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Harvest

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Harvest

Bill Elgersma

Fall day, hint of chill
in the air.

Wind blows frosty air,
shipped from the north
redistributed here.
Along the way cattle confinements,
slaughter houses attach
and so
this is a wind of many cultures.

Somewhere a neighbor could not wait,
the wet wood of his smoky stove
taints the air,
over-ripe melons in the corner of a garden
find their way in,
combined with the last mowing
of an industrious young couple
determined to have a show lawn
on a starter home.

Not only smell
the burned wind bears sound of its labor.
—dried corn leaves or husk for that matter,
stripped naked by machines
indifferent to all but its yellow gold
scrape across roads and driveways and sidewalks
—bean pods rattle as they shiver in these
dipped temperatures waiting only for
warmer store houses.
—trains—grain, coal, and lumber
evidence of a coming season
labor on the wind
The whistle groans going north and barks coming down—

In all of this,
from that first phone call in June
until the last field was cleared
I watched you work, oh Lord.
We plant the seed
you make it grow and bear fruit
and then you harvest.
And now Jeanie's mom
to harvest.

The chill on the wind
causes a different kind of shiver.

We wait while she continues to shrivel,
the cancer taking the best parts first
and now
content
to nibble
at what is left.

But, Lord, you harvest,
ignoring chaff and stock,
leaves and pods,
—taking only that of value
to your store house.

And in that knowledge
we continue to plant
and tend.
We too grow
and you continue to harvest.

One day Lord,
when the wind comes calling
—the beans have lost their summer clothes
—the ears of corn have nodded off

grant that I might be ripe,
fitting for you grainery
waiting to hear the sound of you gleaning

and find my home in your storehouse too.