

Sower 79



## 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.

## FRIENDS

Eighteen years old and just out of high school, I wonder if there exists a better set of circumstances for friendship and adventure. Thinking back it seems so romantic, almost cosmic, with warm summer breezes bathing my memory with pictures of fast girls in parked cars, teaching me or learning with me about an innocent kind of love that has left me forever. That summer was this and so much more: a fast gold convertible that took car-loads of boys and beers to dances, the first wedding I was in and the bitter-sweet tears I cried for a friendship that could never be the same, baseball and suntans, camping and drive-in movies, midnight skinny-dipping, getting ready for college, and Smitty and me and our last big night together.

The Fourth of July was beautiful that year and when I rolled out of bed to the sweet smells and sounds of early summer mornings, my heart tripped in anticipation of a great day. I went to my dresser and pulled out some cut-offs, climbed into my smelly, frazzled tennies, put on a clean tee-shirt (I think it probably had a pocket in it; I was "in" to that summer) and ran downstairs to cram down a sweet roll in the cool, delicious kitchen. A thick, cold gulp of milk, straight out of the jug (God, my Mom hated us to do that), washed down the roll and I was ready to take-off. You know, it seems like so many summer mornings when I wasn't working began this same way, with the cut-offs, and the tennies, and the milk, but at the time it all seemed so original, so spontaneous, so cool. The most fascinating thing though, was those cut-offs. Every pair I had must have been ready made, faded and frayed, because no self-respecting kid would wear them if they weren't. I'll have to remember to ask Mom if there is some trick to making cut-offs, because now that I'm a little older all my cut-offs seem embarrassingly blue and even cut. Oh well.

"Mike, is that you in the kitchen?"

"No, Mom, it's me. Where's Dad at? I was supposed to help him load up that old sofa and take it to the dump."

"Your father got mixed up again, the dump's not open on the Fourth. You'll have to do it yourself tomorrow; Mike and Lonnie can help. Anyway, he went up to your Grandpa's to pick some radishes."

"OK, I'll see ya later. Smitty's comin' by and we're going to mess around. I won't be home 'til late tonight."

"Now don't you go out drinkin' all day."

"Don't worry, Mom, I don't drink anymore . . . but I don't drink any less." With that I ran out the door followed by my Mom's half-hearted protests and playful scoldings. She knew she couldn't buck tradition, and long before she had given up trying seriously. Besides, she thought I was a responsible young man; boy, did I have her fooled.

Just as I bounded off our back porch and started down our driveway a high pitched screaming and squawking of rubber on pavement assaulted my ears. That was Smitty. He was a big half-Polack, his mother's maiden name was Liposcky (and we never let him forget it), and he couldn't come around our corner without giving his new Firebird, a graduation present, all kinds of Hell. "Smittyyy!!!" I yelled and he answered "Goodyyy!!!" With formal and customary greetings out of the way, we began to plan our day.

"Wait a minute, Smitty, I have some Buddies in the house that want to come along with us. I'll run in and bring them out."

"OK, I'll get the cooler out of the trunk. Don't bring any cold cups, I bought six yesterday."

I ran back into the house, grabbed a twelve-pak of Budweiser out of our refrigerator, kissed my Mom who was doing dishes, and dashed back out to the car. Once inside we shoved the beer into the cooler, put one for each of us into a styrofoam cold cup, popped the tops, and began our annual Fourth of July ritual. In our little town it was the same every year: start with beer at ten in the morning, drive around town and watch part of the annual parade til noon, drop in on somebody's barbeque for lunch, drink more beer, go to the country club about one for a swim, watch or compete in the swimming races, the greased watermelon race, the diving contest, the greased pig chase on the golf course, or the tug-of-war over the sewer creek, affectionately called Shit Creek, play games at the Jaycee carnival on the club's parking lot, drink more beer, eat at the Jaycee beef barbeque, drink more beer, watch the firework display while drinking beer, and finish off the day at the annual dance and drink beer, or go to a party and drink beer. This is how it was. Our town has a traditional July Fourth celebration on which day everyone from fourteen on up does pretty much what he or she wants to do. It is on this day each year that minors cruise town and tip their beers in front of old Bernie, the town cop, and only rarely get stopped and scolded for chucking beer cans out the windows in town. It is truly "Independence" Day.

This particular year we opted for a keg party out at Clinger's dad's pasture instead of the dance, so about four o'clock that afternoon the scramble began. Most importantly we needed to find someone willing to buy a keg for a bunch of minors. We approached my older brother and for an extra five dollars, he called it expenses, I called it extortion, he bought us the keg. This we loaded into a barrel after making the "exchange" with my brother, packed the barrel full of ice, loaded it in an old Chevy pickup that belonged to a classmate of ours, filled the rest of the pickup bed with old railroad ties we swiped out by Smitty's place, and took off for the pasture to dump our load. Of course this all took place under the not Nebraska summer sun, and beer and the stereo helped us beat the heat. We swerved down the country roads laughing and kicking up dust devils and tossing beer cans in dark green corn fields.

