

ENOUGH

ALLEN BRADEN

Let it burn, burn down to the damned ground.
Let the horses scream inside the blazing barn
under the timbers popping like shotguns,
the cackling of the tack and saddles
and sparks swarming out into the night,
and let the coyotes, their tails afire, lope along
as if to track this widening ring of light
for the tenderest place to dig in.
As in any dream, you're a little unsure
where and when the will was spent,
when your old man became an old man,
for now the fields all around are dowsed
as the flames weaken, then dissolve,
and he says he's had enough of this life.

GHOST IN THE BUNKHOUSE

Here was almost all that remained of Lewis,
the uncle blown from the sky for his country.
Here in this bunkhouse dark, the boy knew,
lurked a Nazi luger notched with one American life,

and here the fleece and leather jacket hung,
emptied of its hero, beside a bridle and harness
and curry comb with clumps of horse hair
from one long since gone to slaughter.

Here the spent shells of houseflies and hornets
littered the cobwebs along the windowsill
and here in the light, the boy clothed himself
with his uncle's nineteen perfect years,

with any one of the various recited dramas:

*It was 1942 and train after train of their troops
muscle into a village outside Oslo
to drain the blood from schoolchildren.*

MEMORY IS LIGHT THE COLOR OF NICKEL

For a drink, neighbors tell of witnessing light
from a blast worse than any they can remember
that threw a man all the way across his shop.
They thought it was crazy to braze that fuel drum,
to think he knew the ways of diesel and flame.

What I remember best is my father warning,
Now don't look at the light, though he must
have known I would itch to memorize
that voltage lunging between his hands
and charging the rod to bead and meld

something broken over time, that nickel light
trembling the shadow which loomed up behind him,
that welder humming like the hive pelted to a frenzy,
and the cold quality of acetylene reaffirming itself
deep within the angry buzz of my adolescence.

I sweat like a man hired the dog days of summer
to chop a cord of wood and try not to imagine
how ghosts of neighbor boys hovered above
the accident scene, unsure whether to hold on
to the lives they once knew or follow the light.