

## JAN C. MINICH

### *Midnight Cottonwood*

When will she turn around and  
go back up her wooden stairs?  
Midnight happened only once,  
years ago then left pulling  
her trailer into the desert,  
getting out and hiking  
up to those falls I'd found  
on the backside of the Rincons,  
and if she ever fell, she crawled  
and left her marks in the sand.

I've trailed her for days now  
and at each pool of water  
I've seen the places where she  
must have slept, the sand almost wet,  
and know she must have entered  
these pools, passed her tongue  
along the edges of rock  
marking her territory  
and feeding on mosquito larvae  
stranded just above the waterline.

On these rocks she's crawled to,  
out of the water, early evening  
to catch the last sun, I build a fire,  
the last fire, absorbing the day's heat  
knowing that soon the rains will come  
when she will be followed by others  
looking for Midnight sitting  
on her trailer step, the venom  
still in her eyes after all these years,  
getting ready to leave again,  
the falls next year and the desert  
the same age as before.