

Three Poems · *William Ford*

AUGUST DEPRESSION, WINTER DREAMS

West Branch, Iowa

1.

By the early month the corn reaches up
Throat high, is a thick grid
Of tobacco size leaves rivaling
Anything legend in the Carolinas.
You do nothing but porch sit
Feeling the blood slow to a clot,
Your eyes worn out from counting
Your neighbor's well-worked furrows
Whereas you have barely enough garden
And not enough news of your wife
Far distant. You cannot get over
All those things you let simmer
On the well-resolved back burners
Of the worst winter in many.

2.

Christmas brought darkness earlier.
You could see the bruise-purple glow
Of farm lights and the snowy flatness
For miles and miles. You watched breath
Collecting fingerprints on the glass
As though for the local sheriff.
Behind you sprawled the cut open ream
Of tabula rasa bond and the notes
For the letters not yet written.
The air was a carcinoma blue,
The mind's blue making up a story

Over the dead fields of plenty,
Taking its time with crows overhead
All the way home to West L.A.

OF MILES DAVIS

for Paul Zimmer

The pop-out eyes belong to Baldwin
But are sadder, meaner, more direct
In their accusations against us.

The French have given him a medal
And assigned him Picasso's genius.
In the Third World he outsells Bird.

Costumed tonight in a shimmering tent
Of silver, he stands under the spot,
Head crook'd, glasses as dark

As the eyes of Tiresias.
He's blowing a funky put-to-gether
Bouquet of malevolent flowers

From *Bitches Brew* and *Live Evil*
Still daring all comers to take in
The African off-beats and squeaks,

The electric sub-harmonies and shifts
Midstream, notes without place
Except in Black air only—

As from the Devil himself—the whole sound
Shaking with a cocaine jumpiness
He says he finally did kick.