

# planting time

*Mike Burns*

late summer heat, damp and heavy  
blisters the leaves  
in a stand of eucalyptus  
and heat waves rise from the farmer's dirt road  
giant Caterpillar tractors  
crawl with malice  
across the fields of winter beans  
and Roma tomatoes  
pushing, with great belches of smoke  
soot black against the sky,  
their engines snarl at the hillside  
relentless pushing pushing

rich, fertile soil  
warm as it sifts through fingers  
fields of grain, delicate legumes  
turned end for end  
buried beneath concrete and steel  
of another factory, shopping center, house  
the indigestible houses sprouted from baby-boom seedlings

the heat pulls back  
its heavy August quilt  
and the valley eases into the comfort  
of twilight; the naked wood-frame-skeletons  
stand like whispering shadows in the wind.