

While the dollar was dropping
and silver was going up,
in need of a place to sit,
God help us we bought
for onetwentyfive an acre
plus the well already in
(all we had at the time)
forty acres of overgrazed
rundown sulfur-befumed
exgrassland floodplain
at fortytwo hundred feet
from a man in flowered
boots and burgundy pants
who was handling it
for a bearded Christian
who needed money to finish
his current frame house;
deciding in our desire
to work good soil,
to eat unpoisoned food,
that though in no real
sense can land be bought
or sold, the legal act
is binding if by owning
we mean caretaking,
if by that we mean
to conserve and restore.

Jaguar and jaguarundi
ocelot and antelope
wolf and longtailed weasel
used to roam this valley.
Aplomado falcons,
thick-billed parrots, scarlet
ibis used to fly here.
Now that they've gone south
with the water and topsoil
it's bobcat and coyote
the killers are out to get
with guns and traps and pellets.
We have told the wind
we will kill none of them
rat rabbit or rattlesnake
and we'll keep the cattle off
so wild food grows again
on this forty at least.

As for our own food
well have to work something out
with the birds and bugs.
From The Valley Floor