About eight o'clock that evening we asked the over-reactive Clinger if it was all right to have a party in his dad's pasture. Clinger ranted and raved and carried on in a squeaky voice until we finally got him sedated with a couple of cold Buds, then we took off for the pasture to begin our little party. Unfortunately, word travels fast in a small town, and before we knew it our party was a monster. Our moderate bonfire turned into a raging inferno as person after person walked by and tossed a scrap of timber or another railroad tie on the fire. Clinger was really going nuts, and when someone dragged two old church pews up to the fire for more seating his cork popped.

"Schmidt! You always do this crap to me. What about my dad's cattle, his pasture, and all these people. He'll kill me, you big freako." Smitty just laughed. It seemed that at every party it was the same girls sneaking off, only Clinger was flailing away between moans and wails but Smitty finally got him calmed down when he promised that he and I would try to ramrod our monster. We tried, we really did, but as more and more cars from town and coolers full of beer showed up we finally gave up our futile efforts. Car stereos were blasting everywhere and people from 14 to 32 danced, talked, laughed and drank beer down in Clinger's dad's pasture.

Smitty and I finally ended up on one of the pews laughing and shootin' the bull. Couples snuck off into the timber stand or up over the hill and we just laughed. It seemed that at every party it was the same girls sneaking off, only the guys had changed. I guess we were amused to see who had won the prize

this night, the prize that one of us had won at the last party. Finally, at about four o'clock in the morning, the party broke up and people began drifting into the early morning darkness, headed for home and a few hours of sleep. The only people left at the party were Smitty, me, and Jimmy, the kid who owned the pickup. Jimmy was quietly sleeping in the cab of his pickup with both doors open and his feet hanging out of the driver's door. Smitty and I sat on the end-gate of the pick-up, listened to the night sounds, drank beer, talked quietly about our past times together, and let the smoldering fire crack and pop and ward off the chilly morning air.

"Smitty, we've been great friends now, ever since sixth grade. It seems like only yesterday that we were confirmed together and slept over at each other's house."

"Goody, when do you start college in the fall? It won't seem the same around here without ya."

"I'll probably leave the last week in August, we still got a couple of months to screw around."

"It won't matter much when you leave, I guess. It's only a couple hundred miles, I can come up and see ya and you'll be home once every couple of months."

"Just remember, that's what I told Heiny and Keith and Craig and now it seems we're in different worlds."

"Goody?"

"Yea?"

"Shut-up."

We sat there trying to keep the tears from our eyes and watched the sun come up.

### Stacey Goodrich

One silver strand  
caught gently.  
spider's forgotten  
thread,  
bit of promising  
nothing.  
clutching  
riverbank weeds,  
watching its own  
distorted reflection.

Ellen Hamann

I sat alone and knew his name.  
He whispered Light and felt my shame.  
My darkness known, yet Light was kind.  
He whispered Light, he whispered "mine."

Kathy Appel

A bubble floats down,  
A perfect, transparent sphere  
Killed by needle grass.

Suzanne Lazzaro

gnarled  
calloused hands  
shape coarse,  
black bread dough  
firmly, gently.  
her eyes are  
warm and alive, but  
pain has left  
tiny furrows where  
tears have run, and

the worst, the very  
worst,  
when the baby girl  
died,-but  
stand by the man,  
work and work, and  
children.  
smile at the little  
girl and the bread  
thick and hardy as  
they like,  
good with goose grease  
sticks to the ribs.

She is full.

Ellen Hamann

### Fate of the Dandelion

Fuzzy white dandelions  
surrender their soft possessions as  
gentle winds carry them away.  
Stems stand naked against the elements.

A child, innocent in appearance,  
grips the defenseless weed and  
rips it from the earth.  
The weed tears leaving behind anchors:  
skeleton fingers.

Jill Wetzel

### BUTTERFLY

Butterfly  
Under  
The  
Towering  
Elm  
Remember  
Flowers  
Live in  
Your soul

Lynn Hagen

### The Drop

A moment, so close as a drop,  
has stopped the time's flow — Now you live.  
Neither past nor present is found,  
all is transformed, all is here and now.

When the drop shatters, time flies again,  
you are forced with the flow — but you see  
that you can never be quite the same  
as before your blue second of eternity.

from the  
Danish of Grethe Risbjerg Thomsen  
translated by  
Elizabeth Falksen



### Dreams of Wild Horses

Primal fear of fire  
Rages rampant, and consumes  
Their conscious reason.

