

BARBARA LAU

October 2001 / Iowa

Last month we learned the temperature
 at which steel loses
half its strength.

 Then buckles.

We stared for hours
 at what was gone.

How can this clear, corn-flower tincture of sky
 with its crown of geese

its absence of ash

 its huge boutonniere
of sugar-mapled leaves
 bring us any degree of certainty?