

# SOWER

1954

Richard Bensen

# THE SOWER



*Sower of inland plains,  
fling the whistling seed  
against lusty spring winds,  
thrusting it  
into the humid earth womb.*

*Sower of winged words,  
rising before dawn,  
swinging your arm over the world,  
release your thought  
into the lash and roar of winds;  
send your seed singing  
into the westering night.*

—Norman C. Bansen

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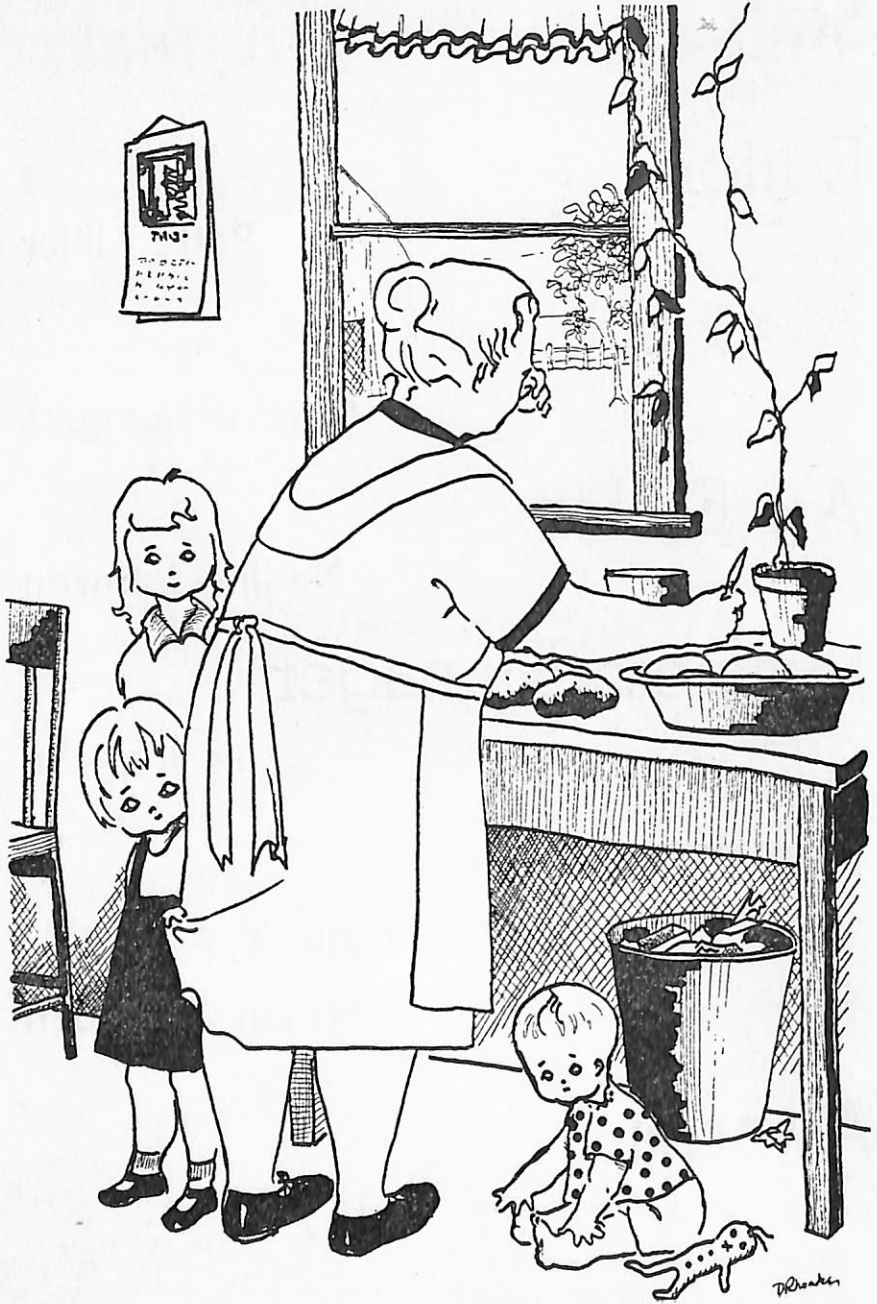
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# ***There is a Time to Weep***

***Edith Skobo***

The news of the death of Carl invaded our home; our seventeen-year-old cousin had been the victim of a gun accident. With sadness in our hearts we thought of the day of the funeral. And yet, we could not help but think of the joy involved in visiting that unique home with its fifteen inhabitants.

As we drove into the northern Nebraska farm, Hans, now the oldest boy even though only fifteen years, came racing toward us shouting, "They're here, they're here!" Then as if suddenly remembering his new load of responsibility, he stepped toward my dad and awkwardly reached to shake hands in a man-to-man fashion. Children came running from every direction—from the barn, the apple orchard, the cattle yard, and from every other place that children find interesting on a farm. Having momentarily forgotten the sorrow that had so recently come to this home, we could not help but laugh at the large number of children appearing—some running, some creeping, some toddling and occasionally falling in their haste. Everyone was chattering noisily as we gradually moved toward the large white farm house.

A stillness hung in the house—a heavy stillness. The only sounds to be heard were the sobs of Aunt Ingie—pain-filled sobs that continued even while she labored over a large pan of potatoes. The persistent tears were a contrast to the usual disposition of our heavy-set, jovial aunt everybody loved.

Silence prevailed. Suddenly one of the youngest boys, not old enough to realize the seriousness of the situation, grabbed my hand and exclaimed in an almost excited tone of voice, "Edie, Carl's dead. Do you want to see him? He's in the other room!" I stood there not knowing what to say or do; yielding to the tugging of my impetuous cousin, I followed him out of the room. His innocent exclamation had broken the silence.