Twisting and turning,  
Wild egos contort, driven  
By the urge to lead.

Sandy Barnum

### NEBRASKA MORNING

An illusion follows me  
With my heavy laden eyes that have seen  
Eons of restless nights,  
And drag the tired facsimile of a body  
To the Powder.

Aimless, mindless, serene  
The tightly laced boots drag my inner spirit  
To its path.

Four in the morning,  
And the eyes of blood and tears can't focus,  
Can't close.  
But still alert, perked like canine's ears.

Silent Night  
Ever so silent night, soon morning.

Five o'clock,  
The quiescent hills gleam with the expectant sun  
Soon to burst the crest,  
Virgin and White.

Minutes pass and seem like hours.  
Hours housed in the annals of time  
Of no conception, no framework.

Passage  
Again Silent Night, now dawn.

Luminescent rays fracture horizons  
Unknown by man before.  
Light from another sun, another galaxy;  
Untouched, unexplained by human eyes of experience.  
Crossing, conflicting, but ever-so crystalline,  
With new-fallen flakes gleaming  
For all to witness, but . . .  
I fail to see.

Six o'clock,  
Dawn has scorched the eyes not accustomed to such beauty,  
Yet tranquil, as the tears of virgin snow  
Trickle down the frost-clad slopes,  
Seen by the heavy eyes  
For once, just this time.

Steve L. Albertsen

## WONDERING IN EARLY SPRING

Sitting on my bed wondering, in the wet and windy spring  
of Nebraska, USA,  
With the book I am reading, *Stadier paa Livets Vej*,  
Silently closed and put aside in my store,  
Here in my room on the second floor of my uncle's house  
With my shadow dimly outlined on the wall  
And on the painting, *Le Jour*,  
Separated from my home, which I still don't know,  
By the distance of choice,  
Enormous, wide fields of possibilities,  
Mountains of dread and oceans of despair,  
And my mistresses, furniture of my crazy apartments,  
Long ago worn-out and forgotten,  
And the woman I think I love  
Five hundred miles and a thousand decisions away,  
And my children not yet born,

I feel the poignant vacuum in my breast  
Expand and disappear,  
Untying the brooding knot of loneliness  
And releasing in my mind the rising roar of hope,

I see the milky-way through the window,  
Eyes of my empty audience — for whom I act,  
My future passes revue; for an instant dizzy,  
Then I return to my book of the three stages of life,  
Open it on a page in the middle — stage,  
To where, I believe, I must go.

**Peter Ljung Larsen**

Iowa sunsets  
written in pink marker on the sky  
warm up to excited travellers and silhouette the trees.  
Welcome, birds, and long-distance/present-day pioneers.  
White farm houses glow in the dark-light,  
with the sun knocking at their back doors,  
as it slips behind a hill  
into Nebraska.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## Bird's song

Once, twice, (this bird can't fly far)  
strike the bars just once again  
and the bloodied wings droop,  
silently screaming pain  
She's running from her life  
and pursued  
(by no-one, like the conceit of  
a man too handsome  
and all his women  
and all his pursuers  
evaporate in the night)

battered bird  
oh sweet bruised flesh  
This cage called you once  
"You flew in freely,"  
mock the iron bars

as if they held the answers

Is that what we talked about,  
those endless nights,  
we thought we'd never run out of words

till the sun burst like a scream of pain  
in our bloodshop eyes  
and we were no closer or farther from the truth  
it lay just past our grasp

Beating fast, hearts-ache  
against the cage you fly  
this time countless  
feathers torn from you by  
every bruising brunt

drop, scarlet, silent  
to the bottom of your cage . . .

**Kathy Swensen**



Prairie glass whispers  
 tales of scorched earth and proud sun.  
 Whispers of battle.

**Kathy Appel**

## **MORTAL LINKS: A PICARESQUE**

After my birth  
 The doctor's hands lifted me  
 Onto my mother's stomach.  
 I then was bathed, dressed,  
 Fed and fondled.

Later, at five years  
 I was taken by Father  
 Over his knee  
 (For turning up the thermostat),  
 And gently spanked.

When a decade old  
 An adored teacher smiled;  
 She enquired if I was bashful  
 As we walked to the playground  
 Hand in hand.

Adolescence came.  
 We gawky gals would gather  
 To exchange gossip and dread secrets;  
 Distracting the lunch monitor,  
 Heads bobbing together.

Adolescence lingered . . .  
 Posing a new question  
 In pitch of night,  
 When I heard the soft laughter  
 Of my parents.

Then — young adulthood  
 We sixteeners called it,  
 As we cuddled steady guys —  
 But too young to feel security  
 About awakening desire.

