of accident. Staff saw the moonlight, like a blade of light, falling across her face out on the lake years ago, the night he knew he was in love with her. He could feel the sense of water drifting through her fingers the way it did that night, the wind with jasmine in it coming to him through her hair as dark as the night sky, the way her skirt rode lightly and daringly on her thighs.

"Where did you go just then," she said, "back to the lake? Oh, Staff, you're such a beautiful dreamer and I love you for it, but sometimes..." and she closed her eyes and saw the look on his face that same night when her heart beat faster than it ever had and she knew he was in love with her. They had celebrated that moment all their married life. The moment, for a moment, was real. It warmed her.



Lowell Stratton saw Mathis across the diminutive Spofford rotary traffic circle and hailed her. His long legs took him quickly to her side. His hair, she noticed, was thinning, a small breath of air parting it in more than one place, and long hours of work sat in his eyes. Lowell, it was known, never went home early to Lila Theis, his wife. She suspected no one would.

Those thoughts were on her mind as she said, looking up into his face, "I know what you're going to say, Lowell, that we're late again, but Staff will get something done again. He always does." Never cute, hardly ever precious, Lowell seemed a bit softer, the breeze at his hair making him vulnerable, susceptible, and, even for a banker, somewhat tolerable.

Once they had dated, seemed a century ago, but Staff Bickerston had ended that promptly. Long ago Lowell had admitted that Staff for once knew what he wanted and took care of the situation.

Lowell noticed her smile was still the loveliest smile around the whole lake, realizing once more she could charm him at a moment's notice. For twenty years she had had that power. All her cares, all Staff's shortcomings, had not creased that lovely skin; and her eyes were yet the softest blue he had ever known. There had been times when he thought he could see the back of her mind. "I know what the old skinflint pays him, Mathis. I do his taxes, and I don't know how Staff will get by this time. Things are really serious. It's rolling all around us, cutting corners, tightening the belt. Even old Culbertson's getting to feel it. He's been the Rock of Gibraltar forever it seems. I just don't know how Staff'll do it this time. It might be the last leg."

"Lowell," she said, her hand touching lightly the sleeve of his suit coat, "you are a very honorable man. Staff has always said you were a most honorable man. Your father was hard but fair, and you are a cut of the same cloth. We know you are patient. Whatever comes to pass will come to pass. Staff's family has had that house for almost a century now. I don't think he will let it go without some rather amazing effort at retention. He knows he will owe forever, or almost ever. But the dreams keep him going. It's what he does best, and there's something to be said for that. He will never die from stress or a heart attack. It's simply not in his make-up."

"Oh, Lord, Mathy, how well I know that. There are moments, I'll frankly admit, when the tonnage comes down on top of me and I wonder what Staff would do in the same circumstance. I swear there are times, right smack in the middle of my day, when I can hear him talking me out of a blue funk or a frazzle. Sometimes I hear him say, sort of an aside, 'Go fishing, Lowell. The trout are biting at flies,' or 'the bass are looking for silver lures,' or 'go put your skates on, Lowell, and make a little breeze of your own.'"

"Come see us, Lowell. You're always welcome. The porch is made for conversation. Staff says that all the time. Come by for coffee some night, when the breeze talks itself across the lake. Those nights are magic for the soul he says. I might tell you about his putting some old glass panes in the old chicken coop, just so Marco can break them with his slingshot. They are cuts of the same cloth, those two."

"God, Mathy, only Staff would do something like that. Only he would think of it in the first place. Yes, I'll try to make it pure social, but I can never promise in this business. Some hard things get hammered home every day. Last week we had to foreclose on Jed Akins at last. Near broke both our hearts, but had to be done."

"What's he going to do now, Lowell?"

"It's probably going to beat him into the ground, but I think he's going to live in a spare room at son Ethan's, over in Coldwell, by the river." There was no pain in Lowell's eyes that Mathis could see, but she knew it was there. "At least he'll have a view of the river. Staff would say that is important, wouldn't he?"

"You pick things up quickly, Lowell. Come see us, an evening or a night when the breeze is right." She walked off on her errands.



Marco never mentioned the sudden appearance of glass panes in the old chicken coop. He just assumed that his father had replaced the glass for his entertainment. Vaguely he could remember his father saying he saved the glass from the old greenhouse that had long ago ceased to be. Staff had stacked the glass in a corner of the cellar. "We'll have need of it someday." There was no way of accounting for it, but that someday was here.

