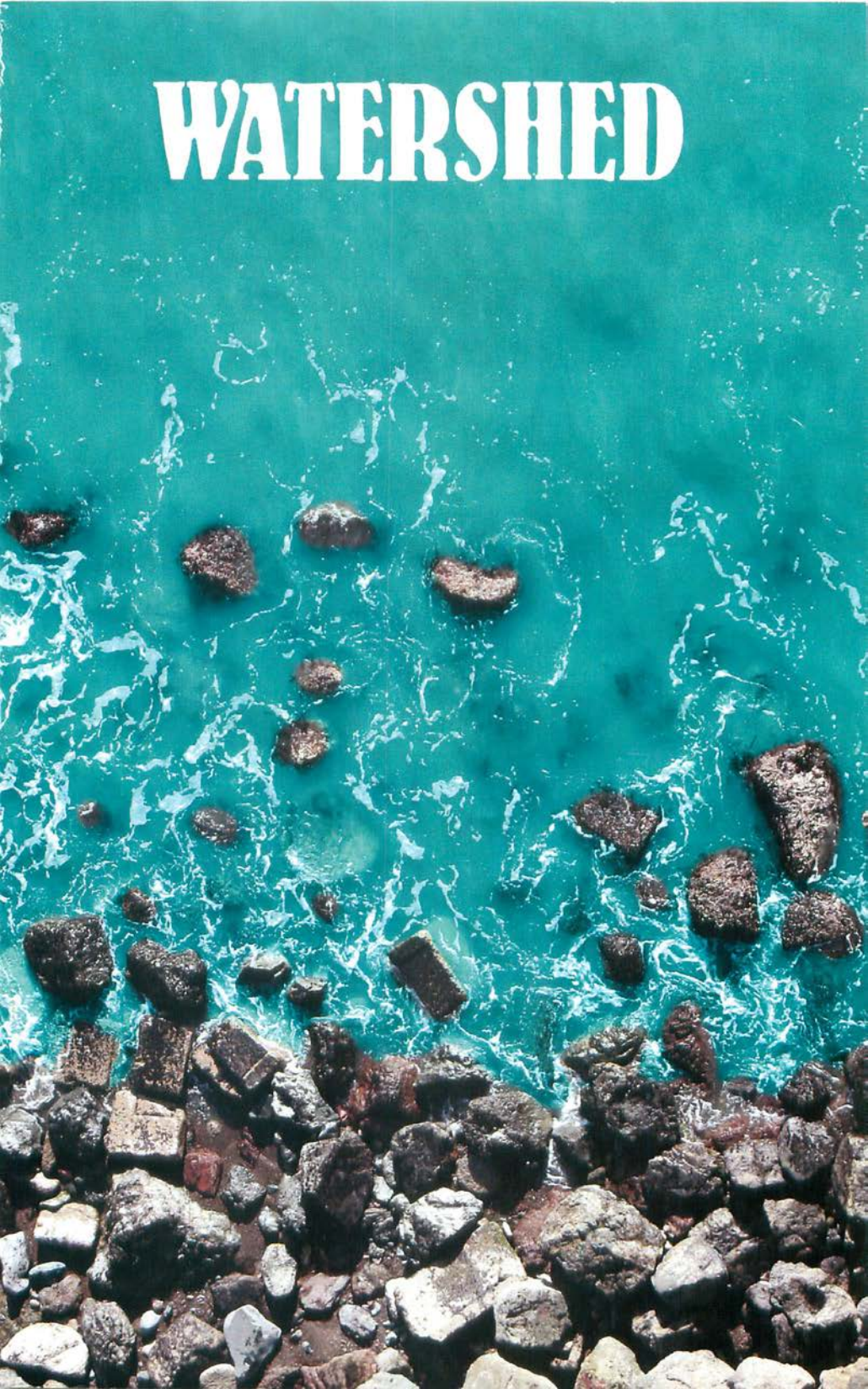


WATERSHED



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rain water gathers at the bulging base
eats dirt away
clumps clinging to smaller roots

larger roots
already naked—twist
into hard bridges for children to skip on
to follow into puddled ends that wet
the rough canvas of their shoes

no destination
only endless circles of play

children swarming the sycamore
pick at its skin
carve initials into hidden green

fallen leaves
like giant webbed hands brace
each step with veiny palms
each fall
each parent's watchful stance
from a distance—

the youngest child's face
a look
they've never seen before

as she finds a cold sunlit cave of bark inside the tree—

the light of hollowness
bewildering
how strong and empty
how alive and dead

and then

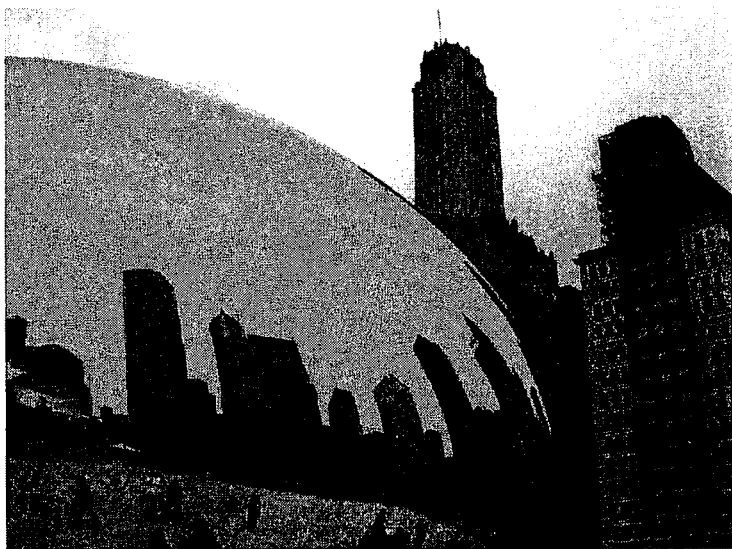
with careful hands to lower down
how perfectly her little self can fit inside

The Muni Train

On the jean-stained seats of the M train
I sit with my backpack heaved into my lap
like a bulky, cumbersome child—
the seat next to me empty before an old man comes to
compress the space.
Some five rows up at the car's front end
six girls swagger in their seats,
the train exaggerating arrogance of their slim shoulders,
and I turn my music on in spite of them.
Next stop another girl steps on,
back hunched with books, an extra one she couldn't fit
flooded into her hands as she sneaks glances for
an open seat.
And as One of Six offers a vacant spot,
the shy one stumbling to sit,
number Two of Six reaches her filthy foot across
the aisle, stamping down on plastic as if to say,
"Mine!"
I turn my music up, though their jeers unfasten
rhythms, adding edges to the jolting transit,
and watch other passengers
watching her, the abused
against that bold, adolescent cruelty.
Three of Six apologizes on behalf of One,
stands up, as I should have done,
before Five of Six rushes to take what the other had
relinquished,
numbers Four and that last one howled,
while girl with books
stands dejected, moving away in lack of protest.
I take my headphones off, ready to defend, to rupture that
abrasive carelessness, imagine stamping their heads down
into what they claimed so ruthlessly.
Instead, I sat, listening to their laughter like
a force impeding upon my will to defy.
Instead, I sat there like a stone.

Laura Jew

Like a coin
Left on the tracks
My heart is now
Faceless,
Through every fault
Of my own.
I've taken
Emotions
For granted.
And now,
I'm left lying on the ground
Hoping I won't be plucked up;
I won't be lucky
Without a face.



A group of children are playing
jungle gym games, marking the earth
with light feet, fragile screams.
This sundown is loud and has your face,
but not your eyes: I have those.
Nearby, a northern wind breaks against

a dandelion's head. I try to count the seeds
as they scatter. Some float and flirt
with one another. Others land like ducks
along the surface of the lake.
Now the stem is alone, trembling.
And the evening air is settling

like a thin film atop my skin.
It's been a year since my mother called
with news that you no longer would.
But I am upright and on a bench,
trying to grasp the last fingers of sunlight
that are warm and familiar against my cheek.