College clarity.  
 Youthful complexes smoothed over  
 Using bear hugs, shoulder pats.  
 The "think of me as a brother" stance,  
 Twined friendship and freedom.

Freedom fled  
 At Grandfather's grave.  
 In front of Death's looming bondage  
 I held my sister,  
 Arm consoling shoulder.

Though now, unconquered,  
 Some dear ones remain  
 Gracing occasion and time,  
 Their affection and presence, links added to a chain,  
 Are forever mine.

**Priscilla Hall**

## Society's scorn — Eulogy for Stefany

I

How do you forget  
without regret  
the child that seemed such a thorn  
which you prevented from being born  
'cause you were afraid of society's scorn?

II

Do you have more  
to even the score  
Or does the harsh reality  
make your inborn practicality  
reject this thought as frailty?

III

Will the weight I set  
on society's scorn  
Ever replace the regret  
that still lingers yet  
of my unborn?

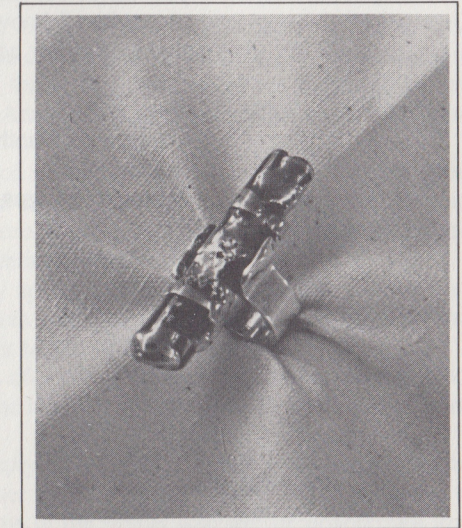
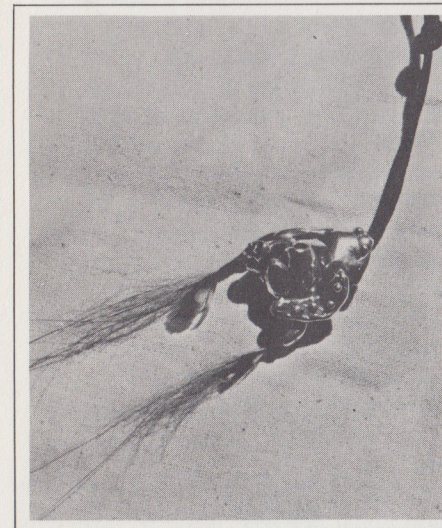
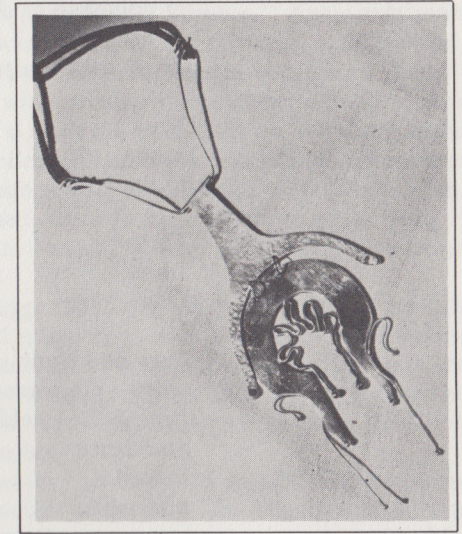
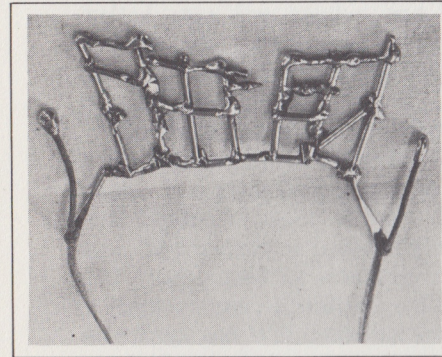
**Anonymous**

### November Day

Fog hangs like smoke around the house,  
pushing the world inside;  
no one goes out without need;  
everything falls into place.

Faint becomes the hand, the mouth,  
silent becomes the gesture.  
Secret as the bottom of the sea  
cry the people and the earth.

from the  
German of Christian Morgenstern  
translated by  
**Allison Sprieck**





## Dance

With the means  
of complete tenderness  
I create  
an abstract sculpture

She can  
dance  
in the wind

To her  
I give  
your name

Now and again  
when I am alone  
behind the shield of worship  
you dance  
for me  
also when  
you are not there  
you dance for me  
also when I know  
that you never come again

from the  
German of Gunther Wirth  
translated by  
**Hanne Lundgaard Hansen**

The quiescent lake.  
And loons laughing overhead.  
We paddle skyward.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## Sunday Morning

Stained glass windows shine  
Glimmering multitudes of  
Melted Lifesafers—

**Jill Wetzel**

## WILD FLOWERS

“Anna, Anna!” Jenny ran across field, jumping over broken stalks of corn and waving her arms wildly. To see her in motion was like watching a small whirlwind skipping over the countryside — pure energy.

