

SOWER 1978



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Volume XXXIII

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- | | |
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AWARDS

Joseph Langland Award for Poetry:

Silent Waters . . . Kathy Swensen

and

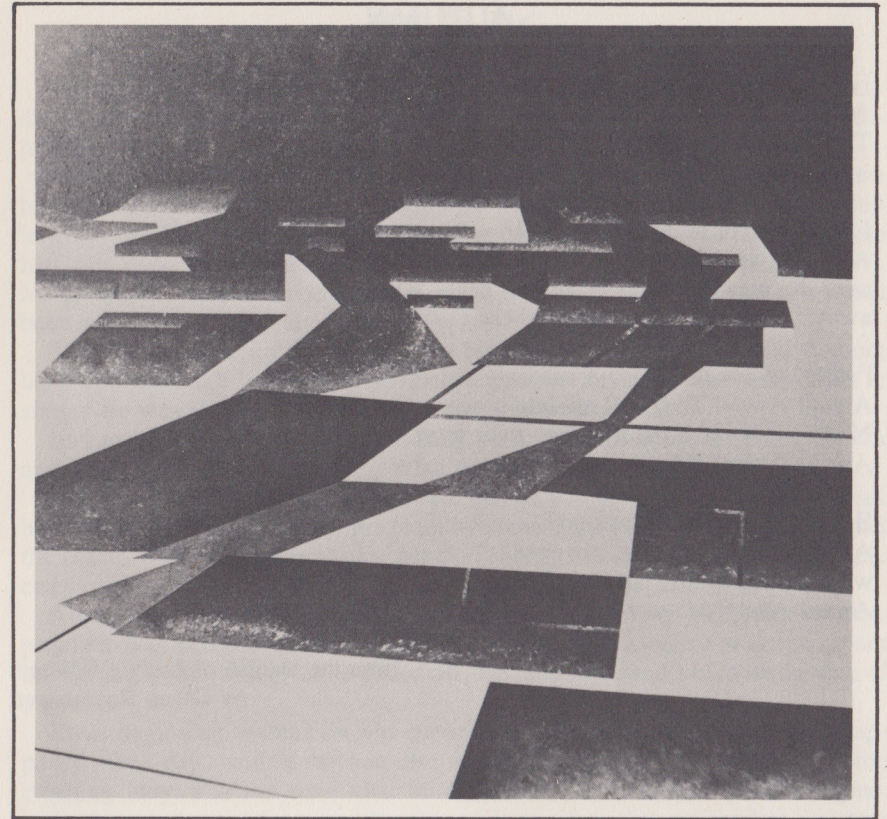
The Science of the Sun . . . Karla Bergstraesser

Hal Evans Cole Award for Excellence in the Arts:

Fields . . . Sande Petersen

Kaj Munk Award for Translation:

Autumn by Ludvig Holstein . . . translated by Gwen Rassmussen



"Fields"
by Sande Petersen

I hold a tool in this hand,
a thing for thought; a pen.
Its tale is that of man's own lot
'tween power and incompetence:
we are the force that creates the thing
we can not destroy again.

from the Danish of Piet Hein
by Emilie Helling

From isolation to here in a day
some scheming self centered fool
from so far away
 came running

silver glistening boldly, this man
with heart of stone
flying through skies of blue
in search of a home.

Iron clad in his ignorance he ran,
mounted a golden sunray
 and slid to the earth's dusty bed
 landed with a thump and
 lay crumpled there
alone, in need of a friend
 heart still beating
 but technically dead.

Karen Allison



"Decisions II"
by Lyn Simon

FOR MICHAEL

I want to write
for you,
to share my life
with you
through my words,
but it all seems
worthless,
 not knowing
 if I'll see you
 again
 or
 if the words were all a dream.

I want to write
for me,
to remember you,
to capture in words
the intensity,
the feeling
 of you.

I tried.
and my poet's mind
failed
to confine you to
a piece of paper. . .
You escape by a mere second
dancing just out of my grasp. . .

Jean Hansen

TIME

I need time
Time to find myself
Time to see where I am going
Time to learn what I want in life

If there be no time for you to give
There can be no time for us
For I will stray away from you
And then you'll wish you had taken time
to understand.

Kathy Olson

WHERE YOUTH GOES

She wore mother's clothes
when she was young.
In high-heels she teetered
around her room in style,
sleeves down to her knees and
floor-length skirts pinned
at the waist and cedar-scented.
She put on a special expression
to match each outfit:
a saucy smile and accented wink
from under a purple hat in
a sleek, slinky black dress;
or a virginal blush
from beneath a pink sunbonnet
above a high-collared white blouse.

