

WATERMELON DAYS

We were watermelon rich
those lazy autumn days.
The long hours we kept
vigil on the vines were gone
and all the husky gems of fruit
lay stretched in greening miles
waiting to be plucked.

There were days when kids
slid under barbed wire fences,
ever watchful and listening
for Grandfather's footsteps
on the furrows.
It took two to lug melons
past boundaries set against
our trespasses.

Triangle chunks were carefully
chiseled and when plugs of pink
beseeched our eyes, we were sure
that it was ready.
They must have guessed-the older ones-
the patch had been invaded,
and all the scolds and whacks
upon our bottoms were only
momentary pain.
A boy who owns a picket knife
cannot be denied.

Here at last, along the riverbank,
we cracked fruit against the rocks,
and all the succulent smell of summer
drenched our chins
as we spat seeds of gold
on dry salt grasses.

Even now, fifty years gone past,
when I see green melons in a patch,
my hand itches for the knife.

ROBED AGAINST THE STORM

Somewhere, back in yesterdays,
A grandfather robed in wool
Waits alone in his handmade Morris chair.

His knotted hands move in restless raps
along the leathered arms.

Blue mist of morning
shelters his land against the clouds.
Ancient trees, barren in the call
of wind, caress sky.

His little house
sheltered by a hedge of white
lies back beyond aging apple trees.
Hills are oaked
against the wake of winter
as noiseless as the fingers
on the chair.
He watches wind pluck dry leaves
from willow trees.

Somewhere, beyond sounds
of wind and storm,
Higher than an eagle soars,
she waits, his Love.

Withered in age,
he looks out on a crystal world
and longs for release
from the prison of his room

THE MIDNIGHT WATER TURN

Something strange and wonderful
happened to my dad after the midnight
water turn and the lifting of the headgate.
His eyes were filled with moonbeams
and his voice rippled like the stream
running around our frame house.

“Listen, child” he said, “the whole world
is changed at midnight. When I remove
the dam around the headgate, that water
carries moonbeams down those furrows
and I am captivated by the spell
of running waters.”

Gives one time to think, not caught
by household cares and kids to feed
and listening to a woman nag.
It makes a man feel washed and clean.
If you listen close, you hear the world
spinning on its axis. The leaves breathe.
That shallow gurgling sound spins magic
round a growing stock. Seeds of life
reveal their inner secrets.

“Oh, child, something happens
I cannot explain.”

Now I am grown, I know.
Like the water running free,
I remove the headgate
from my furrows
Frequently.