On glancing around as we returned to the kitchen I saw that several little blondes had retreated to hiding places and were peering at us from behind the pantry door, behind the stove and under the table. Gradually these more bashful members of the family edged their way toward us and became a part of the group.

Although unable to forget her sorrow, my aunt busied herself with cooking the dinner. Doing my best to help I set the table; with ten lively youngsters playing games and putting on a show for the visitors,

it proved to be quite a task to keep the silver in place—forks and knives make such good toys and weapons.

The aroma that penetrated the air was proof of the cooking ability of my aunt. "Okay, we'll commence to eat. It'll have to be in two shifts," announced Aunt Ingie coarsely as her slightly ill-groomed head appeared in the doorway. Although the gnawing in my stomach was almost unbearable, I offered to help serve the first group.

I walked through the kitchen door and stopped short—the amount of food that had been prepared was unbelievable, it reminded me of the days when Mother cooked for threshing crews. As I struggled into the dining room laboring under the weight of the large containers of food, several pairs of eyes bugged out and the hungry youngsters fairly rose off their chairs. The large containers emptied rapidly as man-sized portions were put on each plate; those little blondes were small but their stomachs certainly were not.

Grief-stricken Aunt Ingie made vain attempts to appear happy and unconcerned, but the tears were persistent. While running busily around the kitchen she pointed at one little boy who was trying desperately to keep pace with her and said, "Olie, go wash your hands."

With a slight expression of disgust he answered, "My name isn't Olie."

"Okay—Paul," she said, continuing with her work.

"It isn't Paul either," he asserted in quick retaliation.

"Then Bob," she said unconcerned.

The expression of disgust became more pronounced and he retorted, "It isn't Bob either."

Scratching her thigh as only she can, Aunt Ingie commanded "Well, whoever you are, go wash your hands."

At last it was our turn to eat. I sat down and was ready to slide a little closer to the table when Margaret jumped up on my knee; but Gordon was not to be beaten by her so he jumped onto the other knee. Resigning myself to the situation I started to eat while two pairs of eyes closely followed every move I made. They had just eaten, but I could see in their eyes a desire to eat with their older cousin; before I realized it I was receiving less than one third of all the bites. Only a small portion of food remained on the table; this was immediately snatched by Paul and handed under the table to the dog with which he had entered. Aunt Ingie's body shook with laughter as she leaned back in her chair and said, "There ain't no waste in this house—no sir, not with twelve kids, two dogs and ten cats."

Soon after dinner it was bedtime. The children lined up for their evening scrub. Aunt Ingie was at the kitchen sink with one line, the oldest girl had another line near the kitchen stove, and Hans had some

in the bathroom. The complete getting-ready-for-bed process was a matter of cooperation and opportunity for a great deal of fun.

The next day was fairly quiet. Having been told it was the day for the funeral, the children did their best to stay out of mischief and make it as easy as possible for their mother. After the service friends gathered at the home; as was his custom, the old Danish pastor stood up to read from the Bible and offer a prayer. He rambled on and on in his usual manner until he was interrupted by the whine of the dog. Evidently Olie was bored with the prayer; he had Shep in a corner and apparently was pinching his toe to create the proper effect. After several similar interruptions the old pastor uttered a disgusted "Amen," raised his head and said, "Guess it's time for us to go home."

That afternoon as we left the farm and drove down the country road I could not help but think of the time when Uncle Jon and Aunt Ingie had piled all their offspring into the car and were going to town for the Saturday shopping. They heard a strange noise in the back seat but paid no attention. A short time later a voice from the rear proclaimed, "We lost Jens."

"We'll have none of that smart stuff!" commanded Aunt Ingie.

"But, Mama, it's true."

"Don't joke about things like that. What if it did happen sometime?"

Because several others had joined in the urging, Aunt Ingie raised herself high in the car and pointing her finger started to count. After counting them three times she was convinced. "Dad, we'll have to turn around; we're short one."

"He fell out the door back there by the bridge," shouted Olie.

They started back; when they went over the top of one hill they saw a little figure coming toward them.

As the car came to a halt, Aunt Ingie jumped out commanding, "The rest of you stay where you are—I don't want you to get your town clothes dirty." Then more sympathetically, "Are you hurt, son?"

"No," came the meek, doubtful answer.

"Then hurry and get in; we've got a lot to do in town."

# Thy Hands, O Lord

## Gunnar Mengers

### Child-like

clutching at thy mother's breast,  
tenderly playing with thy companions,  
reverently holding the words of the prophets.

### Man-like

graciously raised in a sweet benediction,  
selflessly giving health to the sickly,  
painfully breaking thy body for sinners.

### Divine

cruelly broken by nails for salvation  
continually pointing the way to redemption  
but always, O Lord, guiding thy children.

# Driftwood

Ann Harms

Cast upon a beach of broken glass  
We are warped fragments  
Motionless, ineffectual and silent.  
Solitary, with all veneer being eaten away  
By the acid of our environment  
We become only vestiges,  
Bleached and pitted contortions of ingrown souls.

# The End and The Beginning

Marilyn Ward

Outside, Barabbas can hear the noisy throng shouting, whispering, speculating, eager to lay its hands upon the prisoner. The prisoner—Barabbas is a prisoner. Is he the one they want? He wonders, and is afraid. He sits inside his prison room, listening to the noise of the multitude . . .

“What will happen? . . . Will I be stoned? crucified? . . . I don’t want to die! If I were free, I’d kill no more, rob no more, do no more ill—I did not mean it . . .” Thoughts race around in his mind.

The mob becomes silent. Faintly Pilate’s voice can be heard, but not understood, by the murderer, the robber. Then a shout as of the voice of the mightiest of giants rings out—“Away with him!! Crucify him!!”—and grows louder, pounds in the robber’s brain, and echoes again and again—“Crucify him! Crucify him!!”

Barabbas can hear the footsteps of the guards coming closer, closer—and now the key is in the lock. The door opens.

