John Breukelman

Of cattes wylde and tame;
The proper study of mankind is man.
Wee, sleekit, cow’rin’, tim’rous beastie,
The sun that brief December day
And furry caterpillars hasten
I’m going out to clean the pasture spring;
(over the earth and under the sun.)
Come down to Kew in Lilac-time;
The valleys, hills, and dells are mine;
that master-thief, the jay
That this may be your loveliest blossoming
He was speckled with barnacles,
pert exuberance of dandelion days
With a slow, vague wavering of claws,
and the seagulls return to bird island
Snowdrifts hid each thistle stalk.

THE KANSAS SCHOOL NATURALIST
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You readers of The Kansas School Naturalist have responded so favorably to the two numbers of nature poetry (Vol. 20, No. 2, and Vol. 22, No. 2) that we are presenting a third in the series. This one is like "Nature Poetry II" except that I am including this time a group of poems written by young American Indians.

As noted in both previous issues, some nature poetry is merely descriptive, but more often it uses various forms of figurative speech, indirection, and symbolism, to set the stage for expression of experience that goes beyond mere description. The scope of nature poetry has been variously defined. Some limit it to earth, stars, plants, animals, and the other topics traditionally included in courses in "nature study." On the other hand, it has been defined as "encompassing all forces at work in the universe." The first is too narrow; we ourselves are a part of nature. The second is too broad; it excludes nothing. In "Nature Poetry III" I shall be somewhere between these extremes, with the first group of poems interpreted rather narrowly, followed by others that include ourselves as natural parts of the whole environment.

Those of you who wrote or called about "Nature Poetry II" and expressed preferences mentioned SANTA FE TRAIL more than any other, in fact almost as often as all others together, and Judith Jacobs reprinted it in her 1976 issue of "Around Solbakken." As we did in 1975, we will open this time by repeating the favorite from the previous time.

SANTA FE TRAIL

Stand here a little while
In the middle of these tracks,
These grass-grown ruts,
Now almost healed
But once deep-worn and dusty,
Deep-worn by many wheels
And many tired feet
Of men and beasts—

Stand here a little while and see
The canvas-covered schooners
On a grass-ocean route
Pass by in patient lines
In spite of heat and cold
And thirst and hunger
And storm and drought
And loneliness
And sickness
And death—

Stand here a little while with head uncovered
And watch
"The winning of the West"
Along this dusty trail
This long, tough, dusty trail—

Stand here a little while
Before you brag again
Of making it to Dodge City
In forty-three minutes.

1935
1. THE SWING OF THE CALENDAR

Since one of the most obvious features of nature in the Temperate Zones is the succession of seasons, let's start with this; because this is the December Naturalist, let's start with winter.

WHITE CHRISTMAS

A nervous week of Kansas weather—first, a biting wind, below the zero mark—then, foggy mist through freezing rain to stinging sleet—then, snow first wads of puff, then powder piles, dunes in the wind—then morning clear and crisp—for all of us a perfect Christmas Card.

1945

SQUEAKY SNOW

It's still and clear and 20 below; the sound you hear is squeaky snow under soles and under heels and under frigid rolling wheels.

1976

WINTER

December is often elusive; January can be abusive; February is usually obtrusive and March is all-inclusive.

1975

SNOWFLAKES

Contemplate a snowflake—exquisite perfection of design, delicate, symmetrical, and fragile

a hundred of a thousand snowflakes—exquisite perfection of design, delicate, symmetrical, and fragile, and no two alike

a hundred or a thousand trillion snowflakes—(they do come in trillions) exquisite perfection of design, delicate, symmetrical, but not fragile—they can shut down a highway an airport a whole city.

1975

SNOW

Snowfall, even spread, though but an inch or two, makes the cardinal more red and sky and jay more blue.

1969

SPRING

March can be uproarious and April amatorious; May is meritorious and June—ah, June is glorious!
GARDENING ON SHARES

From cabbage and greens and carrots and beans to cherries and pears I garden on shares—
one third for the slugs, the worms, and the bugs, the next of the thirds for the rabbits and birds, which leaves, as your see, one third for me—though the garden's small there's something for all.

1976

APRIL GREEN

Green of trees, green of grass, green most anywhere you pass, green of meadows, green of fields, prophesying summer's yields, green of buds, possessing powers to create all-colored flowers that will sing in rainbow mirth the April lay of reborn Earth—no green like April green can at other times be seen.

1977

JUNE

The greening of June is soft and fast; how sad to know it cannot last. It will slow down by and by in the harsh summer of July, then August wind with scorching heat will bring it to a stop complete.

1974

EVEN THE TREES

Even the unthinking trees extend their seeking roots within the substance of the soil to match the spread of foliage above.

