

CORNFIELD REVIEW 3

1978



ONE
DOLLAR



W.P.

Shit a

CORNFIELD REVIEW

An Annual of the Creative Arts

1978 Vol. 3

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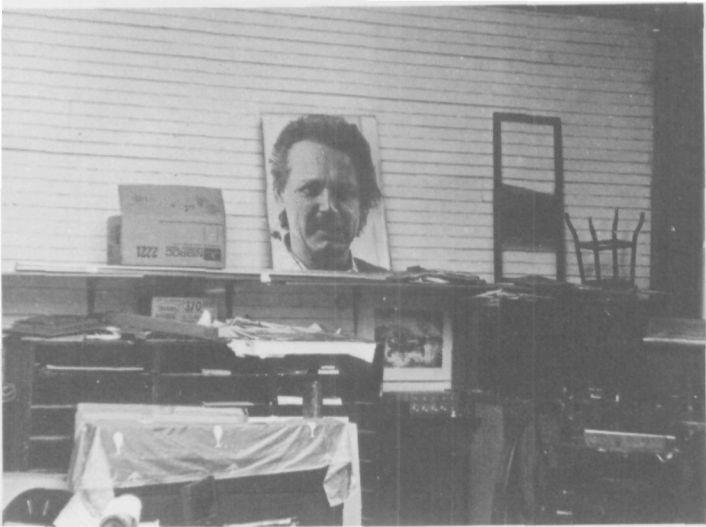
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Contents

Kelli Baer	17
Linda Jo Banks	27
Nancy Bartz	12
Robert Besch	21
John S. Brinkerhoff	28
Steven Ford Brown	22
Joseph Bruchac	25
Rita Burks	27
Les Cottrell	21
Betty M. Dietsch	20
John Ditsky	18
David Evans	19
Jacqueline Lucas Hoover	11
Menke Katz	15
Eve Kelly	8
Marlene Lambert	10
Frances Ouellette	15
Robert Sims Reid	30
Nancy Jo Rinehart	10, 11
Sharon E. Rusboldt	20
Patricia Sierra	4, 6
Darlene Slack	9
Ronald Wallace	26
Adele Weiss-Miller	19
Marilyn Weston	14

Graphics

Marilu Chaney	23
Lynette Graham	24
David Hickson	Front Cover, 2
Patrick McKinney	16
Carroll Neidhart	Inside Back Cover
Glenn Rothman	Inside Front Cover
Jennifer Sizer	Back Cover

PATRICIA SIERRA

Mothers & Daughters

Do you see that girl, sitting in the booth there, a hamburger and Coke in front of her? She is my daughter. Thirteen. Sullen. Aware, already, she has something men want, and aware how I worry about that fact.

I follow her here, certain she has come to meet that boy. He'll be coming soon; it's the same every time she leaves the house, wearing his ring on a chain under her sweater. She walks out, saying something about the library, Sue's house, or cheerleader's practice. She has never been, she has never wanted to be, a cheerleader. I know that she is headed out to meet that boy, to share with him the success of her lie — to parade before him my failure as a mother.

I don't know this girl, my daughter; hair, not very clean, hanging nearly to her waist; I do not know her at all. She won't allow me in her room, she stands in the doorway, blocking even my eyes. But I go in there, when she isn't at home. I turn the pages in her notebook, and see how her mind jumps from $X = A$, to L.R. + J.S. I sit down on her bed, to examine the plush stuffed animals grinning with red felt mouths. I try to remember why I, too, once buried my bed in toys long after I had outgrown them.

I know my daughter is in a conspiracy with that boy; a tall, skinny, acne-ridden basketball player who touches those private places she has been hiding from me for years. She hides them whenever I walk into the bathroom, accidentally. I always apologize, tell her it was an accident, I wasn't thinking, next time I'll knock, we'll buy a lock, I'm sorry — but it's always too late. She pulls a robe or towel between us, looking at me with those terrible thirteen-year-old eyes, until I long to know what it is that's so bad about being a mother . . . what it is that's so bad about being me.

