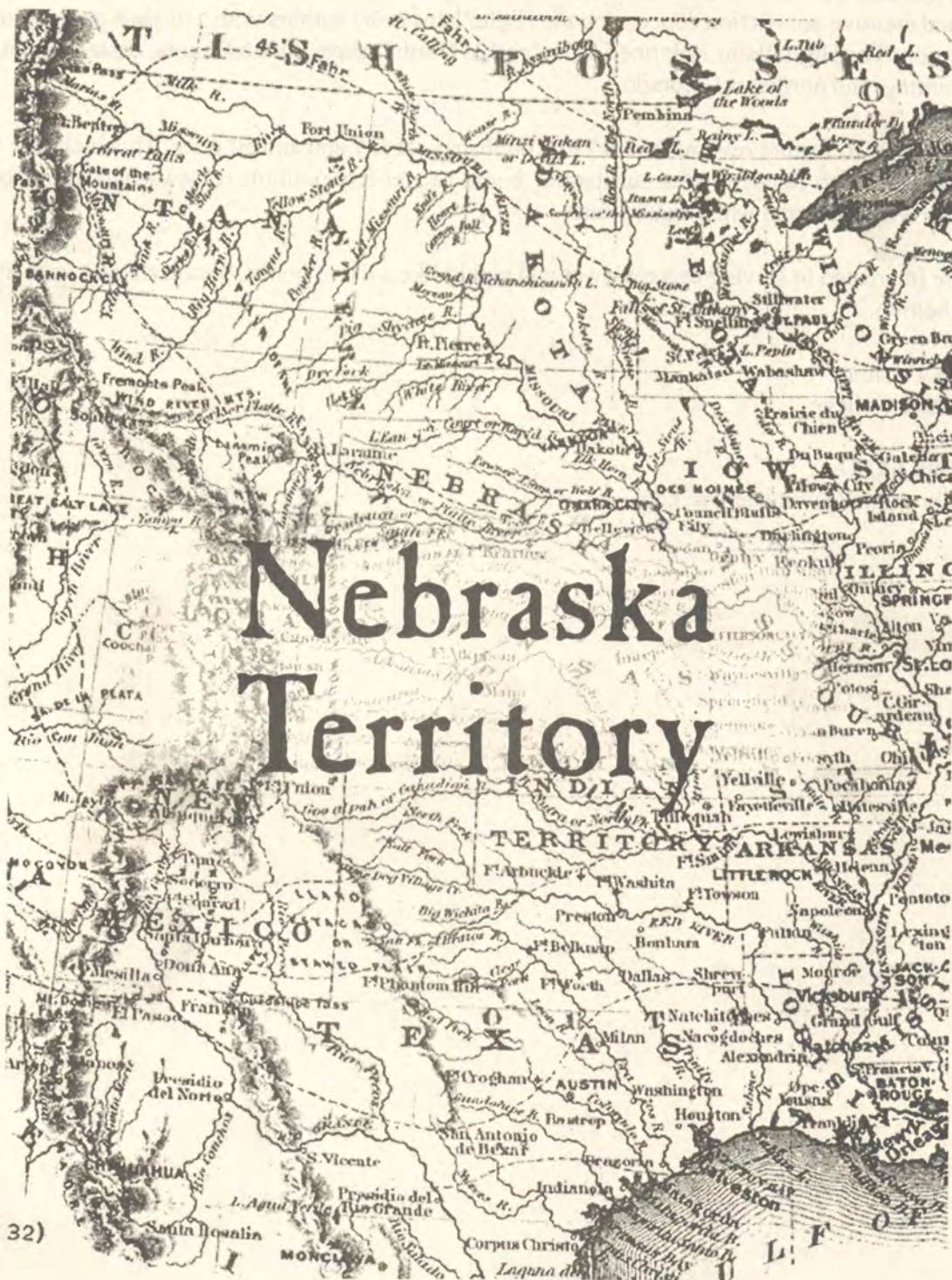




32)

Beginning with its next issue, Nebraska Territory will become a review of literature of the High Plains. Nebraska Territory intends to serve as a clearinghouse for books of contemporary fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction concerning the High Plains or by authors with a distinct connection to the region. The High Plains is defined as Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, eastern Montana and Wyoming, and northeast Colorado.

Our intention is to feature reviews of books by publishers of any and all sizes. This includes chapbooks. Reviews can be brief or substantial, books can receive multiple reviews, and letters to the review will be printed when appropriate.

If you are interested in serving as a reviewer and would like a list of books, please contact us at the address below:

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A Walk Across Ela

by Dawn D. Dolesh

Agua dulce dripped down
her brown chin as she missed
her mouth when drinking in.
The '49 was only movement
this time. She wanted to leave
the Rez. Try her timid
feet in forbidden waters.
The thunder
would be her protector
as she left Adair County.
Tsa'lagi would not recognize
her absence. Her identity
was acknowledged only
by the wind that carried
the words whispered
under the mighty ataya.
She let the remainder
of sweet water run
from the glass
sacrificing it to the grass.
She stood to full height.
Never looked back.
Took the first steps
in her walk across Ela.

The Spiders

by Dawn D. Dolesh

There is too much dust.
I cannot keep up.
It suffocates.
It layers
And layers
And settles
Between the stems
Of the variegated vines,
Between the drapery folds,
Between the wick and the wax,
On the lacquered ledges,
The crevices in the carpet,
The glass panes,
My eyelashes.
The cobwebs grow.
The spider spins them shut.
I cannot get free.
It envelops me.
Forces me to deliver
Lone expectations
Unconquerable alone.
He signed the license too.
Simultaneously
Turning to service others.
Tending to their keep,
Their cares,
Concerns, and needs.
And me...
Why, cast aside
To battle the dust
Alone.
Oh, and he did it so well.
Their demands so tendered.
Sixteen hundred gold rings
And a birth certificate
When he christened his vows.
Incompetent competition.
Still, the loss is mine.
No matter how cunningly I concentrate,
How bravely I battle,

How accurately I aim
How can I keep the dust from layering
And contend with the hundreds of spiders too?
Robbing me of his humanity
To interact freely.
The web is too crowded.
The victims take control.
I too, wrapped tightly
Cannot get free.

The Dark Hole

by Dawn D. Dolesh

The soul runs rampant.
Seized by an overwhelming urge
To leave its body. Electric
Zapping distressingly, morosely
Across the atmospheric boundaries
Of a hell in the heavens.
Immersifying matter. Cold as
Relentless waters on an Alaskan
Shore. Embedding, pulsing in temperance
Astride a bucking meteor
Hurling off its shucking shoulders.
Landing on cratered knees.
Sinking, sucking mortar
Lifting its lips to intimidate;
Lacrimate. To follow through
Permeating the walls of Erindanus.
Tripping off the stars like
Pinballs. Bouncing down through
Illuminated exuberance; screaming
Toward the infinitesimal dark hole
Only large enough to allow
The soul
To disappear into depths
Indecipherable.

