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Marvin Bell

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CROSSING THE CHEVIOTS

Marvin Bell

To the Memory of Poet Jon Silkin

The grass, the ground and the fence posts were tan.  
The hills rose and fell, the land undulating ahead.  
It must have been the undulating hills that jiggled us into laughter.  
At Mary's Loch, we stopped to lay a causeway.  
Hauling large stones into the lake, humping them into a bridge.  
The sky was as calm as an amused teacher.  
Yes, the sky was tranquil, pacific, unruffled and still.  
Under it, we were messy, jaggedly capsizing our stones.  
As we worked, they sucked the laughter out of us.  
We carried them lower, we plodded into the great Scottish lake.  
And the clear day turned into steam around us.  
And the air bristled, and futility blanketed the hour.  
But our failed causeway would have to be long enough.  
Stubbornly, we laid down headstone after headstone.  
Some will say that men work to find God.  
We bore the jagged stones of our bridge without faith.  
Jon worked the hardest at it, and he died first.