

He says the chickens
know more than we do
about crickets and worms
and the weather. They
never drown in the rain
by keeping their mouths open.
They are simply offering
their bodies to God
and, sometimes, He takes them.
At least, He takes their
small feathery souls
above all that man
has slaughtered,
rising, like the dew
after a hot rain,
to their small
ignorant heaven.

FROZEN HARVEST

A sudden cold
shakes the timber. Iced
branches fall along the
driveway like Grandpa's hair.
After a wet spring

comes a wet harvest.
Nearly Christmas and the bins
stay hungry for grain.
At last, the ground will hold us.
Soon, the combine will slide
down the rows like a fat

and aged dancer. This
is the dream we keep having.
The banker smiling. Father
restful in his sleep. But

the window is full of fields,
and the fields are full of beans—
300 tons hanging gently
from stalks so tender and
so brittle, the burden of
one bird would break them.

LEARNING TO DANCE

I

There used to be a horse
in that pasture, a piebald
gelding. He was the only way
my father knew where to turn
when he was visiting.

I remember baling hay there
for the first time, before
the horses, before the sheep,
before my father ever thought
to visit. The sun again close,
our bodies wracked yet constantly
in motion. Waves of grain
in waves of heat. Our stomachs,
the world, moving, our lives a song
we were teaching ourselves
to dance to.

II

Now it's weeds,
now it's beans,
now the old shed
is crumbling.
Sheep turn as the
morning advances.