Now she never smiles coyly
or blushes glowingly;
rather she wears an
inbetween expression
of apathy and dons
conformist gray and flats.

Cindy Thompson

SILENT WATERS

She fell, she fell and none could warn, could know,
Such lush enticing path! with charm, she took.
Oh guilt-bespattered Innocent; we weep
For tarnished wings, once silver and all a gleam.

Too late, too late we saw the ways that brought
Her far from loving watching eyes, no touch,
No hand held out – to drown unseen. . . unheard,
She sank beneath our thoughts, by silent waters claimed.

Kathy Swensen



**"Mermaid's Nightmare"
by Lyn Simon**

TO PAINT A BIRD'S PORTRAIT

Paint first a cage
with an open door
paint next
something pretty
something simple
something beautiful
something useful
for the bird
then prop the canvas against a tree
in a garden
in a wood
or in a forest
hide behind the tree
without a word
without moving
When the bird comes
if he comes
remain silent as can be
wait for the bird to enter the cage
and when he is in
gently close the door with the
 paint-brush
then
erase one by one all the bars
taking care to not touch a single
 feather on the bird
Next do the tree's portrait
choosing the prettiest of its
 branches
for the bird
paint also the green foliage and the
 cool freshness of the wind
the sun-lit dust
and the clamour of the beasts of the land
 in the summer heat
and then wait for the bird to decide
 to sing
If the bird does not sing
it's a bad sign
sign that the painting is bad
but if he sings it's a good sign
sign that you may sign
in that case you pluck very gently
one of the bird's feathers
and you write your name in a
 corner of the painting.

from the
French of Jacques Prevert
by Susan Sandager

THE FARMER

The old farmer is sitting on the porch in front of his house this evening. The slow rhythm of nature is in the rocking of his chair. The tiller is a special man. His keen eyes survey the homestead spread out before his porch. When he settled this land he had nothing but a mule, a plow, and his own strong back. Through years of hard work he established himself and turned the rough prairie sod into prosperous farmland. He is a happy man. His children had been raised on the farm. They were good kids: three sons and two daughters. They have all grown up and moved away, but they come to see him on the holidays. Then Grandma fixes bounteous meals of meat, garden-grown vegetables, and home-baked bread and pies.

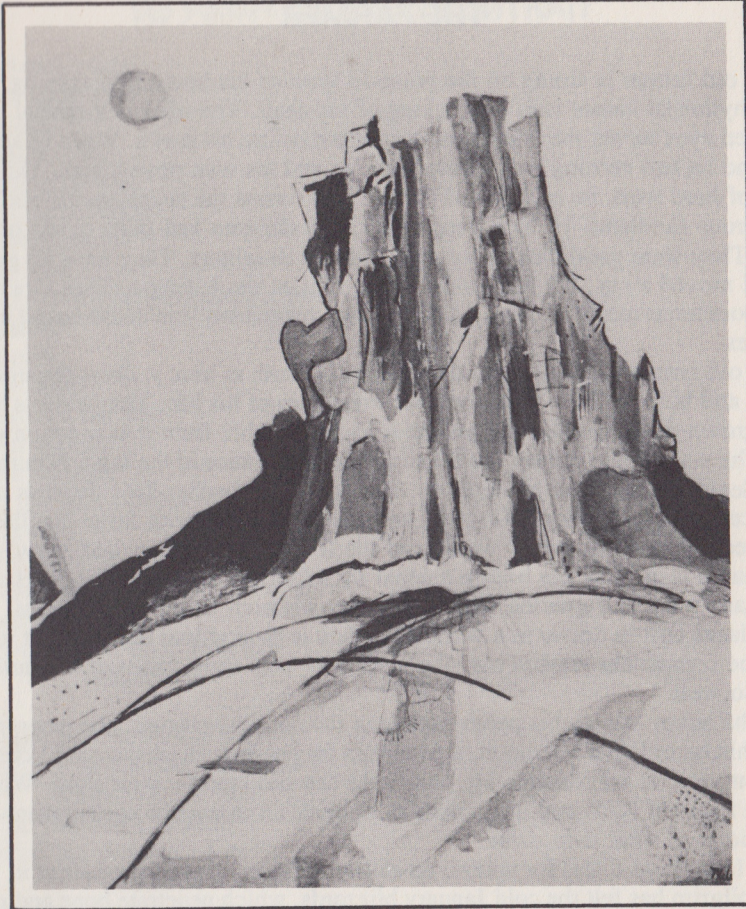
The old farmer has the feel of the good black earth in him. It flows through his blood, and his love for it pours out into every area of his life. The farmer's roots have grown deep into his land and he is as inseparable from it as a cottonwood tree. The sturdy old yeoman has taken on the appearance of the land. Nature has been deeply etched into his features. His sun-cured leather face displays quiet patience and compassion. His nose and cheeks are red with large capillaries, stretched by howling winter winds and the frozen touch of ice and snow. The plowman's lean body has been tempered by a lifetime of manual labor. His big hands are worn and gnarled. Powerful sinews stretch under his forearms, like heavy laces tightly drawn in a work boot. Soil is ground into them so that it can never be completely washed out. His work torn nails show traces of the earth he loves so well.

