

Reynolds
Review



Editors Page

Cover Art

Alice Cleaver

b. 1870 Racine, Wisconsin

d. 1944 Falls City, Nebraska

Girl in White (portrait of Miss Edna Brown)

oil on canvas, c. 1911 -1915

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Corresponding tribute poem found on page 30, "Airs and Reels," by Kevin L Nienstiel.

Type set, layout and design by Acting Editor Carla Frisch.

As Acting Editor I would like to convey my appreciation to the jurors, Kevin Nienstiel, Doreen Pfost and James Hawley, for selecting a wonderful collection of student work. It was a pleasure to be a part of completing this volume.

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End Notes

Sea Burial

By: Sarah J Cole

You are already moving as she asks for water
with her eyes. Her butter-rich voice has fallen
silent. Measure the distance that her hand
rises when she breathes. Try not to drift
into sleep. Keep the glass steady. Dress
her forehead with your touch, for the last

time. She thought like your brother, the lastborn
twin who vowed to be a sailor. She said she was water
when you met. That night her rippling dress
resembled the ocean before a storm falls
when the clouds are gathering. Drifting
like you, to her north-star smile and lily hand

You made yourself a fool by requesting her hand
In marriage, as she offered you one of her last
floating laughs. Already you knew the drift
of her thoughts, her words flowed like water
as she confessed to an illicit desire to fall
into the sea clothed in her favorite dress.

Her face shines like the ivory wedding dress
she would have worn. You take her hand
in yours as it tightens. Relaxes. Blood falls
from her mouth. Her breath fails last,
taken with the wind over the water
to absorb her final whispers in its drift.

Her body lies on her bed like driftwood
covered in a dress of green moss
floating on the surface of the water.
You smooth her blanket and your hand
reaches out to close her glassed
eyes, the color of dead leaves in fall

Watch now, as her star-white body falls
gradually down in a slow-breath drift
Partake in communion with her in this last
rite, as the wind wears her as its dress
for one soaring second. Watch her hand
sink under the waves. Exhale as the water

swallow her as its wine. The gentle waterfall
touch of her hand lingers as your mind drifts
with her into the ocean, her last worn dress.

On Leave, at the Mexican Restaurant

By: Sarah J Cole

Your words hang heavy
and acidic. Their short burst
silenced by your hand tremor
as you clutch a solitary
chip and stare at it before you dip
it in salsa. As if the bright
machine gun flash of jalapeno
as it attacks your taste
buds could likewise
obliterate those trigger
reports and their repercussions
of which you will not speak.

Fall Fugue

By: Sarah J Cole

She dreams falling dreams. Crashing
to the ground in a haze of soaked leaves.

He dreams of the axe,
and the dark, dead branch.

The Farmer

By: Rick Marlatt

Their livelihoods contingent
on the man who sits,
pink nubs flaring
from the clenched steering wheel,
emboldened in worn coveralls,
on a steaming chariot
of hard steel and
cold iron.

Genesis

By: Rick Marlatt

A raccoon lay stiff in dead center street
one week ago today. On the first day
my head tilted toward earth. Studied it.
Flat on it's back, neck snapped, one paw rudely
extended upward like a broken stalk
ragged mouth sharp ferocious red rapture.

On the second day a woman jogged round
like locust child avoiding blue campfire.
Thick leg muscles bulged, sweat sprays sprinkled down
only feet from the shrinking corpse. By third
day's dawn, fleas and maggots had begun their
sacrament blood from blood bread from blood fur.

On the fourth day a young boy no older
than seven lightly gripped the brakes on his
ten speed, stopped to look for just a moment.
Briefly rose like reposture in prayer
curious fingers grazed sweat chilled chinstrap.
But then a sudden feeling, was a breeze

driven smell of browning flesh or a fear
based notion of disease sent the child on
his way again. Left alone the creature
frozen like time in petrified silence.
By the fifth day very little was left
of my friend with red dried fur calm black eyes.

On sixth day morning thick water pellets
bombarded the creature like mushroom hail
This morning, I had half a mind to rest.
Take leave of my fallen companion. But
heard slowing engine rumble like thunder
then tight crackle of halting tires, time stop.

A tall fierce-looking man in camouflage
sleeves, expressionless face stepped from his truck.
With no reflective pause for creation
reached down. Lifted the creature into crisp
fall air. Stick rigid in brute white knuckles
hit truck bed with a clunk, truck disappeared.

Though he's gone he demands more of me now than I can give.
And so I stand here alone still. Waiting for translation.

Mother and Babe

(For Kina)

By: Rick Marlatt

Like a glow emerging in deep oiled canvas
the child drifts to dream in mother's slow,
cradled sway.
Afternoon stillness,
he knows not the weight of relentless memory,
stubborn screams of conscience.
Only the steady thump
of mother's heart on his soft soft temple now.

