

8. Thoughts on Humanity, First Place

The Children Ran

After community potlucks some of
the adults would stand on the
brick porch and steps and
talk of adult things to one another
while their children ran
in circles around ancient oaks
that waited outside the meeting house
the grass was deeply green with
tiny daisies here and there

After night meets the children sometimes
ran in fog and rain the grass wetting shoes
and staining knees of those who fell
running around 1,000 year old trees
they could see their own breath
young lungs and hearts working mightily
everybody's cheeks burning red some
of the younger ones embraced a mother's
legs under her long coat to stay warm

Those noble oaks had their own incense
in sunlight or on the foggiest night
I still imagine that I can smell them
that I can reach out and touch the rough
grey striations of their bark or kick the
tan oak balls they produced
I also believe I'm the only one who remembers—
you see life takes us changes us makes us
immune to all the precious joys of children

The community hall was eventually razed
and hauled away to the landfill
the mighty ancient oaks were felled
their root balls ripped from the earth
the green grass and daisies were paved over
and concrete islands for gas pumps installed
little rubber hoses pinged when cars hit them
most of all adults no longer conversed there
and children of the smothered land ran away

Daniel Williams
Wawona, CA