As the sower sits on his porch breathing the cool evening air, the moon rises above his barn. It is a full moon, a good sign for harvest. His active mind keeps a constant vigil on the weather. He probes the sky and land for their signs. Watching the flight of birds and the actions of animals and insects he seeks tokens and indications of what is to come.

The farmer has a feel for nature, an ability to fit into it and be a part of it. The hardy pilgrim has felt the cold January blizzards, which penetrate bone and marrow and cut their icy patterns into the brain, like the pattern of hoarfrost on a kitchen window pane. With anticipation he has felt the renaissance of spring and the new life it brings. He plants his seed and puts his trust in his God and the soil to bring to harvest the young plants he nurtures. He dries up and withers along with his corn in the hot July wind. He is filled with ecstasy by cool rain water as it falls upon the parched cracked earth. In the fall, when foliage changes color, he dances the harvest dance for joy, as his crops display their season's fruit which he reaps and stores in his barn.

The farmer is a man keenly dependent on God to sustain him. The sower has witnessed the miracle of life first hand in every seed he plants under the pure blue spring sky. Under this sky, with its popcorn clouds, he has cultivated his land and drawn a livelihood for his wife and family. There is an aura of quiet peace and confidence about this farmer. All of nature is expressed through him, and his smile brings assurance to the world.

Larry Timm



"Mons"
by Melody Gramlich

THE GOAL

I have always wandered without a cause,
I never wanted to stop and pause,
My paths seemed to be without end.

Finally I saw that I was only wandering
In circles, and I became tired of travelling.
Every day my life took a new bend.

Hesitatingly now, towards the goal I go,
On all of my paths I know
Death stands and offers me his hand.

from the
German of Herman Hesse
by Mark Christensen

defeat. . .
an opened package
with no gift inside. . .
nothing to share.
uncertainty becomes certainty,
and hope slowly dies.
it hurts
and i cry. . .
am i strong enough
to say. . .
i have collided with reality.

Denise Bentzinger

THE SCIENCE OF THE SUN

The sun flowed warmly through the windows,
And we sat and spent our time,
And it streamed in brilliantly . . .
I squinted, sprawled, relaxed,
And my legs were warm and comfortable.
He read.
Soon he stated, "I can't stand the sun in my eyes."
He moved his small-boy self and his thick-lensed glasses
To a seat in the shadows.
He frowned, furrowed his brow,
And still the light glinted off his eyelashes,
And he was unaware he couldn't escape it. . .
He was immersed in his scientific magazine,
And he read of equipment that trapped solar rays
And converted them to energy
While his eyelashes gleamed gold. . .

Karla Bergstraesser

THE ONLY PROBLEM

The world is waiting
for me.
Travel is hard and I
want
to go
away to other places I've
heard about.
Colorado high, the Lone
Star
State,
Las Vegas, California dreamin'
(dreamin's the only place
I've been -
lately!)
I need'a get
away
from school - no place for me
here.
Cars take too long - buzzing,
- crashing;
planes are expensive - taxiing
on their way to
and trains are Cuba;
missing.
I gotta go there - where
the sun warms and excites
and good-looking girls
loungue and wait
for me.

Getting there is
the only problem

Brent Kroenke



"Growth"
by Carol Arnvig

BANDANA PRINT PAISLEY MAZE

Retracing my steps
I find the only opening I knew
Is gone

Too late to take the turn
That might have released me
From many sessions
Of tears

I passed up the exit
And like sweet chocolate
Melting away —

I long to taste once again
The flavor and ecstasy

Of the last doorway

Jill Wetzel

...and it broke her heart to turn around
and see him going.
“be strong,” said the wind.
“cry,” said the rain.