She is in a conspiracy with her father, too, never showing him the way she has perfected that flip of her head . . . never letting him hear the filthy words she knows so well . . . never revealing to him how terrible her eyes can be. She becomes a woman — prematurely — at the sound of his key in the door; what a shrewd and calculating rival. Watch how she curls up on his lap, as if she were a loving child, willing to be held. Doesn't she know I am able to read such blackmail a room away? Doesn't he see what she's doing to him, what she's doing to this marriage?

I followed her here today, to reassure myself that she lies; she is not worth the worry, pain, or tears. She feeds and dresses herself; there is nothing more I can do. Her destiny is written. I will tell her, on her eighteenth birthday, she is free to go. I will ask her to just take her things and go. Then I can begin my own life. I can go back to the university, learn all I must know for a career in social work. I'll reach out to people with a darker, more twisted existence than mine. My husband will not question where I am on late winter evenings. He will not guess I am in class, he will imagine nothing. I will pay for school out of my grocery allowance, and after graduation it will be a year, two years, before he knows I have taken a job. It will puzzle him; that is all.

Where is that boy? My daughter is early. She must know that she is very early. She does not consult the window, or the watch that hangs on a chain around her neck, like that boy's ring. She wears the watch on top of her sweater, where I can see, a reminder of the presents my husband gives her, in addition to the ones we give her together. It is a flag, a triumphant flag signalling my destruction. When will he divorce me, and will he replace me with a woman like this thirteen-year-old woman?

My daughter does not look around, anxiously, for that boy. She stares at her food, intent on the job of eating. She will probably grow fat, like me, and try the same useless diets. She will have to accept the fact of her body; it is given to her by her mother, also inclined to overweight, like my mother. And she will have my tendency to see life as it really is. I pity her the days ahead.

What would she do, if she were to glance up now, and see me watching her? Would she deny, would she claim that I have read her wrong, would she try to blackmail me with the words that work so well on her father?

She thinks that I am crazy. I have seen it in her eyes, across the breakfast table. She won't ask for a ride to school. She is afraid to ride with a crazy woman. Often I wish that she would leave. My separate life cannot continue when she is there, in the house. After she leaves, I become her friend, her mother. I go into her room and read the gentle words of love, written to her by that boy. I read the letters, and I do not blame; I understand. But she must never be told that I see and understand and love the person she is, or that I grieve for her innocence. She takes comfort in identifying me, the enemy.

Does that boy reason with her, in the darkness of his car? I have forbidden her to enter that car, but she enters, knowing I know. Does he hold her, and tell her that all mothers seem a distant and opposing force when you are thirteen? Does he speak from the wisdom of sixteen, to plead my case? I hate that boy. I don't want him taking my defense. She is my daughter. Mine.

Where is that boy?

I tried to tell a doctor about my daughter. He nodded, and made no notes, no suggestions. I reject all doctors. How can a doctor change the life I have brought upon my daughter; how can he understand that this homely basketball player is my fault, the ruin I have brought upon my lovely thirteen-year-old daughter.

I do love her and she loves me, and we preserve that love by not using it — wearing out our hatred instead.

Where is that boy? He's not here, and she is leaving, paying for her food, alone, and leaving. Look at that hair. I wish she would wash it; I would never go six days without washing mine, but she will and does and shall. How can my daughter defy me so? Must I strap her down, wash her hair as though it is my own?

She doesn't fool me: she knows I am here; she has known it all along. She's leaving before that boy arrives. She is looking at the floor, hiding a smirk. She knows that boy is on his way, that he's nearly here, and she plans to lead me home before he comes. Oh, why does my daughter lie to me this way?

I will not be deceived. I will let her go home, to worm her way into my husband's lap. But I will wait here for that boy. I will sit right here and wait; I will confront him with the evil he has planned.

How Female I Am

1.

That man talks to me about his marriage, the one he no longer has; it is defunct. He tells me about his wife, a woman busy with decoupage and creative casseroles.

He loved her, he says, and watched her as though she were a movie. The marriage survived for three, maybe four years. But now it is finished, and neither of them seems to understand why.

That woman he speaks of now in such a hushed and sacred voice — I do not know her. She is a stranger to me, and yet I am that woman, half a decade later, still threatened by men, still clinging to my freedom to cut and paste and cook what I want.

