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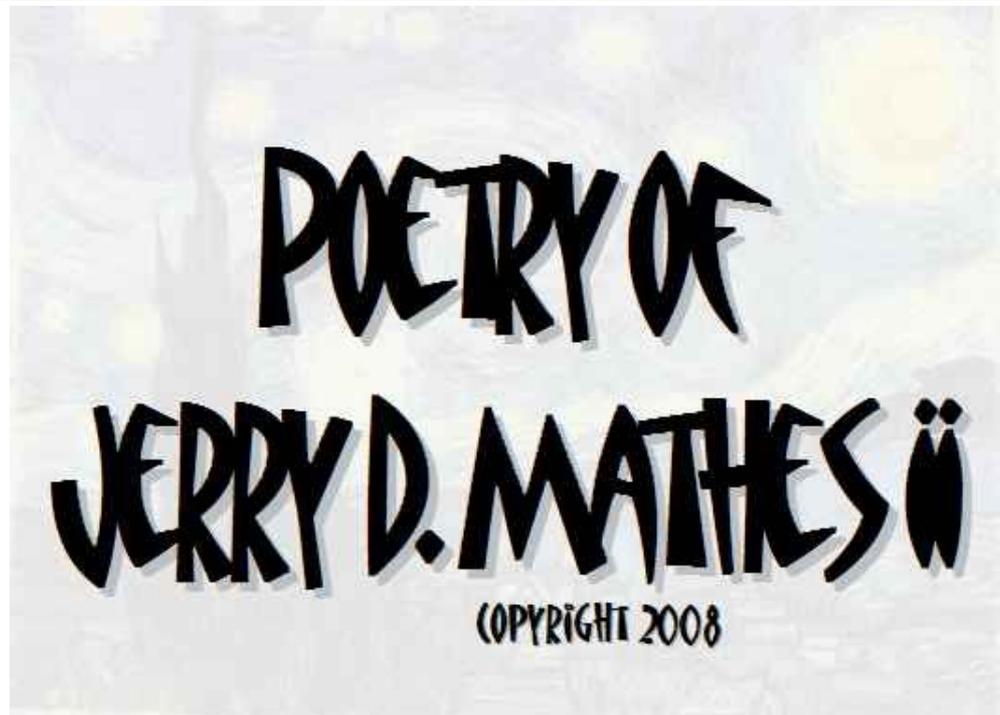
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A Dozer Swims the Clearwater River

The diesel motor rattles hard
pushing raw earth
lessening the grade to the water.
Years of decay drown
in tangy exhaust.
The blade rises
like the hands of one taken
by the Holy Spirit, wet earth
slides into a current
filled with winter's last snow.
The dozer rocks, gears down,
joints creak, smoke sweeps
downstream, the belly
grinds the river, breaks stones,
founders in sand, and its tracks turn
and turn in a hole where no cutthroats
will spawn.

A Spring Night in Carson City

Seven years ago last April
We climbed switchbacks through pines
To a peak I can't name anymore.

I can still name you.
But nothing else is clear,
As if looking through smoke
From last year's fires
Hanging in the air.

My memory in the streets
Of this darkened
Former territorial capital
Sticks like resin to skin.
I sense Twain's loss, his ghost
And our tented night,
Naked and drunk
In a single sleeping bag.

The Journal West

We became like lower class
immigrants dragging out of Old World
poverty, following emigrant trails
to those we thought would help us.

How we hugged
each other by fire light as if a wilderness
stretched away from our arms
circling a space we only thought vacant.

We couldn't read
stories on the land, carved
and painted, or find lost shards sown
into the earth by accidents, famine and war.

And we didn't see
ancient trails worn on the earth,
lace after the Ice Age floods,
and the lines crossing your face, were mine.

We let the dirt blow
over us, felt the pressure of open land
After years we shrugged one night toward opposite walls.
Not finding each other, even under one blanket.

We are those rock
foundations in the desert, abandoned when the gold
ran out, and the rutted meadows and piles of stone
where timber camps lodged three hundred men.

We, the things broken,
the erosion of canals, drifting topsoil
and fences across rivers to hang little girls
canoeing through overgrazed range for one stinking fish.

We fly in a blind
migration lumbering, moving to empty claims
aching in what it is to be free, in space, missing the space,
scribbling different histories in our journals west

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Jerry D. Mathes II is a recipient of a Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship. In 2008, Lewis-Clark Press will release his collection of poems, *The Journal West*, and Finishing Line Press will publish his chapbook, *Fall in the Borderland*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in many journals, including *Shenandoah*, *Camas*, *The Dos Passos Review*, *Grist*, and *Tar River Poetry* and received Special Mention for Fiction in The Pushcart Prize XXXI. In the summer he fights wildfire on a helicopter-rappel crew and is a graduate of the University of Idaho's MFA program. His current project is a novel about love, death and wildfire on the

Mexican border.