



MBER 1975

DRY GRASS

The hayfield whispers as I walk
Each midnight hour up this hill
To tell the autumn wind such talk
And nonsense as I will.
I mark the sumac by the moon
And tear the withered grass to show
How crisp stems crackle, and how soon
The searching fingers know
Beyond old callouses and tough
Thin tentacles of nerve that this
Is death again.

I like that rough
Sharp certainty that is
Portion of hand and part of mind.
For if, sometimes, I run in fear,
Bewildered, questioning and blind,
At least I have death here,
Real in my human hand. It
Is reassuring, being clean
And common to my autumn wit
And in my memory, green.

Joseph Langland

Joseph Langland was inspired by the hills of Dana when he wrote "Dry Grass". In 1942, while a teacher at Dana, he established "The Sower". Last fall he was on campus for a poetry reading and workshop. Langland is a recognized poet in America today and presently teaches at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. His **The Wheel of Summer** is a collection of poems written in common language about universal subjects.

SOWER 1975

Volume XXX

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HAL EVANS COLE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS

Cover Photograph Gary Rasmussen

WHISTLE FOR THE WIND

I saw Selena last night,
Glowing with an amber light,
Heralding the approach
Of a blue white star that follows.

I danced in the fallen leaves
In and out the basket weaves
I'm the child of Autumn
Gladness banishing all sorrows.

I told the trees to bow to me
To celebrate this ecstasy.
We'll drink wine, these grapes of mine
Be joyful ever after.

Very soon, the night will end
There'll be a whistle for the wind
And all that's left
Of me will be my laughter.

Constance Gibson

(haiku)

A dewdrop slides down
Along the green razor edge,
An uncut diamond

Christopher Warman

THE GREAT BLACKBIRD HARVEST

The delicate oats kernels hanging from waving stalks of straw looked to us like zillions of gold pieces glimmering in the sun. Yes, this was the harvest to beat all harvests. A 50-bushel-an-acre crop? Well, maybe, but we weren't counting our chickens before they hatched.

All through the long winter my dad had considered planting oats in the spring. Oats never grew well, the neighbors always insisted, unless the rains came at just the right time and the hail didn't. Besides, who made any money growing oats?

But my father was stubborn – if he wanted to plant oats he would plant oats, and not even the Russian army could stop him. And so, to top it off and as if to show everyone he knew what he was doing, he was not satisfied with a meager ten or fifteen acres, but planted 40 acres of his rich bottomland to oats – a quarter of the farm.

Well, it grew and it grew well – especially considering he didn't use any pesticides, insecticides, or fertilizer as most farmers did, that is except for an occasional load of a reeky blend of chicken, pig, and cow manure he hauled out. Dad always said it was fertilizer, but I thought it would work just as well as an insecticide because no bug with a decent sense of smell would ever come near that stuff.

And surprisingly enough, the weeds didn't come either. Most years we had a type of crop rotation. One year the cockleburrs grew like mad, the next year it was thistles and then it was sunflowers. But this year no weeds came except for some almost harmless milkweeds.

Dad and I started windrowing the oats early the next morning, as soon as enough dew had melted away to make the straw brittle. Round and round the field we went, hour after hour.

Our windrower was a gaudy orange, steel monstrosity, faintly resembling a tank being pulled across the field sideways. It was something I thought belonged more in the Smithsonian's Museum of Ancient Farm Implements than in any farmer's machine shed. But it worked – at least once in a while.

It was my job to sit on a little bar on the windrower as my dad drove around the field. I had to hunch down to keep my head from being clobbered by the revolving wooden panels that brought the straw into the machine and also had to make sure I didn't lean so far forward that I would fall into the cutting apparatus right below me.

I carried my scythe with me and when I saw straw bunching up or saw some straw that wasn't cut I would yell at the top of my lungs. Dad would stop the tractor long enough for me to leap out to remedy the situation.

The cutting had been going well, especially considering what we were doing the cutting with. But then there was trouble coming and I yelled to Dad to stop. For there a few feet ahead was a blackbird's nest fashioned precariously in a milkweed and hovering above it was an angry blackbird, bravely defending her nest and young.

No problems. We just went around the nest and away we went again windrowing. But a few hundred feet farther was another nest, again built in a milkweed. And so it went. There were more and more nests all the time. It seemed that every few feet there was a milkweed and every milkweed had a nest and every nest had a ferociously mad blackbird with murder gleaming in its eyes.

We didn't have the heart to go plowing through the oats pretending we didn't see the birds and their nests. That was too cruel even to consider. And so for the remainder of the day we dodged blackbird nests.

When we were done the field didn't look like any conventional one — you know, those with perfectly parallel rows of grain waiting to be combined that you see in pictures in farm magazines. There were no rows — only curves — and every ten feet or so stood an island of oats with a milkweed in it someplace. It had an uncanny resemblance to my little brother's head after my little sister had played barber.