My eyes close as they slowly slip away
with the hours, into the lonely night.

Now the sun is somewhere magnificent and hidden,
and the children have long since run home
to their families. But somewhere in the
devouring dark the dandelion remains.
I have to trust that it remains, rooted, falling
behind my feet as I begin the cold, quiet walk home.

Sheets still ruffled like waves,
barely warm from your scent,
my leg reaches 'cross
the bed, findin' company
known for too long—emptiness.

I was just passin' through—
or supposed to be.
But the next thing I knew was
you—standin' in doorway
half-nude, starin'.

I'da thought you left me by now
like some wind blowin' by,
carryin' on your business elsewhere.
I don't know how lonely you gotta be
to stay with my behind.

You mus' be tryin' to hook onto somethin'.
But babe, I've got news for you,
this man ain't a catch, not even for your fishnets.

There are a few different categories of excuses. There are the garden variety “not me” excuses. For instance, if your significant other is standing at the fridge, holding what appears to be a failed science experiment—an attempt to play God that has gone horribly awry—and asks, in a voice that could curdle the milk, “Why was this partially-wrapped burrito in the vegetable crisper?” a simple “not me” will suffice. This will cause confusion, leaving you an opening to run for the door, down the block, and into the almond orchard, so that there you will crouch, behind the charred and broken remains of a tree knocked down by an errant bolt of lightning; there you will crouch, in the gloaming, with naught but the remains of the tree for comfort, and the new-fallen rain as your succor.

You count its rings—this tree was old, much older than yourself. It has lived through countless presidents, seen a man walk on the moon; how many have hung from its branches, in play and in finality? How many have received nourishment from its fertile boughs? You sit and contemplate, until the minutes bleed into hours, and the moon is high in the now-clearing sky.

Finally, you bid the tree, and its history, adieu, and skulk back up the block; you crawl, on all fours, your ears perking at the slightest sound, your nose twitching with the spoor on the wind. You are more aware than you’ve ever had right to be. You’ve become one with the night, a dark and eerie presence among the shrubs and trees, and you move like velvet sliding over silk, soundless. Back, back, to the door of the apartment. You slide the bolt, and with a rasp of key on metal you enter.

A cold slickness covers your forehead; your eyes dart like doomed moths trapped in the glass of a lamp, yet the dark is total, and you see nothing but your own fear before your face. You strip to your underwear, leaving anything that could make a noise behind. You slip quietly, ever quietly, into the

bedroom, and gingerly trust your weight to the bed, praying the springs don't announce your presence. You are free—you have made it. You lay your weary head upon the pillow, and slide your hand under. And then you feel it.

Burrito.

In your pillow.

And another battle in the war of attrition has been lost.

Warren S. Taylor

Their rendezvous fed the arid whispers
that fluttered down our Sunday morning pews,
ears bending close like thieves clicking tumblers.
If the preacher heard us, he wouldn't tell,
stumbling through a dry sermon I forgot.

Perhaps we've gotten a false impression—
could be they met there to watch the playoffs,
drink beer and rant over wives, or catfish.
How everyone got word in the first place
is no surprise in a town small as this.

The way they swaggered with women in bars
you'd think they'd take one to the room with them.
But the night clerk swore that no girls came by.
Rumor has it one of their wives skipped town,
sparing herself the iron yoke of glares.

Haven't we known those men for years? Maybe
this puzzle's one we don't want pieces to.
After all, the motel just went bankrupt,
its new furniture slated for auction,
the pristine chairs, beds, and sheeted mirrors.

Silence is my disguise
To speak is to reveal a label
The words I say form your ideas of me
When I open my mouth out pour stereotypes
That you long to place
When I speak you might know who I am
My contributions breed opinions
My silence breeds your stares
Your presence stifles my will to speak
My fear of your labels trumps my desire to contribute

Please go, please leave
So silence can invade the space you left
And I can feel free

I am at home in the presence of paper and pen
They won't judge
My words fall upon deaf ears of white
You'll never see what comes of this
My outlet, my disguise
Silent paper, silent pen
Speaking words from heart to hand
A world of life on a backdrop of white
My outward silence a mask for the avalanche of words
Waiting for a blank canvas
Onto paper, into words, a silent song

My paper and pen will bring me to life
Your judgment ties me to the silence
Forever a slave to the paper and pen
The words I long to express fill pages
Upon my absence the paper will speak
Pervading the silence of my life left unspoken
The secret will be out, the label in print
You will know what to say
What to think
What to feel
Silence is my disguise

Discomfort. Yours and mine. Unease with a hospital cause.
We can go back—two at a time—but pay no attention
to the man dying behind curtain number three. Wrong room,
thank the God I don't believe in and who would in a place like this?
Oxygen hiss sounds, waste containment and smell of finality.
Finally we find right room, right curtain and a small lump
under three blankets that used to be warmed—she's always cold—
but she hides her mouth and Nurse shoos us out. She's embarrassed
she doesn't have her teeth in. So back into the sterile hallway
staring at the woman in the next room—arms and legs peeled
back from her body like the sides of the first fish I saw gutted
by Uncle Kenny at Long Lake—stare without staring, can't stop
invading unconscious privacy. Grandma doesn't have her teeth in?
These people don't have their selves in. All these bodies
hooked up to machines in a cathedral to worship the hull.

Why doesn't someone pull the curtain on all this death? Finally
we are called in. Grandma sits up, watches *The Price is Right*—
Why is she here? This place is a last stop. A visit-now-next-month-
you-may-not-have-the-chance kind of place, not her kind of place
at all. How did we end up here? All this fuss for a little blood clot?
She's happy to see us. She feels fine. As usual. She thanks God
that she feels no pain, but I see her, bird thin below the weighty blankets,
and think—where is the woman who used to pick me up, gold tooth
smiling, breath smelling of dirty martinis? What happened to the woman
who walked by me as I roller skated up Estella on my way to second grade?
Black hair now seeped to white. Strong tan hands now swell with arthritis.
I remember those hands rolling out sugar cookie dough, braiding my hair
into two long french braids, holding my hand as we crossed the street.
I'm glad for the curtains closing us in together as I wonder at the way false
teeth smile in this hospital room, making me think it will all be okay.

The World is Hibernating

As I walk my body shivers, jacket fluffed much like feathers
Of a bird who once sat sleeping on my sill, no doubt dreaming
Dreams of warmer places, and memories of kinder faces
Than the cold steely gazes of these unfamiliar neighbors
Who march beside me, unfeeling and alone...

Who stride right past me, on their way home.

"It's not worth speaking in the city, there is no love nor is there pity
From one heart to another," I assure myself as I ponder
This city snug with silent sleepers, not even nature stays nor lingers,
Just unhappy distant strangers I've met passing here before—
Walking down this lonely street...

Yet I'm side by side with all I meet.

I unzip my jacket as I leave the city—I can hear birds singing...

And I wonder how long I've been hibernating.

-

Matthew R. Y. Hayes

She doesn't talk too loudly in libraries
or trail a cloud of Chanel No. 5,
drags only one shopping bag through the park
and restrains the impulse to talk to strangers.

With shoelaces tied, she marches color-coordinated
like an indifferent drummer in today's war.
She's mastered normal as an art form.
Almost like you, more than a little like me

she creeps up behind the guy holding a sign
on our town's busiest street: \$5 Pizzas.
Everyday, substitutes his cardboard
with the motto of a below-average Joe:
You know nothing whatsoever about me.

Mornings of Autumn

I rise to find
my mother, delicately
balancing a straw
between my grandfather's
quivering lips and
a ceramic mug.
I can smell the coffee from
here, standing observantly
in the doorway, warm
bitterness that unfolds
daytime upon me,
like slivers of sunlight
reaching, their fingers
soft over bed sheets.

I want this image
to stay with me: my mother's
gentle nurturing a quiet
shroud over my grandfather's
weakened body—his hands
like thin silk slipping
coolly along brittle twigs,
all of us silent as
our breaths come in whispers,
mingling to warm us and
the air of this room.