“No! No! I won’t go!! Spare me! Forgive!!” On his knees, the prisoner pleads.

“You are free.”

Stunned, Barabbas stares at his captors.

“Go. The one they call Jesus Christ is taking your place. Make haste, for next time there will be no reprieve.”

Slowly the prisoner rises, still doubting the truth of his release.

Once again outside, inconspicuous among the milling crowd, Barabbas easily becomes one of them. Suspicion gives way to relief and then to self-assurance as he sees Jesus delivered to the throng. He hears Pilate say, “Behold your King!”, and when the answer “Away with him! Crucify him!!—We have no king but Caesar!” echoes in reply, he is no longer afraid.

He follows the procession as it wends its way to Golgotha, joining the crowd as they mock him, ever willing to deride the victim.

He watches as they nail him to the cross. He hears the soldiers ridicule his name. He pities the two others crucified with Jesus,

pities them because they could not escape as he did. He laughs as the vinegar drink is offered to the one on the cross. He takes part in the casting of lots for the "King's" clothes.

He remains for quite a while, watching, listening, glad to be simply a spectator and not one of those being crucified . . . He turns to leave, then faces the trio of crosses once again. As he does so, the sky turns gray. The one called Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" once, again, and then he yields his spirit.

Barabbas is awed. A new fear enters, and as the veil of the temple is torn in two and the earth quakes, he turns and walks slowly down Calvary Hill, wondering, and unsure.

## Memories

*Gunnar Mengers*

Memories are like ashes,  
Not to be stirred in hope  
Of a new warmth.

Leave them.  
Let them lie.  
Let the gentle wind of new experience  
Silently scatter and  
Bear them away.

# Emma

Irene Wittig

"Can I have a basket full of corn or beets, or maybe those few cherries you picked today?" These were Aunt Emma's same begging words, heard wherever she went to visit. Her whining, little voice spoke to them in a mixture of German and English which everyone understood.

After the death of my great-uncle's first wife, he soon loved another—Emma. It was fortunate for him that he found her when he did, or he would never have lived to see eighty and beyond. According to her, she had practically made him young again. How? We did not know, but we guessed. From her conversation, we finally found out that she had been a doctor.

She was a woman doctor in a modern world using nature's remedies. Nothing was so good for that shakiness that comes with old age as a mud plaster made from Indiana clay. What a sight! Yellow-complexioned old Germans acting like spring chickens. But this was only one of her remedies.

"White bread is poison," Emma said. "To have good bread you must grind wheat between two rocks and use that for making bread." She said that bread made from this kind of flour was good for that run-down blood that people with such modern ideas have. She tried to convince many people of the value of her remedies, but the only one she could convince was her husband. There was one remedy, however, that she used on everyone that came to visit her.

This remedy was a glass of good homemade wine—with new flavors. This is where the corn and beets came into the remedies of Emma. She wasn't satisfied with having just fruit wines; she went in for vegetable wines, too. Emma never did tell us what this remedy did for a person, but we guessed that it was to make a person happy after she had made one young again.

As far as I know now, she hasn't found nature's remedy for that shriveled look which wrinkles give; however, she may be working on that right now. Ponce de Leon looked for the fountain of youth, but he never found it. Emma may be the one that finally does find it.

# The Sea Women

Young Soon Chyung

I saw the strongest women in the world when I escaped from Seoul to the coast of Korea. It was on the island of Chea Ju-do which is inhabited by diving girls.

The women of Chea Ju-do, however, are no magic girls. Between the age of 28 and 35 they are engaged in the unromantic task of earning a living by scraping food from the bottom of the sea.

But a legend has been built in the imagination of men who escape from the realities of their daily hardship by dreaming of Chea Ju-do where men live at ease and the women do all the work.

Actually it is a sort of Amazon country. The women go out to earn the daily food while the men stay home, tend the children and keep house.

Of the island's 32,000 population, probably 20,000 are women divers. It's a work for women because men can't stand the cold water. Their plumpness covers muscle. They can remain under water several minutes at a time. The islander's girls start training at the age of 11 or 13 and after 5 to 17 years are considered first class.

They bring up seaweed, sea potatoes, ear-shells and several kinds of fish. Each diver has a float which supports her net bag while she dives for food. The float is a dried pumpkin about the size of a basketball.

The Amazons are too stocky to be sweater girls. Years of deep breath holding have developed powerful lungs and broad chests. Asleep, the diving girls are reputed to out-snore anyone else.

The divers wear modern goggles. They carry a sharp sickle and an implement which looks like a tire iron with which they pry oysters, abalone, crabs and other shell fish from the bottom of the sea.

# Symphony In Words

Joan Jersild

I live and am and have my being  
short and stout and tall and thin  
Clothes and feet and people people  
hands and eyes a mouth a grin,  
Pillows soft and downy fur.  
Hands spanking mommy daddy people  
big and little  
mine  
Kittens puppies candy sweetness  
trees and flowers  
fairies  
me  
Buttons bottles clothes itches  
hair fingers hot and cold  
Chairs and tables all around me  
ants, and little creepy things.  
Sox and sweaters mirrors lipstick  
youth and age and silliness.  
Brothers sisters teasing poking  
life about me seething surging  
everywhere and all about me  
love and laughter—  
happiness.

Grow and grow more people now.  
Life and luck and spice and sin.  
Love and hate and fear and wisdom  
soul and body  
heart within.  
Outside inside lies deceitful  
faith and hope and helplessness.  
Soft and soothing  
crude deluding  
tenderness and sympathy.  
Heart and soul and mind and spirit  
sex and lust and wantonness.  
Greed and grief anguish immortal  
needs and wants and life eternal  
others self and self and self  
and more and more  
to sink and drown  
to fall and die—

decay.

Work and falter sweat and stumble  
bumps and knocks  
I fight I hate.