Approaching New York City

By: Claire Fort

Approaching New York City signifies approaching you
everything is in your face: a peach ripening, yellow
butterflies riding the morning wind off the Hudson

In that idle car sits mourning, a narrow harlequin
on a dream ride in anticipation of laughter

Daylight assures me that I am the root cause of my mother,
not the grey swallow of an after thought
webbing a story even in stillness

Nights are glittering elegies: I am a fidgeting puppet dancing
in grief's blue boas with peonies in my hair
acting in red caged spirit of home

I spend afternoons opening drawers, looking
for an answer in the lavender twig, a red ring,
in the pocket of your yellow dress

You once told me, as a little girl, when you first discovered infinity,
you were astonished, you told your mom
to pull the car over, and ran home

I think I was running beside you
the sixteen years I knew you were spent holding the soft bark of your hand
in my minty palm, exchanging birch sap for veins, amber for blood

Our currency is memory
I was witness
The ones who threw the flowers in the grave were children

Other days, I walk in a stony absence
having the compulsion to tell
but not to know it, or feel it

Stuck in rush hour traffic on the bridge
I look up and there you are
You are a balloon

A gas lighter than air
The outline enclosing my words
a bag of light

My laughter lives on an empty court
my grief is a basket, a hoop,
a hollow ball

Hear I am, a net below you
every day waking a little
in a yawp of laughter

Halloween in Wilmington

By: Claire Fort

Claire sat on the floor, watched how her father wore the haunted tree mask.
She pondered at how easily he howled black bruises at her, who she wore masks so well, too.
Yet Claire did not mind when her father placed his black beret on her head and laughed.
If you were a boy, I would have named you Eliot.
As Claire sorted masks in her mind, something excited sparked.
She decided to wear her Audrey Hepburn dress, blue green butterfly wings, and to superglue
red glitter to her tap shoes before the guest arrived.
Out on the street it was Halloween night in Wilmington.
She moved her eyes to the door as the wise poets entered, dressed as monsters, fairies.
As rooms brimmed with what, convinced, they had had to say.
Blues piled up from the force of the world, filled the chairs, tables, corners of the house.
Claire approached one thin grey, who changed his name to Max Holly and became a country
singer.
He reeked of pot and gasoline when he handed Claire a copy of his CD and a shot of
something that burned red in her throat.
Claire buzzed around the corner and moved her eyes to the blank door, imagined that her
mother waited outside, breathed chilled blue breath, stood on midnight blue lets, with hair so
long it shivered near her ankles.
Am I the crazy one here?
Claire was about to open the door when sound caught her.
A group of swamp monsters in black berets, one by one, spoke in languages that roared off
their tongues.
Claire started at the colors as they singed the tips of her ears.
She listened attentively as Montague commended her in words of cadet blue.
She blinked hard as Giola brandished expensive sapphire flames.
Claire's heart stopped when she mixed in and beheld her father exacting royal blue love
sonnets to his wife in the dusty windowpane.
A nail of loneliness pinched her heart.
She paraded into the upstairs bathroom, slammed into Kooser drunkenly smearing lipstick
into mirror poems.
I thought I was locked in, he said.
A sweetness filled her eyes and heart. Instead of leaving, she soaked up more words that night,
until she burst with blue light that fed into new dawn.
She realized she was drunk when words in honey dripping blues spilled from her lips.
Something is missing, she said to the thin grey one.
More, he whispered, *ask for more.*

Jumping Rope

By: Claire Fort

Mostly on
Saturday's
I'd go to
The city
Green and watch
The fluid
Motion of
Girls jumping rope.

The girls in
Their posse
Determined
By braided
Hair, faded
High-tops, hot
Pink jump-ropes.
Sharp, quick trips
Of the feet,
The dances
In the air
I'd mimic
The older
Girls do the
Butterfly
While rapping
To gangstas
Paradise.

The sound thuds
Something like:
Day day day.
The down beat
Of the rope
Slaps cement.

In my mind.
I try to
Mimic their
Balancing
Act, time a
Jump, laugh, pause
In a moment

mold invis-

Ble hands and
riff a poem.

Early fall.
I'm outside
The bookstore.
Balancing
My weight from
Left to right.
Spinning a
brief cadence.
I track back
To the green.
Signing on in
The static.
Circling
The stages,
On rewind.

But what an
Act am I
What a lie.
I circle this
Translucent
Stage. It is
Static-like
And cold grey.
But I love
Editing
Down, twisting
The globe, dials
Burn all night.
I am a
Funny lie
And happy
But what's so
Hard to get
Is those girls
I used to
Worship. Their
Simple steps.

Confident.
Claire Fort

Those girls are
Invisible
In this world

Of nervous splendor.
I'll be on
My way out
To find what
Fantastic
Paths there are
Back home.

What body.
What stages.
The sheer in-
Stability
One million
Overused
Words that say:
The heart makes
Its own light-
Electricity:
Making love:
Smiling:
A dog as
He tucks his
Heels under
His haunches.
Suddenly
I am feel-
Ing high
Ly evolved.

Black Hole

By: James Hawley

I wanted to talk about mother,
how she can't see anymore, of nurses
who bruise her arms and legs
when they bathe her. You fold your paper
butter rye toast while you read
Maureen Dowd, Thomas Friedman.
I read your horoscope out loud.

You're talking about quasars, pulsars
or some goddamn thing while I remember
the zoo when we were small, how we walked
for hours in heat while I squinted
through thick lenses to see tiny animals,
pictures on wooden signs,
Look, there it is you would say
I would search logs, long grass
but nothing moved.
Even now I cannot see.

I told you mom was proud of your prize,
your discovery, black holes.
how light, gravity swallows
I asked how we could know about something
we can't see, without looking up
you answer *by observing its effect on things around it*

I told you mom was forgetting our names
but you do not hear
at home with your numbers
geometric shapes which prove to you
the universe continues to expand
until one day it collapses on itself.