The lure of the hill out back pulled at him again. Where the chicken coop had been his father's "place," Marco had a spot of his own, and he slipped into the brush and climbed the small rise behind the house. His own place was a cave so small and so slight that only he could get into it, perhaps seven or eight feet deep and four feet high. The cave actually had been formed by three huge stones, which had been brought against each other long ago. Time had set a mound of vegetation growing over the stones, and hiding the cave. In his mind he called it "His Columbus Place," being the first one, he believed, to find it. One wall was always damp, but the air had a magic touch to it, and the same silence he found in church he found in the cave, an awed and overpowering silence, as if a huge hand had transferred it. It was here that he found his ammunition, some of it in small round stones on the floor of the cave or chipping it off the top of the wall where its deep-seated shine attracted him on his first visit. An old cobbler's hammer he'd found in the cellar sat in a small box with some other tools, and with it Marco chipped away enough ammunition to fill his leather pouch. A few stones, too large for ammo pellets, he left in the box in the cave, thinking about making hatchets out of them later on. The old Indian exhibit of arrowheads and spearheads and hatchets at the library had intrigued him from the first moment he had seen them.



A week later Lowell Stratton showed up at the porch, Staff and Mathis enjoying the breeze, the hum of the crickets and frogs coming uphill from the edge of the lake. Out over the lake the evening star was a night light in a spacious room, and slightly downhill clusters of fireflies danced their crazy dance at the edge of Staff's field with the short-lived essence of summer roses on the trellis sharing the air with them. "It's one of those nights, isn't it, Lowell?" Mathis said, as he came up the steps. "I trust it's social and not business."

"I won't mention any predicaments if you don't," countered Lowell. "Felt like a late coffee and Lila Theis wanted to get a good night's sleep for her big day tomorrow over at the Benton Festival. Course, I can't go. So I thought I'd pay my respects." He sat his long frame down easily into an old red Adirondack chair. The chair made some noise, as if a few nails had loosened up.

"You have a decent day, Lowell?" Staff said. "Maybe an iced coffee might be the trick for you, if you didn't. Be right back." His footsteps sounded down the hallway.

Mathis said, "We still in trouble, Lowell?"

"Hasn't got any better, but I really wasn't going to mention it tonight. Just wanted to cool it a bit. Guess this place is about the best place in town for that. It's probably even better than the lake. I would come by tomorrow, though, and say, if things got real bad - and they are about there now, I swear - I can get a good man to give you a solid price for the place. He's from Alberton, done well for himself, and has asked a few times about this place."

Mathis' breath on the intake was clearly audible.

Lowell felt her anxiety. "There is no shame in selling, Mathis. You can pay off what you owe and get a smaller place. You don't need all these fields, either. They just sit fallow all the time anyway, as if they'll never grow another crop ever, or be used for anything else appropriate."

"That last part bothers me, Lowell. I know it'd bother Staff no end to see this place used appropriately, as you term it. We all know what that means, don't we?" Then her head cocked to attention.

Staff's footsteps came back down the hallway, the breeze humped its small back, the fireflies leaped into a cloud in the middle of a warm field. At one end of the porch, a trellis covered with roses, near the end of their short stay, made the slightest emanation on the breeze.

Mathis put her hand on Lowell's sleeve. "Not tonight, Lowell. It's just too beautiful. It has to be another time."

"Scout's honor," Lowell said, putting his hand up, the breeze touching his fingers, the essence of rose trying to carry something of Lila Theis in it. He could not find it.

Staff brought Lowell a tall glass of iced coffee. "Hell of a night, Lowell. Hell of a night. You two have a pitch at business while I was out of earshot?" He put the glass into Lowell's outstretched hand. "Tell you this, Lowell, I'd bet you'd be willing to swap places tonight, wouldn't you? It'd be a great trade-off, what I have for what you have, only I'd never make that trade in a thousand years, come I'd have to live in the gutter."

"I came because Mathy invited me again, and because you know I know you have something special and I don't. I know I couldn't even buy it, so no business tonight, like I promised Mathy when she said come by for coffee."

Staff pointed off across the field. "See those fireflies out there, Lowell? Know what my father told me about them? Way back, I was younger than Marco, I think, we were sitting here and he said they were the Milky Way in another smaller and infinite universe in constant motion. He said they were stars in their own right, just the motion and speed different from our place and time. Had me full convinced about it. Still think it's possible. Gets me wondering sometimes."

