**Climbing the Wheat Silo with My Father**

Roger Camp

My father led me through the door

 of the abandoned grain silo.

 It’s soaring lines, the edgiest sight for miles

framing the golden wheat that robed the pubescent landscape.

Inside the storied blackness a lattice of light

 leaked by an open door and a wink of a window

 six stories up. A wooden ladder lashed to the siding

choked in darkness, a heavy rope trailing alongside.

Father mentioned clutching the rope

 in case I lost my footing or the ladder failed.

 Near sightless, I could sense the dry mote-laden air

a bleak emptiness immured by four walls.

My father, age thirteen as I was now,

 had helped his father to build the silo

 with the hired man and the neighbors.

This prairie skyscraper built by hand with hand tools

to store more than 200 tons of wheat.

 Our combined weights, two hundred

 and seventy-five pounds

now occupied the vacant space.

I could hear my father’s feet

 scuffing on the rungs below me,

 though I could not see him.

I wondered if he was remembering

the last day of construction

 when his family went to town

 and left him to finish the roof.

Boxed-in he had no way to get down.

Impatience drove him to dangle by his fingertips

 from the roof’s edge and like an aerialist

 muscle his body into enough momentum

to swing through the open window of the head house.

Never having told his parents

 he chose to share his reckless act with me

 pointing out that as the eldest son the thankless jobs

always went to him, a lesson not lost on me.