A Lost Dialogue

By: James Hawley

What brings you out 'neath this tall pine, Socrates?
My legs, good Philapoesis, and my desire for better thought.
I see, Socrates, you appear to be in good form.
I would be better to hear of your mind
for it is clear you are delighting in much pleasure.
I am doing what I do best. Writing a poem.

How wonderful to write a poem!
Yes, it is a rare gift of the gods. Do you write, Socrates?
No, the gods have given me different pleasures.
Would read my poem? I desire your thought.
In a moment. Right now something else comes to mind.
What is a poem? How is its beauty in the sentiment or the form?

Ah, Socrates, the beauty is in the form!
I see. Form alone, this is that the meaning of the poem?
I do not understand. What is on your mind?
Do you question the beauty of the form, Socrates?
If it is form alone, my friend, and not the heart and thought
of mind, could poetry reach the heights of true pleasure?

The discipline of restricting words to form pleasures
the mind. It is a puzzle---the words in their proper form.
It does puzzle me that you think thus---I would have thought
that beauty dwells in the structure and truth of the poem.
Do you find no truth in mere form, Socrates?
May I read your poem? Do you mind?

Not at all! What an honor to be understood by your mind.
Many of your words are repeated several times, like "pleasure".
Those are the rules of the poem! Do you like it, Socrates?
What does it mean? Reveal its truth, if you don't mind.
Truth, Socrates? Follow the rules! There is the truth of a poem.
One shelves words like one shelves books? Is that your thought?

Well, perhaps I have not given enough thought
to the importance of the heart as well as the mind.
So there is more than form to the good poem?
The form conveys to the heart and mind pleasures.
But beauty and truth may lie elsewhere than the form?
You may be right, Socrates.

We must try harder if the truth we seek is to come to mind.
Some other day, Socrates, right now I desire other pleasures.
Good day. I will give more thought to your words about a poem.

Vows

By: James Hawley

In the beginning we tendered our word
strangely absurd

to believe you and I could ever be
effectively

joined, two into one, ambitions aside
could we abide

with one another within narrow halls,
tumbles and falls,

scraped and bruised spirits contending for love
prizing above

all those well meant good intentions, that word
so seldom heard.

The Leaves were Red and Gold

By: Rachel Jensen

The leaves were red and gold
that fall day, the colors of sovereign royalty
Queens and king of children.

As we sat upon our throne, the tall
cottonwood that we climbed with the single low branch.
Its leaves were red and gold.

In the middle of a meadow we flew with the birds
in the sky, and ruled the grass of the land:
Queens and king of children

who wear indigo and red wind jackets
and wish the leaves to fall so we could build piles
of golden and red leaves to scatter alongside laughter.

The day you left, no longer a king flying among
the birds but a man against God and War.
The queens were left to rule the children.

You were full of prayers that lacked the faith
to make it to the clouds in which you once flew
above the leaves of red and gold.

The leaves had not quite changed hues the day
you found a new kingdom in the arms of a man.
A lone queen left to rule; a child.

You always claimed: *a queen does not need a king
to rule the land* but your words scattered
like the red and gold leaves fallen from the stripped branches.

I stand by the cottonwood. I kiss the lowest branch.
Spring has come and green buds sprout from the stem.
The leaves are red and gold, but they all have fallen.
The children have gone, queens and king no longer in rule.

A Brother's Homecoming

By: Rachel Jensen

Imagine your father's joy when his son comes back years later
as you stand in the shadows, the same modest worker
he's seen everyday as you spent loyal days by his side.
Days spent plowing his fields and milking his cows
like the faithful ass who humbly pulls the plow,
his eyes straight ahead, unwavering against the sun.

Imagine the son's surprise when the man he betrayed
and disobeyed holds him in his lap, warmth in his hands
and a smile on his face. The rags about to fall off his back,
homeless, a beggar, covered in the dirt of his muses;
a brother you no longer know or care to know
and yet you wish you were in his place, coated
by ugly guilt and the root of pigs, so you no longer
blend into the walls and the fields but by your
ugliness welcomed home with arms lifted to heaven.

Old Jack's House

By: Rachel Jensen

The rain song leaked through the thin roof
as the cigar and cigarette smoke rose up,
a voodoo dance between creaseless faces
and shadowed brows. They sat at wood tables
and listened as the piano keys were stroked.
The chords flowed a blue river of black and white.

Through the haze they began to dance.
High heels and suede shoes on wood floor;
an endless river of striped suits and beads.
A smoke and a bottle of hooch was how the good times began
in Ol' Jack's house. The music changed keys
and a trumpet joined the piano in song.

Jack's keys kept the beat while they bounced
in his pocket, pausing their dance as he shimmied
from one small window to the other, whistling the song
and spying beneath the shades. Tonight would not be the night.
Not in his house. The smoke clouded window panels were covered;
rivers of droplets collected and streaked the glass.

The patrons kept up their intoxicated dance
as the band kept playing its pulsing song.
The rain beat down the smoke escaping from under the door
as the whiskey rivers flowed from open flasks,
the key to the loose lips and swiveling thighs
that throbbed on the wood tables and makeshift bar.

The piano still rang and the woodwinds had taken a break
as the patrons shouted their thanks: *Play a song for Ol' Jack!*
The bead necklaces glistened through the mist of smoke
and they danced to the beat of the piano player
every Saturday night. Jack keyed his sight to the windows
one last time and let his own flask ignite a river of fire.

