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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

It is with great pleasure that I take up the helm of *The Iowa Review* in this issue. I owe a significant debt to my immediate predecessors, David Hamilton and Russell Scott Valentino, and to our managing editor, Lynne Nugent. Along with many other members of the editorial team, David, Russell, and Lynne have ensured an easy transition. Ultimately, however, the success of the *Review*—indeed its very existence—relies upon the lively participation of its talented contributors and enthusiastic subscribers. Those two groups comprise the foundation of the magazine and inspire its future incarnations. They teach us that we edit in order to fashion a literary community, both on the page and in the world.

The energy of that community, its capacity for innovation and invention, depends on dissensus as much as consensus. The current issue reflects that lesson as it convenes a dissonant mix of aesthetics and styles. Compare the measured unfolding of Zhang Yueran's story "A Room of One's Own" with Joe Aguilar's crackling paranoid tale "Poles." Both narratives explore the impossibility of domestic safety, let alone freedom, but they do so in vastly different ways, with Yueran's urban realism standing apart from Aguilar's suburban speculative fiction. That theme of unease also informs the divergent poetries of the issue even as it sometimes binds together particular lyrics. To read Norman Dubie's "Children Standing in the Mist" alongside Douglas Kearney's "In the End, They Were Born on TV" is to confront seemingly opposed styles. Dubie's pastoral aesthetic—"What does the prairie have to do / with you or the golden yield-lines / of cicadas on this desert road"—clashes with Kearney's incantatory poem-as-media-critique: "people in their house on TV are ghosts haunting a house haunting houses. / pregnant women in their houses on TV are haunted houses haunting a house haunting houses." The first poem recalls the power of official verse culture; the second reminds us of the dynamism of spoken word. Yet for all their manifest differences, both poems engage with the challenge of maintaining sanity in an American century. Dubie takes imperial conquest as his topic; his unstable second-person addressee anguishes over the "wasted bison" and "the albian corpse of General Custer" from the vantage point of contemporary Kuwait. Moving closer to home, Kearney zeroes in on

a domestic sphere that can't exist outside reality television; in this horrific dystopia, reproduction generates not life but blood and ghosts.

Longtime readers of *The Iowa Review* will hardly find surprising such eclectic opposites. The magazine has for some time negotiated a range of styles and aesthetics. Yet the new issue does incorporate a few features that warrant mention. Our reinstatement of reviews in the print journal continues, with evaluations of two important recent books: Rebecca Frank reviews Kiki Petrosino's *Hymn for the Black Terrific* and Anis Shivani reviews Dave Brinks's *The Secret Brain: Selected Poems 1995–2012*. And we have included as well an unusual pairing of three Amber Tamblyn poems with images by, among others, filmmaker and painter David Lynch. Such collaborative yoking of literature and art will recur in the magazine. For example, readers can look forward to Shaun Tan's illustrations of Grimms' fairy tales in a future portfolio on children's literature.

Of the various innovations we offer in this issue, however, by far the most unusual is our decision to publish two interviews with conceptual poets. These pieces inaugurate the magazine's series of dialogues focused on new developments in contemporary poetry and prose. Both conversations offer readers a valuable perspective on one of our era's most controversial literary movements, conceptualism, or what Kenneth Goldsmith has memorably dubbed writing "more interested in a *thinkership* than a readership." The first dialogue, between Marjorie Perloff and Vanessa Place, is something of an anti-interview, as the two interlocutors stage the challenge of conceptualism to the dominant understanding of lyric poetry, taking aim at some idols in the process. The second dialogue between Stephen Voyle and Nick Thurston examines the meaning of conceptual writing in an era of neoliberal economy and digital culture. While the Voyle-Thurston conversation conforms to our expectation of an interviewer gently teasing informative answers from his interlocutor, Perloff's conversation with Place provides us with a self-consciously theatrical performance. We hope the interviews and the other work published here will provoke debate. A good magazine depends on provocation as much as tradition, tension as much as support. It will be my privilege to attend to both aspects of our mission in the coming years.