2.

My lover knows things about me I did not wish to reveal . . . things he pulled from me against my will. I do not know how he did it, I will never understand how he did it.

He knows I do not like the collision of bodies. He pulls me into his bed. When he is finished, he apologizes.

I wish he wouldn't apologize; I must then react — admit or deny. I wish my lover had never apologized; I wish my lover were dead.

3.

There was a professor, now a transparent memory. He held my mind in his hands, as my daughter does silly putty. If you build a tower of silly putty, then leave it — it sinks, spreads out, crumbles into dust.

4.

Nine years old. A dark summer night, made darker by the bushes we hid behind.

"Show me *yours*," he whispered, and I did, quickly. "Again," he said, and I did. And that's when they found us.

His mother said, "That's boys for you."

My mother said nothing, but she hit me until I bled from my nose and my mouth. There is a mark, here, under my skin, to this day. It didn't show, but it's there; I can feel it.

5.

There is a man who lets me come to his office to tell him the truth about me — but, of course, I must pay him. My bill is current. Each week I write him a check, eager to keep our records even. I must owe him nothing; he must have no recourse against me after he has heard all I have to say.

What does he think while I talk? *What's for dinner? Does she dye her hair? When, when, when will she be quiet?*

He is not like other men. He has a face that's, well, kind. It looks younger than I think he must be; a face protected from the erosion of all that he hears. His eyes are kind, too — looking at me with a softness I have sometimes imagined in my own eyes, a softness I have imagined while looking at men I have loved. But he looks at *all* people with those kind and accepting eyes.

I question his innocence. It can't be real, not in this time, this place, this administration. Oh, how I hope it is real.

I tell him the worst, and still he looks at me with those eyes. The kindness of his professional eyes is killing me, slowly, week by week.

He knows, I have told him so he knows, that all of my men have been evil. Why is he doing this to me: showing me a kind, a loving man, like none I have ever had — like none I shall ever have? I pay him for this, I pay him well for this, my undoing.

I watch the slow, precise movements, as he adjusts his body in his chair, answers the phone, moves beside me to the door. Slow and comforting movements I am drawn to, and must escape.

His voice strokes my hair, my skin — the tones caress me into submission. I tell him things I have denied, even to myself, and he does not blink, he does not turn away, apparently he does not even hear. His voice warms me with questions about next week, lulling me into an etherized state that may last the week. I feel I am under water, drowning; giddy with the intoxicating pleasure and comfort of drowning in his voice.

Later, when I am unable to sleep, I telephone his home, awaken him, to hear his voice once more — but I hang up, guilty, when he answers. I have not paid for that.

Every week I have this to look forward to: I shall sit, locked into a room for a full hour with a man who tortures me with this close-up look at what other people have. He has given me all of this; he has taken everything, every hope, from me.

6.

I ended my marriage with a letter, the same device I will turn to to end my therapy. I know one day I will write him a letter, whether I want to or not. Or I will call, leave a message with his secretary, unwilling to give him written proof of my weakness. I will do one of those things: I will write or I will call. I shudder at how female I am.

7.

My father is an old man. People think it is butter, only butter, running down the cheek of a man too feeble to be feeding himself. But I suspect that he weeps, and I suspect that he weeps from an overwhelming disappointment. I have not been a good daughter; I have lived my life as though it were my own.

8.

I am alone in my car. It's late; in the rear-view mirror I see a man in a dark-colored Ford. I turn down a side street, but he follows. At the next corner I turn left; he turns left. I speed up; he speeds up. I circle through the narrow residential streets, back to the highway. I see a patrol car, headed toward me, stopped at the light just ahead. The man moves into passing gear, slips past me as I pull beside the patrol car.

I honk, roll down my window; the policeman is young, grinning at me as though I stopped to tell him a joke.

"A man has been following me," I tell him, surprised I sound so excited, so breathless.

"I don't blame him, lady," the face smirks. The other policeman, on the passenger's side, laughs.

I speed away, fleeing the enemy, man.

