

Oklahoma review

tolbert

ghosts

she took the ghosts with her when she died.

the fear that made her cry out in the night
after the sting of wondering whether anyone loved her
was gone like a diminished childhood that never happened.

she tried to talk to those who knew her well;
the conversation turned hard like a brass key
in a rusted deadbolt
opening up yet another secret room where the ghosts lived.

as a child
the ghosts fooled her into believing they were playmates
and the basement closet was a playground
filled with imaginary carousels and colorful marionettes.

even then, she never laughed...
but only watched in disbelief as they paraded by,
marching around another corner
where the music stopped

leaving cruel whisperings about how wonderful it is
to play with silence

and count words that can never escape.