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Bear Lake

Edward L. Hart

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Bear Lake

A fog follows the levee
 Along the drain canal.
 The lake is drawn from the valley
 Leaving sand and shell.

Ice is hiding the river,
 Snow covers the sand,
 Thick-lipped winter bends
 The willow wands till they totter.

Winter weakens to spring,
 The fog scatters out to the benches,
 Unbending willow prongs
 Lean up from the snow by the fences.

The wind blows away the sound
 Of straining pumps at Lifton,
 Within me I hear them in vision
 Turning the lake into sand.

Mountains rise out of the water
 The bottomlands sag into swales,
 Sloughs are festered with frogweed,
 In the mud lie leeches and shells.

Bear Lake lies in the sand
 From the pumps to the Wasatch wall.
 In its evening levels swell
 Black shadows of the land.

Planting the upland fields,
 I heard a far sound of flails,
 And the wind washed by in a wave
 Like the sway of swinging wheat.

Now the thin fringe of leaves
 Has darkened and heaved to brooding.
 Wind from the mountains crowding
 Scatters the petals and seeds.

Water is gone from the marshes,
 Pumps in silence are lying,
 Grain in the valley flourishes:
 All but the land will be dying.

—Edward L. Hart