

**The Engine of Christmas**

a man  
a God  
and a birthday ...

the engine of Christmas slops  
into coldsoft cardboard.  
with it,  
fast hungry reindeer  
plumped paint  
hohohoing  
pissing their vapors of truth:  
love usable toward the toy.

blackfrozen streets  
sad seasonal  
suicides  
panhandling bells, desire  
into dust—a slow crucifixion of  
self: the creative condition  
insisting we be friends  
when really nothing more  
than strangers

ever.

the engine of Christmas  
bounds  
the distance of my  
poem—  
the freak neatness of  
freedom inclined  
toward a valium  
a fishhook  
a hole in the ice:  
the box growing greater  
each passing moon.

the engine of Christmas  
swings  
into our being true  
to a center at the edge  
of silence and in rush  
impassioned and in fury  
about our bones and blood  
like the easy sway of children.

—Michael Smith

**Celilo**

Roaring waters whisper in the morning dis-  
tance.

Dark-skinned men on wooden platforms fish  
dipping long poles and bone-colored nets  
streaking the white water.

A man dressed in black hollers at me  
across the vacant lot;  
I ignore him and continue to explore  
the deserted post office.

My grandparents pass in horse and buggy,  
I watch them from behind a mound  
with weeds growing scattered in the sand  
that reminds me of the preacher's balding head.

I eat some dried salmon remembering words  
from an old song and begin to sing it.  
Hymns from the church and seagull's laugh  
disruptingly mingle with the morning mist.

—Earle Thompson

**My Turn**

It is sad and tough being poor,  
you do not have enough money to buy  
what you want/need at the store.  
what is depressing is when it comes  
to meals you often wish you could  
have even more.

When you live in poverty when the  
holidays arrive they're not fun they  
are a chore.

Being on the streets you must  
strive to stay alive.

When you come from a broken  
home and run away that  
is a memory that does stay.

You must trust in god yourself  
strength and instincts to  
get you through each  
day.

—John Arnold