1944

PLACERVILLE

Across the creek on the August hillside Hangs an Oriental carpet of such hues—Vines of flaming red, Bushes of burning brown, Clearest yellow and flushing orange, Honest white of birches, and shades of many greens—Such a carpet all the wealth of Oriental Empires could not buy!

1940

BRIEFLY OCTOBER

Briefly October paints Over the summer's greens in burnished brilliant patterns Varicolored scenes. Then lays the painted canvas, Still fresh, on winter's shelf. Brief life has many colors For each to paint—himself.

1946
2. FROM THE BOOK OF NATURE

Having spent most of my adult life in the teaching of biology, with emphasis on field work, nature study, and science education, I have had numberless opportunities for poetic responses to the various stimuli of nature.

SWIFTS

Fluttering leaves,
Four-pointed, black,
Fluttering upward
Into the sky
Out of the hollow
Chimney trunk
That marks an
Abandoned brickyard.

Insects living for themselves
also serve a wider need;
without their pollinating flights
plants cannot produce their seeds.

There is no independent life:
upon each life all lives depend;
all creatures operate within
a circle without start or end.

A WHEAT FIELD FIRST

For a sight that beats a mountain scene
Or a view of the rolling ocean,
Look across a mile-wide field
of Kansas wheat in motion,
Motion spring from the ample earth,
Motion of the South Wind's giving;
Look across a wheat field first—
It's green and gold and it's living.

KANSAS SUNSET

It's just as well no artist captured
The play of Rembrandt light and shade
With which the western sky this evening
Bragged how sunsets could be made.
The scene on canvas would provoke
Only disbelief thereat—
"The artist couldn't have been sober;
No sunset ever looked like that!"

3. MAN IN NATURE

We human beings, though we consider ourselves "Lords of Creation," should not forget that we are a part of nature, that we live in the same environment as do all other living creatures, and that we have the same basic needs. "Man and nature" is a misleading concept; we should think of "man in nature" or "nature, including man."

WEST WINDOW

The evening sun sends rays of light
through beveled glass—
The tapered margins give them colors
as they pass
From air to glass and back again
to air.
The multicolored patches on
the eastward wall
With square-edged panes would not
appear at all
Although the same sunlight would
still be there.
The genes have genes for trim and neat lines and that is why we see them flying in more or less organized flocks. The genes which are such genes are sent in strict in flights south and north on sky blue the in them see us.
WHEN

_Homo sapiens_

has managed
by ingenuity
and invention
and specialization
and social engineering
in the name of progress
to make
the air unbreathable
and the water undrinkable
and the food inedible
and the soil untillable
and the non-renewables
dwindle to nothing
and population grow
so much faster than
Earth's power to
provide subsistence
and Homo has become
a genus of beggars
—then—
who will be the
Sovereign of Creation?
*Passer domesticus?*
Maybe?
1975

OLD ELM

That scraggly old elm
with its lopped branches
and its lopsided crown
so ugly as a tree can be
(if indeed a tree
can be ugly)
should be cut down
and replaced by
an oak, a maple, or
something else
tall
graceful
symmetrical
beautiful.
I do not want to cut it down.

Our house is no
Bicentennial Historic Site
but
we built it
and
have lived in it a long time
and
that old elm
is the only living thing
that stood on the lot
all the time we were building.

1976
E=MC²

Energy is indeed interchangeable with matter—in the beginning energy became matter to create heaven and earth and the earth was void and without form and energy moved upon the face of the deep and energy was light separated from darkness.

Nature is universal mind of which each human mind is a part.

The universal intangible is in all of us—religion calls it soul.

If you would like to try your hand at writing poetry a little more serious than a rhymed couplet, you might try a triolet. You will note from the above examples that there are only two rhymes, arranged a, b, a, a, b, a, b. In BIRCHES the rhyming words are cold, gold, and told, in lines 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7; in lines 2, 6, and 8 the rhyming words are away and gray. Note that the first line is used three times, and the second line twice.

All you need to start a triolet is a rhythmic two-part statement. Suppose you look out the window and see a chickadee flying away from the bird feeder. Instead of saying "it flew away," say "the chickadee is on the wing." Now you have lines 1 and 2 of your triolet:

1. The chickadee
2. is on the wing.

You're ready to go—"The chickadee" will be lines 1, 4, and 7 of your triolet, and "is on the wing" will be lines 2 and 8. Your triolet thus far looks like this:

1. The chickadee
2. is on the wing.
3. the chickadee
4. is on the wing.
5. the chickadee
6. is on the wing.
7. The chickadee
8. is on the wing.

So far, so good: next you need lines 3 and 5 to rhyme with "dee" and line 6 to rhyme with "wing." Some "dee" rhymes are bee, flea, free, glee, knee, me, pea, sea, tea, wee, and so on. Some "wing" rhymes are bring, cling, thing, king, ring, sing, and any participle that ends in "ing" such as answering, arguing, and so on.