Playwright

by ShOe

They watch over me
like seraphim wrap
perched upon the bubbles
exuding from my fanfare-felt
productions of thought
and monotony
begrimed by soot
and an affinity
morose affectations
and the stuff
that dreams were supposed
to be made of
He stole from me
my mythology
my rhyme and reason
to remember
each and every single one of Him
And now they
these guardians
stand above
and beyond
and sometimes within
and sing
each note
providing the background
accompaniment
for the great tragedy
in progress...

Always Mirrors

by ShOe

We are care givers
and providers
of self esteem
we are the gate keepers
of future endeavors
and the safety net
below
the lines

We are fountains of knowledge
and we are sounding boards
for all that is unfair and unjust
in that tragic teenage realm of haunt
We are demonstrators and instructors
and sometimes entertainers
and sometimes magicians
who make the tears go away
and the hurt seem less relevant

We are the center of attention
we are martyrs for a principle, objective or theory
and we are sometimes
tired
and we are quite often
tired

We are sometimes underpaid
for the amount of work we commit
and we are sometimes overworked
for the commission we receive
and we are sometimes role models
and sometimes professionals
and sometimes sadly not

Sometimes we are no more than a large group of adolescents ourselves
potraying and representing pride and ignominy hand in hand
those stock characters we so often see

we bicker
and joke
and chum
we drink
we smoke
we shun
we clique
we stab
and we scoff
and we wonder
just why
our students act
the way they do...

Spiral

by ShOe

Somewhere
deep inside myself
I am using nine inch nails
to peel back the layers of my skin
one by one

And like the age-old art
of blood-letting
those leeches
will suck all impurity
and consistency
from my pores
a sort of liposuction
of the soul...

And i will hang those hides
in by parents' back yard
mounted on the same clothesline
that aired out my dirty childhood laundry
I will strap my wrists with twine
and thorns
as a messiah
to the cords

And where the sweet tears of sacrifice fall
and blood from my contriving hands
is wrenched
and wrung out
till dry

there will a hundred roses bloom
in synchronized abandon
and there

will lie hope
for every innocent
grasping hand
pricked by the black-petalled thorns
and infected
with an archetypal wisdom...

Under the Cottonwoods

by Barbara Schmitz

Some flies. The trees are quite
rustlers with leaves turning
front side, back side
like a middle-aged woman in a mirror
checking her image
against her memory.
Over and over.
Yellow ones mixed in the green.

They are all widows,
my mother, her two sisters,
the lone sister-in-law.
All the men gone to a card game
in Heaven like evenings
at Christmas and Easter.
Adults at the little tables:
talk, smoke, highballs.
Us kids a constant buzzing
in and out of their pinochle game.

"Dorothy's next," my mother says,
"then me."
A few yellow leaves
trail down in the breeze,
smack lightly on the ground.

Stolen

by Barbara Schmitz

After we find the cigarettes,
the beer, the other stuff
in his room slid beneath
underwear and socks,
I don't care anymore
about the flowers in their beds
beside the driveway.

I covered them with all
the spare blankets and sheets
I could find like babies
being tucked in for two nights
in the dark; protecting them
from Jack Frost's too early kiss.

After the fighting, yelling,
the tears, I look at the faded roses,
exhausted daisies, straggly bachelor buttons
and speak out loud to winter's
grabby hand stretching to strangle
this fading beauty. "Come on,
and take them away."

Aurora

by Stephanie A. Marcellus

Aurora rises out of night
Pale against black sky
Reality is reflected--cosmic
Moonbeams in blue orbs

Fingers laced
We stand hand-in-hand
Held static in winter
Under a crystal cut sky

A triangle of horses
Flock our sides
Their legs stretch tall
Distorted shadows in headlights
Making our guardians
Seem even more regal in starlight

We are held captive
As ice to frozen earth--
By horses
By moonlight
By warmth and grace

Off the Road

by Stephanie Marcellus

I have plunged off of the deep end
Searched for sanity and came up
As empty-handed as before
Except for a few new psychoses
Swimming around in my head;
Done things that would make a saint swear
And a demon apologize seven times for each deadly sin

I've drove mad-hatted through roadside towns, counties, and states
Like the devil was at my heels
When the only thing behind me was Robert Plant
Crying out my soul from rear speakers

I've cried enough tears in my liberal morality
To send my hopes floating downstream
And drown any conscience I have left
Starved myself down a few sizes
Because I thought maybe beauty had the answers
But came up hungrier with questions than before

I looked for something I thought
I had lost in a small town in South Dakota
And any other put-food-on-the-table,
Clothes-on-my-back job I could find
I tried wearing a blue collar for a while
Then thought that white might suit me better

Tried different perspectives on the same history
But couldn't make heads or tails
Or determine fact from fiction
Because everything is still a mystery to me

Tirade

--for Allen Ginsberg

by Stephanie Marcellus

I am sick and tired of being bound to time
Chained to eternity by minutes, seconds, hours,
I am tired of dealing with the under-handed, double-handed clock
Tick-tocking my life away on the mantel shelf,
Buzzing, beeping me awake in the morning,
Swallowing my night time dreams of freedom,
When wings are glued to my feet and I fly smooth like Mercury,
Nimble movements, mine, in a flash of blue light,
Me, flying unleaden through the air.

I want to be unshackled from time slots, schedules,
Can you do that?
Will you do this?
You should do this.
You should do that.
Why haven't you done it?
I expect more out of someone like you, a smart girl and all,
Would it make any difference if I had been a smart boy?
I want my life to be fluent, uncompromisingly free,
You can never tie me down twenty-four-to-seven,
I will elude you,
Escape mentally, physically, spiritually, alive or dead,

Your higher agencies of learning will never teach me
Why my bread is buttered on one side,
While the guy down the street begs for bread on the corner.
Why we keep devising new ways to kill each other,
As if we aren't able to hurt each other enough,
Without the aid of technology,
Why my peers try to kill themselves
By getting too high, getting too low, and finally hitting rock bottom,
Diving off of any building or bridge they can find.
Your lectures will never teach me
Why some people don't think like I do, and why some never will,
When they scream out of padded rooms and hospital beds.

Your philosophy will never tell me why I am here,
When I don't know myself and maybe never will,
Sometimes I think it is for the best
That I don't know the grand scheme,
When men are raping women,
Children are being beaten for someone else's pain,
And you hate me for some unclear reason
That neither one of us will ever be able to explain,

And on days like this, when the rain falls out of a sky
That is dying according to some high-tech-superhuman-scientist,
Who plays gloomy Cassandra to feed his family food
That is fostered on pesticide and acid rain,
I think it would have been best to have made time *my slave*
So that I would have never known
Anything more than I did
When I dropped pure out of the womb,
Wailing that I had left warmth and security,
And the only freedom of choice that I never had

Lullabye

by Carrie K. Hansen

he wraps her in arms
as strong as tree limbs
and draws her into him,
into his very center

they are gently rocking each other
in a lullabye of souls,
a song of healing

he draws a deep breath
presses his face against her shoulder
and sighs into her,
shuddering.