“Anna, oh Anna”, her name became gasps of air, “today in school Miss Thompson brought wild flowers,” she paused, her lungs aching for air, “and she said I would be able to find them in Father’s timber.” Anna, you must come with me! I want to tell you about each one — they’re tiny and soft, and, oh, Anna, I’m sure the whole timber smells wonderful because of them!”

Anna’s face was long and narrow with prominent cheekbones and deep, dark furrows that cradled gray eyes. Her skin was dried and brown and clung to the structure of bone. But when she smiled all harshness disappeared. Tired lines melted into one another and shadowed eyes glistened with fresh tears.

Anna didn’t say a word but reached out to Jenny with strong arms. Jenny is my sister’s child, she would think to herself, but she is *my* daughter, always finished the thought.

She wasn’t as old as her body suggested. Long years working side by side with Will, trying to make the land productive, had drained her of feminine youth. The earth they tilled was saturated with tears and sweat, in return the land yielded its bounty to them. They were grateful but their prayers for the one seed they wanted so badly to grow never found fertile ground — the child Will and Anna waited for would never be born.

Anna’s sister, Elizabeth, did however, give birth to a child, and it seemed that Anna and Will could not see enough of the new life. Anna would sit with her for hours whispering, “Jenny, you are my daughter, my precious daughter at last.”

Elizabeth never knew about the secret conversations between Anna and Jenny. She allowed Anna to become a vital part of Jenny’s life when she saw the longing in her sister’s eyes and the aching restraint in her arms. So it was throughout Jenny’s first years, and Anna was happy, and Will worked the land and was content.

Anna could smell the crispness of starch and cool breezes in Jenny’s print dress. Jenny’s dark hair flashed with red as the sunshine seemed to glow about her. Her auburn hair could have been Anna’s as a child, only now the lustre had turned to coarse gray, but she remembered.

The sun was bright but the early spring breezes were still cool. Jenny was glad for the warm embraces that Anna was always willing to give, but now she was ready to run, to escape with her to the timber.

“Please, may we go today? This afternoon, we still have hours before dark, oh, please, Anna, the flowers will be beautiful!” Excitement could not be concealed in such a creature.

“Of course, Jenny” was her reply as she slowly lifted her body up and looked down at her beautiful daughter. “We had better not leave without some sort of wrap. The sun won’t reach us in the timber and the air is still cool and damp. Your Uncle Will is out behind by the well. Go tell him our plans and I will meet you by the back gate with your sweater.”

Jenny didn’t take time for another hug but darted past the barn and the small garden to the deep well that promised cool water and Uncle Will.

He stood there looking out over his world. His faded blue coveralls bagged around his knees and hung so loosely about his waist that Jenny thought he had slipped the hired man’s coveralls on by mistake.

"No, dearie, these are my coveralls. I'm just wasting away to nothing is all. Your Aunt Anna just doesn't feed me enough — you're going to have to have a word with her!" Then he laughed loud and clear, looking out over his world.

She understood and laughed along with him, and when he had stopped she rushed on with her message: "Uncle Will, Anna and I are going down into Father's timber. The wild flowers are blooming and I want to tell Anna about each and every one. We won't be late — I would hate for you not to get any supper!" She giggled and ran off to the back gate. She heard him laughing, and she loved him.

Anna waited for her at the gate that swung away from the rigid line of white posts. She held a small white sweater for Jenny, her own heather blue one draped her shoulders.

The afternoon promised to be wonderful. They half-skipped down the worn out path that followed an old fence row that would eventually drop down into the dark timber. The sun could still reach them out here in the open pasture but once they entered the dark cluster of trees there would be only soft moss and Jenny's fragrant wild flowers. The winter had seemed too long for both of them and this chance to get outside was eagerly welcomed. The snow had been thick and obtrusive, the gullies were swollen from the melting of it all — but that would add a nice melody in the sombre darkness. Rushing water always sings of places it's been and giggles while it tumbles over smooth pebbles.

They finally reached the timber and the sun kissed them goodbye. The smell of fresh life surrounded them and the rich moist earth padded their steps. It was alive in this dark, sweet place. The insects hummed and split the air, the squirrels chased each other in the uppermost limbs of the trees, their claws clicking against the bark. And then there was the water, a lulling sound in the background, rushing, rushing away.

