

*Jon Davis*

THE GIRAFFE

When the midnight phone rang,  
my friend's voice kept trying  
to say the word *hysterectomy*, that  
one-word melody with ancestors  
stalking the madhouses of nineteenth  
century England. I was, of course,  
moved, more by the simple  
failure of elocution than the illness—  
which was a factoid in a slick  
magazine. Like learning that a giraffe  
has seven neck bones, that a bat  
will eat a ton of mosquitos  
in an average year. *Hysterectomy*.  
Abstract as a memo from the President  
of Nocturnal Congestion. The dishes  
shifted in their dishwater nest. The refrigerator  
hummed its cryogenic folksongs.  
The budgerigar honked and chattered  
in its night-shrouded cage. I twirled  
the phone cord around my finger  
like a man twirling a phone cord  
around his finger. The voice  
in the telephone. The voice in  
the telephone. I kept hearing  
*appendectomy, lobotomy, laparoscopy*.  
The sadness soaking into the words  
like hand creme. The words thick with it,  
bloated. Seven neck bones. Imagine.  
Like you. Like me. But the miraculous reach.