

little of what it is. For me, that means a few poems which a few others might really care about and the wish never to suspend the activity of the verbal imagination, which must follow as a second principle upon the first one of life, itself. That is part of my higher appetite, and I am 'animal' too.

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Four Poems by Joseph Langland*

SACRIFICE OF THREE WILD GEESE

Three geese blew down the wintry air.
Some law condemned their cries
And did them in. I saw the snow
Drift on their bloodshot eyes.

Native to God, they whacked our stream
And flopped on solid ice,
Srying our blasted hills with errant
Instincts of advice.

All homing prophecies of spring
Were glazed with glassy spears;
Our granaries, at zero blue,
Were buttoned to their ears.

Three geese, shucks! The silly birds,
Who taught them to repeat
Unseasonable Indian-summer tales,
Our climate of deceit?

*The poems reprinted here are © Joseph Langland. "Genesis," "Willows," and "Dry Grass," first appeared in *The Green Town*. "Sacrifice of Three Wild Geese" first appeared in *The Wheel of Summer*.

History warned us farmers. We
Put up the corn; we drove
Our cattle near the barns; we split
Huge woodpiles for the stove.

Down went our trees and down our grain;
Down went our windows, down
Our butchered steers, our blooded lambs,
And all our roots went down.

We packed our house against the ice,
Our food below the storm;
Carnivorous, we fed on death
And kept our bodies warm

And rode the bitterest winter out
Until the larks and wrens
Came walking up the April clouds
And chatted with our hens.

Still, on the shortest Sundays, still
Three alien images
Of death pursue me down the skies
Past neighboring villages

And bear their tale upon my tongue
Until the sunniest doubt
Wrings out the latter days of March
And lays their history out.

Yet there they hover, angel-like,
Annunciating wrong:
A rune, legend of my own,
And an old folk song.

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