Unconditional surrender

by Carrie K. Hansen

What on earth makes me think
I could hold out
for a single moment against
you and your clever arsenal
of neatly arranged weapons:
 intelligence,
 warmth,
 openness,
and sincerity that makes you
so naturally sexy?
sure! go ahead!
be charming! be trustworthy!
you devious bastard, you.

Boobs

by Carrie K. Hansen

As I undressed for bed
I happened to look down
And in an amazing revelation
My eyes zoomed in,
Like a camera lens on amphetamines,
On the two lobes of flesh
Hanging on my chest.

I poked the left one with a well-manicured nail.
What have you done lately,
I asked it,
You aren't feeding any hungry baby mouths.
And you, I said to the right one
In an accusing tone,
You aren't comforting a lover
As a post-coital pillow
Or a lovely handful to evoke anybody's tender sigh.

I should guard my thoughts
A little more careful:
Breast cancer, you know.
If I lose you to a radical mastectomy
I'm sure I will choke on these words.

You couch potatoes! You slackers!
You're just taking up space!
No wonder they call you boobs!

How Graves Didn't Die

by Eric R. Hoffman

My feet propped up on the desk,
Bud Powell on the radio,
I hold my smoke at half-mast
and watch the young couple in love
make their way through the maze
of newly-arrived books.

Then the young boy holds up
the book by Graves and asks me
if I have read it. No, I say. He goes on
to explain how Graves had escaped
death by pretending to be dead,
by lying silent on a field of dead men

(some his friends), how he lay still
and held his breath and waited
for the Germans to pass him by,
on to better prospects for fresh kills
or imprisonment. Then the boy
holds the book in front of him,

and studies it. Weighs the price.
His young love comes to me, carrying
a stack of books like an offering.
Miller & Vidal. Jack Kerouac.
We hold our breath and she understands.
We are young and without war.

Such silences are rarely planned.

Wine

by Eric R. Hoffman

Afternoons, my empty stomach
grumbles its love for you.
Burning heat rumbles your name.
In my room, your slow cloud
folds open throughout my head.

Dead nights I sing your name.
your kiss is the most wet kiss
and loves me late and best.
I swim in your swirling words.
I slur my proposals to you.

I would love you to love me
long and without end.
But with each time we kiss,
some small part of me abandons ship
and goes swimming in the ash.

To A Girl Without Autumn

by Eric R. Hoffman

It is October, and I am writing
you from my desk beside the window.

Wind rattles the glass, and cold
ripples come snaking through the panes.

Right now the wind is blowing so wild
it seems to open up a part of the sky

gray clouds run quickly from. The trees
are so thick with sound they appear

to be blooming within themselves.
What a majesty of sound it is,

quick and forceful, muting everything
but itself, gray as the sky is gray.

I cannot write a word. I am
nothing but a creature listening

from safety, who'd prefer not to be
at this desk, thinking only of you,

passive as a dead leaf. How much
better it would be to be a windstorm,

and to build a cathedral of sound
around you that darkens with thunder

so close it sounds almost as though
it was striking inside your bones.

Young Brave

by Eric R. Hoffman

Where I'm from, a darker kind of skin lived.
They'd walked the land like breath, without a trace.
When I was young I'd hear their names in things:
old names are Indian, streets presidential.
Out west, streets are alphabetical, similiar
by design and farms are crushed underneath
tract housing. Everyone's skin is white
and kept in pristine shape, warm with money.

Where I'm from, the forgotten part of town,
where homes still groan after one hundred years,
where I learned to speak white and to keep out
of dark neighborhoods, just north -- mere blocks
from my bedroom. I saw my white dreams grow on
my fluffed-up pillows. Warm when winters came.
On Western Street I killed Indians dead.
Always the cowboy because, where I'm from,

only cowboys killed. Indians never did.
White snowfall fell and buried arrowheads
and dark-skinned kids might as well be Indian.
Once I stumbled out west, past tract housing --
somehow, I found my dreams trapped and groaning
in the wind-wrapped black barbwire. Indian
dreams of dead cowboys. I felt suddenly old,
as though I had been asleep for centuries.

Dandelion

by Brigid Howard

In all of its beauty, a round yellow flower
with careful fingers I pulled it, leaving the roots,
from the new green dew soaked grass.

I presented to you this golden treasure
A simple gift with deepest sincerity.
You accepted with insult
seeing a weed rather than a flower.

All those red roses wrapped in
storebought green paper pretense
cannot compare with my appreciation
for the single roadside sunflower
tucked ever so thoughtfully
in an empty Snapple bottle.

Long Time Coming

(All I Ever Really Needed
To Know I Figured Out For
Myself)

by Brigid Howard

Sometimes the pieces come back to me
in fragments of conversation
in letters and photographs
in nightmares and in dreams.
It seems to foreign
yet insistently familiar.
Have I been here before?
Some things are better forgotten,
buried and denied.
Truth was a long time coming
and those words still feel thick
heavy in the air.
Do they coat your ears and
leave an imprint on your brain?

I wouldn't let you know me
all of my secrets
and manipulations.
I had to tell someone.
I don't like who I was and
I didn't know who you
wanted me to be.
Did you think you knew me because of those
things I said,
everything I disclosed

I have reached
into the strangest places,
the darkest corners to find peace.
But I can't find it because
it has to find me.
I have to put all of
the lies and laughter
and sins and dreams
and songs and smiles
and kisses and fights
and days and nights
which make up my memory
behind me.
I will move on.

I have to forget the disparity
between who I was and
who I want to be and
accept who I am.
I can't put it away if
you don't let me.
Can you forget the lies
and sins and fights and
who I was and
who you wanted me to be
and love who I am?
I know either way
my peace will find me.
I don't need, neither want,
you or anyone else
to hand it to me.
It will find me.

To a Man I Never Wanted to Know

-In lieu of a Memory for John A. Howard

by Brigid Howard

Digging through boxes of books and pictures,
a garage full of junk your legacy,
and your heirs left to wonder
who was this man?

In letters you wrote in the 60's
you vowed to avoid disagreeable persons.
Were your six children so disagreeable,
with funny haircuts and missing teeth
and smudgy fingerprints to mar
your freshly waxed car?

In yellowing snapshots we are grinning faces
unaware yet of how bad it could be.
Maybe you knew the ugliness
and wanted to keep it to yourself.
Maybe the giggles and fingerprints
were too messy for your orderly mind.
Maybe history was more real to you
than your presence should have been.

I often wonder if you wondered
who I was or who I will be
If we would have talked over coffee
what would you have said?
I know all about your books and music,
and pictures of smiling faces who,
like me, never knew you.
Would I have wanted to?

Unclothed

by Brigid Howard

Snuggled under a blanket
we talked philosophy.

(He has a philosophy for everything.)

He thinks clothes are a wall
people use to hide behind --

as a Taoist, some things are unnecessary.

