The following sample poems from Belated Remembrance tell the story of four women in Kulterstad's life.  Berte Arnesdatter Kulterstad was Arne's mother.   Dorthe Pauline Sofienlund was Arne's first wife, a widow, whom he married for her property.  She later took her own life.  Maria Olsdatter Onstad was his second wife and the mother of Marit Arnesdaughter who appealed to the king for her father's release. All four poems also appeared online in Polyphony, March 2005 as “The Women in Arne Kulterstad’s life.”

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**Berte Arnesdatter Kulterstad - Mother**
             Kulterstad Gaard, Vestringsbygden, North Aurdal, Norway,  May 6, 1825

“A robust one, this one, Berte.”
She lays him in my arms.
A son! A son to help keep
the Kulterstad gaard.

But I am so tired.
My breasts already ache,
and this the ninth to suckle,
then to feed and clothe.

Yet, I already love this one named
in accordance with the old ways.
“Arne, Ole’s son of Kulterstad gaard,
your father’s coming in now.”

He’ll boast tonight
to the moon if no one’s near.
A son, he’ll say. Gud være lovet.
Who knows what Arne will become?

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[[i]](https://133002526-269211388591341732.preview.editmysite.com/editor/main.php#_ednref1) Gaard - a farm or farmstead. Gaards were named and some names date back to the middle ages. Inhabitants generally took the gaard name as their family surname.
[[ii]](https://133002526-269211388591341732.preview.editmysite.com/editor/main.php#_ednref2) Naming – Arne Olson Kulterstad’s first name would be that of a deceased sibling, uncle or great grandfather; Olson means Ole’s son; Kulterstad is the name of the gaard.
[[iii]](https://133002526-269211388591341732.preview.editmysite.com/editor/main.php#_ednref3) Gud være lovet - Norwegian for “Thanks be to God.”

**Dorthe Pauline Sofienlund - First Wife**
            The Dahle Gaard, Aurdal, Norway, 1848-1853

Widowed by my husband’s hand
with five mouths to feed,
the youngest yet nursing.
Erik, my eldest, age eleven,
now owns the Dahle, all
my husband, Helge, left behind.

Three years later, I bed Arne.
Where else lies hope?
Though rough and wild,
I pray he’ll settle down.
A quartermaster sergeant,
he needs a wife to be respectable
and land to be respected.

As custom called,
Erik deeded the Dahle
to my new spouse.
As the months wore on,
I could not bear
the look in Erik’s eyes
when his stepfather announced
he was Arne Olsen Dahle.

The month after we wed
I bore him a son,
proving my worth.
But he neglected the gaard
in favor of drink,
and when deep in his beer,
ruled Dahle by fear.

Darkness fell upon me.
I went to my father’s millhouse at Aabjor gaard
and less than two years
from the date I wed Arne,
I followed Helge’s lead
and left everything behind.

​**Maria Olsdatter Onstad - Second Wife**
             Un-named Farm, North Aurdal, Norway, 1859-1864

He was a rogue.
I knew his history,
his tempest of a temper
when he had his drink.
I bore one daughter
while he was in the service,
a second with him on the farm.
A third child lies within.

His sister Mary offers
the girls a place in America.
They will go for their sake.
What’s to become of me,
worse than widowed
and shunned on his account?
A few good Christians pity me
but that doesn’t fill the loft.

I can’t re-wed.
Only a son could
hold title to land.
A daughter would face
a life of servitude.
All this for what?
All man and more,
a passionate lover

made even more so,
when we’d had our beer.
In the midst of my shame,
I cling to those nights.
I should have known,
but I was so afraid
of living landless
and his eyes were so blue.

**Marit Arnesdatter - Daughter**
             King Oscar's Residence, Christiana, Norway, 1880

King Oscar, I kneel before you
to beg my father’s release.
He was taken while I lay
in my mother’s womb.
For 20 years he’s paced
his cell in the castle.
His mother passed on,
as has my own, and a sister.

Beside me kneel the bonder,
the people of Valdres.
Even countrymen
living far away
in Wisconsin, America.
Even they petition you --
set my father free.

Beside me kneel great men,
Pastor Johannes Fjeld,
from America;
Bishop Skaar,
a pastor in Aurdal
at that tragic time;
and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.
All cry out for mercy.

Beside me kneels my father,
landless, his family scattered.
My sister’s husband
took her to America.
I must join them, now.
Great king, your predecessor,
most mercifully, let my father live,
for my father repented fully
and begged forgiveness.

I kneel, cry before you.
My father’s imprisonment was just,
but what is gained, now,
if Norway cannot forgive him.
I beg you, in your infinite
wisdom, release him.