

Gene McCormick



The Pause That Refreshes

She has a raw look about her, a well-defined jawline and a chin with a slight jut. Skinny-leg jeans emphasize her lean look and all in all he thinks she is probably from Kentucky or maybe West Virginia. She stands a few feet outside her car smoking a cigarette and drinks from a bottle of Coca-Cola, exhibiting a body language suggesting she should be on her way somewhere else. She stubs out a final drag on the cigarette. Without looking about she gets in her car and drives off, using turn signals to exit the parking lot in her Hyundai.



Trapeze Act

Practically nude, her finely developed body falls through the air, arms and legs flailing, dropping sixty feet as she screams Aiyeee. Bystanders gasp until she lands on the netting, bounces twice and flips over the side, unhurt, the four-story fall being a stunt, part of her trapeze circus act, a contrived thrill as phony as clowns knocking over the cotton candy vendor. She exits with a frown while rubbing her right shoulder, selling us on the seriousness of the stunt but we know better. After all, it is a circus and a pageant of embellishment.



The Bookmark

Writing her telephone number on
the blank back of a bookmark,
the sort the local library gives away
to discourage dog-earing of books,
she smirks, hands it to him.

If I call this number, he asks,
will I find you gave me a number of your invention
and she says You'll find out I'm not home,
that I am sitting on this park bench with you.
He dials the number; she is right.

Several days later he calls the number again
and a man answers. Allegra is dead, he says,
an accident. Don't call again.

He won't call again but keeps the bookmark
with her number, a slip of paper to note
progress and time, the written number
words on a tombstone.

Gene McCormick's latest book, *Obsessions*, a unique novella-length narrative poem of realities, is available through Amazon or direct from the Middle Island Press. A follow-up, *Happenstances*, will be published this spring, also by Middle Island Press.