EVE KELLY

Phoenix Exploded with a Big Bang

The dulcimer had lain dormant for an eon
but now drips sound
like honey melting in a cup of camomile.

It sings with the plaintive voices
of my ancestors
crying strength to me from the coal dust mines.

It is the vibration of a star that I saw
trailing illumination across the sky,
dancing with death
and laughing in its face;
it was gone as suddenly as it was born.

It is the singing tongues of God.

DARLENE SLACK

Dissonance

for Debbie Gordon

Some mock form couched inside this box, not you.
Your heart had played no lullabies to soothe
At night, which peaceful poses often suggest.
Familiar were the sounds of dissonance
Composed by thirst. To our own ignorance
It killed you long before we knew or guessed
You planned to string yourself. Your closet's bar
Still holds those dirgeful notes you last performed.

Must we rewrite the tune that made a star
Of you before your cold heart will be warmed?
Or when the priest again sprinkles you, will
Your thirst for harmony be quenched? Your hands
Reached amateurishly and plucked until
They drooped. Your song we, too late, understand.

Thorns

So you wore thorns
and whippings and
dung dust. You were
so thirsty you
bled dry words. They floated
beyond your witnesses' ears.

But now your Passion story
has been overly immersed —
a yellowed, tattered page whose ink
blurs when I search
its meaning
unlike the beloved "Snow White"
I never tired of.
After all,
no one ever tried
to cut your heart out,
though they tell it that way.

I am bored (aren't you?)
and want to stuff
bubble gum in my ears
when I hear
that you wore thorns.

MARLENE LAMBERT

Commuting on U.S. 23

Life goes flying by each day, mile by mile.
Only glimpses of timeless brooks, ambling
Lanes and quiet groves on far horizons
Restrain a bullish urge to charge a truck,
Desperately escape the arena, and gore
The savage crowd, deny their blood lust.
Prized moments pulsate, die in robot grip.
A mechanism, Pavlovian,
Races on, tracing a concrete lifeline,
Not here nor there, less human than the engine.

NANCY JO RINEHART

The Park on Escanaba Bay

sun shining on patch of green
between town and water
 dark blue waves crash
 choppy on concrete wall
shivery lake breeze chills
 whitecaps and me
 in fuzzy red sweatshirt
 marked OHIO STATE
 hood drawn up
 against elements
i am alive with the rest
 laughing and jogging
 along
 water's
 edge
 as motorbike zooms close
 i close my eyes
 i fear he'll ride in
 i fear the deep water
across the grass in the sun i run
 again back and
 to laugh at she on the bench
 where i napped too
 letting nature roll over me
i am alive in this liquid moment
with the park on escanaba bay

NANCY JO RINEHART

Bittersweet

When the days grow longer and warmer, and the young grass peeks from under the last patches of snow, a melancholy seizes me and holds me in its clutch. I cannot explain this feeling. It is a confusion, a pang, perhaps of regret; and it visits me every spring. My mind returns to grade-school days, which now seem to have been so carefree. The playground bustled with activity in pleasant weather. Sometimes we girls skipped rope, chanting familiar jingles and taking an end if we missed a skip. At other times there were exciting softball games at the grassy, north diamond. Those of us who did not like to play ball lounged on the small knoll behind home plate and reveled in the sunlight.

Back in the classroom, we worked on long division problems and studied about the Civil War, but the high walls hemmed us in as the mild world outside the windows beckoned to us. Our teacher read from the library book *Old Yeller* in the afternoons, and we half-listened, half-dreamed, slumped in our wooden chairs.

In April, everyone anticipated the annual field trip to the Center of Science and Industry in Columbus, where we swarmed around exhibits of rocks, machines, and pendulums and ate peanut butter sandwiches and apples that our mothers had packed. Puppy love abounded, as evidenced by the sheepish boys and girls who held hands, exchanged dime-store rings, and stole an occasional kiss when a teacher was not watching.

Yet, my most poignant remembrances are of wistful glances from the classmate I disdained, of tender valentines I tossed aside, of a devotion I did not return. These bittersweet memories haunt me, because I can finally reciprocate his affection, but he does not know that. And I cannot tell him.