Lowell said, "I was thinking about the roses, Staff. How sweet they smell, and what a short time they're here with us. Beautiful and sweet as all hell and gone as quick as you turn around. Oh, Jeezus, it's hard to say, but Lila's like that, sometimes like it's not worth the damn bother." He raised his glass. "To the roses," he said, "while they last."

Later that night, after Lowell had walked down past the small field, past the clusters of fireflies, and off to town, Mathy and Staff agreed it had been one of the saddest nights they had ever known. From each side of the coin, they would agree.



Two weeks later, just before Mathy was to set the table for the evening meal, Marco outside with his slingshot, Staff sitting on the porch knowing Marco had left two panes of glass untouched, Lowell Stratton came up the road in his car. A tall and heavy-set man in a yellow golf shirt climbed out of the passenger seat of Lowell's little sports car, as if he had been shoehorned out of the tight interior. The man nodded to Staff on the porch and looked at Marco adjusting his slingshot in the driveway. When the two men came closer, Marco turned around, adjusted his aim and fired a pellet that smashed one of the remaining panes of glass.

"Helluva shot, kid!" the man said. "Helluva shot! I used to be able to do that. You use pebbles or what?"

Marco smiled, slipped the slingshot into his back pocket after looking at the last pane of glass sitting in the middle of the old chicken coop like the last target on Earth. "I get my ammunition out back." He motioned up the small rise and mound behind the house and the quick burst of brush growing there. "It's kinda secret." He walked back to check out the chicken coop.

Lowell said to Staff and Mathis just coming onto the porch, "This here's Abbot Gruden, folks. He's from Alberton and one of those new millionaires we hear talk about. He's pushed me pretty hard on this and since he's such a good customer now at the bank, I am compelled to bring him here. Has a sincere interest in this property and would like to make you an outstanding offer." Lowell's face, long and angular, seemed longer than usual, and redder.

Abbot Gruden jumped right in, even as he stood at the foot of the porch steps. "I gather this is or could be a might uncomfortable, folks. I don't want it to be that way. This is a very attractive spot, I think, not for development but for good living. A lot of things that I once couldn't afford I can now afford. I've been passing by this place for years and always had a dream about it." His glance went back down the driveway and then across the fields that dropped down toward the lake, the arms of the evening sun clasping the whole laketop. He smiled easily at Marco coming back from the chicken coop. His voice was partly an aside when he said, "Like Tom and Huck, I swear."

Staff said, "Come up on the porch, you two, and have some iced coffee. The scene won't change for about another forty minutes, then you'll get another picture." Opening the screen door, he put his hand out and said, "Case Lowell forgot, this is my wife Mathy and I am Staff Bickerston who is, apparently, deeper in trouble with Lowell and the bank than I would have imagined. I always figured I'd pass back into the land right around here."

A slight but warm smile cut the corners of Abbot Gruden's mouth. "I'll make it quick, Staff. No folderol and clumsy stuff and no feints and quick moves. I'll buy this place from you, let you stay here a couple of years, on me, on the house." His second option at a smile was a bit clumsy. "Did that sound funny?"

"Think nothing of it, Abbot," Staff said. "The point you're making, other than being extremely generous, is you want to become owner of record sooner than later. Is that right? Is that to secure a better buying price?"

"Well, Staff, I didn't make my money by throwing it away." His shoulders were squared away as if he were a military man. His jaw was square too, and his haircut, clean above the ears, was brand new. Staff noticed that Abbot Gruden did not talk with his hands, like so many men did. Abbot Gruden's deep voice carried all his messages, and he continued. "This site represents a good investment for me. The value is never going to go down. Land is just not in production any more. Hasn't been since the Big Bang, far as I can see." His gaze went back across the field where both sun and breeze played in the tops of the high grass, at times looking like combers coming at a shoreline. When a small cloud passed over, the grass changed color and Staff and Abbot Gruden both saw and sensed the

iridescence change.

Mathis meanwhile was looking for something in Lowell's eyes. She took it to be pain. Her hand touched the sleeve of his suit coat.

Lowell said, "That'd be two years of free rent, folks. That's a generosity I never heard about. That's something I could never handle at the bank. Getting tough enough to do things the way they have to be done now." Mathis knew he could still feel the gentle touch at his sleeve. His eyes showed it. The face of Lila Theis came at the back of her head. She shivered with a momentary chill.