Pride and ego selfish falsehoods  
malice, jealousy, and fear.

Hitting kicking fighting smiting  
cutting biting vicious cruel.

Wrath and anger cringe and cower  
worthless scared

and falling downward,  
downward  
down

and

down—

despair.

Melancholy depth profound.

Sadness madness grief and pain.

Limpid brooding broken down

Calling pleading sick and crying

moaning groaning bleeding dying

sin and sickness

death at last

suffering in its grasp at last—

death.



# The Great Release

Gunnar Mengers

Paul saw his chance. His father had just closed the heavy mean-looking family Bible and was mentally preparing his daily list of instructions to God. Everyone's eyes were closed. Paul slipped quietly off his chair and tiptoed to the basement door. His father's wailing monotone had begun as Paul felt his way through the dark basement. He picked up the hammer from the workbench and stepped outside.

He felt strong, terribly strong with the hammer in his hand. He looked up at the black, moonless sky and threw the hammer straight at God. It bounced back on the driveway in a shower of sparks. Paul retrieved it and tucked it under his belt, hiding it beneath his shirt. He thrilled to the cold, hard steel against his skin.

Paul walked out to the street and turned south. Bannock, Acoma, then Plum street. He turned west on Fourth. It was a gravelled street with little traffic. Paul leaned against the trunk of a large elm tree on the side opposite the street light. He looked around. No one in sight. There were lights in most of the houses. The people were probably praying, he thought. Seven cars were parked in the block.

He wrapped his fingers around the hammer and slowly pulled it out. He could feel his pulse pounding in his temples and his stomach felt cold. He sweat in anticipation. He strode to the closest car. Crash. The bright metal of the tail light stared stupidly at the chunks of broken glass. He broke the other tail light. Then the headlights. Then the windows. Paul went on to the second car and the third car. The fourth car was his Sunday school teacher. He swung viciously, blindly and glass tinkled as it bounced off the fenders. The fifth car was the president of the congregation. The sixth and seventh cars were everyone he hated.

He felt strong, terribly strong with the hammer in his hand. He wanted to shout to the whole world, to tell everyone what he had done. But instead he trudged home, carefully replacing the hammer in the basement. The house was dark and he had to feel his way to his room. He undressed quietly and slipped into the big double bed where his brother lay sleeping. He did not notice the blood from his hands as it stained the sheets.

# Brown Salt

Pamela Rhoades

There's a brown river about a mile from town whose tiny tributaries run smack through the center of a state park. One evening we had a picnic down at the river. It had been a long, hot Saturday; we had played tennis and then had gone swimming to cool off. We stopped in town to buy some buns, wieners and potato chips at a sticky little grocery store.

Then we drove out to the river. When we got out of the car a faint cool wind licked our arms and cheeks. I looked at the river. I don't know why it seemed so beautiful that evening. It lay brown and slow and full.

We dragged logs and bits of sticks from the woods and built our fire just a few feet from the water's edge. We spread an old khaki blanket over the sand. The sand was fine and pale tan, and when we stepped in it with our bare feet it felt cool and grainy and good.

In the woods back of the beach we cut sharp sticks to roast the wieners on. The woods were green and crowded. Tall black trees stood silently above the rick black earth. We ran back down the path to the beach and the sand flew off our heels. Sand was everywhere, so soft and fine, like pale brown salt.

Hunger made us sit down and eat. We burnt the wieners to a charred black and stuck them in the buns. I leaned back on my elbows and looked at the sky. I could hear the water gently licking the pebbles along the shore a few feet away. I listened to the slow and easy voices of my friends' aimless talk and soft laughter.

I sat up and looked down the river. The sun was burning itself out beyond the trees, a red ball of fire surrounded by stained pink clouds. And after sunset came the glow which is more beautiful than the sunset itself.

There was a place along the beach where the sand stretches farther out into the river, a kind of miniature peninsula, with water on three sides. I finished my hot dog and walked slowly down the beach till I came to it.

The moon was coming up in the east, all round and yellow and misty. It echoed on the water in a thousand little waves of silver. Far away across the river I heard muffled shouts of kids playing in the water. Then all was still.

Cool air rose from the moist earth, yet the sand over my feet was warm. I stooped and stuck a stick in the wet sand. Water oozed up around the base. I crouched by the stick and looked at the water in the river behind it.

Brown water, silver moon waves, beige sand, brown trees, brown pebbles, brown, tan, cream, beige, white. The air was pale and soft, cool and warm, gentle and fleeting.

Darkness came without warning and clung about my shoulders. I turned and walked back through the white sand to the campfire and the laughter.

Without a word we shook the sand from the old khaki blanket and left. When I got in the car I looked back at the beach. The sand looked whiter and cleaner than ever. The brown water glistened in the moonlight on one side of the strip of sandy beach. On the other side, dark trees stood quietly above the water. The wind touched my cheek before I rolled up the window.

Autumn came, and I went back to the beach. I walked slowly down the path to it. A wind brought the smell of the river to me. I looked at the brown water. Dead bugs floated near the edge; bits of sticks and pop bottle caps had been washed up on the shore. I took off my shoes and walked slowly through the sand. The sand was neither warm nor cool. I had never noticed the sharp rocks by the river's edge. I walked up the path to the woods. In the darkness the mosquitoes hummed incessantly about my ears. I turned quickly and ran down the path to the beach.

The air grew suddenly still. I shrugged my shoulders, and the movement made my damp clothes stick to my back. Tin cans scattered on the beach glinted insolently at me. I shook the sand from my shoes and walked quietly up the hill. I didn't look back when I started the car.

# *A Million Years . . .*

*Ruth Pedersen*

Darkness had settled over the small midwestern town of Oakdale. It had come quietly with the last rays of the winter sun. The stars had shone briefly and then the snow had begun. It had fallen softly at first and then more swiftly as the sharp wind out of the north had swirled it around faster and faster.

