

## Early May Annunciation

by Harry Brown

I've missed the peak of locust bloom when sweet perfume from hefty clusters blesses the air beneath should no breeze breathe. Such exquisite scent from such a brittle, short-lived bole (with such a lovely lemon soul)! Checking on a springing cow yesterday, I caught about the tobacco barn the least hint of fragrance that soon as seen disappeared. Two locusts rise tall in the fence row there. Just one small blossom could I reach and pull from a crooked bough with but an ounce of tantalizing bouquet, barely enough to whisper my loss. But as usual, listening for the Loud, my eyes were shut, I couldn't see. Then in late afternoon driving down Paint Lick Pike, a thin, dirty lace of snow along the edge of asphalt and berm, I knew I had missed forever one Spring visit. God grant me another, and wisdom to watch, to wait, to see.

I have stood  
in a locust thicket when its April essence  
lay around like Athena's cloud to take  
me from the world, open idyllic Phaiakia\*  
and row me to my country. How right!  
These forest pariahs in tough, brittle trunks  
fit only for keeping cows or hogs, their seedlings  
springing up like cedars or pigweed till bushhogged  
or shaded out—never sought by the three-bedroom,  
ranch-style bourgeois to decorate their acre estates;  
the two-storey, white- or red-brick rich  
to help show off their five-acre farms;  
or the woody wealthy whose houses are almost hidden  
by black gum, Korean dogwood and blaze maple  
but never yellow locust, that weed to be  
cut down, not cultivated, and never of course  
sold at Rose Orchid Nursery—  
these lepers that scent barn lots, pastures and tenant houses  
across Kentucky can if we listen transport us Home.

\*Homer's ideal kingdom in the *Odyssey*.