The air was fragrant with all good things, and the wild flowers were bits of glory. Jenny pondered each one and would try a name for it, "wood sorrel, wild pansy, wild indigo, oh, I'm not sure — Anna what could this one be? The flower is a kind of rose-purple color."

"I think my mother used to call them alumroot — it's a sort of wild geranium. Oh Jenny, they're all beautiful."

Jenny's eyes focused on a pale blue flower by the edge of the stream. It was a good distance away but it seemed to stand and call to her. It had waited there for her. Without speaking she walked away from Anna and the other flowers and followed the instructions the soft breeze had whispered in her ear.

The sound of the water grew louder.

The pale blue flower bowed to her and she curtsied in return. It was the color of Anna's sweater, it beckoned her to come closer. It wanted her. Jenny knelt down as if in prayer, her white hands cupped around the flower, she breathed deeply its perfume and she smiled. When she opened her eyes another pale blue flower stood up and called to her. It waited for her along the bank of the swollen stream. She ran to it, leaving the impression of two knees and gentle forearms in the soft earth; a sacred place in a silent chapel. The water chanted the liturgy. Anna thought it was time to start back but couldn't find Jenny. She wasn't sure how much time had passed since they had looked at the alumroot — was it a matter of minutes, or had it been hours? She called out her name; the insects were silent in response. The timber was growing darker and the air chilled her frightened body.

"Jenny, my dear Jenny! Where are you?" She can't be far, she kept assuring herself, maybe she fell asleep in the velvet moss, maybe —

The water was rushing away.

Anna walked over to a pale blue flower, wild hyacinth. There she saw the indentations in the virgin soil, the memory of a young girl communing.

"Jenny," her voice broke and scattered across the water. She found a torn piece of crisp print, smelling of starch and cool breezes. She saw nothing else, she could only hear the water giggle as it tumbled over the smooth pebbles.

All of the townsmen came out to help in the search. The swollen streams pushed on with melted winter and the search ended. There was a memorial service, everyone was there except Anna. Will understood her silence and went alone. He did not look out over his world that day. He could not look on fertile ground and think of growth, he thought only of frost and death and auburn fall turned gray.

Anna sat by the gate. Salty tears found their way through deep, dry furrows that creased her face. Tears do not help, just like a rainstorm does not help the cracked earth and burnt corn. There is a time when it is too late.

She walked back to the house. She would get supper ready for Will, one of his favorite meals, roast beef, and potatoes and carrots from the cellar. The kitchen smelled of the earth and she was pleased. She set the table for him and walked outside to the barn.

When Anna opened the side door the hay was strong and filled her lungs. The fading sunlight captured the floating dust, the pigeons cooed from the rafters. This is a safe place, she thought and walked to the far wall. Will had been shooting rats that morning. The hand gun rested on his work bench.

The bales were heavy but she was able to stack them in a nice square around her — she was strong, this woman who had worked side by side with her husband. She was strong.

"No one will hear, this is a safe place, Jenny, no one will hear."  
The rats hid from muffled sound. No one else heard.

### Kathy Appel

Colorado suns  
redden and tighten faces  
bleach well-worn jeans,  
and weather cowboy boots.

Colorado sons  
chase away Denver showers,  
Durango blues  
and sorrows in the Springs.

Colorado suns feel soaked-in  
and are renewed  
late at night with hot skin.

Colorado suns  
with reddened and tightened faces,  
bleached, well-worn jeans,  
and weathered cowboy boots.

Colorado sons  
chase away Denver showers,  
Durango blues  
and sorrows in the Springs.

Suzanne Lazzaro



hidden meanings  
sneak around the interiors of foot and stanza  
like little criminals  
avoiding the police: the mind's eye.

Black.  
Red/gold/white-orange fire  
gives birth to a brood of sizzling firefly offspring  
that leave home and die quite soon thereafter.  
Fire.  
Builds a wall of warm that only faces touch,  
the rest of bodies summer-cold and awaiting  
scratchy sleeping bag,  
tent-shelter smelling of canvas, damp earth: pillowcase nighttime.

Suzanne Lazzaro

## The Trees in the City

My heart loves the trees in the city  
for the sake of their curious destiny.  
Their roots search under hard streets  
for good soil, which tastes sweet and coarse,  
their leaves drink the city's grayish haze,  
their branches twist in sorrow and in prayer.  
The trees in the city are the prettiest I know,  
they have followed us into captivity,  
they are our gentle sisters,  
see, they pray for us!

from the  
Danish of Grethe Risbjerg Thomsen  
translated by  
**Elizabeth Falksen**

## OLD MAN

Old man, you're a cruel one.

You strip the trees of their dress,  
then freeze their naked limbs.

You hide the deer's food  
and make him stumble hungrily on your disguise.

