

1980

# Walking on a Field

Mary Jane White

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

White, Mary Jane. "Walking on a Field." *The Iowa Review* 11.2 (1980): 206-207. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2620>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

Walking on a Field · *Mary Jane White*

I look in one direction  
at a time. Peripheral vision's there,  
but blurred in coming  
to me by a small  
infirmity I can't

expect to conquer once like  
virginity or a mountaintop.  
It's something I do  
try to compensate  
for—turning my head, whole

body to see. I feel a  
little awkward and that is all as  
I watch my friend's brisk  
approach. We walk off  
together; a cornstalk

turns on its pithy axis  
as we come up, pass by its twirled blade  
like leaves, bent tassel  
and swathed, full cob dropped  
like the forefoot of a

bee, all golden-bleached. I draw  
you one, but a good number—thousands  
of these—remotely  
like ourselves—stand  
rustling intimately

in their ordered rows, each in  
wry, minimal contact. Rooted, how  
can they help but move  
as they do, and bow  
to hail, sleet, wind, and snow,

finally. Still, to speak of  
these too sadly's to step ahead of  
ourselves—up rises  
the present, gentle,  
mounded hill, plowed and

easily taken for  
a pastoral *but* to Iowa's  
flatness. The story  
about that hill is:  
a tractor flipped over

on a farmer and killed him  
bloodily. This field's his place and his  
absence—not so much  
to us as to the  
several people in his

house. Sad homily, sad old  
earth's story, it's hard and right we see  
enough to know a bit  
about him, to make  
a forcible entry.