It wasn't long before the neighbors came driving around, as they always did. In a few days scores of cars were driving by the field, including several cars from neighboring counties. And then the airplane traffic picked up. That oats field was becoming a minor tourist attraction.

A few days later the county extension agent came to inquire about the field. "You've got an interesting field out there," he said to my father. "Why did you leave those patches of oats, anyway?" he asked hesitatingly.

Dad didn't want to answer that question. He hemmed and hawed, finally muttering something about soil conservation and how those patches of straw were going to be helpful in preventing gullies. The extension agent looked dazed.

I hated to see my father embarrassed like that and I had a sinister desire to whack off the extension agent's head with my scythe. To me my father had always been only a small cut below God.

The extension agent continued his vain attempt to solve the mystery, but didn't, and left looking twice as baffled as before.

Nobody ever did find out why that oats field was such a sight. Looking back, I can't help but chuckle a little and feel sorry for those poor devils. I bet they're still wondering what happened.

Steve Berntson



Acrylic Paul Hundtoft

If You Knew - - -

If you knew
What you know,
When your happiness
Burns down,
So is truth
Much smaller,
While it still
Burns high.

From the Danish of Piet Hein
by Pat Knuth

THE MATINEE MIRACLE

Licorice sticks,
and juju fruits,
Saturday matinees.
Popsicle drips, bubble gum tossed and matted into velvety sticky seats,
that scrape and scratch bare arms and legs,
which flail and cheer for the gun-laden hero.

Look! He's got a neat horse and he's wearing a hat –
white Stetson – and a real six shooter!
(that aims over heads, 'cause nobody kills a
Saturday afternoon bad guy)

The bad guy only wears black and clutches the iron bars, while
sneering at sheriffs – that saddle their horse and round up the posse.
Dissolve into scenes of Nellie and Sam.

Yecch – they're kissing again; head for the popcorn!

Now back to clutching the backs of the seats.
The chase scene – the bad guy is out of his jail.

He's robbed the bank, the teller's dumb-founded,
"He went thataway!"
The posse is hot on the trail.

Lights flicker, sound sputters, the reel is ended.
The teen-age projector man whips out the film – while masses
of faces (pale in the dark) try to imagine who'll win in the end.

Ah gee whiz . . . Do you think they'll get them? . . .
You're stepping on my sack of popcorn! Get your own soda!

Ice fights are the craze, but the battle is ended – the case is resumed.
Thundering hooves – not one popcorn bag rustles.
Orange soda tumbles from turned over cups – knocked
over by nervous feet kicking at make-believe stirrups.

YEA! The bad guys are losing!
The white hat has trapped them
in Dry Gulch Ravine. BANG * BANG
BANG * BANG (count six if you can)
They reload behind a great granite rock.
Bad guys surrender – hands flailing in air.

OH NO – here comes Nellie –
there's (SHEESH) kissing again.

Off – into the sunset – man and horse ride out of sight.
Then the hot little theatre grows quiet and waits
for licorice sticks,
juju fruits,
and Saturday afternoon.

Willadeen Stubbendeck

"SPIRITED" SEA

deep blue sea
tossing
sail boats
crest crest
to
marooned
to
trough trough
anchored temporarily
course resumed
navigator
guiding
singled boat
near
capsize oversight
averted

FORSAKEN CREW:

crafty allegiance
abandon
ye
not!

Mary Staby

MEMO

TO: A white rat who died in the line of service
FROM: A Biology Major

Small white form,
Limp and lifeless,
Why are you such when once you breathed?

Why did you die?
To teach some simple fact,
That any textbook could reveal without bloodshed.

But, truthfully,
You did not die alone,
For with you are the millions that man kills —
for whim or reason.

I feel not grief, or regret,
Yet I know not what I feel,
Perhaps a strange melancholy at what man seems to require —
to survive.

Barb Beck

WHITE CLOUD

It is said among the Otoes
That blessed is one of proud girth;
As a greater cloud gives more rain --
A gentle, purple touch to Mother Earth.

Above black fields shine rainbows
Where butterflies dance and tease a lily
To risk brotherhood and pain
And the blood of fledgling wings.

For as by prism parted,
We merge this colored band
To light which sings
To see our children's
children's
children's
children understand.

Al Hanson

FLOWERS BY RYEBERG

"Now this is going to hurt just a little bit, but you'll be all right; this shot is just like the others so you know what to expect."

Stanley talked calmly and hypnotically, imitating Marcus Welby's best bedside manner. He carefully filled the syringe with a solution prepared from the brain tissue of a mouse. As he got into position to give the shot, his left eye started twitching nervously. This was his least favorite part of the experiment: playing doctor. He actually had a rather weak stomach. But he was starting to get used to it and maintained his bedside manner.

