**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.