Staff walked down to the end of the porch and motioned Abbot Gruden to follow him. The two men saw Marco standing in the driveway and looking back at the coop. There was a single pane of glass in the coop and the sun was a slash against that pane. It almost came straight back at the two men. Staff said, "He loves it here. He's just like me coming back again even before I go under the grass. I'd love to keep the place for him, but I know I don't have a shot at it much longer. Not now, not tonight, but we might have to talk again about this. You and I, on the side someplace. Fair enough? You've made a decent and generous proposal. I just might have to do what would drive my soul outward." He leaned to look back at the coop and the slash of sunlight falling off the last pane of glass, shifting positions and brightness. "That's the last one, Marco. Make it a good shot."

Marco, suddenly older, as if he had become his father, said, "Let him try. Said he used to do it when he was a kid." He held out the slingshot to Abbot Gruden.

The initial touch of warm air Gruden had known when he set foot on the property came back over him. He was obviously pleased when he said, "Why not? It's been a long time." Then the exuberance rang in his voice. "It's been too damn long!" He reached for the slingshot.

Staff and Abbot Gruden stepped down from the porch as Mathis and Lowell Stratton stood aside at the screen door. Marco handed Abbot Gruden the slingshot. Gruden hefted it in his hand, closed his fist tightly about the crude handle, closed one eye and looked through the Y of the tines at the pane of glass. "Ammunition, please, Ammo Bearer," he said, the voice resonant, in charge, deeper than before, an infantry officer at command. Marco dug into his leather ammo pouch and handed Abbot Gruden a small round pellet, about half an inch in rough diameter. The new shooter placed it into the leather seat of the slingshot and looked down as he gripped it firmly.

In later weeks Staff would tell the story over and over again. "This kind man, this man who had made such a generous offer, looked down at the pellet, then took it out of the leather saddle and held it aloft. He did it just like I had done before, stupid me. There he was, this stranger Lowell brought over, peering at one of Marco's pellets, shining it up on his pants, holding it up at the perfect angle to catch the sunlight glint of its polish. Wondering, I bet, just like I did, where was it from? What did it have to tell us? 'My god, he says, where did you get this?' Marco near jumped out of his skin. 'Out back,' he says, 'in my cave, My Columbus Place.' 'You have any more?' the big fellow says. 'I got a whole bunch, some of them bigger than that but they're too big for the slingshot.' The big fellow looks me right in the eyes and says, 'Staff Bickerston, you might not have to sell this place after all. You got placer gold here, my man, right in your own back yard.'"

"And we rush off to Marco's hideaway and Marco crawls inside his cave and comes out with his storage box and there's a couple of dozen pieces there, some of them big as golf balls. A couple even bigger. And then all hell breaks loose, and Abbot Gruden, millionaire in general, geologist by avocation, pronounces us probably quite comfortably rich and the mortgage a thing of the past. He's almighty excited and almost out of breath and we have to listen to him. He tells us all that here, as the ice retreated, the Connecticut Valley was filled with a marvelous great glacial lake, Glacial Lake Hitchcock, which extended from where Middletown, Connecticut is now, to just north of where St. Johnsbury, Vermont is. There was a smaller glacial lake in the Ashuelot Valley, too, that eventually drained into Hitchcock. The Ice Sheet rumbled through here, he told us, grinding strong deep grooves, long linear striations, and cone-shaped rat tails into the rock pointing the way, and now he was using his hands to talk, believe it or not, waving them all over heck."

"'Eventually,' he said, 'those ice sleds went on a more southwestward flow. They had Keene and Spofford in mind I'll bet, as the big ice melted and thinned and began to be controlled by the local topography of the mountains over past Keene on the west and the newer mountains on the east.' He said they were pushing stuff out in front all the time, all kinds of stuff. Even while the huge glacial lake in the Ashuelot River Valley pulled and drew down the buoyant glacier front to a new position, ever sliding forward and calving itself into the lake. Ain't that some beautiful, calving itself into the lake. My, oh my, I can see it now."

On more than one summation Staff ended by saying, "Beauty of it all is Lowell was about as tickled as we were. It was the only time I ever saw him kiss Mathy, that's for sure."





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# The Summerset Review

# The Sunset Review

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**I**t was the hottest it's ever been in Bulgaria since 1967, the meteorologists said on the radio. The air smelled of linden blossoms, of geraniums and winds from the Black Sea.

