**Unscythed** *by John Gallas*

By Paparahi Flat, just past the droving bridge,

a vasty field of uncut corn rattles, torn,

sere and straggle-flapping, up to Bonners Ridge.

It’s Winter now. I don’t know why, in ragged rot,

this tall and stalky race were left uncropped, bereft

of use or profit, bluntly clattering, forgot

and draggled-pale, their shreddy leaves like flags,

their cracked confusion like a beaten, huddled troop,

abandoned, standing still, in August’s rimey rags.

Their neighbour-whispers, nods and anxious wags betray,

it seems to me, some shabby incredulity

at some long luck, some higher husbandry that stays

their felling and their muddy end, some shrunk surprise

that they are left alone. I watch them gasp and click.

Their green-time gone, their salad-days long passed, they rise,

a little blankly, yes, a little like a crowd

achatter when the show is done and all the darkling

auditorium of earth an empty shroud

of wind and cold, but standing still. Perhaps this way

of dying, atom-slow, defying expectation

and the time, this easeful progress downwards, may,

with distant busyness, and blindness in the dark,

be mine. I leave the gate and cross the mudded bridge.

Above the track two slapping kahu wheel and cark.

I follow them to Brackall, past the flooded farm,

across the ice at Denham’s Dip to Birthday Creek,

and then the rimus’ shelter, and its sudden calm.