You bite people's faces as they walk innocently  
into your cold breath.

A hundred armies couldn't chase you away old man.  
You are strong.

Then I will fight you.  
Alone

I will strike you —  
with patience.

I will infect you —  
with time.

It's March old man —  
I'm winning.

**Bruce Bro**

## Merely Dust

Grandmother's apartment —  
Such a restful abode  
When she was occupant.  
It fits her more nicely  
Than the nursing home.

I'm filling boxes with untouched cans  
And bottles, and perfectly good  
Measuring cups.  
These strainers —  
We're short at home.  
Oh, Grandmother!  
The candy is sticky now.  
May I finish  
This 7-UP, the old folks' carbonate?

The living room.  
Doilies  
On rockers.  
Would you desire  
These medicare statements?  
Picture frames?  
Valentine cards?  
Could a lavender sachet  
Improve antiseptic atmosphere?  
An African violet  
Brighten a care center?  
A picture of Christ  
May give you strength.  
This canasta deck might provide —  
Diversion?  
Oh, Grandmother,  
Pictures!  
Cousins, so darling,  
We adolescents, ugly,  
Great Grandmother, venerable battleaxe.

Your bedroom, and  
Where did you find  
That Persian knicknack?  
Cushions of lace rest beside  
Long shoehorns?  
You and your siblings  
Sewed squares on that quilt.  
Need another afghan  
To warm your knees?  
And there's that gold thimble  
Resting beside dizziness pills.

The bathroom —  
Spilled talcum powder surrounds  
A back scratcher and stiff towels.  
Laxatives galore —  
I never knew.

Yes, you would fall,  
Letting me clear this mess.  
All right, take your complaining, willful ways  
To another location.  
But Grandmother,  
Must I pack it all,  
Lock the door,  
And slip away, leaving  
Merely dust?

## Priscilla Hall



## "making waves"

Up against the world, they shimmer and shine, so tall and self-righteous,  
they glisten in the light, reaching farther and faster  
beyond question or doubt, seeking and clutching for something unclear,  
Until suddenly — PLOP! — they find they're back with the rest of us . . .

**Kim Morrison**

## Monochrome

A thought crawled in His jealous mind,  
"If I am All, I am not blind . . ."  
His neutral eyes surveyed the world,  
Swarming purple, brown and blue —  
The colors He Himself had hurled . . .  
Only He was lacking hue.

The wrath of Monochrome was great,  
His raging mind denounced this fate.  
The omnipresent hands took hold  
Of all nature, stars and sky —  
The red was torn, the green and gold . . .  
Flung and ripped and left to die.

While tearing His rainbow, piece by piece,  
His great blue tears caused Him to cease.

**Karla Bergstraesser**

## Femme l'ombrelle 1886

Caught on the last rim of the hill  
Before it becomes sky  
You Will be standing;  
Summer grass rippling in  
The breeze that, laughing, is  
Catching the white voile of your frock.

Resting your endless gaze  
On some distant  
Pisarro landscape, quiet leaf-shaded lane or  
Shimmering wheat field hazy with sun,  
You are this moment;  
It is enough.

A translucent green light  
Frames your lovely head  
And the sky behind you will  
Be serene and blithely blue,  
That soft-spoken summer shade of blue —  
Ever-June (your season will not ever change)—  
Till its paint peels,

For Mademoiselle,  
Your fate is hanging on a  
Museum wall,  
Tied to those, passing  
Who imagined the wind, lifting  
The azure ends of your scarf  
To eternity,  
Is faintly brushing their cheek,

Ever-June-  
(A moment—  
Claude painted them).

**Kathy Swensen**

White drifts hide the path.  
If one would venture, that  
vastness might be home.

**Kathy Appel**

## Queen of a Crackerbox Palace

"Operator 2-6."

"I'd like to place a collect call to Highland, Indiana. The number is 219-923-0945."

"Your name?"

"Pat."

"Number you're calling from?"

"9931."

"Thank you." The computerized dialing system connects me to Indiana with a thin pentatonic phrase. After a few rings, my mother answers and the operator begins her AT&T monologue. "Collect call from Pat in Blair, Nebraska. Will you accept the charges?"

"Yes, I will." My mother's voice echoes off the walls of the phone. "I'm the only one home and it's a good break from the idiot box." I'd already prepared myself for the news that Grandma fell on the ice on her weekly hike downtown to get her thin pinkish curls permed, or that one of my high school friends was hospitalized. But instead she's telling me that they got six more inches of snow, the drifts are a foot higher, and the heating bill was \$120 last month.