But all along Fairview Road the people appeared to be oblivious to the raging storm. Each door displayed a bright Christmas wreath whose shining white candle proclaimed to all the joyousness that lay within the walls. Through many windows up and down the street the flickering light of a fireplace could be spied, spreading its warmth and cheer for all who would come.

Behind one of these windows Vicky Taylor stood, her nose pressed flat against the cold pane. "It's getting worse, Mom. Terry will never get here in this storm. Oh, why couldn't it have waited until tomorrow?"

"Um-hum," Mrs. Taylor, deeply absorbed in the last Book Club selection, answered her daughter mechanically. Vicky is always worrying about some boy, she thought. She searched her memory trying to place the name Terry. Then she remembered. Terry was the boy from Clarmont, a town fifty miles distant, who had visited at the Taylor home once about a month ago with Dick, a cousin of Vicky's. She recalled vaguely the letters which had come nearly every day for Vicky, addressed in a sprawling, masculine writing and postmarked "Clar-mont."

Mrs. Taylor lowered her book and looked across the darkened room at her sixteen-year-old daughter who still stood by the window, staring out into the blackness of the night. "You didn't tell me Terry was coming down tonight, Vicky. Where are you planning on going?"

"Mother! I did too!" Vicky's voice was indignant as she turned briefly from the window. "Josie is having a party tonight and I wrote to Terry about it and he promised to come down for it." She turned back to the window forlornly. "But he'll never get here in this storm and I will have to miss the party."

The house was still for a few minutes, with only the crackling of the burning logs and the soft flicking of the pages in the book as Mrs. Taylor progressed with her story. Suddenly the sharp ring of the tele-

phone invaded the stillness. Vicky turned quickly and darted across the room toward the hall. Reaching the phone she picked it up. "Hello?" Mrs. Taylor heard her daughter's breathless voice as she said, "Just a minute. I'll call her." She looked up to see Vicky come dejectedly into the living room. "It's for you, Mom. Mrs. Palmer wants to talk to you." With that she headed again for the window. But instead of resuming her vigil she merely glanced out of it briefly, then turned and flopped down in front of the fire. "I wonder if he will call," she mused. "It is already a quarter to eight and the party starts at eight. Oh, I will just die if he doesn't come! But I know he will—if he can. Maybe it isn't snowing so hard in Clarmont. I'll bet it isn't. It is probably just around here it is so bad."

Mrs. Taylor returned again to her chair. She looked around for her daughter and, seeing her lying before the fire, her head propped in her hands, she said, "Don't worry, dear. I'm sure Terry will call you if he doesn't come."

Vicky heaved a sigh in reply to her mother's encouraging comment. She stared into the fire which blazed brightly, and listened to the wind swirling the beautiful snow around and around, making it harsh and ugly.

At ten o'clock Mrs. Taylor closed her book. "Well, dear," she remarked, "I think you had better just go to bed. I'm sure Terry won't come this late."

"Mom, what'll I do? Maybe he is laying out in some snowdrift! I just know he would have called if he wasn't coming. Oh, what will I do! He probably got stuck somewhere. Or maybe he had a wreck!" Vicky was close to tears as she bemoaned the probable fate of her young lover. "Oh, if anything happened to him I'll just die! I'll never go with anyone again!" With that she ran from the room, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Mrs. Taylor looked after her daughter, shaking her head slowly. She could remember very well her own experiences at sixteen. She had vowed, too, never to love another. But the vow had vanished with the disappointment which had inspired it. Yet, she knew that it would do no good to try to console Vicky. A spurned woman of sixteen is not easily comforted.

The clear ring of the telephone aroused Mrs. Taylor from her reverie. She answered it mechanically. "Miss Vicky Taylor, please. Clarmont is calling." Mrs. Taylor, turning to call her daughter, found she was already at her elbow. "It's for you, dear. I think it must be Terry."

Vicky took the telephone excitedly from her mother. "Hello? Yes, this is Vicky Taylor . . . Hello, Terry. Where are you?"

Mrs. Taylor walked to the room. She wondered what reason the boy would give for not calling sooner. But maybe he had tried to come and had gotten stuck in a snowdrift. She waited impatiently for Vicky to finish talking. After a few minutes she heard the click of the receiver. She walked to the hall, hoping it would look accidental that she came just as Vicky finished talking. However, she did not need to worry, for when she reached the hall she saw Vicky walking slowly up the steps, her head drooping. After a moment of silent debate as to whether or not it would be advisable to talk to Vicky about what had happened, she ascended the steps slowly and knocked on her daughter's door. "May I come in, Vicky?" she queried. At a muffled "yes" she opened the door to find her daughter flopped across the bed. Vicky sat up suddenly and stared at her mother. "It isn't even snowing in Clarmont!" she exclaimed with a sniffle. "He forgot!" At that she flopped back down and resumed her sobbing.

Mrs. Taylor sat speechless for a moment. To be stood up because of a snow storm was one thing, but to have your date forget about a big party was quite another! She looked helplessly at her daughter. Sixteen-year-olds are so vulnerable, she thought. Patting Vicky on the shoulder she said, "You'd better get to bed now, dear. School tomorrow, you know."

All next day Mrs. Taylor wondered about her daughter. She had seemed quiet at the breakfast table. I suppose she was still thinking about Terry. We probably won't see her happy for the rest of the week. She thought all this as she tried to remember her own feelings at sixteen.

Shortly after four Mrs. Taylor heard her daughter fling open the front door, throw her books on the table, and race to the kitchen. "Mother, the most wonderful thing happened!" Vicky's eyes were shining. "Hal Bowen—he's that real cute senior—asked me to go to the game with him tomorrow night. Isn't that scrumptious!"