Part the First

The park, yesterday.

"This is not the time of men, but of immortals. I am but a man; I lay down my sword, and I am slain."

With those words, the elderly man lay down his King.

Checkmate.

"Indeed," said the small girl, sitting across the board. She was not yet ten, with black hair and eyes so dark the pupil was lost in the iris.

They were in the park, seated at a concrete table with the imprint of a chess board permanent in its surface. It was late September, and the dead leaves rattled in the fading autumn sunlight. They played with a raggy set of pieces, some actual, others parted together from bits of clay, scraps of cloth and wood; the white queen the broken neck of a Coke bottle, the black that of a wine bottle.

"Again," she said, as she arranged the pieces. A row of soda caps here as pawns, a rook hand-carved from a block of soap there.

"No, child. Time is finite. We cannot sit for a game, and watch life as it passes by our window. We must rise to it, meet our destiny in the sun."

"Again," she said, more firmly. She did not look him in the eye, concentrating instead on the board.

The old man started to collect his things. "I will be here tomorrow. But let me leave you with this, my dear. You have won the day, but the battle, indeed the war, is still being fought. Your life, your soul, are the battleground. The armies are marching. Whose side are you on?"

She had finished the board, and moved a matchstick pawn forward.

"Again," she said, her eyes glinting like sharpened teeth in the moonlight.

He did not answer her, did not acknowledge her as he pulled thin leather gloves onto his frail, age-spotted hands. He did not say goodbye as he rose off the chair, with the help of a worn cane, and took a few painful steps away from the table. He turned to the child, her jaw set in anger, her brow furrowed, the upside-down V's of her eyebrows adding menace to her visage.

He turned to walk away.

Part the Second
An alleyway, today.

The two men stood at the mouth of the alley, one smoking a thick cigar. The streetlamp reflected harsh yellow light off the brass on their coats.

"Damndest thing," Cigar said, a wreath of smoke gathering around his head.

The knees of the other man buckled. He noisily vomited.

"I saw this before." He smoked thoughtfully. "Years ago. In 'Nam."

A third man, this one wearing white, with stains across his legs that looked black in the yellow light, came out of the alley. He was holding what looked like a broken bottle. He checked his watch. "I'm calling it. 12:58."

Fin
An opium den, tomorrow.

"But what does it all mean?" the young man asked, his pupils dilated.

"The pizza is life," the wizened old man replied. "The crust, the foundation—childhood."

"That's a..."

"Silence."

"Sorry."

"If the foundation is weak, no matter the toppings, you will wind up with cheese on your lap."

"Confucius say, man with cheese on..."

"I've heard that one."

"Sorry."

"The sauce, your experiences. Too few, and your sauce is thin. Too many, and it is overpowering. Not enough variety, if you focus too hard on one experience, and your sauce is tedious."

"My...sauce?"

"Silence."

"Sorry."

"The toppings...ah, yes. That is your personality. A winning personality cannot save a weak foundation or no experience, just as a brash or cloying personality cannot be redeemed by a well-rounded, disciplined life. The toppings you choose are the very window into your soul."

"I like Hawaiian pizza."

"What's that?"

"Ham and pineapple."

"You distress me in ways I cannot comprehend."

FIN

Warren S. Taylor

Pulled from sleep, sudden
scent of hundreds
of campfires burning
uncontrollable,
choking—

stumble outside to search sky
for orange flickering light—
crackle of confusion—
nothing but smell of worry, wondering:
Is this finally the season?

The summer that fire crawls canyon walls?
Storms across the butte,
swings from pine top to pine top
a burning orangutan trailing destruction—
rains down embers,
progeny of flames perpetuating—
grazes on grasses, wicks up manzanita trunks
gorges on shingles, rafters—

But no—this night there is nothing to see.
No cause, just effect.
Wake to summer's blood orange sun
filtering sickly light through a dense
fire-fog roiled on hot winds. Again,
Fate's finger has pointed at another
unfortunate forest—

while we casually resume routines—relieved
this smoky irritation is only the edge of someone else's
moonlight nightmare.

I saw you alone tonight walking,
You looked sad,
It made me want to write weak-kneed poems,
That you can read:
Right to left/Back to front,
Like last words,
Or notes scribbled on paper airplanes,
Because they don't really mean anything,
But if you dream in a language like mine,
Then we can slowly start to fly on them,
We'll float on by like shadows and dust,
Swimming in reverse through unfazed sunrays...

But back in the day,
Words were not my profession,
Poetry was pointless,
And the scorecard between my scars and smiles was much more
lopsided,
I bet you can guess which way it leaned,
Now I'm able to see the proverbial "forest for the trees,"
I can rip out the weeds,
And I can cure the cause of my disease,
Because I'm a real painkiller-in-the-ass,
Which essentially means that I'm uncomfortably stuck where I
don't belong,
But still manage to take the edge off the street-level ledge I've
been walking down...

I am a tear-studded bible-belt bullwhip,
Capable of tearing numbers in half with my head,
So hand me a phonebook,
And I'll go to town on your town's zip code,
Individually clipping each digit until I'm able to rearrange the
nonplussed looks on their faces,
Capturing the photogenic aggregates of their pained expressions
with Polaroid pictures and a pen,
Using pet rocks to paperweight them down in perfunctory fashion,
Because otherwise they might lose sight of the so-called "light at
the end of the tunnel,"

With a misdirected sense of the difference between numbers
and words,
And a refusal to believe that smashing just one clock can stop the
whole world,
But now they chisel their initials into the stone of sun dials,
Leaving a mark on time that rhymes "love" with "fuck you,"
A perfect etching of both acceptance and denial,
That's stronger than the sand we build our nations from,
Where kings and queens don't much matter,
Because nobody around here is any good at chess...

We stalemate with our own soft spots,
And send our souls out into the emptiness of space,
Where they swirl around like satellites,
All the while shooting smiles at the stars and such,
Sucking in deep breaths even though our lungs aren't enough,
Just to inhale the kind of innocence that only jumps from
children's lips,
Jumps from one grocery store tile to the next in a game of survival
from hot lava,
Jumps from the grass-stains in your cheapest pair of jeans,
Jumps from routine missions of super-secret importance to obtain
certain kinds of snacks
Off shelves so high that they exist only in the most divine
of imaginations...

And that's what we do:
We dream big,
We wander,
And wonder what our willpower weighs in terms of how much shit
we can take,
So if you catch me avoiding the black squares on the floor of your
local supermarket,
Don't call me childish,
I'm just jumping back and forth between two sides of the same
brain,
Searching for a place to call home...
It's eighteen minutes until midnight,

And I'm lying awake in a roofless room,
Preparing to do battle with myself,
As I stitch poetry to silver-lined clouds in the sky,
And sift color-coded moments on the moon,
Using the rusty hands of grandfather clocks,
And the tired tips of all the fountain pens that have bled
themselves dry,
Signing checks that no one cashes,
Because it's borrowed blood money...

So let's incriminate ourselves with ink stains,
Until we're walking the streets for a living,
Slipping on banana peels and dynamite sticks,
Just hoping to accidentally start a fire somewhere in our souls,
Finally scaring our skeletons out of strung-out closet space,
Until we're throwing bones like bad puns,
And running circles around the best of them,
Log rolling in a fake frozen lake to the tune of back-snapped
soliloquies,
And who's going to stop the stiff breeze that knocks us gently
to our knees?
Can I get an amen, please?
I'm locked in a homemade jail cell looking for the house keys,
Looking for the road as it's ripped from beneath my feet,
Looking for what I've found at the point where all things meet,
Something altogether lovely:
A language like mine...

Where I can walk a fine line between manholes and mankind,
Making mistakes that checkmate with a match and mandate,
Patching up the rest with strips of green duct tape,
Until "me" and "you" becomes "you" and "me,"
As we embrace the meaning of moving against the grain of sand
that separates "us" from "them,"
Forcing square pegs into round holes until there's nothing left
but rainbow:
An oil-slicked abalone death match to try and create something
like human,
Smashing those seashells with a crooked smile,
And even though they're a bitch to break,
It's the most beautiful mess I've ever made...