You might think the chickadee "is fancy free" and since it's a bird you might think of "sing" and come up with something like this:

The chickadee
is on the wing.
It seems to me the chickadee
is fancy free
fly and sing.
The chickadee
is on the wing.
Admittedly this will not win you any awards for The Poem of The Year, but if it's fun to write—right on! As often and as long as you like.

5. THE HAIKU

Because of its brevity, this Japanese verse form of 17 syllables arranged 5-7-5, is an ideal form for presenting a quick glimpse, a snapshot as it were, of a natural feature. I have had a lot of fun doing haiku.

BLACK HILLS SUMMER

The night-time music blends the rippling of the creek with wind in the pines.

1962

DOG-TOOTH VIOLET

Dog-tooth violet adder's tongue or fawn lily— it is a lily.

1977

HYACINTH

Young Hyakinthos grows from his blood a flower, fragrant purple gem.

1963

CECROPIA

Half man, half dragon, one feeds upon the other half insect, half tree.

1977

IRIS

Goddess of rainbows cloth of gold and sable night, swords and flags in one.

1963
Readers have responded more often to haiku than to any other form I have used in the Naturalist, by sending some brief examples of their own writing—haiku, quatrains, cinquains. This one was sent by Mrs. Arthur Tazelaar, of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**SNOW**
Soft, fluffy, whispering, falling, covering, making everything beautiful, miraculous!

These two untitled haiku are from Dean George Rinker of the University of South Dakota Medical School, who like ourselves, spends much vacation time in the Black Hills, one on flowers and the other on a common Black Hills grouse known up there as the fool hen.

How many thousand flowers dream beneath the snow of the warmth of June?
Dull, stupid fool hen blinking, gawking, sitting there how do you survive?

And these two are from a western Kansas fourth-grade teacher who wishes to remain anonymous.

**PRESIDENT**
It awes me to think—any one of these children might be president!

**QUESTIONS**
Such questions they have! What a teacher I would be could I answer them!
6. THE GROOK

About five years ago, Dr. Eleanor Hoag, formerly of the ESU faculty, introduced me to Grooks, written by the Danish mathematician Piet Hein. These short verses have been described as "small windows opening on a large world." Here are a few of mine I think may qualify as "small windows."

**NO MOSS**

"A rolling stone gathers no moss"  
but the rolling stone gives no heed  
to this honorably aged proverb—  
it wants to gather only speed.

1965

**HORSE SENSE**

Horse sense is something  
that horses share  
that keeps them away  
from the county fair  
and having loads  
and loads of fun  
betting on how  
the men will run.

1966

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT**

Among environmental improvements  
there's one that's not debatable;  
makes all political advertising  
instantly biodegradable.

1968

**SOLAR ENERGY**

When we run out of gas for the dryer  
we'll still get along just fine;  
we'll convert to solar energy  
by hanging the clothes on the line.

1975

**PRETEND**

Pretend that you are  
a dog chasing a rabbit,  
a calf sucking milk,  
a rooster crowing,  
a robin with a worm.

How do these effect you?  
1937

**IN SIMPLE TERMS**

"Microscopic pathogenic  
entities" are germs;  
how hard it is to mention  
common things in simple terms!

1973

**WOODECKER**

The red? bellied woodpecker  
does show some red  
but less on its belly  
than it does on its head.

1977

**A BOOK**

The function of a book  
is idea-linking,  
thereby helping the mind  
with the job of thinking.

1944

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In addition to those mentioned elsewhere I wish to thank Editor Boles for the drawing on page 8 and for the photos of the rattlesnake and the tree roots, Dr. Robert Clarke for the drawing on page 4, and my wife Ruth for her assistance in the selection of poems, her careful reading of the manuscript, and her photo of the author engaged in "research" on brook trout. All photos not otherwise credited are from my personal collection.
Those who have enjoyed American Indian poetry have noted two characteristics. First, since the Indians generally live close to nature, much of their poetry is nature-oriented in both origin and development. Second, much of their poetry is inseparably blended with song and dance. Even many of their prayers are poetry expressed in the form of dance. I once asked my Oglala Sioux friend, the late Ben Black Elk, how the traditional Indian view distinguishes poetry, music, song, and dance. He replied that "we really make no serious attempt to distinguish them. Song is dance, dance is song, and both are music. Poetry is the form of all of them."

The following poems, written by young Indians, are of course modern in the chronological sense. They are however ancient in the philosophical sense. They are in the tradition of love of the land, rich in the imagery of nature. Their views are as near as we can get to the native America, with little or no European influence. We transplanted Europeans often forget that poetry in America had reached a high level long before it came to our attention. Lyrics were well developed and epics were beginning. Poetry was often fused with dance and drama, around an altar, a shrine, a sacrificial fire, or other symbolic center of attention.