Denise Bentzinger

TRAGEDY

Once her eyes were like shining stars
-shining stars of comfort and mercy!-
All living took strength from her strength,
and all sorrow became smaller in her presence.

Today her eyes are like cold globes,
and they need to borrow their luster.
They look like a begging dancer's,
and I dread those beseeching eyes.

from the Danish of Nis Petersen
by Dennis Lee



“Gandolf the Gray”
by Tim Andrews

ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW

Contrary to popular opinion, Colorado isn't entirely mountainous, nor do all Coloradoans indulge in the exciting and expensive sport of skiing. A product of the high plains that cover the eastern third of the state, my experiences in the mountains had been limited to summertime camping trips or an occasional family outing. Consequently, I wasn't introduced to skiing until last December when I succumbed to the urgings of my friend, Dale, a recently converted skiing fanatic.

After innumerable attempts to have me accompany him for a weekend on the slopes, I finally agreed to meet him in Boulder. I arrived at his apartment with what I considered to be the bare essentials: two complete sets of long johns, two sweaters, two pairs of jeans, four pairs of socks, a down parka and heavy gloves. Prepared for any emergency, I also carried the phone numbers of my next of kin, my doctor and my insurance agent, a detailed last will and testament, and a notarized document absolving Dale of any responsibility in the event of my death or injury.

Dale thought my trepidation was hysterical; he continually tried to reassure me that nothing could possibly happen. He said that skiing was easy, and he would personally teach me everything I needed to know. A rudimentary lecture about the basics of skiing followed. Patiently, he told me to keep my body relaxed, my weight balanced, my arms loose, my toes pointed to form a snowplow, and countless other details. This was all very fine and good in the living room of his apartment, but nothing could have prepared me for what was to follow.

The next morning we headed out in his Datsun pickup, affectionately named Donald, in search of skis and poles to rent. This was no easy task since it was the week after Christmas and the semi-annual tourist invasion was in full swing. We finally stumbled on a rental shop that did have a pair of size twelve boots and beginner's skis left in stock.

If you've never skied before, ski boots are something that must be experienced to be believed. Imagine a straight jacket designed especially for the feet and ankles, and you'll have an inkling of what they're like. Ski boots are like concrete overshoes that leave you immobilized to any movement that starts below the knee, but this is only half the battle. Boots are fastened securely to the skis with bindings; the result is complete immobilization except with the help of gravity. You are now at the mercy of the elements.

I paid the fifteen dollars it cost to rent the boots, skis and poles and tossed them in the back of the truck alongside Dale's gear. He shouted with glee as the ski report came over the radio. Conditions were good to excellent with no resort reporting less than a 45" base with four to ten inches of new powder. Because of its proximity, Lake Eldora was chosen as our destination. It lies about 20 miles west of Boulder near the resort town of Nederland.

Leaving town and joining the string of campers and ski-racked cars ascending into the foothills. Donald chugged up the steep inclines and shuddered down the other side. He beeped through tunnels and slid around icy hairpin turns. The road may have been harrowing, but the scenery was spectacular! Sunlight gleamed off the snowy peaks of evergreen covered mountains. Valleys were transformed into snowy seascapes, continually changing form as the wind whipped drifting snow into a confectioner's fantasy.

When we arrived at the lodge, I struggled into my boots and trudged the quarter mile to the lift ticket office. A lift ticket allows "free" access to the ski lifts, crude contraptions that serve as a Coloradoan's idea of mass transit. They connect the lodge to various points of departure in the higher regions of the mountains surrounding Lake Eldora. A lift consists of several open benches spaced evenly along a cable that runs in a continuous circuit; skiers wait in long lines at the base of the slope. When your turn comes, you slide down a ramp to the point where the chairs come around on the cable. With your poles in one hand, you turn around and grab the bench as it scoops you up by the butt. If this is accomplished, you're on your way to the higher reaches of the slope.

I had no problems getting on the lift, but as I was sitting back and starting to enjoy the ride, I was struck by a horrifying thought: Dale had neglected to tell me how to get off! We had enough time in the ten minute ride for me to take a crash course in how to execute this maneuver. However, when we reached the end of the line I ejected from the lift like the cork from a champagne bottle. Ending up face down in the snow, I looked back in horror at the two skiers in the next bench who were preparing to disembark on my body. Trapped like a turtle on a freshly waxed floor, I managed to escape certain agony by clawing desperately through the snow.