They went on doing it, my mother and Aunt Nadi, after whom I had been named. Both of them were dressed in long robes of golden chiffon that looked almost entirely new although they had been putting on these dresses for seventeen years. They did it every evening. My mother played the violin, Aunt Nadi the violoncello.

Those were our happy nights when nobody but Mozart and Schubert existed, I was only empty translucent space and the music was our common umbilical cord. Every evening the three of us were born again and again, beautiful, ethereal like cosmic darkness or the radiance of a supernova. Then the wrinkles on their faces and hands were invisible. They had not put on any weight and had not turned into formless bags of flesh. In spite of the years that had tried to ruin them they sparkled with their golden chiffons and the universe flew through their hearts slowly permeating my own, which was a very ordinary unmusical heart. I was the only daughter in our family of three. My mother and Aunt Nadi were sisters and if they didn't dye their hair it would be perfectly white; both of them were incredibly pretty, turning heads even when they had not put on their make-up.

Years ago, at the time when they were wearing their golden chiffon dresses they had so many adorers, "crowds of passionate young men, my dear," as Aunt Nadi would put it. And, of course, they were flighty young girls. The gentlemen were so handsome and rushed in and out of their lives so rapidly that when, in the long run, the two of them landed carrying a baby each, almost at one and the same time, you could imagine the horror my late grandfather, a renowned concert violinist, lived through.

My late grandmother had panicked. Even on her deathbed, she was head over ears in love with her grey-haired husband who suffered from most of the diseases in the world. Grandmother had carried his picture close to her heart. Whenever she was in a lot of pain she pressed it to her skin, uttering his name, her lips livid, making efforts to overcome the fit, and he sat by her side holding her hand and trying hard not to cry before her. He had desperately wanted to convince her she'd be all right and that

they would live so many more days together in this wrong and bad world.

So when my mother and Aunt Nadi told their poor parents they were pregnant but didn't know who the fathers of their babies were, my grandmother started shuddering and the tremor of fear remained in her fingers. She had surely lived through a crisis and had certainly collapsed into an abyss of inward despair because the poor soul had neither known nor loved another man but her wretched violin player. My grandfather had been her moon and her native planet, her blood, her diseases and her failing health. All that was my grandfather to her, God bless his soul.

Awe struck, I touched his violin which my mother played only when she was in love. I, the most unmusical, a figuratively deaf and inefficient member of our family, caught the dazzling light of music and stood immobile, transfixed with shock, staring at my mother as if she had flown to our house from another galaxy, as if she was not the woman who gave me money to buy chocolates and books with, as if she was not the enraged she-wolf who constantly lectured me, ordering me to go out with my friends or have sex like the other girls in the neighborhood. Why should I rot with the books which filled my not-too-clever head with absurd stuff and lies about life? Why should I look at my feet while passing by clusters of young men? That was an absolute disgrace for the dead bones and blood of all the women of her family who had lived centuries before her.

I didn't see the narrow street I lived in, the blocks of flats, the Struma River that crossed our town and hurried to run away to Greece as quickly as possible, and I didn't feel the winds coming from the Black Sea whispering about sandy secrets, of hot dunes and loneliness.



When Mother played my grandfather's violin her eyes were humbly glued to the ground, because she was in love with a worthy and wonderful man. Both Mother and Aunt Nadi had many men and few among them were wonderful. Judging by the shoes the men left on the threshold of my mother and Aunt Nadi's rooms, they were mostly pretentious big shots. My favorites were the shoes that had not been polished meticulously. In such cases I thought there was hope the boyfriends might be some normal ordinary guys.

Mother and Aunt Nadi were very pretty, their blue eyes as deep and hot as the earth's core, their tall exquisite bodies remaining slim in spite of the huge amounts of bread they constantly ate. They were convinced they killed their excessive weight through sex, but in my opinion it was their blind absurd adoration of music that abolished the unwholesome substances in their blood. Mozart and Schubert were stronger than poisons in the human body.

The black universe turned into white nebula in the strings of their instruments, chasing away the nasty men who sometimes left their perfectly polished shoes on the threshold of their rooms. Their music erased the dirty words that Aunt Nadi shouted at times in my presence, to teach me in advance how disgusting life was.