"Why, yes, dear. That's wonderful!" Mrs. Taylor shared her daughter's enthusiasm, ignoring the transient thought of last night's heartache. That was yesterday, she told herself. And at sixteen yesterday can be a million years ago.

# Dusk

Virginia Hansen

A field is white  
And the gatherer knows  
Soon comes the night.

Workers are sent,  
And the power flows  
For the purpose it's meant.

Endless forests  
And long narrow trails  
Lead to unknown quests.

A burning desire  
When it fails,  
Dies a smoldering fire.

So, as slowly, the evening sun  
Sinks in its radiant glow  
Workers and gatherers stand as one  
In Heaven, eternally.

# Leaf

Phil Pagel



The raging storm carried the leaf far—  
Far into darkness, through valleys of fear and gloom;  
Till at last the winds were still and the world was silent.  
Now life had passed, and with it had gone  
All hope to return to a worldly role.  
But the wind too had died and all was without motion,  
Nothing was there to bear the soul home.

The water was cold where the leaf now lay,  
And for a moment it felt the surge  
Of a new born gale,  
And then sank.

# The Good Old Days

Diana Rhoades

The Old Days are always the best. No matter what hardships or unpleasanties they brought up at the time, the Good Old Days are just that—Good Old Days.

Now take my childhood, for example. Why, children just don't know how to live anymore.

My two sisters, two neighbor boys and I grew up in the outskirts of a mid-western town. I speak of the two neighbors right along with our family because they are so much a part of our stay on Orchard Avenue that they could not be left out. Whatever we did, it was the five of us—unless someone had unluckily fallen from the good graces of our quintet. In back of our house, extended over hills and hills and hills, were woods. The woods were very nice woods. They were equipped with everything a child could want—many hills, a long, turning, steep pathway which made a wonderful sled run, pretty flowers for May Day, a bag swing in one tall tree, a long creek, and even an old tree which had the distinction of being the gallows for a suicide—Dead Man's Tree, it was. Then Fairyland must not be omitted. Fairyland was hidden far inside the woods; its floor was soft moss and ferns, its decoration was Dutchman's breeches and sweet williams.

We shall most remember the creek. This creek, first discovered in '42 by Rhoades, Rhoades, Rhoades, Bergquist and Bergquist, was probably more thoroughly mapped than any other creek. Known as the Mam, its three main branches were the Mississippi, the Amazon, and the Missouri. It sprang from Echo Mountain, rushed past Lookout Mountain, tumbled over Niagara Falls, through the Grand Canyon and finally reached the gutters of Orchard Avenue.

Never was Shakespeare as heartily enjoyed as he was in our group. Many times our long-suffering mothers (or perhaps a row of empty chairs) had to witness a thrilling, blow-by-blow account of his tragedies, invariably ending with the entire cast lying prostrate, cold, and dead on the floor.

Occasionally, however, we had a larger audience. This was at

our carnivals, in which the main events were the Spook House, the Penny Pitch and the Grand Show. The Grand Show usually contained its share of home movies and Shakespeare—a very modified Shakespeare, I must say.

I don't think any of the five of us would be the same today if it were not for our clubs and our newspaper. How the newspaper remained the Kanessville News for the entire five years, I'll never know—our clubs were not so unchanging. To name each club we formed would take forever; however, it usually had the same five members. We read comics, had elections, argued, and disbanded, then formed a club again.

Yes, those *were* the Good Old Days. Children don't know how to live anymore!

# Water and Sand

*Gunnar Mengers*

Neil stood near the base of the sodden and trembling earthen dike. He could hear the sullen gurgle of the Missouri River above the whine of army trucks plowing through the mud on the dike. Headlights bobbed rhythmically, throwing a sickly, yellow light from mud-covered lenses. The rain had stopped, but a breeze had sprung up and fingered its way through his wet overalls and army combat jacket. He tried to figure out what he was doing there.

The papers had appealed for flood relief workers and Neil volunteered. "Flood Crest Due Thursday; Volunteers Needed" screamed Tuesday's headlines. Now it was Friday and the river was still rising, searching and prodding with dirty brown fingers for a weak spot—there must be a weak spot—in the dike.

Neil had been assigned to the chain gang handing up sand bags to a section of the dike too weak to withstand the heavy vibration of army trucks. The motion of passing sand bags had become mechanical, and Neil did not even see them as they moved along from man to man like a thin brown snake disappearing into the river.

Neil wondered what time it was, and hurriedly glanced at his watch. It was covered by wet sand, and he had no time to brush it off.

Sand was everywhere—in his hair, in his eyes, in his mouth. Sand was inside his clothes. His sweaty underwear picked up the sand and ground it into his skin with every turn of his body. Every muscle ached, and his legs felt like posts driven into the ground to be left there permanently. He wondered to himself if he could walk away without falling down and smiled at the thought.

Somewhere in the black distance he heard the cry of "Sandboil!" Other voices took up the cry and the sound began to bounce around in his brain like the throbbing of a pulse. He formed the word with his lips and glanced at the men around him embarrassed to see if they had noticed. Their faces were vacant like the faces of dead men.

Neil relapsed into semi-consciousness. He was in hell now shoveling coal, and the river was God trying to reach him. No, the river couldn't be God. The river was evil, evil. The river was—suddenly Neil didn't give a damn what the river was.

The bags began to come at a slower rate. Neil reached into his pocket for a cigarette. His matches were wet so he sucked on it unlighted. He spit it out when it became limp from sweat and saliva.

Neil was startled when the man on his left spoke up. "New guys here. Fall out. Pass it on." He turned and repeated the order, then silently walked to the trucks, holding his arms out like a baby unsure of his ability to walk. He listened to the whine of the truck tires on the pavement and fell asleep. He dreamt of thin brown snakes and sand.