"OK, Samson, here we go . . . it'll be over before you know it." Samson was the ideal subject for a nervous experimenter. As strong and hardy as the name implies, Samson of course didn't make a sound; and scarcely a leaf quivered as Stan gave the injection.

"There y' go Samson. See if you can't make yourself a little brain outa that," Stan said as he wiped the little beads of sweat off his high forehead. "You're the best Coleus I've got, Sam. If anyone can make this experiment work you can."

Stan took off his glasses and stepped back from the table Samson's pot sat on. He stretched his hands as far over his head as the low basement ceiling would permit and said, "Well, Samson, you just take it easy now; I've got to go feed and water everyone else. I'll check back in a little while." He straightened up the clutter of tools around Samson's pot, turned off the light above the bench and headed down between the rows of plant boxes to his little watering and feeding cart.

Stanley Ryeborg was a funny little man, a bit heavy for his short height; but not at all worried about it. His one and only concern was for his plants. Since the time he left college 15 years ago he had become a self-taught plant psychologist and a successful florist. The florist shop was just successful enough to support him and his basement full of some 500 happy, healthy plants. Although the basement was larger than most, every available square foot of floor space was taken up by tables and shelves to support his precious pots. The whole room was brilliantly illuminated by nearly as many light bulbs as there were plants. Once a day Stanley would push his little cart down the narrow aisles, watering and tending each and every plant.

"Everyone seems to be in good spirits today," he said as he nipped a dead stem off an aged fern. "You all ought to be proud of Socrates here, he's been with me 20 years today." Stan never baby-talked to his plants, but addressed them on equal terms. He said they grew better on respect than on babying. His plants had feelings and Stan was determined to learn to understand them. That was the purpose of the experiment with Samson. Stan had equipment to monitor the electrical activity of his plants but the signals he picked up were too weak to decode accurately. He thought that the injections of brain material

might stimulate the plant to develop some sort of brain tissue that could make the signals louder and clearer. His idea was not biologically sound, but he was a patient and determined man.

Several weeks later a small, pulpy growth began to develop at the base of the stem where Stan had been giving the injections. He stopped giving Samson the shots and waited patiently to see what would become of the growth. Over a period of three months it slowly got larger until it formed a half-dome of delicate gray matter about six inches across at the very base of Samson's stem. During the three months Samson had grown into a lush bush nearly four feet tall, a phenomenal size for a Coleus. After the growth remained unchanged for a month Stanley decided it was time to find out just what it was.

He spoke to the plant in his usual Marcus Welby manner, "Samson, I'm going to take a tiny little piece out of that lump on your stem. I want to find out what it's made of." As he talked he prepared a microscope slide and a sterile razor blade to take the section with. "Now I'm only going to take off the tiniest sliver of the outside, so you probably won't even feel it." As he brought the blade close to the growth he suddenly got the strangest sensation. His eye started twitching annoyingly and he sat back trying to figure out what had happened.

"These lights must be getting to me, Samson, I think I'm hearing things. I didn't really hear it, y'know, it was sort of like a voice inside my head." He sat and stared at nothing for a moment then shook his head and said, "Oh, I'm sure it's nothing. Just nerves I s'pose." He turned back to the plant and once again brought the blade up against the growth.

"Stanley. Please don't do that."

This time there was no doubt. Stanley jumped back and stared in amazement at the plant, his eye twitching madly.

"Was that you, Samson?" Stanley's voice cracked with nervous excitement.

"Yes, Stanley. I don't want you to hurt me, not just yet." He heard the voice clearly now; but what really had him confused was that it was definitely female. It was a smooth, clear, and perfectly calm voice inside his head. Stanley was sputtering incoherently now with one hand on his left eye to steady his vision.

"I had no idea, I . . . a voice, but . . ."

The voice interrupted his stammerings, "I appreciate all you've done for me, Stanley, but I have to ask one small favor. Would you do something for me, Stanley?"

Stan gathered his wits enough to answer, "Uh, sure I suppose I can . . . but how can you . . ."

Once again the voice interrupted, "It's very simple, Stanley. Now just put your hand on the growth on my stem. Touch it gently with the palm of your hand, but do be careful - I'm very delicate."

Shaking terribly, Stan moved towards the plant with his free hand stretched out. He tried valiantly to keep his hand from shaking too

much and succeeded to a small degree. He moved it slowly closer to the gray lump, not knowing what to expect. Suddenly, just as his hand touched the growth, there was a low humming noise and all of the lights in the basement dimmed almost to off. Stanley froze with a strange glaze in his open eye. He stood there petrified for an instant, then slumped to the floor. The lights slowly came back up and the humming faded away.