To cut a long story short, when Mother and Aunt Nadi told the violinist and his wife they were both expecting babies in July, the violinist said, "O.K., girls. I hope I'll be strong enough to make money to feed two additional throats. Go ahead." As my late grandmother heard his calm tone of voice, in spite of the fact that the tremor of fear never left her arthritic fingers, she agreed there could be enough old dresses to cut into pieces and make swaddling clothes for two tots.

Aunt Nadi aborted her pregnancy because at that time she fell in love with a naval officer, a great charmer. My mother gave birth to me, a half smothered suckling looking very blue in the face. The evening concerts of my mother and Aunt Nadi started with my first birthday, which they celebrated when I was five. And that was perfectly normal for two heavenly women who didn't care about anybody but Mozart and Schubert and about their concerts in the warm darkness. Unfortunately, my grandmother and grandfather died one after the other, the violinist outliving his beloved wife by eight days. We found him dead holding his instrument, which my mother played only when she was truly in love, as I have already said.

So no one taught me to play the violin or violoncello. I could only whistle different tunes. Mother and Aunt Nadi were with their handsome adorers whose perfectly polished shoes made me sick, I whistled the tunes I had heard at their dark concerts and fell asleep dreaming about Mozart. He composed another of his beautiful symphonies and I prayed I could hear it on the following day.



I could not love the town and the Struma River if I did not love my mother's and Nadi's music. It was in linden blossoms, in the rumble of the summer storms, in the windows of the blocks of flats that

glowed at night. The concerts of Mother and Nadi were the happiest time in my life until I met one of my mother's men. He played the violin as well. Thin, fair-haired, so in the beginning I thought he was ill. His face looked transparent. I even told mother not to have him in her room for he probably suffered from some serious disease. But he proved to be a very nice guy. His name was Kalin.

While Mother and Nadi entertained their boyfriends I listened to Kalin play his violin. I didn't know who the composers of his music were. It was neither a black universe nor a spring meadow. It was music of a tortured and ill man who probably saw death waiting for him among the semibreves and quarter notes. Perhaps he saw the world beyond he was to fly to after he left my room, or caught something in the air as he pushed aside the plate, on which I had put a piece of stale cake for him, given as a present to Aunt Nadi by some of her numerous admirers. She had a sweet tooth and they brought her bars of chocolate and sweets.

I thought one never lied when he faced death. Kalin's music was quiet, like the last drops of rain against the window, like hope that a guy would have enough time to eat the last crumb of the stale cake on his plate. It told death, "Wait. Let the girl listen to the last part of the piece. She likes it so much. It is not a black universe. It's not a spring meadow. It is not even a kiss. It's not pain. Let the girl listen on. I'll come with you when it's finished. Have my piece of cake if you want."

When I told Mother and Aunt Nadi I was expecting a baby they froze in their tracks, then screamed they were going to shoot dead all their boyfriends. They suspected one of them was to blame for my misfortune. It was Aunt Nadi who declared that we'd have enough money to feed a small thing like a suckling. Why should we be afraid of a baby, she asked? It's just some disposable nappies and milk bottles. Go ahead.

But when they learnt I wanted to marry Kalin they went through the roof.

How was it possible? They both were very intelligent and gentle but... Nobody got married these days, for Christ's sake! "All men are mean dogs, my dearest. He'll break your heart. He'll cheat on you and you will suffer. You know us very well, dearest. And we know men very well. They are nasty." Mother said Kalin might die soon and that was all right; I'd be free again and the three of us would bring up the child. Let's hope it would be a girl. They didn't let Kalin enter our apartment, saying there was no place for such a wretch in our family.

Once, they heard him play the violin in the street at the entrance of our block of flats. He was playing not for death but to his daughter who was not born yet. Some time after that Aunt Nadi said, "Listen to me. There may be place for him in our sitting room. What do you say?" And that was so much from a woman who had been playing the violoncello for twenty-one years now, had been dreaming of dark men, of the child she had not given birth to, and of the naval officer who had broken her heart. Now she was going to have a granddaughter, and if God didn't call her in to heaven to play her violoncello for him then my baby would be a great violist. Her blue eyes had said this and they never lied.

Kalin told me that a river of stars had started flowing in the strings of his violin after he met me. He said he'd stay alive only because I lived in that narrow street in our town. I thought he was my native planet, my disease and my health, and I swore that I'd ask Aunt Nadi to play something for him when she was in love with someone. At such moments her eyes sparkled. They were the most beautiful eyes anyone could ever have.