Suddenly the windows crashed in a river of glass.
Men in blue forced open the door, they had found a party keystone.
The piano's song stopped, a break in a happy chord
and the dance became a wild run of screams as people
thrust their drinks onto the alcohol soaked wood.
Jack took one last smoke and dropped the cigar to the ground.

The wood floor lit up in rivers of flame. People ran,
danced and leaped over the heat's song as the cops left the building to burn.
Jake took his key and threw it into the fire. Smoke swallowed the rain.

Report to Senator Wellstone on World Affairs

By: Andrew Bennett

What thoughts we have of you tonight, Paul Wellstone, for the blood in the desert keeps spilling onto the streets of the cities and countryside. Entire families have been spilled from the pantry. What are you doing in the wild rice gruel, Paul Wellstone? The plane falls to the earth. Death plays Haydn; the tunes are piped into the gallery. On the news, “Why is history not the way we want it to be, Mr. President? We report; we should get to decide. We are more objective than thou. Pass the tax cuts for the fat cats and praise the Lord!” The lawyers plead innocent. They’ve been saved, after all. It’s those fanatics that are the problem, them Islamofascists and them Democrats, their interns, and them dictators that we don’t like anymore—and them Islamofascists (and sometimes the French). Their dates are spilling over into another Kilmanean, which are clenched with hooks, corresponding to severed hands from lower Manhattan to Kandioyhi County.

The Moonlighter and the Moonshiner

By: Andrew Bennett

I. Song of Chris McKee and the wedding photo.

All the accounts said he was a storyteller
From the hills of the glistening hill country
Ohio did live on that gray, cloudy March day
Through the solid battle cry of love and wind
To the shining, early sea of the dazzling new spring,
The Raccys and McKees had come together to witness the flight
Upon Samuel and Alice's wedding day they had all come
And the story teller was there, Chris McKee, the wolfman.
He was a congressman they say in the legends.

From all accounts the day was long and dreary
And the cloudy air of early spring, which had sprung up
Brought forth the harvest ripe and bold, but not quite yet
From the bearded men that came in blazing suits.
Waiting and posing so quickly in front of the old camera.
And in the pack, a distinguished face mugged
He was a storyteller and a congressman they say.

The infants were all held in front
Protected from the cold by their long white glistening gowns
Mamie was the only one who smiled out of everyone
The rest just stared ahead, away, away, in disarray
Chris McKee glanced out his eye's corner; he was a congressman they say.

The family was almost entirely in gray
The men wore the dark suits of the earth
Blending away in the beauty land Ohio they had all come
As the hilly earth grew like a wasteland, as it had recently done
Chris McKee stared straight ahead—dead on, straight into the camera
He was a storyteller they say, when telling of all his deeds.

He was a story teller so says them all
And so when Chris glanced in the very front of the row
Looking out over the world with his juju eye
Over the newly joined Racey and McKees
And frowned his distinguished frown, behind his moustache
He would tell them stories was all his mind could say,
He was a congressman and a storyteller, they say.

So out of this fragile earth was born anew
The wasteland of March in Ohio came again.
Holmes county was on the march of a late winter
And now the Raceys and McKees joined together.
Chris McKee looked out an stared into eternity
He had many a story to tell everybody always knew

II. Nervousness

And Samuel did clench his teeth, as he hid
From the wiles of Alice, but never did he notice.
“Alice, my fair, my nervous fears do I try to rid
and realms of glory from this hill of ice
frozen in the time of late March
Given over to the bell of the larch
Now moved on to fabled wedded bliss
But so my fears did cause a miss
Of all things beautiful, wonderful and fair
Like a trap upon an unwitting hare
And given together we shall not dare.
My hand is yours, my fair indeed
If after all this shaking, it can still do the deed.
Alice did unto Samuel say
“Wherefore, my love, why speak thee so
In southern Ohio, it is unlikely so
Perhaps an ironical taste of immodesty
That I am also speaking also; it is travesty.

Now is a time to skin the fatted coon.
Roasting upon the potatoes, near a new spoon,
The families put together shall now go forward
Over the goal of coal that we all go toward.
The hills of West Virginia left behind
Now from the emblematic shield
Of simple, plain folk, we are
Given to the talkative hare
Of good old Uncle Chris, the storyteller
The bookworm that would be better of a teller.”

III. The Guests

From two-cent deep-fried fish, comes a moan from those authentic geniuses the Brooks Brothers, since there is a challenge from the choo-chooing and clickity clack of brown suits and plain dresses, jangling, warm vibrating sounds of hoedown, gut-bucket small whistles, bringing down honky-tonk lyrics, like the rustling of wind through new minted summer sweet corn, motivating through the new-found phonograph, that Mr. Edison has so kindly invented and made available to the world. All the men and all the ladies, even a few children too, dressed in this piece of whipping chocolate, with their seamless souls all a flappin’ from catfish licks and guitar music and banjo and fiddling playing, smoking down through the hoedown, though Chris is feeling as if something is missing, but he is just looking into the camera all distinguished like. What he is really looking out for is the story to be telling, cluing himself into this new people, so he can duck-walk over to someone, just anyone and bring out crowing & sound waves, while he charges a new pupil with the family arms, the stories that they cling to, the Greek and Latin that they read, and the rumors that they are telling—everything that says to them you am.