Let the young native Americans speak for themselves.

The following are reprinted by permission of Red Cloud Indian School, Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The first was written by a boy of 17, the second by a girl of 14, the third by a boy of 14, and the last by a girl of 17.

**WHAT IS TIME?**

Time is a million-year old rock
that once was a mountain.
Time is a tree
that once was a seed.
Time is a person
who once was a child.

**WHY?**

Tell me, O Great Spirit
why the Mother Earth is changing.
They have put factories where the buffalo once stood,
And where the wild ponies played
And where the sage once grew.
Why?

**THE SMALL BIRD**

Lord,
I am your winged
Feathered creature.
I have but two legs,
I'm free to fly as I wish,
Free to land as I want
Remember, Lord,
My brain is small;
Do not release my soul
From your grasp
I am but a small bird.

The following are reprinted by permission from Photographs and Poems by Sioux Children, published by the Tipi Shop, Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1971. The poems and accompanying photographs were done by children in the Porcupine Day School, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota, and are from an exhibition organized by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the Department of the Interior.
Tracks on the snow
horse tracks,
cow tracks,
cat's, man's
a horse pulling
a rope in
the snow,
where do they go?

Dennis White Thunder
Grade 8, age 13

Cat, sitting by a rock
alone and hungry,
thinking how it would
be to be a human.
He thinks he would be happy
but he wouldn't.

Doris Cottier
Grade 7, age 13

“Get off, you are holding me,”
said the water to the ice.
The ice is frozen so the water
can't move, but the fish was
moving slowly.

Marvin Left Hand
Grade 5, age 10

Photograph by Leslie Bush
Grade 7, age 13

Photograph by James White Thunder
Grade 8, age 14

Photograph by Harvey Iron Boy
Grade 8, age 15
A tree is a tree
until you and the axe
cut it down to
a sad ending.

Donroy Brewer
Grade 7, age 13

A road has no end
and never knows where or
When to stop.
The road comes and goes
Through streams, hills, and cities.
A road is where you can
Find happiness and again
You can find sadness.

Mariene Locke
Grade 8, age 14

KEY TO QUOTATIONS ON FRONT COVER
1. THE BOOKE OF PHYLLYP SPARROWE,
John Skelton, 1460?-1529
2. ESSAY ON MAN, Alexander Pope,
1688-1744
3. TO A MOUSE, Robert Burns, 1759-1796
4. SNOW-BOUND, John Greenleaf Whittier,
1807-1892
5. SUMMER, Christina Rossetti, 1830-1894
6. THE PASTURE, Robert Frost, 1875-1963
7. IN TALL GRASS, Carl Sandburg,
1878-1967
8. THE BARREL-ORGAN, Alfred Noyes,
1880-1958
9. I AM NOT POOR, H. H. Siegele, 1863
10. UNGATHERED GRAPES, Robert P.
Tristram Coffin, 1892-1965
11. TO AN ORCHARD NEAR LONDON,
Jan Struther, 1901-1953
12. THE FISH, Elizabeth Bishop, 1911
13. LOVE NOTE II: FLAGS, Gwendolyn
Brooks, 1917
14. LOBSTERS, Howard Nemerov, 1920
15. REDISCOVERY, George Awoonor
Williams, 1935-
16. TWO LYRICS, Richard Thomas, 1951-

The author of "Nature Poetry III" was a
professor at ESU from 1929 until his retirement
in 1968. He was the chairman of the committee
that founded The Kansas School Naturalist in
1954 and was the editor for the first 14 years.
He is the author or co-author of 16 previous
numbers of the Naturalist, the most recent
being “You Can Be Informed,” October 1976.
Breukelman Hall, the biology part of the
science-mathematics complex, was named in
his honor in 1970.
FINAL AUDUBON FILM PRESENTATION

Thursday, February 23, 1978

"Okavango"    "Arribada"

Photographed and narrated by Bernard Nathanson

7:30 p.m., Albert Taylor Hall, Emporia State University Campus. Single admission: Child—$0.50, Adult—$1.50. ESU Student ID admits. Call 343-1200, Ext. 443, for further information.

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It isn't too early to start making plans for an interesting and informative summer by enrolling in one of the Division of Biology's summer courses. Both field and laboratory courses are available.

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You are invited to bring any students, especially seniors, who might be considering the field of biological sciences as a career to visit the Division of Biology, meet the staff, and see the equipment and facilities.

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Back issues of The Kansas School Naturalist are available upon request. Some popular issues have long been unavailable, due to the depletion of printed copies. However, we can make any of these back issues available for the cost of xeroxing ($1.00), should you wish a copy.