

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Nebraska Bird Review

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union

---

3-1999

## Two Poems

William Kloefkorn

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev>



Part of the [Ornithology Commons](#), [Poultry or Avian Science Commons](#), and the [Zoology Commons](#)

---

Kloefkorn, William, "Two Poems" (1999). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 27.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev/27>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska Bird Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

**Two poems by William Kloefkorn**

The first poem captures well the sense of satisfaction those involved in CBC and other bird counts experience:

**COUNTING THE COWS**

Because earlier in the day I walked the fencelines  
I know that none has escaped or wandered off,  
and though I realize that should the count fall short

I'd have two options, count again or shrug my shoulders,  
I go to the field to count them, anyway, knowing as I do  
that counting is itself sufficient cause for counting,

something sweet in the accumulation, you understand,  
and if the count should complement the ledger  
how much sweeter then the effort. And if the count

falls short, as occasionally it does? Always I choose  
to shrug the shoulders, my consolation more than equal  
to potential loss, the credit being this: that I have

seen and have inhaled, at dusk, the lovely bulk of cow,  
that its path returns no less than takes me away from  
home. All of this is what my grandfather in the course

of an autumn morning more or less informs me. We are  
in that room where Grandmother died, her body at last  
a fencepost under a hand-tied quilt. And before the sun

quite drops behind its hill I'll be moving in my father's  
familiar Chevrolet, gravel pelting its underside  
like the rain that so far not even prayer has been able

to induce. Dusk. At my left I see the darkening silhouettes  
of grandfather's cows, their heads lowered as if in ritual  
into the occasional nourishment

of bunchgrass. One. Two. Three. All there, each cud  
in a land of milk and of honey, you understand,  
and accounted for.

\* \* \*

The second poem connects people and birds in a most natural way:

**GEESE**

I hear them honking  
before I see them,  
a low-flying V

going wherever V's go  
when the sap in the ash  
gives way to gravity.

And I am tempted to draw  
some natural-world  
conclusion,

to say that the birds  
know something the rest  
of us don't, and maybe

they do, though my mother  
at eighty-three  
takes her cue each year

from the first frost, she  
and her boyfriend then  
as if a skein of two

on the wing for Texas. So  
it seems to me that  
the natural world

and the other one  
considerably overlap.  
I hear them honking

before I see them, my mother  
and her boyfriend  
in a blue pickup

lifting off, the motion  
of my mother's out-  
stretched arm

as natural as any natural  
world can be  
in its act of going.

From Covenants by William Kloefkorn and David Lee (Spoon River Poetry Press, Granite Falls, MN. 1996). Bill Kloefkorn's latest works include a memoir, This Death by Drowning (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1997), and a book of short stories, A Time to Sink Her Pretty Little Ship (Winside, NE: Logan House Press, 1999). In addition to the preceding works, Bill Kloefkorn has published more than twenty volumes of poetry. For further information, see the following internet site: <http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/kloefkor.htm>.