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Title graphic: "My Violin" Copyright © Aline Baggio 2003.

# The Sunnset Review

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## Contributors' Notes

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teaches at the New York Institute of Technology as Susan H. Gray. Her recent poems and short stories can be found in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Slant*, *Fireweed*, *Ariel*, *Stray Dog*, *Jewish Women's Literary Annual*, *Zeek* and *nycBigCityLit*, among others. She is the author of the chapbook, *The Scottish Café* (Slapering Hol Press, 2002) and a winner of this year's Annual Salute to the Arts Contest, judged by Illinois poet, G. E. Murray. You can find out more about her at [www.SusanHCase.com](http://www.SusanHCase.com).

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lives in Pernik, Bulgaria with her husband, two sons and one daughter. She's had three collections of short stories and three novels published in her home country. In the United States, her work has appeared in *Mississippi Review*, *Metropole*, *In Posse Review*, and numerous other places. She has also been published in Great Britain, Canada, Germany (winner of the short story competition of Lege Artis Foundation, Leipzig), France, Poland, Russia, Czech Republic, India, Macedonia, Serbia, and Australia.

### **Tony O'Brien**

grew up in Dunedin and has lived in Auckland, New Zealand since 1978. He began writing in 2000 after taking a course with David Brown at the Department of Continuing Education, Auckland University. He has published stories in *Takahe* and the online journal *Carve*. Another short story, "Mrs. Mafua's Hat," has been produced for radio. Tony works as a mental health nurse and lectures in mental health nursing at the University of Auckland. He is married with three adult children and can be contacted at [joanandtony@xtra.co.nz](mailto:joanandtony@xtra.co.nz).

### **Tom Sheehan's**

fourth poetry book, *This Rare Earth & Other Flights*, was just issued by *Lit Pot Press*. His third novel, *Death for the Phantom Receiver*, is due soon from Publish America. He has a Silver Rose Award from American Renaissance for Twenty-First Century (ART), three Pushcart nominations and won east of the web's 2002 nonfiction competition. He has appeared in *Tryst*, *Eclectica*, *Literary Potpourri*, *Paumanok Review*, *Eleven Bulls*, *Small Spiral Notebook*, *storySouth*, *Megaera*, *Nuvein*, *Fiction Warehouse*, *Three Candles*, *Eleven Bulls*, and *C/Oasis*. You can reach him at [tomfsheehan@comcast.net](mailto:tomfsheehan@comcast.net).

### **Jennifer Spiegel**

is the co-fiction editor of the literary magazine *Hayden's Ferry Review* (along with Robert Johnson, Jr.). She has an MA in Politics from New York University and an MFA in Creative Writing from Arizona State. Currently, she's writing as much as possible while teaching English and creative writing at Grand Canyon University. Her work has appeared in the anthologies *Literary Lunch*, *Europe as a Rite of Passage*, and *In Our Own Words: A Generation Defining Itself, Volume 4*, as well as literary journals such as *Image* and you are here. A short story is forthcoming in *The Seattle Review*. She hopes that, one day soon, her novel *Love Slave* will appear in a bookstore near you.

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# The Sunnset Review

# The Summerset Review

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## Guidelines for Submissions

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Writers are invited to submit contemporary short stories and essays of up to 8,000 words. No sci-fi, horror, graphic erotica, poetry, or subject matter with emphasis on death or loss are likely to be accepted. Fantasy, romance (literary), and overall lighter stories will be given more serious consideration. We enjoy seeing essays that enlighten us in subtle ways.

All submitted work is assumed to be original. Reprints, novel excerpts, and simultaneous submissions are accepted. We read year-round.

Email submissions to [editor@summersetreview.org](mailto:editor@summersetreview.org). Please be sure to state whether your piece is fiction or an essay. It is preferable that the submission be an attachment in standard manuscript MS Word format. If you are sending a piece in plain text, please be sure to clearly designate paragraphs, alignment, and italics. Please do not simply give a link on the web where the story appears. All submissions receive replies, usually in less than six weeks.

We do not give previously-published authors any more attention than new writers, and judge submissions objectively on literary merit. Even with this, we prefer a brief note accompanying the submission. We are not sure what we want to read in this note, but would appreciate the extra effort, rather than a blank email with an attachment. We usually comment on material that got further along in the review process. On pieces we accept, we usually suggest minor editorial changes and always confer with the author.