(I think there are some people

I wouldn't want to see naked.)

As if reading my mind he tells me
naked and nude are two
very different things.

He says once a person
discovers comfort with oneself
that person will rarely feel naked.

(I think especially when
that person has clothes on.)

He says the body is a beautiful work of art
and a wonderful creation of nature.

(If you run around naked you'll
either get arrested or molested.)

Finally I ask him,
right now are we nude or naked.

He says, as he kisses my forehead,
we are enjoying the bliss of nudity.

(I didn't want to tell him
but I still thought we were naked.)

If. . . , Then

by Leslie A. Bentley

If we are to remain friends,
Then don't take pictures of me
or pictures of me with you;
Don't tap my knee
when you're making
a point in conversation.

Then don't ask about my day
because you weren't in it.
The days you were there,
(watching birds in ecstasy,
later, checking the dates on a
fine scotch)
either you or I
belonged to someone else

Then don't tempt me with
the this and that
that is you,
(hands and rough laugh)
or trouble my
vision with your hair, or
complicate my senses with
all those odors of you:
deodorant, cotton, denim.

Then don't blame me when you weep
as I have -- in restless despair over
my absence in your presence,
unsuccessfully wishing for my
body's satiated residence
next to your own, pliable and naked.

And don't deny me my evasive
maneuvers in our intellectual intercourse
when you lean over to whisper in
my ear, and you've forgotten
that we don't sleep in the same bed.

Then
our pillow companions end up being our
Field guides and empty scotch glasses.

Not letting go; for the loss of old friendships

by Leslie A. Bentley

I have lived the possibility of
my life being cut short
the slicing of my abdominal wall
to remove
my blood-filled womb
replaced
with the tattoo of incision
commemorating my survival,
and the joy of laughing with
you once more
at my cat's silly antics

and now you are thinking of leaving
I fight against this inevitable scar
of letting go
not expecting anything less
from my blood-filled self, exercising
sheer determination against losing you
to circumstances
my resolution defying all the logic
of the controlled violence of removal

Friends

by Leslie A. Bentley

in my house you are the guest
yet I am the one who is not sure
how to behave
I wander between positions
silently asking to know what you want
you patiently watch me get closer
your eyes making split-second decisions

later that evening in bed
after you have gone
I listen to you read erotic poetry
over the phone
the more provocative perhaps
because you are the voice and I am the ear:
you're breathing in my ear
my hands rest at my thigh and I imagine
the smells of your breath,
or remember it

this morning I am sure that
I love you
though I know that other mornings
I have not and will not
(maybe this is true)
but there are wonder times like this
when I long for the hummingbird that is you
to arch into me

and it is sincere

Escort GT

by Krista Remer

The blue and silver oval that reads
Ford
is staring back at me
from the middle of the steering wheel
half upside-down
half sideways

You always knew how much I loved
being upside-down and sideways

on an amusement park ride
like Rock-O-Plane

At the same cockeyed angle
cruise buttons
on-off-resume-set accel-coast
I sit and wonder which one we are
and which one to push

Trick-or-Treat

by Krista Remer

Half-naked trees reach skyward
bony arms outstretched
Unaware that I wait beneath

Goblins and witches pass by
I leap out
Yell "Boo!"
to creatures much scarier looking than I

They, of course, scream and run
thinking I am an evil spirit...
The one that haunts their bedrooms at night
while they lie wide-eyed
in the dark
Alone and afraid
They fear I am
risen from the grave this
Hallow's Eve
to take on of them back with me
to keep me company
Underground
until next year when I will return
hide beneath skeleton braches
my countenance illuminated only by moonlight
and munch happily on fallen candy
left amongst the leaves by
Dracula and Princess Leia
on a panic flight

Opening of Pheasant Season, 1996

by Bruce R. Nelson

Harry leans toward me and laughs
his face red, his hair a mess and in his eyes
waving his hand in the air as though it might stop the spasms in his
abdomen
Did I ever, did I ever tell you about the time I went hunting with Davey
Updever?
Harry swallows and regains his composure
I brace in an-ti-cip-a-tion

Usually when I hunt I like to hunt with four
maybe five men
total, he emphasizes, his fist on table
I am reminded of tapes of Krushchev at the U.N.
"We will bury you!"

But this time, Harry points his finger toward the sky,
there were forty-five of us.
Davey, thinking no one would show,
had invited everyone he knew.
And everyone he knew showed up that warm November day

Lured by the promise of a keg of Bud
which he did not deliver.
Harry leans back on the couch, sips at his bottle
and arches his eyebrows, an act meant to display his arrogance, I think.

Clouds floated lazily across Harry's eyes, already misty with reverence
We walked shoulder to shoulder, spanning a quarter mile.
I felt proud and elated, I guess the power got to me,
it was as if I were a Union soldier under Sherman's command,

Then down the line, just a few men, I heard those words
"Oh, I've never hunted before,
I just borrowed this gun from my brother-in-law."
I casually dropped behind the rank
and moved near Davey, at the far end

Whenever a bird flew into the air,
it didn't matter what kind of bird mind you,
it was open game.

Hell, you'd fire and kill the bird
and down the line someone else,
not quite so quick on the draw,
would fire and kick the bird back into the air.
And down the line,
someone else,
attracted by the sound of gunfire would look this way
and see a bird
and fire
Keeping the ever-diminishing
and seemingly animated carcass in the air.

Harry sat down.
He had long been standing;
pointing his air-gun into the tiled sky,
marching in the waning days of the Civil War,
his hand pulling cartwheels, illustrating the bird's postmortem
activities.
He took a long pull from his beer.
It went on forever I tell you.

nominative B

by Jim Mercer

They be who they have to be
and sometimes who they need to be
but seldom who they want to be
and don't know who they be.

and

You be who you think would be
the who shouldwouldorcould to be
not the be you want to be
and seldom if not ever
the whywhynot forever.

and

I be who I pose to be
and sometimes who I loathe to be
but seldom the correct to be
for you and they it seems.

but

We be who we need to be
and maybe need is all there be
but be there be we have to be
and being here be
us.

Smoke

by Jim Mercer

My neighbor and I silently sit
smoking on respective front porches,
secretly celebrating the incongruity
of public privacy.

He smokes the artificial safety of filtered,
antiseptically produced, low
tar and nicotine, his arm
a metronome ticking off
seconds until the television
pulls him inside
its spell again.

I luxuriate in ephemeral perfection
rolled by deft brown hands, tactile artists
in a leafy living medium.

We exhale acknowledgments to each
other; the neighbor returns to his electronic
mistress and I listen to the lower
latitude songs of the smoke
and dream this poem.

Myth, Luck and Refuse

by Curtis Meyer

In my neighborhood
the trash is picked up
Tuesdays in the early A.M.
I'd never seen people
who do it, but some mornings
I'd wake and hear the truck
squeal and grumble by the curb.
One Monday afternoon
I bought a lottery ticket
at the liquor store
and won \$100.
I blew it
on a fifth of XO cognac
and a half gram of crank.
Next morning
I stood there on the lawn
wearing my bathrobe
snifter in hand
and watched them
launch the garbage
into that truck.
"Good morning," I said.
They ignored me,
but Venus winked
from her pink heaven
and I was awake
to see it.

