

## The Boxer

By: Samantha Hunsberger

I knew a man  
who lied about his age  
to make up the time  
he rode a bike without brakes  
and landed on a bluegill bed  
somewhere along White River  
where he talked about the fellas  
that hung around the banks  
and robbed them with Tommy guns  
held by family relatives  
who gave him a thirty two  
with three notches  
to honor the dead

I knew a man  
who stacked pins off Tillotson  
at the age of eight  
when his wife was scrubbing  
some colored boy with a washboard  
but didn't know where  
the dirt came from  
that Laddy fell in  
and who pushed his brother  
into that gravel pit

I knew a man  
who went AWOL  
in a bottle of tequila  
that grazed his lips  
along with a girl he met  
across the border of Texas  
before some Private carried him  
back to Fort God Save Us All  
after he was accused  
of rigging a push-up contest

I knew a man  
who won the Golden Gloves  
against some young scrub  
named Bootsie Johnson  
all because he could dance  
around a rina

the same way he could dance  
to old vinyls playing  
The Wanderer and The Newbeats

I knew a man  
who ate malt balls for breakfast  
followed by two packs  
of Marlboros  
to fill the afternoons  
spent grappling in a gym  
wearing wool pants  
and fifteen years of  
living like Finn.

I knew a man  
who was mistaken for McQueen  
somewhere south of town  
where his mother was known  
for gambling after dark  
with jealous fathers  
of actors  
who hung around  
a new scene

I knew a man

who owned a blue row boat  
and tin tackle box  
filled with bobbers  
he never used  
for the fish  
he never kept  
it a secret-  
that angling was  
never about the win  
as much as it was  
about the wind  
letting his oars  
take a break  
from this shallow channel

And I knew You  
Jay Dee Lewis  
You taught me  
how to throw  
a right hook  
and rig a line  
on a bamboo rod

You taught me  
how to hum a tune  
to Burl Ives  
while skinning the cat  
ten feet off the ground

how to dive off  
a wooden pier  
on the lake that  
froze the winter  
you went through the ice  
your wife broke  
her arm on  
that transparent concrete  
in front of  
the cottage where  
You taught me this.

You taught me