

THE STAINLESS VANE

we left the fire dying in the stove
compressed in fever at
the bottom of its burrow of smoke

outside our cabin
the sun had already exhausted the morning air
and charged the leafy clearing to a monotonous
blaring glitter

one step down and our legs were suddenly helpless
our breathing stopped
in a thigh-deep tangle of catnip and burdock

then we went out upon the plain
rucksack and lunch and there
the vector wind shot its stainless vane
across our eyes and through our hair
swung us caught us quivering aflash –
and thought-free and fresh it bore us
wild and apart on its ice-thin scores

on the last green hill we lay aslant in the sun –
intimates of the sky, our nostrils and lips
irrigated with blue –
and one by one clouds heavy
and humming with snowy light
arose from the valley and drifted over our heads
but our bodies bare and perfect had nothing to share

–John Steffler