Wonderbread

by Jason A. Elznic

The New America is here!
Here in this musty cellar of blandness.
McAmerica, the old frontier.
No trapper wrapped in bear
to point the way west.
It's gone bust,
It's a crust,
Mold,
That holds our white inside.

Wayne County

As Done By a French Impressionist

by Jason A. Elznic

I want to see the massive plow
a splotch of red
splitting the land
like so many carcasses
going down the line,

The live electric green
of five-legged frogs
squirting out the blades furrow
living off the heroin
injected in nature's vein.

I want to see the rough-hewn horror
that is cottonwood trees,

A vacuum at the bottom
that used to be
dirt
and water,

The transplanted behemoths
sucking the last out of mother
their roots tearing at
her very breast.

I want to hear the roar.

One Thousand Snapper-Baggers
tearing the canvas
in an ocean of sickly bluegrass.

All done in perfect pointillism
the monster of summer
reduced in the mind
to a quarter-inch
of the hundred foot canvas.

I want to see the artist
fat on his commissions
dancing here...
dancing there...

With a paint-pail on his head.

The Don Quixote of High Art
dashing at windmills
with a Number Two Camel Hair,

Thinking justice is done.

Thistle

by Marilyn Dorf

In dry years it was thistle
alone he survived on,
the one crop that thrived
on his hills. But he was

alone and he could eat
burdock if he had to.
Boiled burdock and
horseradish, anything

to stay with the land,
and in spring after the
tumbleweeds cleared
try again. So fierce

were his roots,
defiant as thistle,
the soil both his bread
and his blood.

Xavier

by Marilyn Dorf

each day at dark
pulls from his pocket
the sacred beads
brought from
his youth on the Rhine,
fingers their lack-
luster polish, then
more out of habit
than piety,
says them,
the Hail Marys
a soft thunder
out of his throat,
each bead cool
and soothing,
sweet as old wine.

He rolls up
to sleep then
close under the ribs
of the old bridge.
He could write
his whole life
on its flank.

Why I Never Have Been Good at Condolence

by Jim Reese

I watch the teenager bop by today. I can hear him coming from across the street. He's talking to himself and I wonder if it's a problem for him or just his way. I think it's weird but then stop and think of my own head thinking and re-thinking and singing commercials or old show tunes -- god, it's infecting us all. With this in mind I go upstairs to call my uncle -- he just buried his sister today. What the hell do I say, and the line is half dead on the other end appreciating the call. "So, anything else new your way?" That's all that comes out on my end. The whole conversation lasts two minutes. Anything new your way, for god's sake, what the hell was I thinking?

Soul Food

by Jim Reese

Like some sort of
Half cackle
Coming from a
Frenzied drill
Sergeant major,
He signaled
His own
Reveille.

A morning gun
Awakening
That still fires
To this day.

And I,
I salute
Not for any
Passion
Of the rising
Sun, and for
God's sake!
No pleasure of
Some
Early morning
Cackle
From a post-riding
Rooster.
No, I did this
For our time spent
Together.

It's not
That I hated
Fishing.
I just hated
Mornings.

It wasn't
Until I
Spent nearly

Eighty bucks
This year on tackle
And gear alone,
That I realized
He might have
Had
A point.

No fish
Bites
In the afternoon.
At least,
Not the
Keepers.

I looked over
At him,
As he pushed
That Chevette
Towards the
Sailorville
Spillway.
Listening to
Him whistle
An out of tune
Ellington.

Life
Unfolding.
This new
Day arising.

I laughed
And asked,
"God Damn, aren't you
tired?"
Then I laughed
Again,

Because I was more
Awake than
I had been
In months.

Singing now—
He took every turn
Like some early dawn
Pony Express Rider.

Upon arrival,
I watched as he carried
Five poles,
Tackle
And box
To his spot
On the rocks.

"Bring the bucket!"
He yelled. "And hurry up!"

The dew
And steam
Still rising
Off the water,
As I watched him
Take that first
Fish.

Hours passed
As he fixed
My snags.
Hands freezing, I
Forgot to cuss
Anymore
And that bucket
Continued
To fill

With Crappie,
Walleye and
Cat.

To this day
I've never met
A better
Fisherman.
Nor
Seen one
On any
Hell-forsaken
Televised
Fishing
Contest.

Like a fully
Stocked bar,
He took those
Fish
One drink
At a time.

Bent Houses

by Jim Reese

I take another drag
And catch another collage on the
Wall
And say,
You know Hoss,
they're all bent houses
to me.

These barns, with their
crippled foundations
and peel off paint.

These five here
Hide more history
Than a 12th grade text.

I know for sure
She lost her virginity
In the one farthest south
There, and this one
Here is where her grandfather
Half bent after a days work
Drank whiskey
Into the night and
Sang old German
Songs

That one over there,
A bucket calf
Still awaits a feeding

I take another drag

Like stories Hoss,
They write
Themselves
And someday
They'll echo
Our call.

The Bet

by Jim Reese

Marc Stronge
Was a fat son-of-a-bitch
Got his freshman 15 all
Four years of
College
Had a fiancée he
Swore he'd marry
Till death did 'em part
She's well-developed too
Her upper half
Like horizontal bananas

He always made a point
To remind us
About those Chiquitas too

Awkward, I always thought

Looks like a lot of
Work hauling those
Wire suspended
Back breaking
Pieces of fat
Around everyday

She must not have
Thought that way though
She put 'em on
Display with
Tank top and
Spandex
Had one of those
Push-ups
That made 'em point
Northeast

After seeing her
I always wondered why the

Well endowed
Wear spandex

Is it for packing potential
Or flexibility?

Soon to be Mrs. Stronge
Was a bitch
To old Lunker
That's what we called him,
He's always carrying
Around a few loads

One time
You could hear them
Half in and out
Of orgasm
And old Lunker was
Getting loud
Made a point
To let every
Roommate know
He's getting some
And then all a sudden
He stopped
And you could hear
Her bitching about
Too much time
And needing sleep
And poor
Lunker
Came downstairs
For Ho-Ho's
And our beer
And said he's going
To do something crazy
And after one more of our beers
He said the only
Reason he's gonna
Marry
Banana boobs
Was because
He could put it on his
Resume

That he's married

And had got
A hold on things

And he kept saying
He's going
Do something no
One had done
And he came up
With the BET

That night
Lunker swore he'd ride
His Huffy Mountain Bike
From Fremont
To Wayne
In 5 hours
Hell it might have been
6 it's hard to recall
But he's going
To ride that thing
And if he makes it
We all had to give him
Ten bucks
And if he didn't
He had to buy us
A keg
And we shook
Without thinking
Cause we knew
He couldn't do it
And hell he
Needed the exercise

By the end of the night
He's so drunk
He'd mapped
Out smoke breaks
And Main Street
Taverns for a drink
He made a big list
For all our friends to
Sign up
And swore
On next Saturday
The old bag would be gone
Home for the weekend

Too
And he wouldn't have to
Listen to her
Bitch about
Cholesterol
And too many miles
And how he'd never
Make it

So Saturday came
And we had
A list of 17 guys
And Lunker
Was back home in
Fremont
Ready to set sail at
8 a. m.