"STANLEY RYEBERG: FLORIST TO THE WORLD" the sign read. And it was true, too. "Flowers by Ryeborg" became the status label in the status class. He grew the biggest, the brightest and by far the most beautiful flowers in the world. He was a changed man: quiet, confident and always happy, not to mention wealthy. To his friends, though, he was still pretty much the same old Stanley, except for two changes they just didn't understand: he never even thought about women any more, and his eye never twitched.

Christopher Warman



Ink Sketch Jane Nielsen

**“Hjaelp mig at følge dig —”
Skrevet i 1921**

Mester med den tunge Tornekrone,
jeg kan ikke følge efter dig,
naar en Praestegaard, en venlig Kone
og to raske Drengé lokker mig.

Mester med den tunge Tornekrone,
havde blot du vaeret Jordens Gaest
for at laege, frelse og forsone,
var det ingen Sag at vaere Praest.

Men nu naar den tunge Tornekrone
og de mørke Blodspor til din Grav,
og din Tales smertedybe Tone
vidner, at du ogsaa stiller Krav.

Mester med den tunge Tornekrone
følg mig! Følg mig! var dit Bud, din Bøn.
jo, men se dog fra din Aerestrone,
hvor din Faders skønne Jord er skøn.

Mester med den tunge Tornekrone,
“Hvo sit Liv vil bjerge, naar det ej.”
Hjaelp me da, trods Praestegaard og Kone,
ja selv Drengene, at Følge dig.

“Help Me to Follow You”

Master with the heavy crown of thorns,
I cannot follow after you
When my calling, a pleasant wife,
And two lively boys entrap me.

Master with the heavy crown of thorns,
If only you were still the Earth's guest
To heal, save, and redeem us,
Preaching Your word would be easier.

But now the heavy crown of thorns has left
A dark trail of blood that leads to your grave.
Your teachings' deep, grievous tone
Bears witness that You too make demands.

Master with the heavy crown of thorns,
Follow me! Follow me! was your wish, your command,
But look now from your throne of honor —
How lovely is your Father's beauteous earth.

Master with the heavy crown of thorns,
“Whoever would save his life will not succeed.”
Help me then, in spite of my calling, my wife
And also my boys, to follow you.

translated from a Danish poem by Kaj Munk
by Lori Nielsen

PEBBLES

Spring is a time
A time that is scheduled
Scheduled by someone
Someone that knows.

A spring thaw is water
Water that forms streams
Streams that flow
Flow where they go
Go where they know.

Flowing water carries pebbles
Pebbles that roll
Roll where they go
But go where they know?

Amidst spring
What is knowing water?
Where are rolling pebbles?
Who is knowing water?
Who are the pebbles?

Warren Riley

Trumpet 123
Baritone B.C
Trombone 12

CHORALE PRELUDE

ON
Lass + Uns Erfreuen

for
BRASS SEXTET

Jeff Meyer

medium I

mf mf

slow + deliberate II

p mp mf

p mf mf

BOX 55

A hole, three by five,
Simple, yet complex with the emotions it can deliver.
There it is, naked, empty.
It delivers no news, yet in that void a bad message.
For it is long since now,
That it has been split by the familiar line of his letter.
The letter of my love,
A winged Hermes that says "I am fine."
And, more importantly,
Delivers the glad tidings of his love for me.
For distance divides,
And these few sheets of thin paper are all our love can
journey on,
Across the many miles
To where my love, perhaps, waits with his empty box.

Barbara Beck

"NIGHT TALE"

Blue coats silhouetted against
the castle gate,
and out from the shadows the
nocturnal world
silently
emerges into its annual timetable . . .
Haunting black stallions in the forest of coal
and the
wiry highway man stage the scene -
and suddenly shimmers the coat of dawn
along the horizon
as
night becomes day.

