



Pamela McMaster Yenser is a second-generation Kansan, conceived in the Sunflower State while her parents trained in Kansas City and Pittsburg as nurse and pilot during WWII, and born in Alexandria, Virginia, at the home of her paternal grandparents. She attended grade through graduate school in Wichita, attributing her early literary interests to Wichita Southeast High School teacher Lee Streiff and Iowa Workshop graduates Michael Van Walleghe and Mark Costello, who joined Bruce Cutler on the writing faculty of Wichita State University (WSU) in the late 1960s. She was contributing editor of *Mikrokosmos* at WSU, where she met and married native Kansan Jon Kelly Yenser. Witnesses to the Beat Era when Allen Ginsberg read at the Wichita Vortex in 1966, Pamela and Kelly were among the first English majors to submit creative writing theses at WSU, just before the start up of the Creative Writing Program.

Yenser is recipient of an American Academy of Poets Colleges and Universities Award from the University of Washington. Her work has been nominated for an AWP award and Pushcart Prize, and her poetry manuscript *Bundle of Nerves* has been acknowledged in the finals of national competitions such as the Many Voices Award at New Rivers Press. Yenser teaches writing at Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque.

The End Of TV

Before my Dark Ages
I would go to visit it where it sat
oblatelately on its own rag rug, rabbit-ears
extended in a V to trap the airwaves, Old
Chief Gray Face, humming a crazy test tune.
What happened next was a leap of faith
like a hook in a cloud or an icy rake
of ice through heaven's face.

If there was a warning nobody heard
but come it did: a purple wall cloud,
lightning, hail, and the low bang
of a big black freight train come
uncoupled across the plains—
or so said the ministry of storms
next morning in the Wichita Eagle—
and a high voice exhorting Mother
to give up Hollywood and be saved.
No more dancing. No TV. No sex.

I could not have been more astonished
if Lucy had burst out like a burning bush
and tumbled along with the Lone Ranger
through the footage of my Flint Hills
where the earliest yellow rose let go
her petals on the little brick road
past my home, mown like grass—
that shortcut spring once
took through Kansas.

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Summer Games

Blame me. Blame history.
Or blame yourself if life lies
foul and love's a mystery
(foul play!) that we realize

through our fingers in the dark—
like those leather-hard, hand-sewn
balls of flesh whose symbols mark
your sex—to each his own.

Now give me your hand—and glove.
Let me show you a softer mound,
greener fields empty with love,
a lighter stick to swing around.
You started this game in the first place,
bragging how you'd gotten to first base.

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(18:3 Pushcart Nomination)

Abduction

Glitter dust and cotton-
wood seeds trapped
against the front screen—
Storm cellar open—

Evidence of broken saucers—
On a bedside

stand, a pineapple
ruffled doily—and in

a mason jar, smiling
a mother's chattering teeth

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Topland

Under spare willows a creek
winds up its invisible spring.
The sand, disturbed, rises.

By now our horses have stamped
an acre of hybrid strawberries,
tilted your fire fenceposts,

topped the dam. To calm them,
we climb, creaking with leather,
the screw of the hard workroad.

We're past the point of danger,
that drop-off that dropped
off the farmer with his load.

A hawk floats up. We stall
in a green crown of alfalfa,
shifting our own lazy weight

to the pulley of brown necks
reaching as far as they can;
nothing more to spoil our day

than sunset on our hands,
red and blue with berries wild
as the iris of your blue eyes blooming.

Deer! You take me by surprise.
Green turns brown in the birch-blind.
Deer, you murmur, Deer.

The delicate birdnest tied
to my saddle flies apart—
straw into the wind—my souvenir!

You're looking back, I'm holding on,
the horses break for home,
and the next day I am gone.

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Bundle Of Nerves

In Wichita, as far as I could see
the earth was round—one gigantic pie baked
until it cracked and grasshoppers escaped

with a ratcheting whirl of legs, the sound
of mixer blades against a Pyrex bowl
or the slanted needle of Mother's Singer

singing through the curtains someone tore.
Above the sound, the cumulus pile up
padded tornadic cells with hooks and eyes.

Who's in charge up there? Mother Nature? Who's
her husband? Is he my brother's maker?
His bobbed brain won't be growing back again.

What's the cure? Cells from a live embryo,
I suppose; or, if given that political
mess, topical salve from our Mimosa—

a family tree so tuned to touch and light
her spine is a bundle of nerves, which, cut
or winterkilled, multiplies underground.

In the springtime of our yard she returns,
as much a livewire above as below.
Medusa child of the vegetable world,

feathered in leaves compounded and dangling
with pink earrings. She is called Woolly Bush,
Silk Tree, Siris, Sirius the Dog Star.

Serious! How can you be serious
my alter ego, my gorgon, my wild
red-headed remonstrance, dreaded, gorgeous.