We had a buddy
Who
Worked construction there
On the weekend
He even had a cell phone
And sure enough
He spotted old Lunker
And he called
Saying he's not
Holding on to any back
bumpers
He's really doing it

Earlier Scott Brayshaw
Paranoid about his ten bucks
Had hooked
A mile marker
On
Lunker's
Bike
For verification

Now the only
Thing we had to do
Was wait
And we decided on a Bar-B-Q
And invited everyone over
Figured one of us

Would have to drive out to
Wisner
To pick him up
Jason Erickson
He started feeling sorry for
Lunker and
Went out
To look for him around noon

The rest of us
Concocted
A finish line across Main Street
For the Huffy
Or Erickson's
Car
Even bought a roll
Of film
Just in case

Banana boobs must
Have caught rumor
Of the event
Cause she's across the
Street pacing
And cussing us
For participating in such
Foolish
Antics

Erickson
Fifteen minutes later
Crosses
For the checkered flag
Without any bike in his
Trunk
He walks right to
The cooler
And points
South
And yells
"That fat son-of-a-bitch
Is gonna make it!"

We all gasped
And took one big
Pull off our
Milwaukee's Best Light
When we saw
Lunker
Head down
Pushing her for
All she's got

We started cheering and
Poured beer on each other
Lunker he's so happy
Got his hands in the
Air
For victory

He rolled up
Not even gasping
Goes over
To the cooler
Grabbed himself
A beer
Took one long
Pull
And finished
It whole
Let out the biggest belch
We ever heard
Crushed
The can
And rock-skipped it
Across
The street
To old banana boobs
And waved
His final farewell

Fellatio

By Laurel Longe

If I wiped away that deep line running across his forehead; if I tightened that flap under his chin and smoothed his hairline forward a few inches; if I pushed in his little pot belly, extracted the pain in his lower back; if I gave him back his wisdom teeth—he might be eighteen again. And if I firmed my upper thighs and reduced my breasts to an A cup, I could be seventeen ... seventeen. I could be seventeen with long hair and virginity. I could be a size five again.

But right now, while he's sleeping, he looks like a very old man. He looks like the picture of his grandfather hanging on the living-room wall at his mother's house. And even though he's getting more hair on his chest than is on his head, and even though he can barely button that letterman's jacket he tries on once a year when he cleans out the front closet, eighteen is less than twelve years ago. Less than twelve years ago, the muscles in his legs swelled when he ran. And I actually slept at night. I didn't have to kick him every few minutes to keep him from snoring.

He tells me he snores because he works so hard. He has a crew of twelve men and spends the day yelling, "Get back to work! Stop fuckin' around! That's what you get for coming to work drunk!" He rounds them up and tells them how they should stay out of trouble and budget their money. Or he'll take one aside and explain what that one needs to do to keep his job. And when he gets home, he rubs lotion over his callused hands and up to his elbows, into the soft space between his fingers and around his smooth white nails. Those are the hands that have been cut and scraped by various power tools. Those are the hands that have been washed under cold water in the winter and dried on the fronts of jeans. And while he performs this ceremony, he tells me all about his day: how he felt bad for yelling at his men for misreading some blueprints and adding a window to a closet; how the guy over in shipping was just laid off and his girlfriend is pregnant. And then he goes into detail about someone who measured something wrong and the chain reaction that mistake produced. My mind wanders as I watch the movement of his hands, but I keep one ear open for any mention of myself, any stories containing, "And I said, 'Well, my wife ...'" I like the thought of him bragging about me at work. I like the thought of him comparing our marriage to the relationships other men have. I like the sound of his voice saying my wife. It makes him reflect back over our marriage together. It makes him think of eighteen ...

I've heard that people who keep their wisdom teeth have about a forty percent greater chance of losing their sanity than those who have them removed. I wonder what is stored back there that makes them fester and grow in all sorts of wrong directions. What kind of knowledge is lost when the last molar is ripped from its bloody umbilical cord? Or maybe it's innocence. Innocence is stored in the back teeth and that's why you have to have them pulled when you're young. And once they're gone, that's where the wisdom comes in. I've kept these teeth too long—the roots are strong, anchored to my jaw. This is what happens when you hang on to your childhood.

Waiting in the lounge for my name to be called, I saw a girl asleep on a leather couch with her feet tucked under her, waiting for someone to take her home. I sat and watched and thought how nice it must feel to be able to fall asleep anywhere and in front of strangers. She was about sixteen, using her coat for a pillow, and I wished I could have entered her like a breath through her nostrils and allowed myself to be paralyzed by her sleep. She woke up and looked around, surprised to be

surrounded by unrecognizable faces, and I was sorry to watch her leave. Then my name was called and the dentist held up my x-rays and said he'd look forward to seeing me next week so he could pull those wisdom teeth. He asked me if I wanted general anesthesia and I said no way. Deep sleep like that would probably feel so good I wouldn't ever want to wake up.

I don't know why I didn't have this done sooner. He had his pulled at eighteen and I brought him juice and then sat on his bed while he slept with his cheeks all puffed out and pretended to be his wife. I could step right back into that bedroom and look out that second story window and still see him walking away with his baseball cap pointed some place far away. I could look in the opposite direction and see her walking away, as well, and I know she would be trying hard not to look back. And then I'd be tempted to turn to her, sitting on his bed while he slept with his cheeks puffed out and flipping through channels on his television with the mute on. I'd want to tell her about what was going to happen between them later on: how he would not understand why she doesn't like to make love on Sunday mornings with the sun burning through the blinds because of the jagged purple stretch marks on her thighs and the astonishing color of her nipples under the scrutiny of daylight; how, years later, he would ask her why and why again can't he make her happy the way she makes him. And why oh god it's been so long couldn't she please go down on him the way she did when they were young, when he was eighteen?

But he doesn't understand, doesn't see the connection between now and eighteen, between now and not so long after I sat on his bed flipping through channels with the mute on while he slept with his cheeks puffed out. And I can't sleep at night because I can't remember the words he said, I can't remember why he had to leave, only that he did, and the measure I took to insure that I would not have to feel the good-bye.

A square patch of sun on the olive green carpet. An ironically beautiful day on the other side of the window. A pair of vice grips clenched onto my temples as he kneeled in front of me, hugging my knees. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Time to figure out who he was without me. Space to do it in. Time and space and other intangible bullshit and I was confused and I was angry and I don't want to think about this anymore let's just move on. I'm sorry. I hate to hurt you, but I have to do this. And what kinds of other cliché break up lines could he say? He was gone and I knew that. He was gone but he was kneeling there and I was refusing to feel the good-bye.