JACQUELINE LUCAS HOOVER

Reconciliation by the River

You and I and the single smoke line
fire sit in a row along the bank. The
mist rises from the water to close in
our primeval symmetry.

My mind slips into the river among ancient
shells and formless bits of bone.

The smooth stones at the bottom overwhelm
me with their coolness and sense of place.

I am too jagged to belong even here, shivering,
denying the warm curvature of your shell dwelling.

Seining the river bottom with your body,
you salvage what is left of me.

Your fingers make a fossil on my arm.

NANCY BARTZ

Pursuit

Night sounds very often blend with dreams, altering them so that you cannot determine in your conscious hours which were causes and which were effects. In the heart of the night, from some distant place, a special sound was reaching me, disturbing whatever dream-vision was in progress.

A wild chase, beginning to the west and involving two unknown beings, passed directly beneath the bedroom window of my creek-bank home and woke me from sound sleep with a sudden chill. The victim's frightened shrieks pierced the pre-dawn night. Snorting and snarling, the hunter pursued with great and relentless speed, its feet pounding the ground. The pair circled the yard, then tore down the steep creek sides, snapping twigs and scattering dry leaves.

I leaped from bed to the closest window as I heard them hit the shallow water bottom and continue up the opposite side. All the time the plaintive, staccato screams of the prey penetrated my head, and my body involuntarily tensed in response.

Through the yards, on the other side, they raced, waking the big dog chained there, who added his mournful howl to the strange voices.

They doubled back, bringing the sounds my way again. When they reached the water once more, the whine increased with savage force and desperation, and I knew, without seeing, that the battle was almost over.

The end came beneath the overhanging branches of the trees which, in daylight, form a lush, green, peaceful refuge for many wild things. The violent noise of churning water suggested the image of sharp teeth sinking deeper in the creature's neck, shaking and crushing its life away.

The smaller animal persistently cried in its struggle, at first loudly and rapidly, then more slowly, and agonizingly. I was impatient for it to be over, for I suddenly felt tired and helpless. I didn't want to hear any more. Please, let it be done soon.

For a few minutes there was silence. Then I could hear the victor wading through the water and entering the foliage, dragging the lifeless body along, and resting periodically.

I was consumed with morbid curiosity to see the triumphant winner. I felt sure the victim was a rabbit, for I had once heard the same futile sounds from a baby rabbit dragged off into the bushes by a family of cats. But no animal that roams my yard had ever presented the image of being such a tireless, vicious hunter as was there tonight.

It was no dog, of that I was sure, for its barking would have betrayed it. No raccoon, opossum, or groundhog would be interested, if, indeed, one could have traveled that fast. And no cat could ever make that pounding sound I heard.

The moonlight that bathed the yard as I waited assured me that if the predator retraced its path through the hedge border I could identify it. But it didn't appear and I felt the chill of the night in my bones and retreated to my bed, my ears alert to the night noises.

I was alone this night, and never since we have lived in this house have I experienced fear. But here, in the very center of this small town, with a creek running beside the lot, and trees entwined with wild grape vines, I had witnessed, indirectly, the life-and-death struggle of nature.

It was a long time before I relaxed. I imagined the victory feast that must be taking place so near, and I didn't like it. My mind drifted in free association.

"Oh, God," I prayed, "I know it is natural for such a contest to be, but may I never have to experience the feeling of the hot breath of an enemy fast at my back."

No film or television special of the hunter and the hunted ever produced such realistic sound effects to prepare me for the agony of it all. Orchestral backgrounds neatly censor this realism from a picture. I know that in the past as well as the present, in war and in peace, man and animals have always grappled with each other and with their own kind. But that realization did not lessen the horror of this encounter for me.

My thoughts sped on. There are two things I must do tomorrow morning before anything else can be started. I must write down what I feel this night. It is important that I remember it. Then I must go to the dense banks to see what can be seen, if anything.

I know after that I will be able to go on with the ordered events of my own life. I will chase the groundhog from my lettuce bed, and the mother raccoon from my garbage pails in the garage. I will continue to delight in the brilliant cardinals as they feed in my neighbor's yard. I will care, as best I can, for my family returning today.

