

Masthead Logo

**The Iowa Review**

---

Volume 3  
Issue 4 *Fall*

Article 21

---

1972

## An Altercation Rectified

John Batki

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Batki, John. "An Altercation Rectified." *The Iowa Review* 3.4 (1972): 24-25. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1426>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

It is not a turtle though the shell is  
such that it can and does withdraw.  
The inscription inside the shell reads.  
The musical notes coming from within  
have been annotated and found to read.  
In its working habits it's said to.  
All surviving records indicate that.  
When the last specimen was alive, it.  
At the last, the sounds most resembled.

*Carol Bergé*

### AN ALTERCATION RECTIFIED

Hello again! And let me start  
with an apology. Last night I called  
you a dotard, a yellow bole on a fuzzy  
unripe tree. I take it back. I only meant  
to touch your breast unnoticed by the  
dormant tramps in the shallows of your mind.  
As it happened, you welcomed my hand but  
looked askance at the doubtful compliment I  
cast your way. And rightly so. Two things  
should immediately occur to you from this incident.  
One: I am frightfully timid, or rather, have  
a cozeningly clownish fright of the direct  
approach, which, Roman statesmen tell us, is the best.  
More about this later. And two: I am an  
amphibiously libidinous Venetian desperado,  
out to get into your cunt. Don't take this  
amiss. It is neither a compliment nor meant  
to be one, although I can't say it is a  
detraction either. Simply: the meeting of two  
minds (and this has proved to be our case)  
requires that after the passage of a certain length  
of time, such as four breakfasts, and a mid-  
night skinny dip in your grandmother's duck pond,  
there should be a reasonable and deliberate  
exploration of the senses. I am sure you will  
agree, in principle at least.

As for the directness recommended by the noble Romans: I do not see eye to eye with their approach. It is a fool that kills the fatted calf with a blunt weapon like a typewriter. Never trust a man, especially a statesman, who promises to save you pain by lopping off the head of the first intruder. I myself prefer the winding ways of my fond ancestor the wrinkle-headed turtle and his best of friends and guide, the meandering line in Paul Klee's early middle etchings.

*John Batki*

#### THE HANGED MAN: *Tarot Key XII*

*Who is the Hanged Man? Golem.*

*Who is Golem? Ask Judas.*

*Is he standing on  
a Tau? on a toe? upon  
a bough before a tree's bole?*

A rope suspends him  
by an ankle, from a bar,  
his legs crossed before the Tree.

*Does he think of Death?  
Is this, then, the dance of blood,  
the wind's breath shaking his bones?*

His arms are water  
in a triangle, hands held  
behind him. His eyes are clear.

*Who has hanged this man?  
What does he see, how does he see it,  
when will he tell how he sees?*

We have hanged him. We  
gave him his aureole. Look.  
He will tell us when we see.