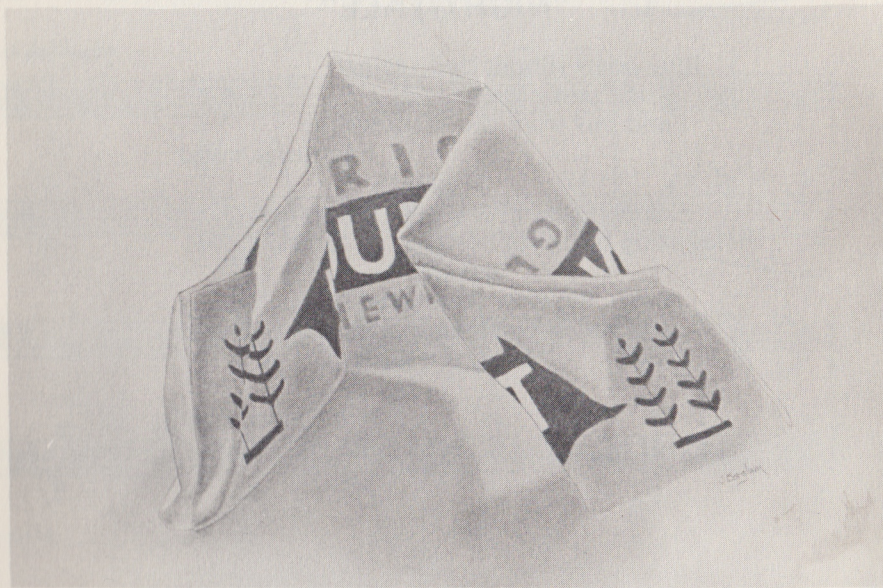
Giles Bronson

DEFEATED

cold paint
 flaking
 from
 my shiny dream
fluttering
 half
 heartedly
 flake
 by
 flake

 turning
 fully
 torrential
covering barren worn
 holes
 earthen sorrow
 blanketed
 by
 purity glow
in
 wintered frozenness

Mary Staby



Pencil Sketch Sherry Borglum

"A COMMANDMENT"

There once were given from an ageless and weary God
Ten negative and zealous commandments.
The Prophet named them with fearful stares,
Went out among people and called "You shall Not . . ."

I believe that there will come, to redeem us,
One single command, that says "You shall . . ."

translated from the Danish of Piet Hein
by Lori Nielsen

MUSE IN EXISTENCE

Maskless?

Jewish beliefs.
Wooden hearts,
Rusty,
unmotivated.

Flaunting life,

no reality,
only a muse.

Zombie persons mask
muse in existence,
touching the flower,
touching life,
 falling,
 trembling.

A glimpse from the electric hill
falling into a ravaging sea

Unreality.
Plastic existence,
Hatred Falling from the rain,
 bolting,
 scorching
Death by stark reality.

Cin Sweetman

THE BATTLE OF THE SEASONS

Sun on the verge of rising
Alarms await their cue
Sleep is heavy
All is at peace

Summer is changing
Must be fate
Frost has kissed all the flowers good-bye
The ground wears a cloak of brown
Soon to change to white
Naked are the trees
The wind abducted her leaves

The sky darkens
One lonely flake floats
Lands, Melts
Summer wins round one
The wind with fury attacks
Soon, much too soon
The battle of the seasons is over

A flurry of snow falls
The ground is carpeted
Summer is gone now
Only the memories remain

Warren Riley

Perhaps we should take a lesson from
the butterfly —

In its short life it flits from one flower
to another,
In brief observation touching each color.

While we alight and concentrate on one at a time,
Until its stem bends from exerted weight
and its color fades
from too much shade.

Jean Wood

MARCH 12, 1913

Our room was still completely black when Dad called Chris and me to get up and do our chores. We poked our noses out from under the stuffed patchwork quilt Grandma made for us and each blew out a “haw” of air to find out if we could see our breath. It wasn’t unusual for us to see it that winter, but since it was nearly spring then, we saw no white streams of air. Our feet didn’t get as cold, either, when they hit the wood floor of our little room. Since Dad’s second call usually meant that he was coming up to drag us out, we were downstairs and dressing by the warmth of the wood stove in the kitchen long before he yelled again.

My job was to get the milk cows from the field of corn stalks and hurry them home by the time Dad and Chris finished feeding the hogs and chickens. That morning, it took a little longer because I had a hard time convincing Rosy to leave the bull. Dad and Chris were standing impatiently in the dim lights of the barn by the time the twelve temperamental shorthorns and I finally made it down the lane.

“I don’t know why I don’t do everything myself,” Dad said. “You boys are so damn lazy in the mornings. You let half the day go by before you get any life in you!”

I was the last one in the house that morning because Rosy also refused to give me any milk. When I finally came in everyone else was sitting around the table waiting for Dad to finish the blessing. No one looked up as I pushed open the door, letting in the fierce March wind. I washed and sat down in my customary place to the left of Dad, expecting to hear him call me a slowpoke like he usually did. He was already digging into the pancakes and home-cured sausage that we usually had every morning, along with eggs, fried potatoes, oatmeal, and plenty of milk or coffee.

He glugged down a couple of swallows of Mom’s strong, steamy coffee and said in the general direction of Chris and me, “You boys better get a move on or the girls will leave without you again. You know how fidgety they get when they think you won’t make it to school on time. I suppose I’ll have to call you at four-thirty instead of five from now on.”

That sent us wolfing down our food and running upstairs again, throwing off our chore clothes to put on that lousy dressy stuff that we had to wear to school. We slicked down our hair, ran out the door, and caught our two sisters before they even got to the end of the lane.

I rarely enjoyed the two-mile trudge through the snow to the country school. I especially hated it that morning when I seemed to be about five minutes late for everything and the wind was blowing hard against us all the way up the hill toward school.