Dale, by now helpless with laughter, tried to pull himself together enough to lend me a hand. His peals of laughter rang out against distant slopes until icicles dripped from his beard. Meanwhile, I was gaining momentum and with a mighty grunt I managed to assume a vertical posture.

"How does he talk me into these things?" I thought to myself as I stared down the snowy expanse that was the slope. We stood at the summit of "Baby Hill," but from my point of view it could just as well have been Mount Everest. It hadn't really occurred to me that once we got up there, the only way down was on skis. The lump in my throat was matched only by the dryness of my mouth. In my stomach, a chorus line rumba-ed to the rhythm of my hyperactive heartbeat. I berated myself for not converting to Catholicism and wondered who the patron saint of skiers was. Genuflection was impossible because of my skis: I felt Utterly Alone.

At Dale's insistence, I made halting progress down the slope, "skiing" down in a zig-zag pattern. I'd get under way all right, but my skis went every way except forward. They looked more like scissors than a snowplow. I'd go about twenty feet, gaining speed and confidence when another skier would flash in front of me. Not wanting to risk collision and a possible lawsuit, I'd go down in a heap. Each time I got up, I scooped the snow out of my parka and gamely proceeded.

Falling down wasn't painful — in fact it was half the fun. It was also the one sure way I knew how to stop! On one particularly long run, I was shussing across the snow, my shock-absorbing knees keeping my body in balance as I glided down the slope. The wind whooshed past, and I felt as if I was in a Suzy Chapstick commercial. Suddenly a tourist appeared out of nowhere! A collision was imminent, so I dove for safety, rolling and sliding in a flurry of flying skis and broken bindings. I landed face down in the snow. When I looked up I saw a skier, obviously another beginner, heading straight for me! There was nothing I could do but cover my head with my arms and wait for cuts and contusions. Miraculously, I wasn't harmed. I looked back to see where he had gone and why

I had been spared. The answer was obvious when I saw him; he had done the splits right before hitting me and was still howling down the mountain-side doing cheerleader imitations all the way! Wiping my brow with relief, I got up and made my final run to the lift line.

I rejoined Dale there and recounted my adventures. He said I was making good progress but I "needed to work on my turns." As we inched forward in the line, Dale gave me more tips about the finer points of skiing. I listened enthusiastically and my paranoia began to dissipate as we got on the lift. I even got **off** the lift all right and was beginning to feel like an old hand at this skiing business.

As we stood at the summit, I looked breathlessly down the slope. The scene had a ballet-like quality as skiers descended in winding patterns, falling down and getting up as if controlled by some unseen choreographer.

As I was admiring the scenery, Dale said, "Arne — this is your first **real** skiing lesson. Dig it!" And he shoved me. Not just a friendly push to get me started, but a whiplashing thrust that was to send me shooting straight downhill! I yelled an oath about his immediate ancestry and was gone like a shot!

I was off before I really knew what was happening. All he had told me about skiing vanished from my consciousness; a primal scream rose from my throat as I descended at an ever increasing rate down the slope. "Oh my God!" I thought to myself as visions of my boyhood appeared before my eyes. Trees and tourists blurred by as I flashed past them. I wanted to fall but my id wouldn't let me! My head swam in an amalgamation of panic and exhilaration.

Frantically snowplowing, straining to stop, my dilemma was solved by an engaging co-ed from Kansas State. I tried to warn her but it was too late! I broadsided her, catapulting us skyward in a mass of jumbled skiing gear. We crash landed, rolling and tumbling, collecting other beginners as our miniature riot rolled down the slope. The crisp air was filled with cursing bodies and flying flurries of snow as we sputtered and shouted downward.

We were stopped by a grove of aspens. As everyone tried to regain his bearings, my initial victim came up to me and said, "Watch where you're going, Turkey!" And she kicked me in the knee. With her concrete overshoe.

This incident ended my skiing adventure. I limped back to the lodge and headed out to Donald. Dale was full of praise about my final run. I thought he was full of crap. We went back to Boulder where I nursed my wounds, but I proudly displayed my lift ticket and secretly hoped that everybody knew my limp was the result of a skiing accident.

I haven't gone skiing since, but I did hear from Dale the other day. Now he wants me to join him in his new pastime — sky diving!

Arne Andersen