

## Two Poems

D E B O R A H B O G E N

## the doctrine of original sin

When Archie McCloud ran off with Gerald Beamer's second wife, Tammy Sue, no one was surprised, or thought much of it, least of all that it showed imagination. For weeks Tammy Sue had been sneaking 'round the back of Bradley Wilson's Chevron station, moving with the studied saunter of an amateur thief, and there was nobody back there but Archie in the coveralls his wife, Gladys, kept as clean as Tide could get them. Those two were just tawdry and ordinary and everybody said so, but when little Jessie Jo turned out to be the love child of Gladys and a knife thrower from the Barnum & Bailey, that was edgy, that was darned near cutting edge.

## the doctrine of angels

One leg over the motorcycle, I regret the impulse. It's 1969. What we have in common is his brother's suicide, and I know what's running me—enthusiasm, that variant of fear. The *I Ching* says enthusiasm in service of the self is a bad thing. That's the kind of warning I take seriously, but Roger's dead—and I don't want to start smoking again. No stars tonight, just dark shapes rising against darker headlands, and part of me aches to be on this bike, silhouetted against the sky. And soon we're on the slope that takes us past Olema and Point Reyes. Past cryptic horses, head-down and mellow, stygian banks of nasturtiums and the rich folks' dogs straining on their chains. The bike's come wholly to life and the boy directs it. I try to sink into him so there's no fleshy argument distracting the machine. The engine's agony drowns out thought as we slide down to blackness, the sex of wind on our arms and necks. I did not attend the funeral. I still sing but not as well as this bike, which tonight is keening. There is something I'm trying to master. There's no reason to trust the boy whose bike heads down this mountain.