# Knickerbocker History of New York . . .

## a Criticism

Ann Harms

When Washington Irving wrote *The Knickerbocker History of New York*, he first intended the book as a parody of Samuel Latham Miller's *The Picture of New York*, an earnest but dull handbook of the history and institutions of New York City.

Pure burlesque at first, the book soon outgrew its original purpose of laughing at a "ponderous historical treatise, and became a work of art done in the spirit of broad comedy."<sup>1</sup> The whimsical satire has been called the "first great book of comic literature written by an American."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps this tribute to *The Knickerbocker History of New York* is partly due to the skillful caricatures of the three Dutch governors, Wouter Van Twiller, William Kieft and Peter Stuyvesant. Irving's gay and light-hearted account, written in the very credible manner of historians, extends back to the creation of the world, the flood, the settlement of the Dutch in the New World, and through the days of Van Twiller, the doubter, to the grandiose reign and pathetic end of Peter Stuyvesant, the headstrong.

As he wrote, Irving discovered that the history of New York as a Dutch colony had never been adequately written, and he spent many hours with old books and manuscripts in the New York Historical society and other libraries. Despite his humorous and satirical purposes, his account embodied fact as well as fiction, and, as he said in later life, his work provoked research into the "forgotten archives of the province."<sup>3</sup> Even so, Irving called the history "the youthful folly." He loved literature for its own sake, and not as a means to the attainment of some social, moral or political end. The more strenuous problems of life, and the tragedy of it had no attraction for him.

*The History of New York* is far more than its title suggests therefore. "It is improvisation on a large scale that ranges from out-and-out

<sup>1</sup> Franklyn B. Snyder and Edward D. Snyder, *A Book of American Literature*, 226.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley T. Williams, "Washington Irving," *Dictionary of American Biography*, Dumas Malone, ed., IX, 507.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Blair and others, *The Literature of the United States*, I, 540.

burlesque to epic grandeur of scene and action. It is a richly embellished recreation of Gargantuan figures and fabulous history."<sup>4</sup> Among Irving's targets are Swedes, Yankees, colonial historians, Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam, red-breeched Jefferson and his democrats, English, French and Spanish literature, and the quizzical author himself.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the book there is a mingling of the serious and the comic, of actual fact and stark impossibility; there is colossal exaggeration. In other words, it is a fabulous yarn told with the gravest of faces.

Irving recognized the grotesquely humorous possibilities of the Dutch character and temperament when confronted with problems of state, and the narrative is presented with an air of historical gravity. So grave, in fact, that a German historian took the *History* seriously, and quoted from it.

The character studies are full of individuality, and are drawn with a mock seriousness and minuteness that give them all the qualities of actual historical portraits. "In particular, the Dutch personalities of Wouter Van Twiller, William Kieft (a cartoon of Jefferson), and Peter Stuyvesant have crept into tradition, painting, and into the imaginations of subsequent generations of readers."<sup>6</sup>

Irving's characterizations of the three governors were very good, and he did follow the real personalities of the governors while he caricatured them. The book is youthful and undisciplined, and is full of irreverent bouyancy.

Irving had a conception of natural goodness, and his characters were treated with sympathy. His writings are satirical, but not sharp and biting. He has a gentle humor. In Book II he wrote, "I do not think poor human nature so sorry a piece of workmanship as they would make it out to be; and so far as I have observed, I am fully satisfied that man, if left to himself, would about as readily go right as wrong. It is only this eternally sounding in his ears that it is his duty to do right, which makes him go the very reverse. The noble independence of his nature revolts . . ."

Irving's polished wit is subtle and ironic, but at times it becomes prolix and repetitious. His charming characterizations, his ridicule of pedantry, illustrated in his style and in his labored footnotes, and the urbanity of Irving himself compensate for any of the faults of the book. The entire *History*, its style, manner, humor and characterizations, typifies the youthful Irving at the beginning of his literary career. It proclaims his self-cultivation and also the vigor of mind that underlay his apparent languor.

<sup>4</sup> Saxi Commins, "America's First Man of Letters," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXVIII, (Sept. 1, 1945), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Robert C. Spiller and others, *Literary History of the United States*, I, 246.

# Semantics and World Affairs

Irene Wittig

What causes all this confusion in the world today? To answer this question, one must look to semantics and say, "Misunderstanding." Words have sometimes completely reversed their meanings through the ages. However, these forms of language have sometimes been deliberately given certain meaning associations for the purpose of turning them into carriers of distorted thought. All these changes in semantic content have actually come about by differences in the experiences of individuals.

It is very common to hear reputable journalists say, "One of our main barriers to understanding with the Soviets is a semantic crisis." We Americans do not understand the semantic content of the Marxian terms, and the Russians do not understand our western ideas. All this exists in spite of the fact that we still persist in using words which at first glance seem to be identical.

To take, for example, two countries like America and Russia and expect them to have the same meaning for a word is foolish. These two nations with such different backgrounds and experiences could not possibly have the same definition of "liberty" or "democracy." In America, "democracy" is said to emphasize government "by" the people; Russian "democracy" emphasizes government "for" the people. The word "liberty" suggests to us certain ideas involving individual freedoms. "Liberty" used to appear in the Nazi and Fascist songs, where its connotation was built around the freedom of the national or racial group to expand at the expense of others.

These differences in word meanings are responsible for many international confusions. One such happening occurred in the usage of "corn." "Corn" means "wheat" to the British, "oats" to the Scots, and "maize" to the Americans. During the war a government agency bought "corn" for European famine relief at the request of the British government. This bit of ignorance in semantics cost a few million dollars to repair.

Semantics does not only affect understanding, but it also affects the vocabulary of different groups by disposing of some terms and adding new ones. The Veterans of Foreign Wars decided to drop "comrade" from their list of special terms because of its supposed communistic associations. Now "buddy" is used instead.

