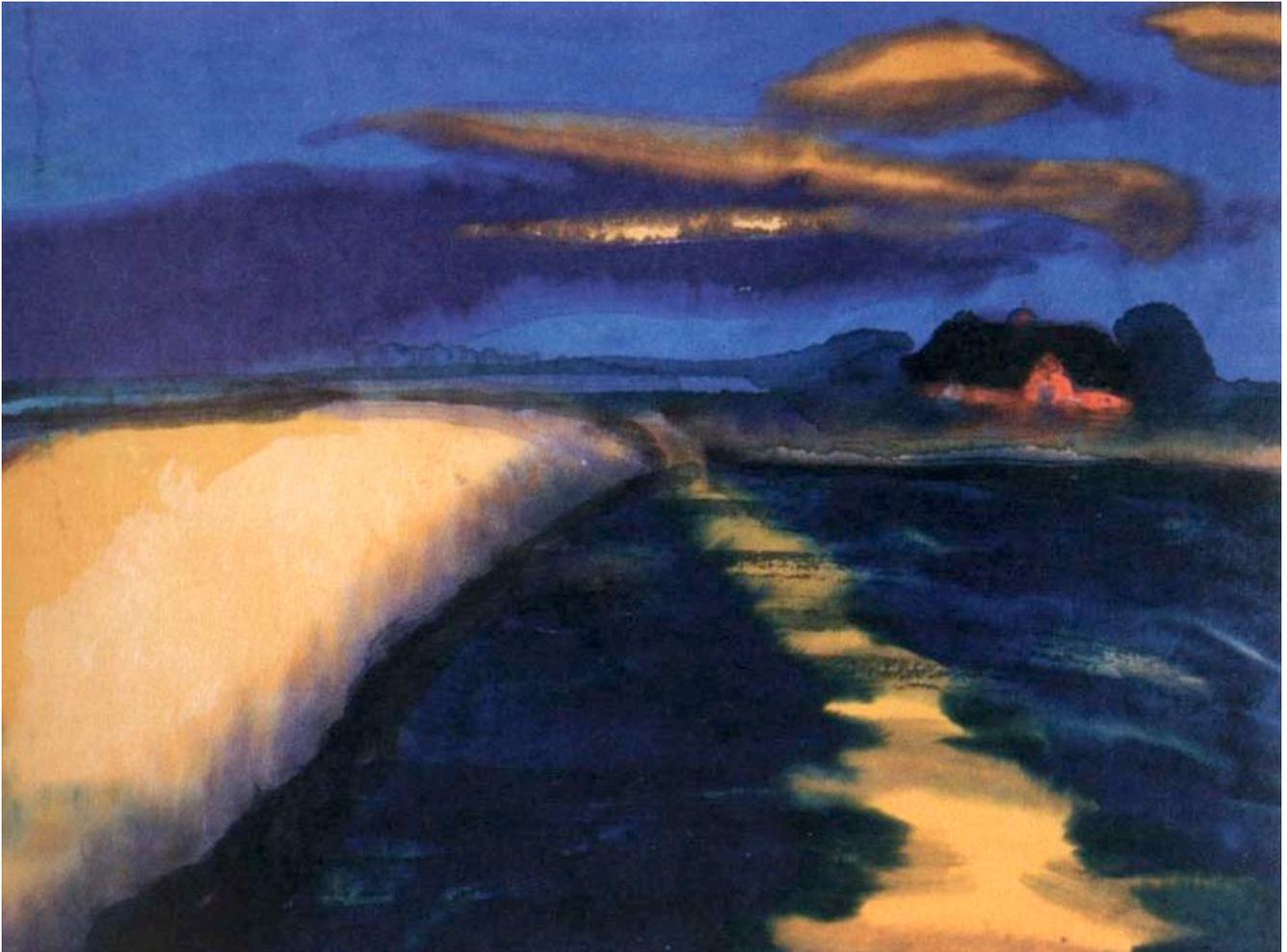


# We Had Heard Them

by [Michael Shindler](#) (March 2020)



*Wheat Field*, Emil Nolde, 1900

**We had heard them** in the clouds overhead  
Above the sun that had begun to fall  
And the field where flicker the fallen dead:  
Above you and me, but not above all.  
And what a strange sound they make as they fly

As we go with the whirl of the world by.  
But it is a good sound, that sound that went  
In the moments that marked our day's descent:  
It came down in the silence of the hour  
Then left that hour and the silence content  
With us caught up in a dying flower.

You and I had went where that sound had led,  
Racing one another at the high wall  
Till our footfalls fell in—in that race wed  
Like two faraway stars found at nightfall:  
At first a lonesome light to the lone eye,  
But which darkling hours split with a sigh.  
And what all the sound and the starlight meant,  
And what their absences now represent  
Shades a lone eye as branches a bower  
Where they had been but for an hour pent  
With us caught up in a dying flower.

Where went those stars? And is that field their bed?  
Did they both come at one another's call,  
As if tied and towed by a common thread?  
Do not tell me until I can recall.  
The way of the field and way of the sky  
Are from each to each a sort of reply,  
Which must be gotten and which must be sent  
Without regret and yet without relent  
By us two in that tall ashen tower  
Standing midway within the world's extent  
With us caught up in a dying flower.

And in that tower, what we both had said  
Of what had been and what would yet befall,  
Of a faith and folly, of joy and dread,  
It was true somehow—was good overall  
But the hour had passed, the sun rose high,  
It had come time at last to say goodbye:  
So you and I had went, with your head bent;

The sun in glory, the moon discontent;  
It is what it is: out of our power.  
But what was—it lingers yet like a scent  
With us caught up in a dying flower.

But where am I? Am I where you had fled?  
The field is gone, the tower not so tall.  
Was that sound a song? Are these clouds a bed?  
The stars seem too large and the world too small;  
This is the hour when glory would die,  
That sound your song, these clouds where I will lie.  
I had forgotten what we had forwent  
And without a sin, I cannot repent;  
The hour is silent, the sky dour;  
All the sun's glory has lately been lent  
With us caught up in a dying flower.

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Without a hope, with nothing to resent,  
This fate is my life's redeeming event:  
What I had weakened, I now empower;  
That of glory the world once had was spent  
With us caught up in a dying flower.

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

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