But, from this time on, any animal which wanders freely through my domain will make me wonder whether this is the one, who, at night, changes into a Mr. Hyde, and torments those that are smaller.

I was glad I had been alone this night, for my gentle children would have been distressed and sent me, with flashlight in hand, to give aid. It was not to be that way, however.

The living go on and on. What is done is done, and I must pursue that morrow, and put aside the drama of the evening, for I was merely an intruder on a private and important scene.

Soon the birds were awakening, chattering happily, and the squirrels' feet clattered and clicked on the loose bark of the dead tree outside my window. The sounds were a lullaby and somehow reassured me that many have survived the night hunters of their life, as I have survived these many years. And then I could return to my sleep for a time, until the sun rose to dispel the wildness of the night.

MARILYN WESTON

You're Here

the trees are bare.
it seems as though the first leaf fell only yesterday.

we celebrated Michael's first birthday,
we sang and laughed
and missed you.

Grandma's fine.

it's so cold and

i remember a day when we ran
laughing through fields of sunshine and yellow flowers,
chasing butterflies and each other,
somersaulting through time.
the grass tickled my bare legs.
i giggled and rubbed a beautiful flower
on your nose.
you stroked my golden hair,
whispering through tears you'd never leave.

i bring you flowers every day,
stroke the cold gray stone above your head,
waiting for the wind to whisper you're here.

A Taste for Red Wine

the cold and snow
have brought warmth
for winter wheat,
fire to flicker
in the eyes of lovers,
the hearts of children,
given me
a taste for red wine
and your lips.

MENKE KATZ

Old River

Even the old river complains life is short.
The fate of man, stars, beasts and stormlit mountains
moans in the shoal waters of the riverside.
The old river is a true friend of the doomed.

Cows in their old age, the grandfolk of the herd
with much mooing and little milk, old barrens
at five, beggars of pity, milk slaves at the
mercy of the skinning knife, all who drag the dust

of the road on their way to the slaughterhouse
are welcomed by the river to quench their thirst:
Bearded goats with broken teeth, priced only for
their raw hides, are of no use even to God.

Sheep, meek-eyed preachers who preach peace all their lives;
castrated steers raised for beef, bulls breathing fire,
face the butchers in white—the angels of death.

River willows offer wild grapes for their last meal.
Calves, jolly children with bells on, unaware
they toll their own death, leap and cheer and marvel
as if the slaughterhouse were a wonderland.

FRANCES OUELLETTE

Little Things

I've had
So many dreams
That got caught
In little things
Like the amount of time
From here to there
And having the rent due
Unaware
Of weeks that drift
And mounting golden air



KELLI BAER

A Rosary

for Terry Baer

i

the lake swallowed him
in grasping
hungry sludgewater.
it hadn't had a bodymeal
for quite
some time.

he thrashed she struggled
both for and against him
until it was clear she couldn't go on.

She let go.

and quite soon after

he let go, too.

ii

D.O.A. Grady Memorial
delivered in soaking denims
and with a contact lens lodged under one lid.

She cradled his head in her lap
as if a mother's kiss
could revive what was lost.

iii

I didn't know it was a rosary for the dead.
(Who's dead? My father held life in the tube of his hand.)
Counting heads, my mother knew before me.

detachment and somebody's nembatal
brought the night down
with something fuzzier than what we knew we felt.

iv

my own embryonic cries still choke me in the night
and his younger brother paces midnight floors in trance:
testimony to the way
the dead go on living
in the living
who go on dying

JOHN DITSKY

Rhythms

in the time between
the raising of a lager mug

the duke of edinburgh's
limousine emerges
from the admiralty just
across the street

and drinking

: britain goes on

The Midwestern Poet

He knows he is being
watched. He writes his poems
with his penis—that being
the day's convention, all
that is said to bolster style
and earn a man audition.

Burly and bearlike, he smiles
at readings at slightly older
girls who know—who drink
and give and make no fuss.
He runs affairs with a heavy
heart. He loves his wife.

DAVID EVANS

First as a Weed

The grass grows
In our minds
First as a weed,
Now to be loved.

