

*like James M. Cain . . . She writes like me. I have to stop every once in awhile to read a sentence over again it is so much like one of my sentences. Uses three dots liberally—just like me and Celine . . . John Cage suggests that the hard work of the serious artist is equivalent to playing chess. Why do you play chess all the time, I can hear some father saying. It's time to grow up and go to work. Like somebody might have told Fragonard, Drop that pink paint brush! Or Mozart? Why must you always compose in pink? . . . Mozart, your nudes will live after you. Edith Oravez has brought them to life. Drop your pink brush. That's what people tell me. Lafe said, But how does your hero make his money? But I'm on the ground floor of the revolution of the novel. More Juno! Catullus' title. That's all right. Something was going on then. I thought it was over and I was only hanging on, that's what I thought, kicking a dead horse. I should know better. I told myself a long time ago. Keep kicking the dead horse. You never know where you might get to! I told myself! The modern novel a monster. Robbe-Grillet has puffed me full of confidence. Yes, yes, I'm an exponent of the nouveau roman . . . any school that will have me . . . my own influence felt around here . . . I hope it widens . . . a celestial body . . . exploding, spiraling nova . . . that's me . . . on fire . . . yeah yeah yeah! Going for bear, yeah! Into the fray . . . and all of that . . . back to back . . . coming going along . . . I like it like that . . . Celine has shown us how . . . (from letters to the editor and "Renata Is Crying: A Nostalgia for Mona and Those Times")*

## Some Big Broad / James Mechem

Some broad I'd say on first catching a glimpse of the Twin Volcanoes, the Platinum Hair, the Imposing Dimensions, the Fine Figure of The Woman. And more often than not I'd faint dead away at her Feet. Those Smoldering Twin Volcanoes Would Overpower Me, you see. And I'd be done for, more often than not, you see. "What a broad!" I would exclaim and faint dead away, swoon practically in her arms. "Who is this buffoon who keeps doing this?" she asked finally after the fourteenth occurrence.

Naturally I was unable to answer, struck dumb as I was, groveling in ecstasy at her feet, delicately sidestepping as she had learned to do when my tactics became troublesome.

"I suggest you lock this Man up," she said. "Put him away. He's an eye-

sore. He's unclean. Unwashed. I feel too much attraction for him."

Hearing those words I sprang to my feet.

"Nothing that can happen to me now could matter so much," I said. And that was all there was to it, beyond help and all of that course, beyond help and all of that course beyond help . . .

Standing nude in her garter belt that I whipped her with. That's what she envisioned from me and she had a right to tremble, because that's what I had in mind.

## Zakiya Reconstructed / James Mechem

I loved you in your slip approximately. Blue stems out of reach. Marigolds on table. You skewered the suckling pig. A very pleasant evening spent in your company.

You showed me around your garden. All your power on display. You had me in thrall. Power raiment sparkling. I couldn't do anything. But open my eyes and gawk!

How have you done it? I've often wondered. Recollected in tranquility. I can't understand it.

Even at the time. While the music plays. You dance before my eyes. And I don't understand. I can't fathom it. What drives you?

If I knew the truth I'd know better surely. But how to reach that! It's not to be apprehended at once. Seized for this occasion.

In the thicket of this life I have come upon you often, have spoken of you.

You always show me the creek bed. Indeed, what is it about you? I am the head stuck in the ground that you dance round idolatrous.

*I like to do these one-page things. After writing a hundred novels I'm sort of burned out on novels . . . (from a letter to the editor)*