I don't know how it began. He was kneeling there and I hugged his head and I knew he was gone, but I hugged his head anyway. I knew I couldn't keep him, I knew. But I could kiss him and he could kiss back and it wouldn't feel like good-bye. I could let him take off my blouse and that wouldn't feel like good-bye, either. I could kiss his chest and wonder at the peach fuzz sprouting there and around his belly button and I wouldn't try to keep him because I knew he was gone, but at least it wouldn't feel like good-bye. And he could sit on the bed beside me because maybe he didn't like the feel of goodbye, either. So I had his approval when I kneeled in the square of sunlight on the olive green carpet. It was okay. It was genuine. It was old times. It wasn't good-bye. It didn't feel like it.

It didn't feel like it even when he glanced at his digital clock and shit I'm late for practice pulled up his shorts and quickly knotted the drawstring. Practice. Shorts. It was warm..... track or baseball. But I didn't feel it as he led me down the stairs with his hand against my back, or as he walked down the sidewalk adjusting his cap. I didn't feel it as I turned away, trying hard not look back. But I see him anyway, from above, from his window. I see her, holding that I'm sorry hug a little too long. I see them always from that second-story window, splitting like mitosis.

Nicole wanted all the details. What did he say? What did I say? But I had no answer because the words left me and all that was left was a square of olive green carpet. I tried to explain space and time but she understood that as well as I did so I skipped that part and 'My god,' I said. "I blew him."

'You're lying.' She giggled.

'No . . . I did. He said he couldn't love me anymore and I . . .'

'Oh honey . . . You thought that could win him back?'

'No. It wasn't that. I knew . . . I just didn't want. . .'

I let my voice trail. Even now, sometimes, I can justify myself and it scares me. Ten feet up, it was valid. It was old times. I could pretend it wasn't good-bye. But sitting on Nicole's front step, poking my big toe into an ant hill, my voice was muddy with sea water and I stopped speaking to hide from her the space in my mouth.

He rolls over and puts his hand on my ass. Even drowsy he's affectionate, but I wiggle around a little to shake him off and try again to imagine why he's lying here beside me. It certainly isn't my talent for fellatio — that was twelve years ago, that was eighteen. That ended that afternoon when he couldn't stand the sight of my guilt. Just because he's here doesn't make it right. He was gone. I knew that. I didn't know he would come and stand on my porch three months later with his hands in his pockets, kicking the step and trying not to look at the space in my mouth.

He stirs, wraps an arm around my waist, then draws it back to rub his eyes. He blows air out of his mouth in a long ssshhhhhh. Suddenly his lids burst open and he stares at me.

"-time is it?" He takes the blanket with him as he rolls over to check the clock. He is surprised to discover that he has been sleeping, and I can feel his eyes glowing as he tries to draw shapes out of the gray room. Soon, as I was fearing, my tongue grows thick with apprehension at the words he is searching for.

He sighs.

My tongue sticks in my mouth, growing larger, pushing into my throat.

Say it. I dare him.

A thread wraps around my trachea. A dull ache tightens my chest as I suck long drafts of air around my tongue.

Say it.

I feel his mouth open, waiting for words to regurgitate themselves into the gray air.

Say it. I plead.

"I thought we were going to make love tonight."

My trachea loosens and I exhale, relieved he has spoken but knotted at this confrontation.

"So did I." I challenge.

"Can't you sleep?"

I don't speak but my answer is already hanging between us. I feel his next question before he releases it, and I cower under the blanket.

"What do you want to do?"

It's a cruel game we play, one that we didn't always allow, one that we began not so long after my breasts swelled out of my A-cup bra and my hips exerted their width against my size five jeans. At one-fifteen in the morning lying in bed, there isn't much left to do but sleep. He's knows this. This is the part he plays. He wants to hear it. He wants me to admit it. My sexuality. He's trying to make me say it I want to make love and he knows I can't. It's like asking for water when the tap is running in front of me.

"Huh? What do you want to do?" As though maybe I answered and he didn't hear me. As though want to have sex dinner and movie are among the options. He squirms under my silence and I think maybe this time he'll give in and say I want to everything's okay, that I don't have to fuck play this anymore. We can try to find the knot. We can start again without it.

I wonder if he includes this when he talks to the guys at work. 'Well, my wife never initiates sex ... And I haven't had a blow job since I was eighteen.'

Frustrated, he turns his back to me.

"I can't do this by myself, you know. I need answers from you."

Answers are easy for him. Hungry? Yes. Tired? A little. Want to make love to your wife? All the time. Want to ruin your sex life over something that happened twelve years ago and should have been forgotten by now?

Moments later, his breaths are slow and deep and I resent his sleep, longing for my own. I wait for that moment when my conscious and subconscious swirl together until I'm standing in the dark staring into the vortex and I can't tell my dreams from reality. That moment before repose, I steal a glimpse of my core and see revelations I have searched for since ... since seventeen. And I try to rouse myself, but I'm too far gone and I realize I will wake in the morning with a pang of ignorance.

Going to bed tonight, we wrestled like kittens, beat each other with pillows until screaming in laughter, we returned to our respective sides of the bed, tingling and expectant. Then we ... waited. Waited for the other to aggress some passion. Waited for that old feeling to return. That eighteen feeling. As I sat on his bed those years ago, flipping through the channels with the mute on, he woke up, groggily snuggled under my chin, and planted a loose kiss on my neck. And even though he was heavily sedated, and even though a stream of his drool began to run down front of my blouse, that gesture sent a shiver through my stomach: like a spear thrust through my ribs, deflating me even as I drew a breath. Then, I was innocent. Then, I was seventeen. I didn't protest daylight on my nudity.

Yet I am never naked when I'm alone. When my clothes are lying in defenseless piles across the floor, water running over my arm to temper the shower, I take a moment to enjoy my own skin, the width of my hips, the small of my back. I can admire the contour of my thighs, the curve of my stomach. I am not seventeen. It is not until he pokes his head around the bathroom door to ask where his clean socks might be that I realize I am naked and stand with my eyes popping in embarrassment, feeling the radiation of his sweeping gaze, and I try to remember the location of his socks so I can speak and draw his eyes to my face. I am painted—jagged purple lines, fuschia circles, inky shadows, pink burned flesh. In the shower these colors wash away and I watch them disappear down the drain. I am no longer a set of used parts. I am whole again.

The gray room darkens and gravity pulls me inward. The dark room reminds me of our first apartment. It had a dark hallway with no windows and one night I tripped over the end table going to the bathroom, knocking over my grandmother's antique lamp. He came and gathered the fragments while I stood in my bare feet and cried over my scattered pieces. We stayed up all night gluing it back together. Not perfect, he said, but close, and still beautiful.

I awake suddenly as though I have been dropped from the sky.

A piece ... a fragment.