IV. Say “Rabbit!”

Having lied to the guests about his intentions
Chris McKee went hunting for a story
Instead of dancing with the bride.
Only a few dozen people were there
But Chris McKee was looking for someone
Anyone to tell just another tale to
For he was an austere man
Who was looking to tell just another tale.

Once he had found a victim
A young girl with black hair
Named Mamie, he sat her on his knee
And told what he had to tell.

“If we were to look back into time
My dear, we would see that each
Of us are put into this rather odd clothing
Dragged onto the hills of high noon
While all around us blows the March winds
While at the plow we could be ready
But now we are just unwitting
While some of us are in serious need
Of a stiff drink. Aye, even a child could us
A little something in this cold weather
Off to get a cider, but get back here.
Chris went over and picked up an ale.

Ale, as the poet recently has said,
Is the stuff. English bastard
No good lousy atheist
But he is right about the booze.
Even if a fella doesn't have the sense to be a Christian
At least he got the sense.
Don't worry, you Mamie, the booze won't get you
I'm sure they're slap some kind of tariff
And then they will probably just prohibit the stuff
The dirty, dirty, mouthy progressive scalawags.
You know, there's this fella Teddy Roosevelt
Who's a famous and great man to be sure
But I just don't trust the man, he seems liberal.
Between him and his family, they're probably get this
Communist nonsense they have going around Europe
Going on by the time that you get a big
But I have probably filled your pretty head
With things much too big for you.
Now girl, tell me what you are going to do
On the first of April, first thing.”
“Why, I'll help mother with the chores
like always, of course,” Mamie did reply.

“We’ll, that is a fine thing to do
of course, for a young girl
to be helping her mother,
Come, let me sneak you a sweet
Come my child, stretch out your hand.
However, I must tell you that on that day
Since it is the first of the month
There is something even more important that you must do.”

“Yes, I know,” Alice replied.
“I must pray to God
And thank him for the Spring
And mother and father
And all the wonderful things.”

“That is a wonderful thing to do too
So stretch out your hand and I shall sneak
You a silver coin; don’t tell,” Chris winked.

“Yet, there is something that you must do
Aye, it’s almost like a prayer
Or helping mother with the chores.
Child, you must, at the beginning of the month
Say ‘Rabbit.’ You do know why, don’t you?” Chris asked.
“Of course not, silly uncle,” Mamie said.
“Why, you must say rabbit because it will bring you luck.”

Mamie, however, had a modern mind
And drew skeptical of her silly uncle
That offered bribes so sweetly
But had many a foolish thought.
What she thought of this bearded, mustached man
Dressed in simple attire, yet with a little more dignity
And an air of authority, and a twinkle in his eye
Yet Mamie could not help, but think,
That her silly uncle Chris must be telling
One of his many fibs

But she, a child,
Was still intrigued by his tale
So she begged to hear more
About the good luck hare.
“Yes, don’t you know that the hare brings
Good luck to all,” the wily Scotch-Irishman
Descendent of the rip/tide
The Moor/side
And all sunken lights
Of all sunken moors
And Uriahs
And the story that was forming.

Sulpheric night will draw upon this place
Before the hundreds of barrels of rum
That wash came, like a jangling beaded place
And bituminous breath of Ohio whiskey
Is smelled upon his howling wolf breath
With the wolfman howling at coal mines
And moaning for the bad boy banjo player
To just come out there on the stage
Crack up the whip of the fiddle
And bring his aching heart some measure of comfort
From the juju late winter/early spring afternoon
Sideways, cousin fucking of Holmes County
With all the people dancing to the music
And the little girl that was looking him over
Curly brown locks hanging down
Asking Mr. McKee wolfman, congressman juju hide
Down to the roughshed storyteller that he am
Twinkle in his eye is what he does always in his dreams
And he knew that this new tale of the hare was a tale
That even he, the storyteller, could believe in
For Chris McKee was a newly roughshed moonlighter
And an amateur moonshiner at the wooden stills
And a man that had his many sanctimonious whims
In place for the mind of the story he was after.

“This here land and story ain’t nothing but sticks now
But the old hare, he just ain’t never going to form
No good luck just for the mere fool that doesn’t ask
You have to say it to make the wishes come true
One wakes up and just says it first thing, ‘Rabbit’
And poof you have yourself some very, very good luck.”
Chris had himself so convinced by one of his tales.
He would have sworn on the preacher’s Bible
That he was not zinging any zany, serious metaphor
Of tonguing woody, tree-filled West Virginia border hillsides
Duck-walking over anything that was precious and holy.
He had the tale licked for good he thought to himself
And the muddy waters rang true even to him – success.

V. The truth, devised from photos

So the child’s mother came up to Chris McKee and Mamie
And she was pumping hard for some information
Because it’s about time someone got her daughter away from that crazy wolfman Chris
McKee, since there is no telling what he was going to do, so she calls Mamie over and
than she sends her running along and gets talking to Chris, except that Chris was halfway
near drunk and was thinking things over, his face was real stern, but the mother of the
child kept hanging on and he felt a mean banging on his hot. The child’s mother was
saying, “Come on, Chris, you’re not going to keep telling tall tales still, are you. You
really should come back to reality. You’re not really a Congressman and rabbits do not
bring good luck.” But Chris just looked at her, like looking out the window, when it gets
to be snowing real hard. So Chris starts twinkling his eye and breathing out real hard, but
the woman is not buying, so Chris gets that sense and just sets his mind to the tree and
than turns to the woman and says, “In a hundred years, if people look at that photograph,
people are not going to know anything about the truth. The truth is like an albatross. Look
at the Raceys, telling their story about their cousin getting mentioned by Abraham
Lincoln himself, and bragging. You know what they brag about? The president wrote the gov-
ernor, “Do not let Racey out of prison.” And that poor chap is a source of legend, too.
When the Union recruiters came, it’s said that he put his pitchfork down and said, “You
ain’t gettin’ a single man out of Hagerstown, Ohio.” The insurrection happened at his
store, but he ain’t had no pitchfork, but he sure got run down quick. So people, in future
times can believe what they want, but photos are not going to tell the story. They’ll think
about what they believe to be the truth.”

