

Fall 1978

Shelby, Nebraska, 1933

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SHELBY, NEBRASKA, 1933

Space is space
For a long way
Through the Plains,
Their immense reduction
Of things.

Trees are ghosts
Against the sky,
Buildings a balance
Of mass and time.

The few birds
That fly overhead
Lock you into your bearings,
The lines of your sight
Opened on one direction
From where
All directions begin.

Where no matter
How hard you look
It is always Shelby, 1933,
And the dust
You still can't believe
Is falling everywhere
Swirls all around you,

The world ascending
Particle by particle
Into the sky,
The Plains turned round
With a vengeance:
A landscape of dunes
And drifts,
Distances of glass.

At night you can hear it
Scouring the roof,
Feel it sift like sleep
Into your eyes,
Invading your life
With all the momentum
Of history, sintering
Through lungs and belly,
Shoved as far
As love is desperate
Into your wife.

Through the window's
Scars of light you watch
The sun come up
Like blood out of Kansas.

The sand-blasted trees,
Stripped of bark and leaves,
Howl like Angels,
Their white robes
And tongues,
The dust of their hair
Streaming in the light
Which is wind and flame—
The great billowing air
The world almost
Does not come apart in.