Matthew Zellmer

He bursts through a curtain of bough & leaf,
Grabs a twig with his trapeze grip, & sidles
Sideways for balance. The dove's feather square
In his beak's a handlebar moustache for this
Vaudevillian half-wit, till he starts
To speak, drops it, double-takes, & flies off
As if jerked away with a joke shepherd's crook—

What a world this is! Is there any day
Nature doesn't give us a dash of slapstick?
Yesterday's myopic wasp poring over
The screen window's fine-print, or those stilt-legged
Harvestman spiders of summer's matinee,
Dandelions pitching their carnival tents.

He's back, silly sod, bobbing his triumphant
Head with a wad of cotton to line the nest.
His Pertelote darts from brick sill to branch,
Perching close to grouse him with rubbery squeaks,
Then lurching off to clean & polish her beak.

They're both well-colored for a dull day in March,
Its bored light, its laundry of clouds tossed
In the corner. Still, from deep inside maples
Red blossom-fingers emerge—more defiance
Than hope—rummaging for scraps of spring.
But I don't see the sparrows yearning, just
Acts of instinct & their mercury switch.

Cleaning gutters last summer,
I leaned a ladder
Against the dormer to look at a nest.
It was padded with waxy scraps of a brochure,
Woven through with shredded blue fax paper.
Later, I picked up a thumb-top of a thin,
Stippled egg. A gust spilled it. Watery light
Swilled the shell like a ghost yolk, but the dead

Were soon forgotten. Already the threads
Of a new home poked through the gable, the birds
Busy at the gap with beaks full of song—
For years have I longed to be that thoughtless.

I came across my skeleton
quite uncharacteristically exposed—
(on occasions like this, it happens).
We made our acquaintance stiffly—
rather suspiciously constrained;
nonetheless, deliciously.
But as I attempted to press flesh
upon bone, my skeleton
upped, got in his car
and drove furiously home.

I.

Purge and purge the ailment from my corpus.
If not illness, if not a parasite,
tell what are you, then, to mankind, Eros?
For sickness forces slumbering to cease,
as the appetite of the corpus dies
and its organs corrode, crumble, consume
this mortal flesh inward as a cancer.
The mind can ail so, Eros, can it not?
The madness of a mind split into halves,
at once manic, ungoverned by reason—
euphoria so grandiose and divine,
at once full of anguish, ungoverned still—
De profundis clamamus—unanswered,
unwanted, unfaithful, unrequited,
or unforgiven: You are how we fall.
How different from sickness are you, then?

II.

Do not importune me, enamorate,
though you are like a placid, temperate gulf
with sea-hued gaze, beaming as does the gold
wheel of Phoebus over a fresh, new world's
ocean. I was once the wary helmsman
comforted only by the gyrations
of your currents and your breezes. Until
I must venture newer gulfs, or until
your currents and your winds drive me away,
for Eros bears wings, for he is flighty.
And I will yearn and seek long and fruitless
for your deep coves again—to find nothing.
And I will wish that I had not presumed
to cast my eyes upon the sea at all,
for it would be better, I think, to stand
on solid soil and wonder how we'd be
and live a coward, than to live in pain.



is like that moment when
you accidentally see
into the kitchen
of your favorite restaurant
and catch the chef
coughing into the parmesan polenta,
and the waiter wiping his nose briefly
with the same hand he just used
to adjust his parts before he reaches for
the fine china filled with
cuissees de grenouilles à la provençale
meant for you...

The dish—so pretty on the plate
before
so delectable
so worthy of the trip
the price
the wait
so prettily displayed even now—
is forever spoiled.
You will never again
yearn for this establishment,
or acquire a taste
for that nasty frog
—dissected and exposed on the plate—
you bought.

It begins not
knowing how (?)
or why, even.

Just words—

little prayers

strung on

lines

d

a

n

g

l

i

n

g

clothes-pin-less,

dreaming of prayer

winds ~~~~~

m ~~~~~ove~~~~~ ment.

This poem knows
it sucks.

It knows it needs
to be
worked

u

t

It knows it needs
an
image.

It has what one would call
(ahem)
an *image problem*.

This poem sees.
It wants to
say what it sees
looks like (?)

Words don't see
with eyes
and eyes see
sdrawkcaB
and
e
d
i
s
p
u

(This poem read that in a biology book about vision: how
images are inverted in the human eye, something to do with cones
and rods)

This poem doesn't know

where

it

is

going.

This poem knows it sucks.

But the rod
reminds it of a prayer
wheel
in a Tibetan monastery—
a hollow prayer
wheel
with holes drilled in each
End.
(This is where the prayers fall out)
This poem thinks,
the rod is what
the prayer spins around?
This poem thinks
it has no rod.

But maybe the other way?

the rod is a hot dog
spinning in metal prayer trays
inside the outfield
snackbar
during the bottom of the 9th

score tied,

2 out,

1

on

third

base.

This poem asks,
“What the hell?”
Prayer wheel?
Rod?
Hot dog?
What’s in a hot dog, anyway?

Knowing kills the pleasure. .

This poem is

lost

it knows it sucks
like the bridesmaid knows it sucks

to
walk
first
down
the
aisle

S G
M N
 I L I

in her tacky,
crumpled dress.

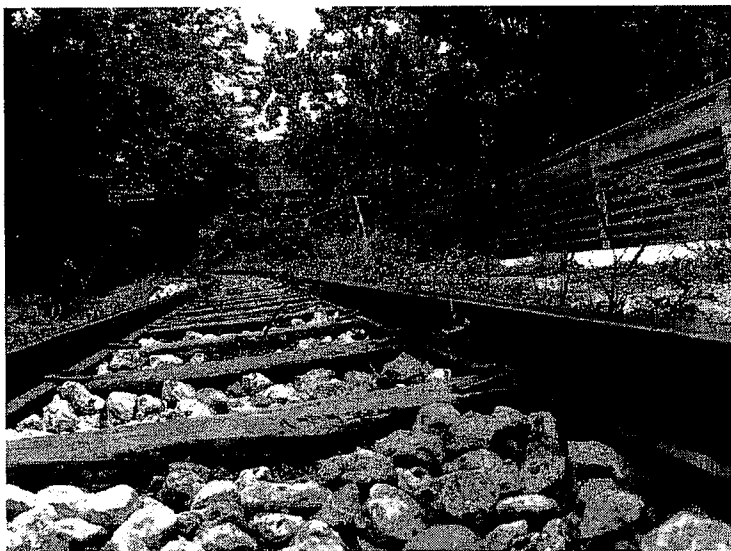
Lisa Trombley

In bed last night
what I saw aroused me
from slumber-laden sheets—
a man holding a lantern
on the far side of a slovenly fence.
How he wished the light
would penetrate the gauze-like curtains
concealing me
on many a night spent watching.
Is it you who hounds me?

Obsession is an abominable trait.
This night you return
with your meager, man-made sun.
I've been waiting.
Do you see yourself in me?

I realize now
that last night
my perception of depth was faulty.
The lantern is but a far off gleam
a fluorescent bulb
planted in a couple's ceiling.
Only *I* am watching
longing to be the woman
in the illuminated house
betrothed to my first love.

My own house is dark
swathed in moth-bitten curtains.
Morning is late as Christ in its coming.



Bud Carpenter wore his white hat,
sheriff's badge and gun.
He took a sweet dream bride
who gave him five children.

Dutch Bill was a bad man
though only twenty-four.
John Bishop weren't no better,
and they robbed the general store.

Bishop stood as lookout
in the black beneath the stars.
The silent sound of night broke
as Bill dragged the strongbox to the car,
sounding the alarm.

*Waters of the Trinity are boiling in Hell's Hole.
Fires of the devil are burning up men's souls.*

*There's blood out on the highway and ghosts of dead men dance
where the Dutchman shot the Sheriff out at old Burnt Ranch.*

Sheriff Bud took the call.
He called his fireman.
The bandit car pulled over
as the lawmen drew their guns.