The Old Man and the Garden

By: Imene Belhassen

Time left wrinkles around my eyes
And when I smile my face is
Nothing but crossed lines!
My hands always shake
Even when I am calm!
My fingers are slow, counting my Sebha beads
An old person's way to pass the time.
I lost most of my hair.
The few ones left are grey.
But my red Shashia hides it well!
My knees are very weak...can't stand me anymore!
My kids now all have kids.
Yet, I still see them with the same old eye which
Fifty years ago saw them when they were born.

I always sit by this wide window, at my small garden...
That big orange tree in the right corner,
Misses my wife's hands!
She planted it thirty-five years ago,
For her mother's memory;
Now for her memory it stands.
We sat a lot under that tree, oh yes
To drink mint tea, and smell its Zaher and leaves.
The jasmine, white lilies, iris, gardenias and carnations there...
Are Leila and Yasmeen's, my sweet daughters.
I remember them daily counting how many flowers are there!
The onyx, the white rocks, sea shells and sand roses,
Are Aymen and Naccem's collection, my two beloved sons.

I sit in the garden with my old photographs,
To recall the past sweet fifty years:
Four kids and a pretty tender wife...
From time to time, I clean the rocks and water the flowers
So our garden lives longer and remains beautiful, strong, clean and neat...

Sebha: a collection of 33 or 99 beads (representing the 99 names of God) that Muslims use to pray.

Shashia: a traditional Tunisian red hat made with wool.

Zaher: means "flower" in Arabic, but in Tunisian dialect it also means "fortune" or "luck".

Hiram Sings The Lost Highway Blues

By: Kevin L Nenstiel

Jim Beam in a glass
pink and yellow pills
motel room in the ass end of Shreveport
with sweat-soaked cotton sheets
one more night on the Hayride
why don't you love me
like you used to do
spine twisted in a hangman's noose
this is your Hillbilly Shakespeare
this is your long gone daddy
this is me alone with my guitar
trying to tell you the truth about
your beating heart and my aching back

—Jesus—

I miss you Rufus
only dad I ever knew
banging your guitar by the Santa Fe line
only man I met whose spine bent more than mine
you taught me the composition of pain
Long Gone Lonesome Blues never
passed my lips without your long arms
cymbals banging between your knees
montecristo box full of dimes
your jaw harp your flying fingers
burned black and red on the backs of my lids

Don't lie to me son
ain't no such place as Canton, Ohio

Thirty years old staring me down
with both barrels aimed along a trough
Miss Audrey carved across my Alabama breast
goddamn Opry ain't never gonna know
how deep they pissed in their own well
I got a feeling called the blues oh Lawd
since my baby said goodbye
Shreveport will always take me
one good time long as there's a sad song welling
a drop of blood they can wring
from a thin cowboy with a knotted back

The Cadillac rocks me to sleep with a hard-on
and a bottle of Tennessee sour mash
one hand on the throttle
one hand on the brake
gonna make the last show
hear that lonesome whippoorwill
sounds too blue to fly

Ain't no such place as Canton, Ohio

Country singer Hiram "Hank" Williams (1923-1952) died in the back seat of a Cadillac while being driven to play a show in Canton, Ohio.

Airs and Reels

By: Kevin L Nenstiel

—*Girl in White – Portrait of Miss Edna Brown*
oil on canvas, Alice Eliza Cleaver, n.d.

She draws her bow along the fiddle strings
Her Carlow line pervades the strain she plays
Shadows inspect the corners of her dress

Her walnut panel walls fall back unseen
Unwanted, as the Wexford theme sustains
She slides her bow across the fiddle strings

Eyes close against the lamplight—she forgets
The earth, her father, everything awaits
Shadows receive the borders of her dress

Checks shimmer with the ruby of her dream
As fingers tune the doleful Sligo wail
She glides her bow above the fiddle strings

Shut out the sun—it only breeds regrets
When Leitrim skin is branded by the flame
Shadows ascend the furrows of her dress

Her maple is the only wit she speaks
Her song the only master she obeys
She draws her bow into the fiddle strings
Shadows absorb the linen of her dress

Trial Separation

By: Kevin L Nenstiel

I made a kettle of *gazpacho andaluz* on Friday, tomatoes cored, seeds strained, habañero tanging at my tongue, just the way you taught me. Your mother's recipe was thick with promise, rich in nuance. I poured it in a melmac mug and drank it with a lukewarm bottle of Rolling Rock and Thursday's bone-dry Hot Pocket from our fridge.

The Things I Wish I'd Said

By: Kevin L Nenstiel

—For Elisabeth Kuhn

How are you feeling, everybody asks
When no one wants to hear about my pain
It's probably nothing, my doctor says,

As he pokes and prods my lumps. So why can't
I feel my fingers when I sign my name?
How am I feeling? Everybody asks.