There was no time to talk to my friends that morning because Miss McGuire, our lumpy, rat-haired teacher, was ringing her brass bell as we reached the top of the hill and the white, one-room school.

"Hurry children," she smirked, as she held the door for us. The coat closet was full and as I threw my wool-lined, denim jacket on top of the closet, Miss McGuire rasped, "Henry, you find a place in the closet for that jacket! I'll not have any sloppy people in this school."

I hung my coat over someone else's and quickly shut the closet door before she could see my coat slip off the hook and fall to the closet floor.

"Today we'll start with arithmetic. I think I'll begin with the first graders," she leered benevolently. "You others make sure your assignments are done when I get to you. Ninth-graders, don't forget those algebra problems."

I hated algebra almost as much as I hated Miss McGuire. That morning nothing seemed to make sense to me, although the answers seemed to check out all right. When she finally got around to us, I found out that although I did my problems wrong, my answers were actually correct.

"Henry," she woke me from a daydream, "didn't you hear me? I said put problem three on the board. Hurry up. You're wasting time."

I got out of my seat and sauntered up to the blackboard. I was confident that my answer was right so I quickly wrote it down.

"No, Henry, I want to see the whole problem."

I dropped the chalk on the floor, but picked up a chunk just big enough for me to hold in two fingers and scrawled the rest of the problem on the board.

"No, Henry, the algebraic way."

"This is the only way to do it," I said.

"No, you are no longer in arithmetic. This is algebra and I want you to figure it out algebraically."

"But it's the right answer," I said.

"It doesn't make any difference, I want to see that problem done right."

"It is right." I was turning red.

"No, it's not!" She was turning redder.

"What's the answer to the problem? That's it, isn't it?"

"You must do the problem the other way. The answer doesn't matter for the moment!"

"What difference does it make how I do it if I get the right answer? What do you have for that, Joe? Four, right? How 'bout you Floyd? Four, huh? Carrie, did you have four? Yep! See, I told you."

"Henry, sit down!"

"I did it right."

"You did not. Sit down and let someone else do it."

"Why should someone else do it when my answer's right?"

She moved over and grabbed my shoulder. "Sit down!" she said through gritted teeth.

"No!" and my left boot blasted her in the shins.

"Henry!" she gasped as she tried to backhand my young face into the next country. "Leave this building immediately! Superintendent Fritz will have to deal with you and your father."

The superintendent didn't need to tell Dad what happened. I found him in the barn and told him the whole story. Mom was horrified when Dad told her, and was even more shocked than I was when Dad didn't beat me.

All he said was, "Henry, that algebra always seemed dumb to me too, but you had no damn business kicking your teacher. You apologize to her now or forget about going back to school. Just remember, if you don't go back, you'll have to peck and scratch for everything just like I did."

I was a stubborn young fool then and I never went back. Dad was right. I've had to work like a slave all these years to get what I have now. I probably could have been a banker — I always wanted to be when I was young. I wonder if Miss McGuire ever got rid of that limp?

Dave Stickrod

Gott schuf die sonne

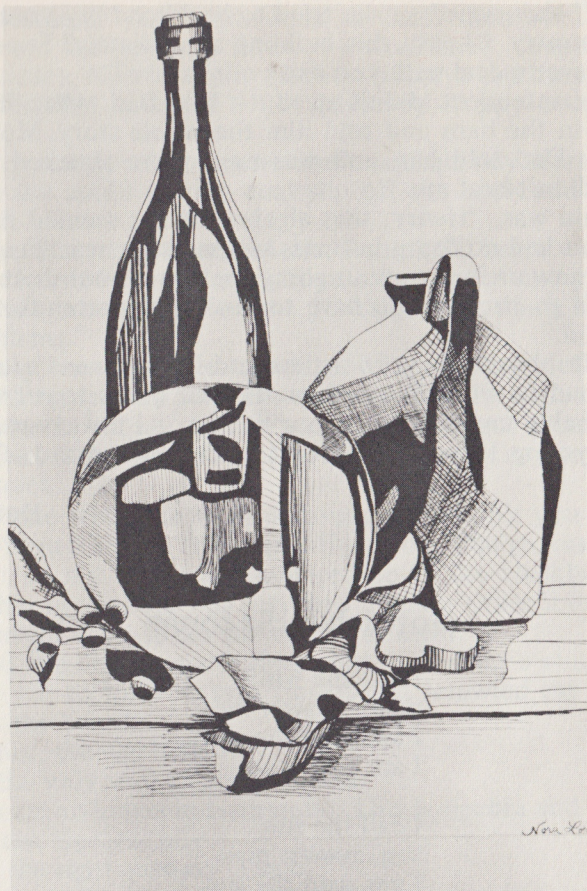
I call the wind,
wind, answer me,
I am, said the wind,
I am with you.