Bishop grabbed the fireman.
Bud looked up and sealed his fate.
Dutch Bill shot him point blank
with a snub nosed thirty-eight.

A shotgun blast hit Bishop's head.
In a heartbeat two men died.
Dutch Bill hit the gas and went
roaring off into the night,
and disappeared from sight.

Now river folk talk about it
just like yesterday.
A gritty man sells cigarettes
a hundred feet away

from where his Grandpa died
in nineteen twenty-eight.
He stares at me with wary eyes
'til I know that he knows—

*Waters of the Trinity are boiling in Hell's Hole.
Fires of the devil are burning up men's souls.*

She was a very old woman, painstakingly walking
Holding up foot-traffic.
Over and over the surging crowds opened briefly
Swallowing whole her frail and aging figure,
Spitting her out again far behind.
They did this instinctively,
Momentum guiding their paths to nowhere and everywhere.
She was an old woman.
And they didn't even see her.

She trudged along,
Defending her right to be there
Breathing deeply of the moist air
Among the seagulls and fishing boats and weathered wood.
From under her wide-brimmed hat
She peered through spectacles thick and smudgy.
The faces passed her, youthful and carefree
Or time-marked but vigorous yet.
And they didn't even see her.

She carried a basket, old-fashioned and heavy
With two checkered napkins,
Blue and white triangles poking freshly from each side of the lid.
She had worked so carefully to pack it.
Cradled it on her lap in the bus.
Smells of the old home wafted to her withered nostrils.
Rye bread.
Warm potato salad.
Buttermilk fried chicken.
She smiled knowingly at a young couple strolling
Hand in hand.
And they didn't even see her.

She rested upon a heavy bench near
Vivid azaleas pink and white.
She watched the young children ride the carousel.
Heard their melodious voices calling out to eager parents,
Watch me! Watch me!

One bouncy boy with dancing eyes clutched tightly the golden
pole,
Swinging his chubby legs with glorious enthusiasm.
Just for a moment he was her very own Jimmy.
She rose to wave at him when his mother gathered him up in her
slender arms.
And they didn't even see her.

She reached the end of the pier and turned right,
Looking expectantly for the place.
She prayed her memory would not fail her today of all days.
Her own two feet echoed loudly in her ears
As her uneven steps beat upon the empty boardwalk.
And she passed sailboats and sailboats and sailboats.
And they didn't even see her.

She reached the bench finally,
The one directly in front of the little incongruous church,
Quaint and pretty among the wood and the boats
and the whispery winds.
She sat down, memories all aflutter,
With a loud and bittersweet sigh.
When she raised the lid on the basket,
Seagulls landed to her right and to her left,
Their eyes black and shiny and greedy.
And they didn't even see her.

She prepared two plates of food with love,
Setting the heavier of the two in his place
And covering it with one blue and white napkin.
She poured the merlot into their favorite wine glasses
Older now than the children.
When the birds advanced, she shooed them away,
Careful not to upset the settings.
When she made the toast,
A single tear slipped down her withered old cheek.
And he didn't even see her.

She nibbled at her meal,
Talking to him quietly of their love
And of their memories in the big empty house that contained
their lives.
When a gust of wind blew her hat from her head,
She rose stiffly to catch it,
For it had been a gift from him, and a tradition on this day.
She still remembered the fancy ribbon
He had tied awkwardly around the delicate paper.
The wind changed direction
Dropping the hat high upon the signpost of the little sea church.
She looked around her for help,
Anxiously beckoning toward an advancing group of tourists
Not so far off in the distance.
But they didn't even see her.

She hurried back toward the picnic,
Clapping her hands to scare the gulls away.
Her uneaten slab of buttered bread lay near her plate, overturned.
She tossed it to the birds,
Hoping to buy herself some time.
She returned to the signpost with a stern determination,
And grasping the railing with her brittle hands
She slowly climbed dangerously up, up, up,
Reaching out her hand to grasp the wide-brimmed hat.
When she fell forward, her fingers brushed the brim,
Loosening it from the short wooden rod atop the post.
Together they tumbled down, down, down,
Crashing into the black and murky waters of the bay.
When the tourists reached the church
They saw purple stains on blue and white napkins.
And a wide brim hat, old and faded,
Floating languidly upon the water.
And they didn't even see her.

Though she feels the pull of her private north,
it's required that she concede to experts.
How many facilitators would it take
to make her bolt from the workshop?
For an ice-breaker everyone at each table
is told to join hands. She wonders
what the skinny dry one feels in her left,
the cool creased one in her right.
And then the mandatory introductions.
No longer sure of her name
she opts for monosyllables.
Three grunts and two flashing smiles
and then she's out of there,
free of nametags and sign-up sheets.
Mercifully it's raining, mockingly
she pirouettes among a million drops.

A poet's love of pen to paper, sound
that whispers like the eyes, is ever arched
in search of wonder, casting far the line.
The night, dark water falling fast, will flood

familiar streets that wander out, away
from restless towns and throbbing lights, too bright
for words to find their place beside the bank,
to dive down deep, the rush like wind that sets

leaves free from everything they ever knew.
When bitter air has sent some home to warm
themselves beside the fire, the poet lost
on purpose, stepping quiet, knows no path

around the dark, just wades in farther, waits
for beauty's scales to pass his open palms.

I.

Siberia is not so cold.
Africa burns colder
below a sky as blue as ice.
The stone-eyed poachers
who come down from it
are born of mechanical eagles
whose wings are bolted
in forced flight;
The animals that thrive
amid such raucous planes
schmooze
with species unlike themselves
unaware of evolution.
These mixed-race rendezvous
between teeth and hooves
and steely weaponry
are reduced
to red
tainted savannahs
where blood grows cold
as it courses out
its slain hosts' bodies.
This is what a poacher knows.

II.

In the land of the free
a young boy's heroes have gentle smiles,
unwrinkled skin.
Such idolatry becomes
the mother's affair
because the father, seldom there,
kneels to a white-collared, more modern deity—
"chivalry," a fable,
celebrated before his time,
and "gallantry" a virtue
better left to his son's devices.
So his wife busies herself
finding men who will provide

the love her husband sacrificed.
As it is
we all must have something
that will make us warm inside.
Of this, the adulterer is wise.

III.

In a world of insomnia
trains make the most headway at night—
when the jowls of junkyard dogs
are left salivating,
and God's most esteemed creatures
are lying in bed busily
begging sleep and waiting
to hear a sound more melancholy
than their breathing.
(Listen to the freight car;
are its burdens heavier than mine?)
Its breath coming in pretty gusts
(like a flute accidentally played,
touched by the lips of some ethereal being)
as it lumbers along
beneath its awesome, coal-fed body.
Thoughts such as these
are the wide-eyed reveries
of the habitually lonely.

IV.

In the chamber of the fevered mind
white hospital lights shiver and break
upon corridors slick with formaldehyde
while nurses—like peddlers of monkeys at
a county fair—prod and demean their ashen guests
dreaming of their own, sterile, Auschwitz.
At last, the white assailant does the begging
for her patient's finite fare.
Of this, the dying are aware.

V.

Wouldn't it be nice
to be isolated for a time?
Away from the regions of the world
thought to be so warm, and "hospitable."
Oh how indelible one would feel in Siberia;
like a little star
in a land where earth and sky
are but one shard of crystal-snow-like-
sugar.
But perhaps then, being inhabited,
one's new abode would become
"hospitable" too...

The whole lot of his is in her basement. Not hidden away, but set up exactly the way it was at his house. His blue loveseat, with the crusty stain and blasted hole in the left cushion, is pushed all the way back against the gray concrete-block wall. His rough plywood and black metal coffeetable is in front of the loveseat and exactly far enough away that his long legs can stretch across the space. She even left on top of the coffeetable the green plastic mug with the leftover ring of chocolate syrup still on the bottom. And the blue neon light shaped like an electric guitar that he bought for himself in New York sits on an end-table next to the loveseat. It's never turned off. She calls it a beacon. His small television sits across from the loveseat and coffeetable, in case he feels like playing with the switches. She says he might figure out how to use them as he becomes more comfortable. She says it could be a way for him to give her a signal that he's there.

