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Photographs by Richard Allen Burns, Gregory Hansen, Sadie Ivy, and Angela Williams.

Transition

by Tom Williams

Transition, it could be said, has been a hallmark of the *Arkansas Review* throughout its history. If the cover of this issue isn't enough proof, one need only look at the submissions that arrive in our mailbox daily: some are addressed to the *Kansas Quarterly* (gladly forwarded by our friends at Kansas State), others addressed to Norman Lavers or Norman Stafford, to *Arkansas Review/Kansas Quarterly* or *Arkansas Review*. Simply put: even though for the past six years we've remained fairly steady, things haven't stayed fixed for *Arkansas Review*.

So it should come as no surprise that with this particular issue, *Arkansas Review* reveals another transition, as William Clements steps down and I, Tom Williams, the Creative Materials Editor since 2002, begin my stead as General Editor. But this transition is not as abrupt or significant as the previous transition--indeed, transformation is a better word--from an international creative writing journal to the present status as a *Journal of Delta Studies*. No, the only thing to be altered is the masthead, and Bill Clements will still serve as layout editor and in an advisory capacity for as long as I need his advice.

But before I introduce myself to the reader, a few things need to be said about William Clements, whom I am in no way replacing. Irreplaceable describes Bill Clements better than just about any word I know, for he has, during his tenure, produced a journal through effort that verges on the superhuman. This is no hyperbole, as I've seen Bill do what most journals employ three or four people on staff to accomplish. With the aid of Norm Stafford, Steven Mayes, Kim Vickrey, myself, and the editorial board, he has produced three magnificent issues every year for six years. And while we can thank Arkansas State University and our subscribers for funds, along with the ASU Print shop for their efforts, it has seemed, in my time with the journal, that the single most important source of inspiration and energy for *Arkansas Review* is Bill Clements's will. Whether assigning book reviews or working

with our authors or tiring out his eyes before the computer screen, Bill has devoted innumerable hours to the journal's production. As well, he has allowed an easy beginning of my stint as General Editor by giving me a journal of unquestionable quality. And, as said before, Bill is not leaving us entirely, and his expertise will be tapped for many issues to come.

Still, *Arkansas Review's* loss is a gain overall for the university and the academic community. Bill will now be freed to spend more time on his own research and writing, which will surely result in worthwhile additions to his already considerable and enormous body of work. (Honestly, one needs a back brace to lift his CV.)

In addition to the transition at the top of the masthead, the Editorial Committee welcomes new members Cherrisse Jones and Gregory Hansen and thanks those whose past service to *Arkansas Review* helped shape it into the journal it now is. Further, our Advisory Editors are joined by Steve Yarbrough, Endowed Professor of Creative Writing at California State University, Fresno, and author of such notable novels set in the Delta as *The Oxygen Man*, *Visible Spirits* and his latest, *Prisoners of War*.

It is probably necessary again to assert that I have no intentions to change the focus of *Arkansas Review*. Our readers should still expect a variety of disciplines on display, while past and future contributors from all fields--Anthropology, Folklore, Literature, History, Political Science, Music, Sociology--will always find their work welcome. As a fiction writer and creative materials editor, I hope to discover new Delta poets, essayists, and fictionists, as well as celebrate those who have already made their mark; but the focus of the journal will still be Delta Studies. I believe that our focus and variety singles out *Arkansas Review* from other journals, and through my experience of living and teaching in the region, I have come to believe that this Mississippi River Delta is so bottomless as to provoke study of all sorts for many years to

come. This particular issue provides ample evidence for this claim, with fiction from previous contributor and short story master, George Singleton, as well as newcomers William Giraldi and Melissa Phipps. Arkansas's own Jo McDougall makes her debut in our pages, along with award-winning poets J.D. Smith and Louis E. Bourgeois. The scholarly articles--by Andrew Scheiber and Arkansas State's H. Jason Combs--continue our tradition of multi-disciplinary approaches to the region, and the book review pages feature a host of books of interest and keen reviewers.

In closing, I like to believe that the future of *Arkansas Review* is bright because of the work done in its past. Yet we will not stand still. I want to see our circulation grow and our reputation increase both in the region and the

world. At a time where "region" seems endangered throughout the United States--too often a homogeneous place viewed from the interstate, where WalMarts, McDonald's, and malls crowd the local vistas--it feels vital to examine and maintain such distinct places as "the seven-state Mississippi River Delta" we focus on in *Arkansas Review*. In an interview that I conducted with Steve Yarbrough--that appeared in Volume 33, Number 2--I asked the Indianola, Mississippi native if the Delta was limitless, and he agreed, saying, "I could tell any story I wanted and set it there." It is my hope that *Arkansas Review* continues for some time to be a forum for such stories, along with all other contributions that evoke and examine the Delta, its heritage, its art, and its people.▲▼▲

Poems by Louis E. Bourgeois

On a Hill at St. Andrew's Cemetery

The sky is heavy with gray. There is tar in the air. Someone burns tires. Crows call. Hawks rise toward the highest sky. In the distance, wild screams of children playing. And further, someone hammers steel. Trucks groan and sputter along the interstate. Squirrels and a dog bark from the same backyard. A dove flies before my eyes, as a plane glides over Oxford. Stone is all around, each with a different name. Dry leaves and new grass cover the ground. Crickets scrub out their chorus. The dead tell stories. The sun is going down.

In a Field Near Sardis Dam

Silence. A scarecrow flickers in the wind. The corn is dead. Geese speckle the horizon, followed by crows and herons. The evening is dark as it is long. A man walks in the distance and disappears. Another man calls his dog which has run out of sight. Dust settles on the road. Above, the distant cries of the geese. I walk toward the car, camera in hand, not having the nerve to take a shot.