Thicker Than Water

Once in a grand while,

spring water from our farmhouse faucet

became laced

with a decaying corpse's odor

and taste.

Dad began pulling the boards

from the well under the windmill,

then to deftly threading

a water snake to a half caduceus

about the handle of his hoe

before the unceremonious

beheading,

finally fishing out a skunk

from the spot where he ceased

treading.

He took the pickup to town,

returned toting two liter bottles

of root beer.

Mom lined the freezer shelves

with mugs of ice cream,

and for the week it took

the water to clear,

we 'd keep a bottle by the couch

combating the froth's dissolve

watched *Gunsmoke* if we could coax

the antenna to revolve,

reveling in the joyous way

problems could be solved,

the ease with which the differences

between two men

absolved.

By Guess or by Gosh

*By guess or by gosh*

he'd mutter,

picking over dusty nails,

bent bolts,

before finding that flawlessly-

broken swather sickle

to hammer into the wood

swelling its circumference so

to hold hoe

or axe

or pick

in perfect place

*Like tussly. Good,*

*good.*

Nothing new ever bought,

no professionals sought,

*Got your pliers*

*in your pocket?* ought

to be rhetorical

because baling wire

always needs a twist,

the bolt's gonna turn,

metal's bound

to be hot.

There was art

in setting one's jaw

just right

knowing when to cajole,

when to use might

in this apprenticeship

in cobbling

a life

which grants chance

so seldom

to begin anew,

so by dint

of elbow grease,

the bent,

the rusted,

we make do.

Realism

*Sunshine appears*

*HERE and NOW.*

*How beautiful this very moment is!*

is inscribed below the painting

I bought from the Mad Monk

of Lam Ty Ni Pagoda in Dalat

though I found him

neither angry nor particularly eccentric

just a capitalist like everyone

in that communist country

where I was a lone planet

orbiting myself

through atmosphere of theory

and philosophy

and now this painting rests

above tangible and tactile steps

from where, Buddha baby,

you gesture,

beckoning a pause,

until I read the mantra aloud,

little word made flesh,

awakening me

at all hours

until I've kept the bags packed

under my eyes

so as not to miss

a single moment of sunshine

here and now.