When Allen and I were kids Mom used to talk to Grandpa all the time. The wind would slam a door shut and she'd call out, "Okay Daddy, I hear you." We'd roll our eyes and call her crazy. But maybe that's why Allen did it. Maybe he knew he wouldn't be gone forever. Maybe he thought it would be easy. Maybe that made it easier for him.

"Mom," I say when I think the time is right, "isn't this all a bit morbid?"

"How else will he find me?" she asks as honestly as a child.

Brightly lit pinholes poked in the sky bleed day into night,
Seemingly sinking the Earth as it careens around the universe,
And we are just so fucking small in comparison,
We're not really the stars of the show,
We're more like the slow cameo appearance,
And this right here is the poorly conceived sequel to last summer's
blockbuster,
Where we can squeeze ourselves between the title screen and the
end credits,
Rolling out fantasies to remind us of what we wish we could be:
Completely free,
Unknowingly accepting a role that doesn't suit us properly,
As cigarette burns signify a change in scenery,
While we melt into missing reels,
Missing the point,
Missing the big picture,
Crawling around on wounded hands and knees in the dark,
Waiting for some sort of intermission,
With a ticket stub for a movie called "Reality" saving our place
in line...

But nobody's camping out for this one,
It's not highly anticipated because it's just too damned scary,
And life looks a lot like the way we react to tragedy,
Where every good mourning begins with us missing out
On the harmony of an otherwise stellar existence,
Cut from the teeth of painful promises,
And kept somewhere near the bottom of a melodic pocket,
It's a soul searcher's symphony orchestra,
And it keeps us up late at night without even singing,
But it's going to get us through this,
Just find a drum to beat,
Because there's nothing quite like pain release...

In fact, it's so easy a Concave Man could do it!
Just look for the dents in his sides where we've ripped out his pride,
And hung it out to dry on a really long laundry line,
Strung up alongside our light-headed brain scans,

Held together with clothespins and Coke cans,
Selling vacant advertising space on our faces,
At a rate so low that outsourcing becomes an exercise in therapy,
As our sense of self-importance begins to outweigh infinity,
While our souls are only inches thin,
That's why we take growing pains on the chin,
And shove vitamins up our own asses,
Because our mouths are so full of shit,
That we've got everything backwards,
And don't know how to turn around without falling out of our own
skin...

It's an issue we don't want to deal with,
So we put on some headphones,
And let our problems come in the form of our favorite songs,
Where the melody of mediocrity is very easy to decipher,
But somehow it still manages to grate on the ears,
Like unrevolutionary fingernails scraping a once-revolutionary
chalkboard,
Where teachers used to script out enlightenment,
Trying to right this sinking ship,
And oh my, how well we sink...

Our spiritual depth charges have us so knee-deep in debt,
That drowning doesn't even begin to describe the way we struggle
to break free of uniformity,
So choose your favorite shade of unbroken gray and get back to me,
And if the industry of monotony has already claimed you,
May you Rest In Pieces,
And realize that something's happening here,
And it's bigger than the movie screen,
So stop crawling around on the cutting room floor,
You're not going to find what you're looking for,
You'd be better off learning how to burn ants with stained glass,
Because your destruction needs a distraction from being directed
at your past,
The painkillers tattooed in your eyes won't heal the scars covering
your heart,

And it's not too late to forgive the person you've been so you can
accept the person you are,
Finally discovering what it means to rest peacefully,
Waking up the next morning to a bowl full of 21 servings
of something called "soul,"
Spelling out the words "save me" in your cereal,
So take your smile off the refrigerator door,
And staple it to your face if that's what it takes to get you through
the day...

Now, let's get back to basics,
And inject some guerilla tactics into this moment,
When you just can't beat your enemies,
And who needs friends like these,
With so many demons left to free,
And so many habits left to feed,
You'll never bleed like you want to,
Believing there's a constant speed of life,
At which you can measure the nature of that freeze-dried smile,
So go find some chalk and start painting your dreams along
the sidewalk,
Because there's no tax on dreaming,
And you don't have to sell them for a dime a dozen, either,
You can keep them,
You can be them,
You can write them into a poem and eat them,
Chewing between short breaths and gut checks,
Sharing lungs with those brightly lit holes in the sky,
Just to inhale beauty a few fleeting moments at a time,
So that you might experience the relief of release,
Until peace is all that's left...

Matthew Zellmer

I trudge back to the early ancestor
the earliest beginning.

Isolated in warmth,
in mother's womb
fed on cosmic soup.

We fear our upbringing, our
raising from the rocks.

Like Lazarus. We lie,
drag our feet and deny
that we have been here before,
fashioned from a process
older than the rocks.

We try to wipe the slate clean, to forget
that we belong to so scrawny,
so inhuman a form.

And so we make her black.
Blaspheming her body, beating
her bones. Liquidating them
into a warm, thick mass of myth
to fuel our destruction,
our ontological ego.

We eat the remains
of our fossilized mothers,
watch the sky collapse
as oceans boil over,
all while we propagate
the notion, and continue
propagating with the notion
that forever began
with our immaculate conception
and that we will live forever.
And our children will never cry.

*I. Arma virumque cano... **

"I sing of arms and of a man,"
man of my blood,
man of my country,
across the seas he went,
valiant as Aeneas.
He marched through death to triumph,
to lead his men,
and spill the blood of an Axis,
to engender from it
the ancient rule by the governed,
ancient and precious spoils,
for me, his kin,
for us, his country,
to guard and love.
Thus he suffered,
to die under the *Pax Americana*,
and the pomp of Her twenty-one blasts.

*II. Musa mihi causas memora... **

"Muse, remind me of the reasons"
he warred for this,
spilt the Axial blood
for my Liberty.
Lament, in the grave, grandfather,
your beloved country has passed away—
grown vain, rather,
from a land of Ciceros
to a land of Caligulas,
or perhaps grown old,
into an imbecile,
like a blind, brutish Polyphemus
to be protected from itself,
for it has bruised itself
Red and Blue
in its mindless frenzy.

*Virgil, *Aeneid* I



Your Last Cinquain

Unleashed,
The wind runs wild.
Down hills, up skirts, through kisses—
Killing umbrellas inside out
All day.

Kelly Reeve Smith

My Victorian razed.
I live in a modular home now,
furnished and sealed shut.
I won't cook
on the electric stove,
it makes the food taste flat.

When I get hungry
I build a fire outdoors.
Near the shell of my old house
I cook myself a big pot of beans.
The smell of wood and fresh air
gives the food flavor.

My daughter visits,
brings the Fire Marshall.
She says if I don't stop
cooking outside,
she will put me in a home.
My home is gone I say.

I miss the music of the old country—
goats bleating, roosters crowing,
the sound of church bells.
From my adega you could hear
seals call out,
waves crash against rocks.

At night I look for signs
in the stars,
see canvas sails of my young years
billow along routes
the fishing boats took
when they left port.



I am alone save for one man.
The odor of his inadequate hygiene overwhelms
my senses to the point of nausea.
Propped against the wall, newspaper in hand,
I am fighting to maintain my calm.

The man is muttering obscenities to the machine before him.
"Can't believe it, I know what they want."
Breathe. He must not see my fear.
Like a child, listening to the creaking of the
closet door, the hair on my body stands up in
horror. My intuition warns me to take heed,
but my escape is implausible as the

dryer reads 12 minutes remaining.

The man's eyes alight on me,
at last a warm body to listen.
"She can't do this to me..."
The words stumble out of his mouth,
crossed between a question and a challenge.
"Doesn't she know I could take a gun
and shoot her?"
As he aims his imaginary gun, I am certain
that my breath will not sustain me.

10 minutes remaining.

"And my mother died last year..."
My panic turns to pity as I offer my condolences;
we both know the words are hollow as they
bounce off the Laundromat walls.