International understanding would be wonderful, but I do not think that the world will ever attain such a goal. In order to have such understanding, every individual in every nation must have the same connotation in the meaning of every word. This should be our goal.

# MISS GOLL

Margaret Brodersen

Mary Goll! A simple name—a not uncommon one—but to the youngsters of our town, it held a magic meaning. Meaning and appearances are two different things and Mary Goll was no exception.

Miss Goll was a familiar sight trudging along in a long flapping black overcoat and a knit stocking cap. She was middle aged—not old in years, but a life of hard work made her appear very old. She wore men's rubbers or overshoes the year around. When she walked, she bent forward at the waist as if heading into a high wind. The overshoes may have accounted for this characteristic walk, but probably it was because the wagon handle was too short. Always, she pulled a child's battered steel-wheeled wagon and always in the wagon was a box or basket covered with a white tea towel.

And what that little wagon carried was the remarkable part of Mary Goll!

Mary Goll was creator of birthday cakes for the children of our town, the light parkerhouse rolls for family gatherings, the cream puffs for afternoon teas, and dozens of cookies, pies, and loaves of bread. She was the first one consulted about family gatherings, a birthday party, a card party, or just a special surprise. Miss Mary Goll was the best cook in town and everyone knew it.

She and her sister, Miss Amelia, lived in a little white house on the north edge of Blair. All around it was a black iron fence and Miss Goll's gate had a delightful snap when it clicked shut. And Miss Goll's house? What a house! Not one bit of furniture did she have in her living room or dining room. Two bedrooms off the dining room were crammed to the ceiling with household furniture, but all the other rooms were bare—living room, dining room, parlor—just bare floor boards and faded wallpaper. She had no time for this part of her house.

But the kitchen—oh, the kitchen—this was the true Miss Goll! Here was a scene of activity and confusion. Along the walls were shelves—even built across the windows—shelves laden with every conceivable cooking aid—flour, raisins, spices, extracts, sifters, pans, ladles, everything. Everything but a cookbook, for Miss Goll did not need a cookbook—she was an artist in her own right. No standardized formulas for her! And in the midst of all this was the stove and Miss Mary.

Miss Goll's philosophy of living was as surprising as her house and her appearance. She always rose at four in the morning and had



been known to rise at three if she had something special. "The very best part of the morning comes before seven," she used to say. To offset this, she and her sister went to bed at seven—sometimes at six.

Generally the two sisters were far too busy to talk. If Miss Mary was delivering with the little wagon, she hardly paused a moment. If customers called to pick up their orders, the orders were ready. There was little time to talk unless just one name was mentioned. If a kind customer asked, "How is Jacob?" that was the key to conversation for these two busy women. For Jacob was their beloved nephew—the one-time owner of the little wagon, the old overcoat, the ancient over-shoes. He was their reason for living.

The child of a long dead sister, Jacob had been their care and their happiness since his babyhood. Now he was in medical school. Miss Mary and Miss Amelia were helping him. This fact gave reason for all the baking and cooking. Jacob was always in the hearts and minds of these two old ladies. In the midst of the feverish activity in the kitchen, his picture looked down upon them from its place on the spice shelf. And on the cold winter delivery trips that Miss Goll made, the thought of Jacob warmed her numbed feet and relieved her bone weariness.

Senior Ann Harms is a proud Langland Award winner this year for her poem, "Driftwood," also receiving the Hal Cole Award for her essay, "Knickerbocker History—an Analysis." Ann was the first woman president of the student body. She was on the *Sower* staff in her sophomore year and was last year's editor, and has served on the staffs of both the *Hermes* and the *Danian*. An English major, she has won an assistantship for graduate work at the University of Nebraska.

Another Langland Award winner for his story, "Water and Sand," is junior Gunnar Mengers. He was associate editor of the *Sower* for two years and was a member of the *Hermes* and *Danian* staffs this year. His poetry has appeared in *America Sings*, a national anthology of college poetry. President of his class and next year's *Hermes* editor, Gunnar plans to do graduate work in English.

Winner of the Hal Cole Award for art for the second consecutive year is senior Marion Christensen, a native of Omaha. Marion was a member of the Women's Dorm Council and has spent a great deal of time designing decorations for campus social affairs. A psychology major, Marion plans to teach next year.

Physical education major and former Chicago parish worker is Edith Skobo. She has drawn a delightful picture of a rural Scandinavian family in a story written for the creative writing class. Edith has been active in LSA, WAA, and choir and headed the Association of Women Students.

Five freshmen contributed to the *Sower* this year. We like Joann Jersild's flowing word picture, Marilyn Ward's description of Barabbas, the thief, and Irene Wittig's character sketch and essay. Virginia Hansen displayed her ability to handle words in her poem, "Dusk." The other freshman is writer and illustrator Diana Rhoades who designed the cover.

Diana's sister Pam is a transfer student from the University of Nebraska and Iowa State College and a junior class officer. Her "Brown Salt" is the recollection of an experience at Iowa State. Pam plans to teach in the Blair public schools next year.

Pre-seminary student Elmer Petersen is the third illustrator for the *Sower*. A senior, he spent two years in the army before returning to Dana to continue his education. He had been elected student body president but was unable to serve, being drafted before his term of office. He was president of the LSA this year and sings tenor in the newly organized quartet which will tour the Midwest this summer.

A teacher at Craig, Nebraska, Mrs. Margaret Brodersen wrote her charming sketch, "Miss Goll" for the creative writing class. "Every bit of it is true," she claims.

Highly interesting is Young Soon Chyung's "The Sea Women of Korea." Young has hurdled a difficult language barrier to present a fascinating picture of his home land in his essay.

We especially like Phillip Pagel's "Leaf." A sophomore, this is Phil's first contribution. Actor, singer and speaker, Phil has been active in the Viking Players, the a cappella choir and the male glee club, and has worked to develop the debate team.

