

2.7.16

MY MOTHER'S HARVEST CENTERPIECE

Out of the space of supper plates
pushed back, out of her all-night falling asleep
and waking up to arrange it on the tray

under the hanging lamp, this perfect, twined
circle of twigs and autumn leaves she collected
from the dirt driveway of our tarpapered
garage-house. Out of the next day's forgotten

breakfast and lunch, no appetite now
but for making it, this cardboard wish
of a house with a picture window, floating

on the soft, unseasonable green
of Easter grass, and out of the grass, tufts of grass
on each side of the front door, wide open,
with the crowd of pipe-cleaner kids coming out,

enough to make the women who view them tonight
at the square dance club dinner laugh.
Under her smile as she thinks of their laughter,

turning the small world she constructs like a god
to glue on the kids' last paper dresses
and pants, the sorrow of her own childhood
raising six younger siblings in the Ozarks,

and pregnant now herself for the fourth time.
Underneath the mother she has made
at the center of the centerpiece,

a faceless clothespin woman that the children
converge upon, who else but herself,
her endless chores on my stepfather's would-be
farm like the woman's impossible chore

of feeding with no hands a flock of jurassic
plastic chickens, nearly as tall as she is?
Who else under this clothespin farmer leaning

toward the woman with no way to touch her
but my stepfather, the man who now paces
in the twilight shouting that she's taken so damn long
with the centerpiece, the square dance dinner

is going to start without it? Out of the deep dream
my mother goes right on dreaming, the wide
outer circle of a harvest from our family's unhappy

harvest in the back field: turnips and baby winter
squashes and potatoes like gloomy hills
the little family can't see beyond. ~~Under the families,~~
~~all that her making knows and she cannot see.~~

See new
ending -