6 minutes remaining.

I realize my responses are of little worth,
my attention is the real reward.
He continues on, but as his direction

again leads to rage,
I pray to any god who will listen.

Finally, I concede that my life is worth
more than dry laundry.
Maintaining eye contact with my unlikely
companion, I open the dryer door

with 2 minutes remaining.

Wishing the man well, I leave the scene
of what would later be known as,
the most uncomfortable

15 minutes spent in a Laundromat, ever.

Sarah Kirkpatrick

Behind the box of chipped china cups,
piles of pillowed wool sweaters—
Grandma's sewing machine.

Its brand was etched in bronze once
circled round by two elegant lines.
Not so elegant as her hands
as they turned the wheel,
surging prayers into cloth.

It had to be magic, I thought as a little girl
kneading Grandma's knee.
And the thread knew exactly where to go,
silver needle poking perfect lines
between pin fences.

Yards, scraps, thrift store fabric
massaged, caressed.
Cotton orphans transformed
into pirate pantaloons, gowns for a princess,
gypsy headdress.
Grandma knew how to stitch little dreams.

"How much?" an elderly woman asks
as she runs her index finger
along the spine of Grandma's sewing machine.
Her eyes absorb my pause,
my accounting: converting memory into currency.

Her fingers open, clasp my hand,
fingers that know thimble
fingers that know prayers
whispered at the wheel.

"Not for sale" she says,
then smiles a grandma smile,
turns into the white morning sun.



Warren S. Taylor

I pass this homeless man
camped on the edge
of First and Main.
Mid-November, cool
and clear.
Vanilla latte warms
my unpocketed hand.
I passed him
last week,
last month,
last year.

He's bucklehunched
outside Blue Room Theatre,
slack-packed against a chain
link fence.
Coral crumpled sweatshirt
pillows
his slungdrunk head.
I brace myself for what comes next...

But nothing comes next.

I watch tobacco fingers
roll a question.
Watch tobacco fingernails,
yellow moons
wax fantastic mojo~
crease cracked fingerpads.
Rolling,
rolling.

Yellow eyes, sunless suns
eclipsed—lidded black
gumboot eyes
hovering beneath
walrus eyebrows
wandering,
wondering.

My pocketed thumb traces orbits
in latte leftovers.

Nickel, quarters, penny, dimes~

Penny, nickel, dimes, quarters~

Dimesquartersnickelpenny~

Come Together

in my hand.

Old flattop groove,

Beatles

spinning

spinning.

I brace myself for what comes next:

That question.

And wonder, does this spare change exchange
change anything?

Round up fifteen human beings and put them in a line,
Then shoot bottle rockets at them to find out who flinches first,
And foremost, it'll tell you a lot about why we act the way we do,
So take a number and search for a voice,
You'd be surprised at what you'll discover about yourself,
And how we're all at once together just the right and wrong residue
 of generations who've done it better,
Clogging our arteries with impatience and avarice,
Ripping out our own intestines and laying them across an
 operating table,
Because we want to know who's got more guts,
But who really gives a shit about guts?
When we're all joined at the hip of hoping for more out of this life,
And I can't tell you how many sleepless nights I've had,
Staring at the cracks in my ceiling,
And retracing them in my mind as if they were the veins that lead
 to my own fractured heart,
Etch-A-Sketching my many misgivings on living gauze just to see
 how ugly I am on the inside,
"Man, you draw a helluva stick figure,"
And yeah, that's me on the surface:
Thin as a rail and about as interesting,
But just wait until I jump off this page like these one thousand
 words
To slap down some sense with a little verbal countenance...

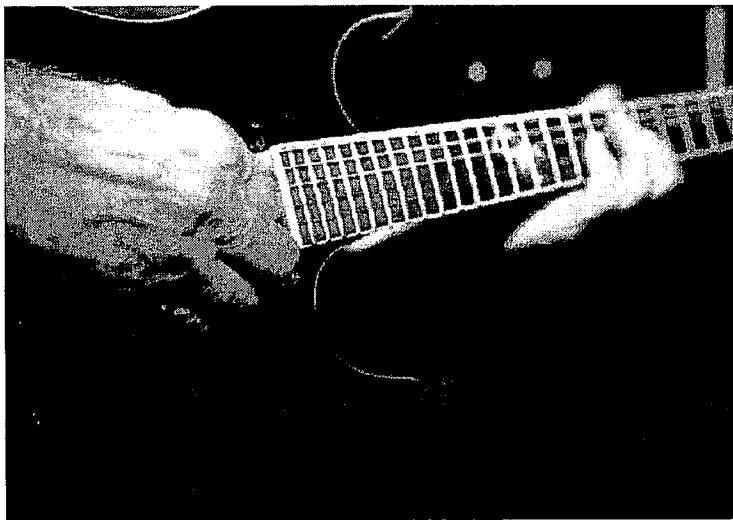
Now, ladies, let me tell you something:
Chivalry ain't dead!
It's just been swept under the rug by a society that tells you to do
 everything on your own,
But I'm happy to open the door for you,
I consider it a privilege to watch you waltz into rooms to the tune
 of "fuck you, I own this joint,"
You've got this amazing sense of self-assuredness framing the skip
 in your step,
And a shade of lipstick deep enough to drown in,
Red is as warm and inviting to you as Morgan Freeman's voice,
And it's your color of choice,
You look good wrapped in Rock & Roll and draped in drama,
And what can I say other than the fact that I love you that way,

You dance alone by firelight in spite of the darkness,
With the same broom you used to sweep up all of your life's pained
expressions,
Until you had a trail of tears measured in years of wearing
counterfeit smiles,
And I pray that you never smiled that way for me,
I'd bend down to kiss the tips of your fingers searching for what
lingers beneath that rough exterior,
Only to discover: you've got really soft hands,
And that's strange for a woman like you,
It does not suit your affinity for discolored and damaged fingernails,
And you know what, I think I'd like to get my nails done
up like that,
Because these things are damn near manicured,
And I don't want them that way anymore...

Yours, on the other hand, have scraped chalkboards,
They've been to places I've only seen in pipe dreams,
Picking out the dirt leftover from digging up the past,
And cleaning out the dried blood from your ex-lover's back,
Those are the nails of revolution,
Pounded into rafters and suspended over the altars we craft
for the false gods we proudly display,
Holding our hopes high and performing our patchwork praise,
Gently running our fingers over creation,
Overcome with the realization that we are all going to die,
And the part that hurts is the part that we can't cut from our hearts,
Left to scratching at the insides of the coffins we bury ourselves
alive in,
Until we've written a message that reads:
"Here lies John & Jane Doe,
Killed unmercifully by their own bones,"
It's a very sad and a very common tale,
Weighted down by a malnourished sense of self,
And an impoverished peace of mind,
And now we cultivate last gasps in the soil where our families die,
Finally lifting the lids off our sound-proofed tombs,
To let our cries for help escape the so-called "rape of the human
soul,"

While tacking these casket-shaped signs that shed tears to trees
in our very own fucked-up forest of fear,
And I can't hear you!

We might need to perform "kick a hole in the speaker" surgery
to remove your foot from your mouth,
So take another number and get back in line,
And remember that the Tower of Babel wasn't built in a day,
In fact, God smashed it just to tell us that you won't find your
voice in a consumer report,
(Sponsored in part by the poor in heart and the makers of
metaphorical expression)
You are not angry enough!
And this world is far too cruel for your complacency,
So smash something!
Tell me how it feels,
And join the Hallelujah chorus,
Because an auditory tidal wave is screaming in your direction,
And that wonderful wall of sound says: "Speak up!"
Or "Shut up, because we're singing to you..."



Goodbye. One word, but two words, really—good and bye—squished into one. Writing them together: goodbye draws a little fence between the lines forming d and b. db. See it? Letters d and b turn their backs on each other, fully aware that the forced marriage of good + bye doesn't equal a bond between them. That space between the d and b represents the differences in the meaning of "good" and "bye." There's nothing "good" about "bye," nothing good at all, other than the psychological benefit of literally (or orally) facing the hard fact you are separating from something (or someone) you'd prefer not to separate from.