I call the sun,
sun, answer me,
I am, said the sun,
I am with you.

I call the stars,
answer me,
we are, said the stars,
we are with you.

I call the people,
answer me,
I yell! it is silent,
nothing answers me

from the German of Christa Reinig
by Wanda Peltonen



Ink Sketch Nora Lorraine

Paradox

This sadness fills me, yet empties me.
 What a paradox!
 That I, a living being, now
 feel like blood brother to a nearby
 snow-covered beer can.

Sherry Borglum

THE INFINITY OF EMPTINESS —

I wonder how the moon must feel when
 it counts the days to attain fullness, and
 then clouds obscure it and dampen its joy.

Jean Wood

DUET

I count the stars one by one,
 I sing to them, they sing to me.
 All of my tunes have been heard before;
 My songs are prayers, prose, praise,
 Love, and mostly, selfish me.
 Stars sing tunes unknown, denied to me.
 I can never duplicate their music,
 It's not as if I have never tried.

I count the stars one by one,
 See them quivering, shivering, shimmering,
 Glowing with undefinable light.
 They dare me to defy and describe them,
 Name them, own them, know them.
 Long ago, I perceived their amusement
 At my attempts. Secretly they smile to see
 The limits they have put on me.

And still I count the stars one by one.
 I never get past ten. I never will.
 So when the stars laugh at me,
 I laugh right back. We are still friends
 Despite our differences. We sing together,
 Their descant to my melody,
 Their soprano to my alto, 'til our song
 Lulls my eyes shut and I hear them in my sleep.

Constance Gibson

MAIL ORDER BLUES

The order form proclaimed:
PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE.
And I wondered what it was for.
It could've been a gap
to save the reader's eye
or just to impress the buyer
while he's filling out the form.

The tag on the pillow said:
DO NOT REMOVE UNDER PENALTY OF LAW.
And I pondered its idle threat
one late night
when sleep was far away,
and it hurt to think of
anything deeper than a pillow tag.
I fingered it and fringed it –
tugging on thread after thread –
until PENALTY OF LAW was just a pile of strings.

I bought the pillow – of my own free will – yet it wore
a threatening tag.
When I ordered it, I doodled in the space: FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.
I wonder if that's where I went wrong?
Willadeen Stubbendeck

HOPE

Gray are the windows
streaked where the drops ran
revealing glimpses
of clearness
beyond the horizon.
John A. Tjomsland, Jr.

TIME

The value of time
as slow as it may go
never ceasing
without beginning
changeless
Today shall be tomorrow
yesterday a dream
the future a memory
inverted inversions
remain
time shall neither come
nor pass
trapped by the present
to be released
only to escape
to be won
only by losing
John A. Tjomsland, Jr.

CUMMINGS CITY

A lonely hill,
Untouched by plow,
Protects, preserves my heritage.
Dotted with depressions of unmarked graves
Uncared for, overgrown.
I wander amid the crumbling stones.
Although I may tread on unrestful souls I feel no fear,
For I come to recapture memories never known to me –
Of my great-great grandparents' trek to this land,
Of struggles and hardships I shall never have the joy to know,
Of men who knew life and of women that were free.
Somehow I feel most at home here –
The unquenched desire within my soul finds satisfaction
Reliving the past unknown.
Tis my desire to reside here for eternity.
Perhaps in claiming my tiny plot of land,
My soul shall find rest among these kindred spirits.
Barbara Beck

CONFUSION

I sat there alone
as the wind pushed against my face.
making tears come to my eyes —
and I thought of you.

Sadness took over my heart again
as I thought of loving you.

I wish we could be together
sharing the beauty of every day
feeling the warmth of the sun
press gently against our bodies.

There is always something, though
holding us back from happiness
holding us back from truly being together.

It's not you
it's not me
But something else
perhaps confusion of what's to come.

But the tears still come
despite the love I feel for you
and what you feel for me.

The tears still come
even though you are in my heart —
I am alone.

Sandy Pierce

Everyone is supposed to be
equal to one another but we aren't.
The truth is, we are all equal
only when we are dead.

— Name Withheld

I endure alone

I silently complain,
because I want no one
to hear me complain;
I suffer alone,
the burden is mine.
No other ought to suffer.

from the German of Friedrich Rückert
by Wanda Peltonen

Environment:

an allotted space,
an unasked for place.
a situation to endure,
a condition to cure,
if possible.
like a cage.
a place to perform
where the spot lights are warm.
"we all love a clown,"
so don't let your mask down --
do your act.
you're on stage!
a background to use,
to tell what from whose.
your fate is dictated,
or changes persuaded,
like a diary.
nothing more than a page.

