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## Lincoln County

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# Lincoln County

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*Bill Elgersma*

Pancake flat  
poured out in God's skillet  
and flipped.  
The color of the land  
a marbled batter of blue and yellow  
—an icing of clay.  
Eons ago  
erosion formed the fruitbelt  
by stripping the escarpment naked  
—a barren wilderness.

Stone boat  
ironic the name  
steel runnered, rugged  
flounders on the shoals of rock and dirt.  
Side racks hold its catch,  
low though for stones don't jump,  
they grow.

Each spring again  
the boat is launched  
to fish the fields.  
Rising from the deep  
frost's school of pebbles, stones,  
become rocks as they grow.

Land so poor  
if a rabbit wants to cross it  
he'll have to pack a lunch.

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The escarpment  
leftovers from secondhand and castoffs  
the remnants of the remains  
attract people in kind.

The farmers  
poor as the land they farm  
where fences—stone and split rail—  
hold poverty in  
as if to sentence those foolish enough to try.

Corn stalks yellow  
oats turn early,  
second cut is thin on land too stubborn to yield a third,  
the clay petrifies and cracks in late August heat.  
Stunted crops on stunted land  
with stunted trees  
and stunted men,  
God's skillet continues to fry.