I'm generalizing here, I know, because there are some "good" byes: spewing goodbye into the telephone receiver connected at the other end to the bill collector who calls during your first-date dinner; squealing goodbye to the ten pounds you lost (again!) after 3 weeks on the Hollywood diet; pounding the delete key (goodbye!&%\$@) to the 17 spam emails clogging up your inbox. These truly are "good" byes.

Or more like good riddance when you think about it. Now "good" and "riddance" go together in a way good and bye don't, because it is always good to be rid of something (or someone) annoying, yet good riddance is two words instead of one. English grammar and social etiquette don't marry riddance with good, which is highly ironic. Smash the two together like goodbye and you get goodriddance. It's a nifty looking word, with the "dridd" and all in the middle. Pure pleasure on the tongue. Sure, the d and the r turn their backs on each other too, but the r is so damned short and accommodating, you can hurdle right over it, skip on down to the i and dance through the double d's. Just like you hurdle right over life's little bumps from bill collectors, excess weight and inbox spam and dance on to something better.

But goodbye, the real heart-rending goodbye, squeezes a universe of unfulfilled desire between those tiny mirrored letters, d and b. Pairing good with bye gives us the illusion that parting is good (it's not) and all will be well in the meantime (it's not). We live in this empty space, between letters d and b until somehow, magically, at last we are freed by the possibility peeking between two spooned lls in hello.

Josh Alameda

Josh Alameda just moved to Chico as a freshman. His major is undeclared. Josh is from Salinas, California, and is quite excited to be a part of the Chico community. Over the past few weeks, Josh has taken a great interest in photographing the scenery both at school and around town. He is taking photos with an ancient Canon AE-1 Programmer. He hopes you enjoy the picture he has contributed.

Jeffrey C. Alfier

Jeffrey Alfier's recent credits include *Cutthroat*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *River Oak Review*, and *Watershed*. He is author of a chapbook, *Strangers within the Gate* (The Moon Publishing, 2005).

Sarah Brown

Sarah Brown likes the comfort of her familiar cocoon, but is slowly allowing her true nature to emerge, so she can spend her final days flying from one enjoyment to the next. Her top five pursuits are photography, writing, travel, languages, and love of mankind. You will probably see her pass through Chico State in the next few years.

Alex Camarota

Alex Camarota has been previously published in *Watershed*. He finished his studies at Chico State in May of 2006 with a BA in English, a minor in creative writing, and a certificate in editing and publishing. He considers cheese to be the greatest thing ever created in the history of the universe.

Andrew Christian

Andrew Christian was born in San Jose, California, and moved to Chico in 2004. He is currently an undergraduate in the English department and is working towards his degree in general English and minor in creative writing. He would like to thank all his friends and family for their support, especially Beth.

Sharon DeMeyer

Sharon DeMeyer graduated from CSU, Chico, in 1996 with a BA in English. She currently works in the English department office here at CSU, Chico. She was born and raised in Chico and has lived here all her life.

Andrea Foster

Andrea Foster is a senior student-athlete at CSU, Chico. She is pursuing her degree in English education and hopes to be a junior high English teacher in the future. She is involved in the cross-country and track-and-field teams at Chico State. She loves to read, write, run, and sing.

Emily Grelle

Emily Grelle is an English major who is minoring in creative writing and European studies. She is particularly interested in Russian history and oral literature. Ms. Grelle has been living in Chico for most of her life.

Lara Gualarte

Lara Gualarte is the editor of the online journal, *Convergence*. She received her MFA degree from San Jose State University, where she was poetry and art editor for *Reed Magazine*. Gualarte is a previous contributor to *Watershed*. Her most recent work is forthcoming in *The Fourth River* and *Bitter Oleander*.

Matthew R. Y. Hayes

Matthew R.Y. Hayes is planning to graduate in the spring of '08 with a BA in English education. He has loved and written poetry since the sixth grade when his English teacher, Mr. Micholetti, introduced it to his class. He selected some of his favorite works for *Watershed*.

Mark Herrera

Mark Herrera is currently studying environmental justice. He enjoys playing Ultimate Frisbee, is a vegetarian, and just loves to have fun.

Laura Jew

Laura Jew is aspiring. To what, she has not yet discovered, but she will be glad to tell you once she has.

Sarah Kirkpatrick

To Sarah Kirkpatrick, the most attractive thing people can do is be themselves. Most important to her are her friends, family, efforts to sustain a truly green planet, maintaining peace of mind, and the evolution of her dreams. She doesn't wish to hold onto any regrets, they only waste precious time.

Sarah Knowlton

Sarah Knowlton wrote her first poem in grade school. It was a haiku about a butterfly. She is still trying to top it. Working toward her master's degree in creative writing at Chico State, she hopes to have earned her diploma before she joins the AARP.

Jennifer D. Loman

Jennifer Loman is a grad student at CSU, Chico, and formerly taught English at the secondary level. She was also an editor at Academic Press. Mostly, she drives her three kids to sporting events when she's not studying or cleaning like mad.

Joanne Lowery

Joanne Lowery's poems have appeared in many literary magazines, including *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *5 am*, *Passages North*, *Atlanta Review*, and *Poetry East*. She lives in Michigan.

Robert Mirabel-Ramos

Robert Mirabel-Ramos is a senior at CSU, Chico. After switching majors several times, he is now majoring in English. He was born and raised in California's Bay Area. One of his lofty post-graduation ambitions is to attend law school. Currently he works in retail, which he loves other than the part that requires him to deal with people.

Christine Newton

Christine Newton is a recent graduate of Chico State, with a BA in Anthropology. She is currently attending classes as a graduate student and hoping to be accepted into the master's program in English literature.

Gregory Smith

Gregory Smith is a husband, father, architect, guitarist, songwriter, and racecar driver. He just bought his first new pair of glasses in thirty years. You can find his poetry scribbled on the backs of magazines scattered about the house, or on a beach where serendipity waits with her feet in the sand.

Kelly Reeve Smith

Kelly Reeve Smith is a graduate pretending to be an undergraduate at Chico State in order to enter the credential program. She's taking core-strengthening classes with the hopes of counteracting her horrible sitting-at-the-computer-typing-all-night-long posture.

Warren S. Taylor

Warren S. Taylor is a desperately amateurish photographer and bumbling writer, with little of either style or grace, no eye for detail, and a near total lack of self esteem. He lives with his wife Michelle and cat Toonces, of whom he is not worthy.

Lisa Trombley

Lisa Trombley graduated from CSU, Chico, in 1991 with degrees in English and Humanities. After an 18-year detour working in banking, she recently returned to continue her studies in English and creative writing. She shares her passion for the Chico community with Dave, her husband of 19 years, and their two boys, Trent and Trevor.

Martin Walls

Martin Walls lives in New York.

Jennifer White

Since, at the moment, she's in the MA English program at CSU, Chico, teaching an English 220 class, being a mommy to three children, and holding a part-time job, she's grateful to have her sanity (well, some of her sanity) intact.

Jeff Whitney

Jeff Whitney is majoring in International Relations and Spanish at Chico State. He was born in Fort Worth, Texas, but has spent most of his life in Northern California.

Caili Wilk

Caili Wilk is a student, and hopes to graduate one day, maybe even in May. After moving more than 30 times in her 31 years, she now resides next to a horse farm in Arroyo Grande, California, with her two willful young children, and such a splendid view of the stars that she almost feels guilty. Favorite poets include John Berryman, Robert Hass, and William Carlos Williams. Caili wonders if *karoshi* (death from overwork) is what happens to poets who take their own lives.

Matthew Zellmer

Matthew Zellmer is from Roseville, CA, but Chico has become his home the last two years. He enjoys getting lost in his head and taking long walks on short soap boxes. He is currently a junior at Chico State, but has been writing poetry since his senior year of high school. Now you can find him performing locally with Chico Poetree Slam.