Authors retain all rights to their work, and will see galleys of accepted pieces for review. Unfortunately, contributors cannot be paid for accepted submissions.

To get more of an idea of what we are looking for, writers are asked to read The Summerset Review or consult our [Recommended Reading](#) list. We also suggest that contributors be familiar with the writing found in better literary publications. Some examples that have inspired us in both content and the manner in which they have handled submissions, based on first-hand experiences, are found [here](#).

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## The Summerset Review

# The Summerset Review

Author	Title	Source
Aciman, Andre	Cat's Cradle	From the November 3 <sup>rd</sup> issue of The New Yorker, 1997
Anderson, Dale Gregory	Girl in the Tree, The	From the Spring/Summer issue of Alaska Quarterly Review, 2003
Ashton, Edward	<a href="#">Night Swimmer</a>	Online at The Blue Penny Quarterly, Spring/Summer, 1995
Baggott, Julianna	Five	From Other Voices #28, 1998
Bardi, Abby	My Wild Life	From Quarterly West #41, 1995
Baxter, Charles	Snow	From the collection A Relative Stranger, published in 1990
Borders, Lisa	Temporary Help	From the Spring/Summer issue of Bananafish, 1998
Broyard, Bliss	<a href="#">Mr. Sweetly Indecent</a>	From the Fall issue of Ploughshares, 1997
Burns, Carole	Honour's Daughter	From Other Voices #31, 1999
Cain, Chelsea	Pretty Enough To Be a Showgirl	From the Spring issue of Grand Tour, 1997
Cheever, John	Stories of John Cheever, The	A collection published in 1980
Christopher, Nicholas	<a href="#">Veronica</a>	A novel published in 1996
Crowe, Thomas Rain	<a href="#">Firsts</a>	Online at Oyster Boy Review in January, 1997
Dancoff, Judith	Vermeer's Light	From Alaska Quarterly Review's Intimate Voices, Other Lives, 1997
Dormanen, Sue	<a href="#">Finishing First</a>	From the Summer issue of Lynx Eye, 1998.
Doyle, Larry	Life Without Leann	From an issue of The New Yorker in Fall, 1990
Kennedy, Thomas E.	Kansas City	From Vol 62 No. 4 of New Letters, 1996
McInerney, Jay	Model Behavior	A novel published in 1998
Millhauser, Steven	<a href="#">Enchanted Night</a>	A novella published in 1999
Murakami, Haruki	South of the Border, West of the Sun	A novel published in 1998
Offill, Jenny	<a href="#">Last Things</a>	A novel published in 1999
Salinger, J.D.	For Esme - With Love and Squalor	From the collection Nine Stories published in 1953
Tilghman, Christopher	Way People Run, The	From the September 9 <sup>th</sup> issue of The New Yorker, 1991

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[Alaska Quarterly Review](#)

[Black Warrior Review](#)

[Hayden's Ferry Review](#)

[Literal Latte](#)

[The New Yorker](#)

[Other Voices](#)

[Oyster Boy Review](#)

[South Dakota Review](#)

[StoryQuarterly](#)

[The Sun](#)

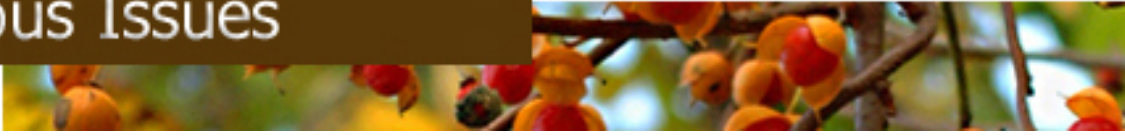
[Quarterly West](#)

[West Branch](#)

# The Summerset Review

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## Previous Issues



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### Summer 2003

Linda Boroff, Thomas Brennan, Sue Dormanen, James Francis, Gina Frangello, Gwendolyn Joyce Mintz

Eric Bosse, Sarah Maria Gonzales, M.M.M. Hayes, Janice J. Heiss, Pia Wilson

### Spring 2003

### Winter 2003

Max Dunbar, Jenny de Groot, Soo J. Hong, Rachel Belinda Kidder, Michael Marisi, Ulf Wolf

Kit Chase, Diane E. Dees, Edison McDaniels, Regina Phelps, Jacob Fawcett

### Fall 2002