"Your brother called last Saturday. His car is running again — maybe it'll run for more than a week or 25 miles this time. He says it's pretty warm in Arizona. Been raining a lot. He got promoted to Airman First Class last week. He might be going to the Philippines with that jet he's been fixing. He won't get to come home for leave for more than a week if he goes. He seems to enjoy it, though. Doesn't sound the least bit homesick, even though he's been gone for so long.

"Oh, and Nancy wrote yesterday. She's getting the furniture and dishes ready to go to Germany. Frank left a week ago and she'll follow in two weeks. She hasn't called since Christmas. I guess newlyweds don't have much time for anyone else. But she says she loves playing housewife and cooking . . . She was going to come home for a few days before she goes to Germany, but she doesn't think the car will make it here and back to Texas.

"Hm, you know what I did the other day? I went into her room and yelled at her to get out of bed, or she'd be late for school. Raz thought I was crazy. It was just four or five months ago that you two were fighting because she broke the rose bush while you two were playing catch. She looked so scrawny in that softball uniform and braids and a band-aid on the knee she skin't sliding into third base.

I pick up a dead pause. "Yeah, Nan was always having to be put back together. But Frank has to do that now. You've got three down and one to go. Remember how you used to tell us how much you'd enjoy the quiet once we were gone?"

"Well, your sister Margie keeps me running more than the rest of you together. She's been working at Debate almost every day after school, and she has to be back at 7:00 for Chamber Singers at night. And every Saturday she's got to be at school by 5:00 for those meets. She's always so tired by the time she gets home that night that I end up going to church alone.

"And work's been fine. Mr. A. came in this afternoon and told me a Pollack joke. There's not very many bosses who take time to keep their employees laughing. And Maryann comes in to keep me company whenever she has a spare moment."

She tells me more stories about work, things the dogs did. We talk about my classes. She asks about Merp, and Julie and Kevin. I keep feeling something in her voice reaching out — not especially to me — just reaching. After a five-second pause I mutter something about having to get back to my homework, and she says she has to let the dog out anyway. "Take care, and write."

Another five-second pause. Some words manage to escape from my throat. "Mom, I . . . well, keep warm, and don't shovel too much snow . . . I . . . I'll write soon. Well, be seeing you."

I hung up the phone a half hour ago. I haven't opened a book, just sat in the dark trying to figure out what words are still stuck here in my throat. I feel almost guilty that Mom is sitting in the crackerbox palace that the prince and princesses have left. I feel even more guilty that I can't find the words to tell the crackerbox queen that I love her.

## Patty Reed

Relinquished dreams evolved in adolescence  
mire in sands of regret  
climb on vines of loneliness  
swim in seas of depression and anger.  
Those placid daydreams of yore,  
without ever being born,  
aborted by those who do not hope,  
who do not support or lend encouragement.  
Each day brings new doubts and wonderings to mind.  
Commonplace are mystical outreaches for something lost —  
a goal denied  
a success spoiled.  
Plaintively, driven on by longing for yesterday,  
searching for tomorrow,  
believing that somehow those dreams I lost will be renewed  
by someone more appropriate for the task,  
less influenced, more apt,  
who will deny those who do not hope,  
who do not support or lend encouragement  
their own self-satisfaction.

Suzanne Lazzaro

You plague me with airy words  
 And a simplicity that makes me believe  
 Then disappear for a time—  
 Or try a bit too hard to prolong a  
     heavenly kiss.  
 But even then, maybe it isn't me on  
 Your mind . . .

How easy the words come  
     due to practice?  
     repeated scenes?  
 Who else listened with eager and  
 Believing ears?

Leave me sit with a platonic friend  
     (that my mother insists should receive  
     a kiss and my complete attention)  
 Than scaring me with  
 Your simple words  
     and openness that  
     brings you fame.

**Jill Wetzel**

he lay  
 covered  
 with old feed sacks  
 in a cold, dark,  
 night barn;  
 tiny, wet  
 shiney black, and  
 helpless.  
 only newborn, yet  
 rejected by  
 life.  
 he struggled just  
 to breathe while  
 i forced warmth and  
 hope down his  
 raw throat.  
 my shoulders wracked  
 with the pain of  
 supporting his  
 dead weight and  
 the cold  
 seeped in, oblivious  
 to the battle.

my calf  
 lay stiffened  
 in the morning heat.  
 his face,  
 newborn white,  
 blackened  
 with flies,  
 surrounded by  
 the stench of  
 death.

**Ellen Hamann**

## SOWER 1979

### Volume XXXIV

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## AWARDS

### **Joseph Langland Award for Poetry:**

Femme l'ombrelle 1886 . . . Kathy Swensen

### **Joseph Langland Award for Prose:**

Wild Flowers . . . Kathy Appel

### **Hal Evans Cole Award for Excellence in the Arts:**

Four Pieces of Jewelry . . . Mark Jorgensen