

FOREWORD

Cynthia Larson

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

This Spring, 1984 issue of the *IJLS* marks the end of my two year term as chief editor. The very nature of conclusions, I find, draws memory back to beginnings, to sortings and summings up. I regret that I haven't the luxury to write from the distance a real end offers. Forewords, I remind myself, are not afterwords and must march to press with the rest of the journal, far ahead of any true end.

During the past two years, we have accomplished much. We developed a computer program for the *IJLS* and worked on perfecting, as much as possible, the mechanics involved in transforming typed submissions into a finished journal. We added two new areas to the *IJLS*, essays and art work. In an attempt to serve more University of Iowa graduate students, we spent many hours soliciting manuscripts not only from all the departments housed in EPB, but from other departments as well. This year we received manuscripts from graduate students in Engineering, German, French, Spanish, Religion, Art History, Theater, Film, Sociology, and History. We hope this healthy broadening trend continues. Much of our time was devoted to strengthening the *IJLS* organization. We worked on *IJLS* policies, job descriptions, marketing, publicity, finance, and advertising. Due to greatly increased journal sales and ads bought by local businesses, the *IJLS* has been able to present cash awards for the best poem and story published in this issue, to organize and finance a forum, "Getting into Print," and to assist in funding the International Folktale Festival sponsored by the Office of International Education and Services.

While all of this is well and good, and does indeed represent the results of much time and effort, I shouldn't point to any of the above as my most valuable experience as editor of the *IJLS*. The *IJLS* is a collaborative effort, the work of many hands joining together for endless diverse and sometimes conflicting tasks. Quite simply, I feel privileged to have known—as profes-

sionals and as friends—the people whose names join mine on the masthead. My memories, when I think back on my days as editor, will be of them.

THE *IJLS* POETRY AND FICTION AWARDS:

This year, thanks to all of you who bought copies of the *IJLS* and to the local businesses who bought ads, the *IJLS* was able to sponsor a \$100 award for both the best poem and the best story published in this Spring, 1984 issue. The response to our contest was gratifying: 220 poems and 44 stories were submitted for consideration. We hope to continue these awards, and to offer awards in other areas next year, journal and advertisement sales permitting. Our congratulations to Laurie Henry who won the fiction award with her story “Reception,” and to Robert Crum whose poem “The Hereford” won the poetry award. The poetry was judged by Professor Paul Diehl and the fiction by Professor Susan Lohafer. Both generously and cheerfully agreed to shoulder this task in addition to their many other responsibilities. Their responses to the contest are included below:

PROFESSOR DIEHL:

“Poems, as usual, best speak for themselves. But since the poetry editor won’t let me get away with that, let me add that this group speaks exceedingly well. There are fine moments throughout the finalist poems, moments of inner-and-outer weather, of deep memory, imagination, artistic kinship, discovery, transformation. I chose one among them because that’s how contests work. And because it keeps rippling in me, as Howard Nemerov says, like circles ‘Out of the center over the sunken stone.’”

PROFESSOR LOHAFER:

*“Earlier this year, Robert Coover described some 300 books as a composite fiction, as one giant novel. Short stories normally don’t pool together in this way; if they’re added together, they’re at best a compendium. Such, at least, was the case with the seven finalist stories of the 44 entries in the *IJLS* contest. There were stories of manners, of oblique points of view, of ritual and archetype, of bold fabrication. The confessional first person was, indeed, predominant, and those stories which did not explore the relation between the generations, dealt with closely-knit subcultures. What I found was a mastery of traditions well taken. Finally, I chose the fiction that, for me, was a double-take, a story that made reality look stylized—and like itself, seen truly.”*

ABOUT THE COVER: A YORUBA OSANYIN STAFF: (Researched by Molly White)

The Yoruba, a West African people, implanted staffs like these in the floor near the foot of their beds at night to protect themselves against *aje* or witch attacks. Only the god Osanyin could protect the Yoruba from these *aje*. In

the male-dominated Yoruba society, female reproductive powers were regarded with ambivalence and distrust. The elderly women in particular, the Yoruba believed, possessed a strong spiritual life force, the *ase* which could be used either to heal or to harm. When at peace, the women helped Osanyin priests gather and prepare medicinal herbs. But when angry, they transformed themselves into bird spirits, flew down the Yoruba's chimneys at night, pecked into their sleeping victim's heads, and sucked out their spiritual blood or *ori*. The Yoruba believed these witch attacks caused impotence, infertility, insanity and, particularly for children, death.

The iconography of the Osanyin staff is an embodiment of this rich mythology. The encircling ring of sixteen birds, the *aje*, face inward and up toward the large surmounting bird, Osanyin, who controls and is protected from the witches. Osanyin's symbolic message is "the makers of death can be conditioned and controlled by higher powers. Evil can be commanded to become good." (Robert F. Thompson, *Black Gods and Kings*.)

The University of Iowa Museum of Art's Osanyin staff is composed entirely of wrought iron and measures 73 cm. in height. It is similar to the University of California at Los Angeles' Osanyin staff in its particular bird shape, its twisting of each bird's leg, and in its lively, lyric suggestion of bird motion. Based on stylistic and documentary evidence, both the Iowa and the California staffs can be attributed to an anonymous master blacksmith working around the end of the nineteenth century in Igbomina, a town in Northern Yorubaland on the Guinea coast. The University of Iowa Museum of Art's Yoruba Osanyin staff was purchased in memory of John Brady.

SUBMITTING WORK TO THE *IJLS*:

The *IJLS* is a journal managed and edited by graduate students devoted to steering fine University of Iowa graduate student work into print. If you are a graduate student at the University of Iowa, or have recently completed one of its graduate programs, we invite you to submit articles, essays, book reviews, fiction, poetry, interviews, and art work to be considered for publication. Please consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* in preparing manuscripts, which should be no longer than twenty pages. If submitting poetry, please send no more than six poems. All submissions are reviewed anonymously. The *IJLS* is copyrighted by the University of Iowa. Authors, however, retain all rights to their work.

To submit, please send TWO CLEAN COPIES of your work and your campus mail address to *Iowa Journal of Literary Studies*, c/o Department of English, 308 EPB. You must include a RETURN CAMPUS ADDRESS or a SASE for the return of manuscripts and other correspondence.