I leap from the bed and stand staring at the indentation my body has made against the mattress. A piece, a fragment. A piece of me. A part of me. What happened? What did I just do? I walk to the doorway, then turn around, unsure of why I have gotten up. I have a dizzying feeling, as though ... as though I've been staring through a vortex of swarming revelations. Across the room is an old full length mirror and I catch my movement in it as I absently replace a fallen nightgown strap over my shoulder. In the gray light, I look at myself, then let the strap fall. And the other as well. I can make out my silhouette, so different from seventeen. Then, my figure was as straight as the arms at my sides.

But now.

I stare at my figure across the room. She stares back. She has more curves than she did at seventeen. Her waist is not petite, but below it her hips widen and then taper again at the knees. Her breasts are not the scrawny things she used to keep hidden under a strip of lycra. They are full. Not large. But nice. I like how she looks. How I look. I like it.

I put my weight on one foot and the silhouette erupts with bends and soft round shapes. This is not the body of a seventeen-year-old. This is not the body of someone who should be trying to hold on to her innocence. This is the body of a woman. This is twelve years later, and I have hips and I have breasts and I have thighs and I have a stomach that curves and I have a butt that he squeezes even when he's sleeping. I like this body. He would like this body.

He already likes this body.

And he's not eighteen. He has a few gray hairs in his new beard. He has a brow that wrinkles when he reads Sports Illustrated. He has hair growing from his chest downward and hair growing around his belly-button upward and each place is reaching towards the other so that his stomach reminds me of figures on the Sistine Chapel. And I love these pieces of him.

I flick on the light. I flick on the light before I have even realized the intent of doing so, and my toes curl threads of carpet waiting for him to blink the blindness out of his eyes.

"I'm not seventeen."

"No," he says, rubbing his eyes. "What the hell—"

And then he looks. And I let him. I have been scattered far too long. I have attempted to remain as a child, with a child's body and a child's innocence, and I ... I am not ready for this. He's sitting up, bewildered. I cannot explain my nudity to him. I cannot allow him to celebrate my body because what if he can't? What if he only sees the motley of swelled and aging parts?

I turn out the light and ease back into bed, curling away from him, knowing that this time my silence will not be accepted. My withdrawal is just as powerful as his aggression, but has left us impotent and resentful.

Try, I think. Figure me out this time.

His body is tense. I feel the anticipation of his question.

Try.

He's shifting his weight. I wait for his arm to cross my body, for his nuzzle at my neck.

Try.

But his shift is not towards me. He has turned away, pulling the blanket to his shoulder, and I am numbed by his disinterest. I have kept these wisdom teeth too long. They have anchored to my jaw and prevented my speech. They have locked me into a denial of my own senses and forbidden my passion for him. All this time, he has taken the brutality of my indifferent love-making and now he sleeps, exhausted by his efforts.

I lift the blanket and cross the cold threshold of the middle of the bed, spooning into him. I have forgotten how large he is, how warm, how whole. He twitches, startled in his slumber by the unfamiliar touch of my embrace. I steal an arm over him, rest my hand on his chest. He waits, tense as a rabbit, and I am unsure of what to do next. His feet are cold. I slide my foot over his, wrap my toes over his until I can no longer tell whose toes are whose. He relaxes, draws me in, and when he turns and reaches, I know that it is in celebration of me.

About the Writers

Leslie Bentley had a long and lovely childhood in Nebraska. She's a student of the Theatre Department at Bowling Green State University and has a teaching position in the Chapman Learning Community, where she teaches everything from Critical Thinking to Aesthetic Appreciation and Cultural Diversity. Directing plays, facilitating community theatre workshops, bird watching, drinking black coffee, reading poetry until 4 am, and dreaming of the prairie. She lives in Bowling Green, Ohio.

Dawn D. Dolesh is employed full time as office manager and credit counselor for Consumer Credit Counseling Services in Norfolk and also teaches Speech and Literature at Nebraska Christian College. She graduated from Wayne State College in 1989 and is enrolled in the masters program there. Hobbies include writing poetry, singing, dancing, baking, family, and laughing. She lives in Pierce.

Marilyn Dorf was raised on a farm near Albion, Nebraska. Her poetry has appeared in Northeast, Kansas Quarterly, Whole Notes, Plainsongs, and other literary journals. She has published three collections of poetry, *A Tribute to Buttons, a beautiful friend, Windmills Walk the Night*, and *Of Hippos and Hummingbirds*. She lives in Lincoln.

Jason Elznic graduated in 1998 with a bachelor's degree from Wayne State College and is now a graduate student of the college. He is working on a chapbook that will include his having seen hay fall from a sickle, rivets pounded into steel, countless talented people come and go, and many more things from his life. He lives with his wife and children in the small community of Winside.

Carrie K. Hansen grew up in Central Nebraska as an only child. When she was young, she would write stories and poems as well as sing to keep her amused. She was a Wayne State College graduate of 1996 with a BFA in music education. She is teaching instrumental and vocal music at Fullerton Public Schools. Her poetry has been published in *The Judas Goat* and *The Wayne Stater* on the creative images page. Her poetry is also online at <http://rivendel.com/~molly>

Eric R. Hoffman's work has been published in *Phase & Cycle*, *Voices International*, *Ilya's Honey*, *Newsletter Inago*, *Mobius*, *Hurakan*, *Blue Unicorn*, and others as well. Some future work of his will appear in *Exit 13* and *Albatross*. He will be publishing a chapbook of poetry in 1999 through the Lone Willow Press. He is living in Omaha, working at the Jackson Street Booksellers in the Old Market.

Brigid Howard graduated from Wayne State in 1996 with a bachelor of science in Sociology. She has contributed to both *The Judas Goat* and *Nebraska Territory* in various forms while she was at Wayne. Now she is working as a graduate assistant in the Sociology Department for the University of Nebraska at Omaha while writing poetry as a hobby.

Laurel Longe graduated from Wayne State College in 1998 with BA in English Literature and Writing. Several of her poems have appeared in *The Judas Goat*. One of her poems will appear in the winter issue of *Platte Valley Review*, and she also published her first chapbook in 1998, a collection of short stories called *Shadow Songs*. She lives in Wayne with her husband.

Stephanie Marcellus is going back to school for her master's degree in English and is working as a graduate assistant at Wayne State College. Last year, she put out a chapbook called *All That I Thought Was Light*. She lives in Wayne.

Jim Mercer teaches English in a suburban district and writes to give a meaning to life. He lives in Omaha.

Curtis Meyer lives in Omaha.

Bruce R. Nelson graduated from Wayne State College in 1993. He works as a freelance journalist in Lincoln.

Jim Reese is currently going back to school for his master's and is imagining editor for Logan House Press, which he runs with Jim Brummels.

Krista Remer is Wayne State graduate who is living in Omaha.

ShOe teaches at Elgin Public School and lives in Elgin.

Barbara Schmitz won a Nebraska Arts Council Award for poetry in 1997. She has had published two chapbooks most recently, *The Lives of Saints* and *Main-Traveled Roads*. She has had 100 poems published in many different journals.