

To Christine, Whom I Loved Because Another Would

by Con Chapman



She was young, like me,
almost too quiet for my taste.
Fair—dark brown hair.
She was from Tennessee, with advantages over me.
An upbringing surrounded by books
and sensitivity— perhaps too much of the latter,
but now it doesn't matter.

*Christine, I have only lately understood
I loved you because another would.*



We flirted with our eyes, but nothing more
until another paid her attentions
with a smile that was more like a leer.
We were all pimpled then— boys,
far short of being men, impelled by innate forces
that pushed us forward, like the surf,
but which we could not resist even if we would.

*Christine, I'm not sure you understood—
I loved you because another would.*



Why had I hesitated until then? I can't recall;
I saw only the looks of other men in the hall.

There is something in young men of
Emulation, that causes them to contest
a woman even when no love is there.

We shared a bed just once
Before year's end, but I by
that stroke prevailed over others.

*Christine—I'd recall the time if I could—
I loved you because another would.*

We parted for the summer, you got an apartment,
I went home to haul ice. We corresponded, as freshmen would,
with irony and imagery. We swore we'd reunite in Chicago.
I begged leave to go, and rode
a bus eight hours to be with you from
a Main Street where the big attraction
was a man who could imitate a cow.

*Christine, fine and good;
I loved you because another would.*



From afar, you were what I wanted,
but when I arrived, and there was
nothing between us but two
t-shirts and pairs of jeans,
in the absence of another who wanted you,
my passion seemed a sham.
We made love that second time.
I left, and there was nothing more.
Forty years this summer have now gone by.

*Christine, forgive me if you could;
I loved you because another would.*

Someone asked—what happened that night?
“Nothing,” I said, and you may take that as you will.
We want what we do not have— this all will learn.
But we want what others want as well.
Tonight, I am sick with drink and cannot staunch
incoming tides of wine, red like the blush that
came to your cheeks ‘neath the lights of 57th Street
that shined through your window.