I craft a soothing lie about my cells
Lungs heart breasts and how these visible veins
Are probably nothing. My doctor says

I should take up running, refrain from sex,
Eat unprocessed foods, and stick to whole grains.
How is everybody feeling, I ask,

Watching me grow waxen and waste away
Standing around my coffin with the nails?
It's certainly something, my doctor says.

He treats me with chemo and cobalt rays.
I stare back mute from the foot of my grave.
How are you feeling? Everybody asks
It's probably nothing, my doctor says.

Lame Johnny Creek

By: Alissa Roberts

Lame Johnny didn't come with the wagon train.
Rode into town at dusk one evening in 1876
No story no last name
Showed some skill with numbers
Homestake Gold Mine hired Johnny as a bookkeeper
Johnny had a wooden leg that clunked on
the wood walk ways. He wore a brown hat and suit
Shook hands with the businessmen tipped his hat
to the ladies a long wave like gesture Ladies first
Stride clunk glide clunk on the way to work.

Never seen in the bars playing cards or
drinking whiskey with the cowboys on Saturday nights
He dined with bankers and their wives
Hobbled home before coffee and cake
Had to rest his aching right leg
Cowboys stumbled home like Johnny's limp
singing Irish songs, gamblers collected poker chips
Silence wrapped the town like a blanket
That's when Johnny would go riding.

Polio or childhood accident no one knew
Johnny had that limp in Texas when he
was known as Cornelius Donehue, horse thief
cowboy whose limp named him lame
The gang called him leader as they
captured Homestake's gold
hid away in King's Ridge Cave
to loot the stagecoach lines
between Hot Springs and Buffalo Gap.

Large spreads of cattle and horses for 15 miles
between Hot Springs and Buffalo Gap
Temptation called an Arabian with silky black mane
Brown eyes peeked over a black scarf
Under barbed wire Johnny would go creeping

Dodged the prickly pears and yucca plants
Whistled to the horses their noses to the ground
as they munched buffalo grass. Come with me,
Arabian, to Denver, to trolleys, to circuses, street crowded with people.

Who caught Lame Johnny on
A starless night? Posse of John Wayne
kind of men who applied the law as they like.
Wanted horse thief in the stranger's hand. They hung
Lame Johnny by the branch of a tree north
of Buffalo Gap. The branch bent low
131 years later the creek below named for Lame Johnny
Where a headstone once read:

Pilgrim Pause!

You're standing on

The molding clay of Limping John

Tread lightly, stranger, on this sod

For if he moves, you're robbed

by God.

Son, Brother, Friend

By: Alissa Roberts

Son, brother, friend	<i>Mom's lily of the valley</i>
Told Paul McCartney jokes	<i>Wrestler, turkey hunter</i>
Super Sunmart Boy	<i>Baggy jeans and backwards hat</i>
Dyed the skim milk green	<i>Mom's lily of the valley</i>
Son, brother, friend	<i>Deer ate rose petals</i>
Left for potpourri	<i>Below the granite</i>
Etched pine tree hills	<i>Blue ribbons on the mound</i>
Mom's lily of the valley	<i>Son, brother, friend</i>
Engraved headstone	<i>I was here graffiti</i>
Molded red shale letters	<i>Today you will be</i>
With me in Paradise	<i>A crayon script promise</i>
Kindergarten drawing	<i>At the wake in October</i>
White flower sticker	<i>Surviving family member</i>
Son, brother, friend	<i>Mom's lily of the valley</i>

Canoe

By: Doreen Pfost

On the Crawfish River bank
we tie up for a rest and survey
hapless paddlers near the other shore
who flail, flap like broken-winged
shorebirds, stagger, circle and call.
In the sterns, mostly men,
who cannot see, shout
Left. No, LEFT, and muscle forward,
to the right. In the bow,
women mostly, try to steer left,
fumble, switch sides and flip
bright water accidentally behind.

With studied ease we return
to the current and pretend
it's native skill, this primal waltz
rotate, push down, lift
rotate, push down, lift
Only the forward impulse is innate
and the will to move in tandem.
The rest we rehearsed,
a floating *pas de deux*:
Forward sweep, stern draw, feathered stroke.
Rehearsed until you know
the meaning when my back
curves this way. And I anticipate
your reach, know the flex
of your forearm, not looking back, I see
the golden hairs glint in the sun.
We glide past the fluttering birds,
knowing all that we know,
especially the fear-dashing secret:
we can capsize and still survive.

In the soft-woolen February night
I wake, face against your backbone
and study the flick of my eyelashes
on your skin. Outside the frost-furry
window, a great-horned owl calls
for someone to help pass the night.
Who's awake? Me too-oo. Snugly paired,
we drift, nested shells lulled
on waves of sleep-heavy breath.
Nights like these, I would not move forward
except to follow you, perhaps
to lie on a tide-lapped beach, count
the stars that dance on the water,
and dream of waltzing.

Near Yom Kippur

By: Doreen Pfost

Aaron, that time of year has come again
When evening shade and reverie grow long,
That burrowing-in, self-searching season when
We meditate on mitzvahs left undone.
Could I repay those thin-haired bosses who,
Ignorant of chemistry and physics,
Crammed two desks in that office, and us, too,
And made you rabbi to a budding mystic?
They never guessed we roved un-earthly ground
Between debt-service and cash-flow projections
Debating the G-d I'd lost, the one you'd found,
Forgiveness, death, atonement, other lessons.
Sometimes at night, do you look at the phone,
Remember me, and wonder where I've gone?