ADELE WEISS-MILLER

Memories

I'm home again, friend.
Just the sound of your voice
over the crackling wire
carries me through the years
and the miles
until I alight upon home.

SHARON E. RUSBULDT

It Is Time

He will not go behind his father's saying . . .

—Robert Frost

It is time. This is not my command.
It is simply time.
You have always been just in front of
Or found your own private place
Just off to the forward side.
It's something those criminals never did—
The ones we drive past in the car so often,
Those taking the afternoon sun
Enclosed outside
By the double and chain linked and barbed wire and gun pointed
Guard towered fence—
They have locked themselves there
Just in front of and off to the side—
They have not gone behind;
they have never
(Also nursery children: it is not ever
Expected till a certain time)
Discovered the orders of orders,
They cannot take command.
All of your life you have been outside.
Now it is time.

BETTY M. DIETSCH

Last Night

I dreamed
my budding self
flexed against its acorn walls
and hurtled
into light.

ROBERT BESCH

The Keeping Room

Where lives and doilies got their shapes,
We sit in battlement and pit our smiles
Against these stern and ghostly faces
Framed in ovals of mahogany.
They beg us to recall how they smiled,
Before old cameras and brushes fixed their flesh
For quaint ancestral death-by-hanging
From a twisted wire.
Soon our war of eyes will end,
With no clear victories to share.
They'll stare, content, within their glassy dorms;
And we'll have spent our minds in yesterday
With nothing else to show
Except the spoils of poor remembrance.

LES COTTRELL

Winter Death

It came,
a blinding dance,
 a horrendous yowl,
 and a biting frost
scintillating the earth.
Celeritiously,
 it conquered.

STEVEN FORD BROWN

Conversation 3

for LC

the small bones of our words
lie at the edge of the woods
we turn away from each other
hearts deaf & thundering
I open myself to grief
& all her ugly sisters

I remember the dream of you
face lifting to the surface
like a pale fingerprint
suddenly appearing at
the center of the lake
the absence of wind
birds helplessly confused

the endless roads
of our conversations
have finally come to an end
among the dead & shattered
stalks of the sun
waving in the emptiness
of the far field
I hesitate in the last light
before disappearing
through the trees

I carry away a number
of bitter truths & the
memory of your face lifting
to the surface for a moment
as the final dark clothes
of our goodbyes hang themselves
on the outstretched arms
of the trees.





JOSEPH BRUCHAC

Dunham Brook

All of the streams
in Greenfield Center
were running slow
from the drought of late summer
when I went with dusk
to Dunham Brook.

Wood Ducks,
their crests
bright rainbows of color,
spoke to each other
from both sides of the swamp.
A Bittern boomed
the moist dark.
Bullfrogs held
the breath of the night
to let it go
again and again
in deep drumbeats.

Rain dappled the surface,
flowing, flowing
alive and dark
into the mouth
of the metal culvert.
I thought for one moment
how I might look,
silhouette like a moving tree,
seen against the sky
by a trout.

Then the worm vanished
and the line pulled steady,
touching the pulse
of another life.

RONALD WALLACE

Aging

"I still think I'm twenty-seven.
Some mornings I get out of bed
and it's a good half hour
before I can figure out
why I can't straighten up."
My grandfather pauses, saliva
dripping from his chin,
his thin lips quivering.
"Or I lift the cereal to my mouth
shaking, incoherent, and wonder who's
the old fool holding the spoon."
The evening lengthens,
shadows slowly caving in between us.
We do not turn on the lights.
He cups his empty hands
together in the dark
as if they held an answer,
something palpable.
"Old age. No, I don't believe it.
Though my wife has strangely aged enough
to be her grandmother."
His clear eyes spark.
The darkness overtakes us.
And I watch myself grow older,
incomprehensibly grow older,
by the light of my grandfather's voice.

RITA BURKS

Clouds

I used to believe I saw pictures in clouds—
Camels, elephants, old bearded men—
All made of that soft cottony fluff,
Outlined in clear honest blue.
I imagined myself floating up
And capturing a piece of cloud in a paper bag.
I dreamed of keeping it in a box on my dresser,
Taking it out, fondling it,
So sedate, serene, without worry.