Sherry Borglum

Five for Melegaros

- I.
Treasure my lamp,
 Heliodora
May it keep cautious Psyche
 Away from your shadow
And bring many wealthy customers,
 Burning with passion,
To your golden door.
- II.
The gold of you, my treasure
Is as beautiful as a coin
 Is to Charon and as graceful
As that awkward kiss
That carries my soul to yours.
- III.
May the Gods who turned from
Their ambrosia to bestow upon you
The cleverness of a beautiful body,
Wealth, and power
 O Heliodora!
Grant to you only the flattery
In these chiseled words I myself bestowed
Upon my tomb.
- IV.
When we meet again in Hell, my sweet
And we'll meet there by and by, us two
Please don't expect me then, my love
To praise either that place or you.
- V.
Tell me Antikleia, who is that girl
 Selling wine colored flowers near
The tomb of Melegaros? How her
 Sad, slow smile
Reminds me now of you.

Richard C. McLain

THE WOUND

The bountiful land stretched out in all directions, vigorous and thriving since it never had been marred nor worn. Each spring a healthy skin of grass, grain, and trees grew to protect the fertile soil beneath from the incessant wind of the prairie and the pounding rain. Sweetly scented with clover and wild flowers the green layer stretched out across the land covering the hills and plains up to the banks of the life-giving streams and rivers. In the morning sun the skin glowed with the radiant green of youth until the caterpillars besieged it.

With an uncontrollable appetite they swarmed upon the hill, and the buzzing of their motors filled the once-still air. They gnawed into the thick skin of grass and trees that covered the hill. Their sharp blades dug deeply into the skin and devoured huge chunks of grass and trees. The edges of the wound grew outwards as the hungry caterpillars unceasingly ate. Only when their appetite was satisfied did they leave. Behind them a huge wound was left with the soil exposed. Dust from the wound was blown onto the trees and grass nearby. The rain eroded soil down into the valley below. The healthy skin was discolored from the festering wound.

Then huge, yellow levelers began to infest the ulcerated wound. The thin scab covering was broken as they moved about on the hill with their blades scooping the soil up into their yellow, metal stomachs. The nauseating odor of gasoline covered the scent of the flowers and the dust discolored the blossoms.

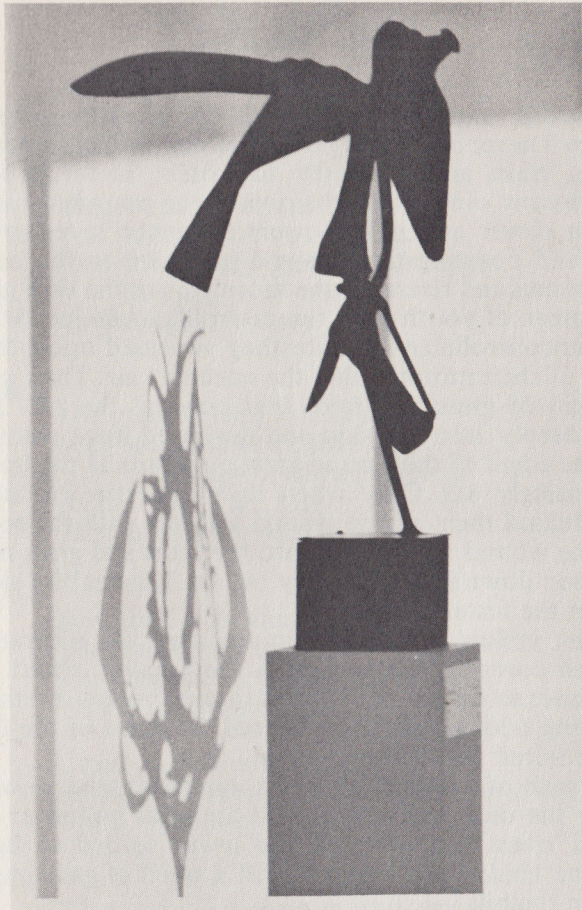
Finally a scab of cement sidewalks, tar roads, and wooden houses formed over the ulcerated wound and the pests no longer infested it. Flowers and trees were planted and lawns seeded to bandage the wound on the land. But there was still a smell of gasoline and a scar showed upon the hill.

Deb Schou

Plea

Bubble burster, please put away
your pin.
Just once, just for today
couldn't I watch it spin
and sparkle, rainbow colored,
in the sun?

Sherry Borglum



Photograph Gary Rasmussen

THE LAST POEM

I have dreamed so painfully of you,
I have walked so far for you and have spoken so of you,
Loved your shadow,
That nothing of you remains any more.

It is left to me to be a shadow among the shadows
To be one hundred times more a shadow than a shadow
To be the shadow that will come and to return
in your sunlit life.

translated from the French of Robert Desnos
by Giles Bronson