The River's Elegy

By: Doreen Pfost

She dozes now, summer afternoons,
her thin grey braids droop dull and limp
and trace the curve of a careworn spine.
Some days she fades completely, this crone
with the wildish glint in her eye;
she waits to die.

Ah, but she was a beauty once!
How she tossed her frothy skirts, swirled
and laughed, while revelers shouted, whooped and leapt
at the springtime bacchanal. Her mile-wide plait
unloosed, curled and billowed, burst the banks
of a riotous bed.

She was the green tendril that poked
through the soil, the eagle's silhouette
on the moon. She was the lifeline, life-rope,
lifeblood of the prairie, the matrix of thirty
thousand summers. Men called her
shallow, inconstant, but she was enough
to keep them here.

Now, gnarled and gaunt, she hums to herself
of lusty days, and sighs when silvered swallows
dart, like polished shuttles, weaving ribbons
through her thinning braids. Tiger-striped butterflies
flick her shoulders, jewels on her shroud;
they watch her die.

Ah! But she was a beauty once.

The Impeccably Timed Mr. Pig

By: Omar Ghamedi

Allow me now to recall to you the story of Mr. Pig
Who strolling down Piccadilly one day stepped on the tail of a lizard
How annoying! He thought forgetting his discourse on regionalism
More vexing still, was that he had long seen himself a pacifist
And the incident was becoming a rather unfortunate tragedy
I believe everything be allowed justice, he said, everything is sacred.

Of course being ever concerned with the sacred
Mr. Pig, crossed Piccadilly with great haste and said,
I must correct this tragedy with integrity
And sought out the lizard to give him his due
My dialogue be damned! He thought, I must commit to my pacifism!
At that moment remembering his forgetting his discourse on regionalism

On the point of regionalism and its storied discourse
It had always been something of a sacred subject
Clashing rather violently with the ideals of pacifism
In the opinion of Mr. Pig
But at the moment he was concerned with the lizard
And correcting the tragedy that had recently occurred

Arriving at Police HQ, and explaining the tragedy
At times unnecessarily bringing up his discourse on regionalism
But eventually returning to the subject of the lizard's tail
And of the important and sacred responsibility he owed
Mr. Pig bored the officers
Who honestly couldn't care less about pacifism

Now pacifism is a painful thing to relate to
By officers who often commit a tragedy or two
Yet, in the mind of Mr. Pig that day
His head filled with rational arguments regarding regionalism
And ever concerned with the preservation of the sacred
The poor lizard's plight was of significance

As he spoke, a lizard with no tail entered Police HQ
And observing the dialogue on pacifism
Taking in all the eloquent arguments regarding the sacred
Demanding that his tragedy be corrected
Saving the officers from another unnecessary detour on the topic of regionalism
As a result, Mr. Pig was arrested and thrown in prison.

Alone in his cell, Mr. Pig did not contemplate his tragedy
Nor the fact that the sacred halls of justice had punished his pacifism
Glad the lizard had received his due, he continued his discourse on regionalism.

Fate

By: Omar Ghamedi

I see them as they stand there
My eyes are upon it
Their movements are sacred
They look up in worship
Oh, Lord! In far off heaven
Accept these prayers we give thee!
Then their leader rises
He tells them of salvation
Then tells them of heaven
He lingers in his sermon
Speaking to them with passion
He does not know it then
He stands aloft like Jesus
His last words are spoken

*fifteen men in prayer
adoring them in peace
their bodies like waves
their words are faint but clear
each eye is filled with tears
their hands are clasped as one
and each man follows suit
their heads move up and down
their eyes all look on high
they look up to the fan
they act but are too late
they know he soon shall die
the fan comes off its screw
to fourteen men in prayer*

Blood Drunk Mind

By: Omar Ghamedi

I found myself alone in an alley way,
Hanging by my feet from the one lit lamp post,
That rose high above the city street,
And jeered at passer bys with flickers

The ever encompassing night surrounding me
Mocked my peril with silent, yet injuring laughter.

My blood filled head emptied of thoughts
As my pendulum body fought the pull of the earth.
Was I seeing blood, or were my shot eyes full?
I could not reach the ground.

I was caught in between myself and the world below me.
With outstretched arms I summoned in delirium for the grasp of gravity
But failed.

There was no companion for my upturned self
But by mind drunk with blood and lost in rotation.

Yet, help came with dawn.
And I was released.
T'was a dream.

If only I could always awake.

The Reynolds Chair and Creative Writing Emphasis hosts the Platte Valley Review, Reynolds Review, Reynolds Reading Series, and the Honoring the Sandhill Crane Migration Literary Retreat and Festival. Sandhill Cranes migrate to their spring apex just outside Kearney, Nebraska annually in March. This largest migration of any earthly species has occurred an estimated 45 to 60 million years. The Kearney area apex numbers 600,000 arriving birds. Traditionally, numerous Indigenous philosophies and languages, including written, were influenced by these cranes over thousands and thousands of generations. UNK's English and Creative Writing disciplines honor this migration, pattern of life and landscape, and tribute the literary and philosophical grace given our geographic home and history by this impressive seasonal visitation.

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