

Spring Camp

Forty clicks in, all dirt,
pretty good road when it's dry.
Open range –
mostly cattle and horses,
some greening winter wheat.

Weathered buildings,
skeletons skewed,
skin no longer fits the frame.
Surfaces stripped,
leaving boards burnished
shades of sienna, charcoal, sepia.
Warm rich colors
like a Rembrandt print,
becoming metaphors for the lives
that are drawn within.

Abandoned homestead,
been there long enough
to get a linoleum floor
though no plumbing or power.
Priorities?

Chinked log walls support
a sod roof where cactus thrive.
Dirt sprinkles down
as the hot dry wind
puffs and sucks
through the open door
and broken windows.

Swallows make their nests
in the corner
where the double bed once stood.
Life continues in different form.

Along the thawing river
lined with cottonwoods,
many girdled by beaver,
balanced precariously
with a gnawing sense of fate,
a man and boy make
a pretense of fishing –
water's still too cold.

Time stands still
while the camp smoke
chases the boy around the fire
where he eats blackened marshmallows
and pretends he hears
calls of the not quite
vanquished wild.