The other day as I was driving through fog
I realized I was in the clouds;
They were all around me,
But I wanted to blow those clouds away.
The air was too thick with solitude.
I could believe I was the only person:
The world limited to where I was,
Nothing around me but lonely peace.

Now, I wish I could bring back the clouds.

LINDA JO BANKS

Troilus

Troilus, I reject you!

In my youth I thought you, as you lay on your couch,
Immobile, eyes burning from the smokes of your heart,
Glassed over with opaque cameos—
You were what lovers ought to be.

But, you puppy, you only loitered on the first rung
Of a ladder leading not to a white rose
But to the surging phoenix of love.

Love burns not my wings;
Love makes me more than I ever could have been,
Less than I shall become,
As I grow free and open to receive.

JOHN S. BRINKERHOFF

Terra Nova (1912): Kathleen Scott Sails to Meet the Captain

In 1912 Robert Falcon Scott, a former captain in the British Navy, and two other members of an expedition to the South Pole were found frozen to death in a tent on the Antarctic ice cap.

The world changes.
England is changing, Kathleen.
Lanes that led to love
have begun to run backwards.
The billowing, stonewalled meadows
are falling to bleakness and rubble.
The maternal whispers of summer leaves
are becoming somber as the chants of monks.
And the birds
are learning the psalms.

The world changes.
Kathleen, the sea is changing
beneath you, as you slide southward
in its broad, strong palm.
It is becoming gray and mean,
and will claw at the black home rock,
a thief of seasons, an ogre god
whose spell gives the men who sail it
youth
and his smile.

We change.
You are changing, Kathleen.
The girls and women you were
are hurrying ahead to meet you.
The blaze of coming mornings
is arcing behind you.
At the dock, a man who cannot look up
will hand you vastness and struggle.
And your eyes will seek out
the children who are lonely.

We change.

Kathleen, you are changing
into an apparition, a dream.

And he, as dream, is coming to life.
Far away, in the manger of the wind,
your heart drums in a slush of sleep and waking,
in a vague stench of fouled breath,
heat's last feeble promise,

as days glide like mimes
from the lantern.

Everything changes.

Times are changing, Kathleen.

You will see that he covered his ears and grieved
when they killed the ponies for meat,
and understand

as well as you understand your journey.

He will not have decided this end;

but isn't the choosing of honor, in itself, the same?

As futures glide like mimes
from your cabin lamp.

Eyes to ice.

Bone to stone.

Pliant flesh becomes the mountain face.

The change is made in guttering
lantern afternoon light on English lawns,
at tables in cool grottoes of shade

where they toast his achievement, and he smiles
and lifts his wine to you, and the afternoon light,

deep, warm light,
such grand light
for ponies and men . . .

ROBERT SIMS REID

For Ned Graves

Could he feel her skin butter-soft
through a blouse tugged free of buttons
and the water that choked her tame
in the cool creek, silt sliding back,
back to himself bowed over lunch
outside the gym, 400 pounds
of boy called genius. More lessons
to learn than school and Ned hired on
with the carnival. Something light
jiggled in that flab when he sat
his bench at the V.F.D. Fair.
Kids would shout Let's go Ned, go fast
and he'd yank more levers than one
to stop his toys and let pretties
off to vomit. Miracle Shows trailed
south to winter. I watched one truck
speed away, filled with brooding fat:
*My love, my love, these padded walls
are old friends. You lay light as bones
dressed up. This tattoo's for water
to sail a boat on, this here knife
will keep us warm.* Once in a book
I learned things I can never keep.
Why love the rain? I almost know
the way it smells, the way my hands
cradle a rock from palm to palm.

Neither lover knew the other
would die, one among the slim reeds
pointing the way far to some moon
that would not care. How could she know
which arm was tender, which a club?
After years of night I insist
his wrong lay in that wet, bruised mud
holding them closer like a kiss.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KELLI BAER is a student at OSU Marion. Her poems have appeared before in the *Cornfield Review*.

LINDA JO BANKS teaches English at OSU Lima, Lima Technical College and in OSU Marion's educational program inside the Marion Correctional Institution.

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