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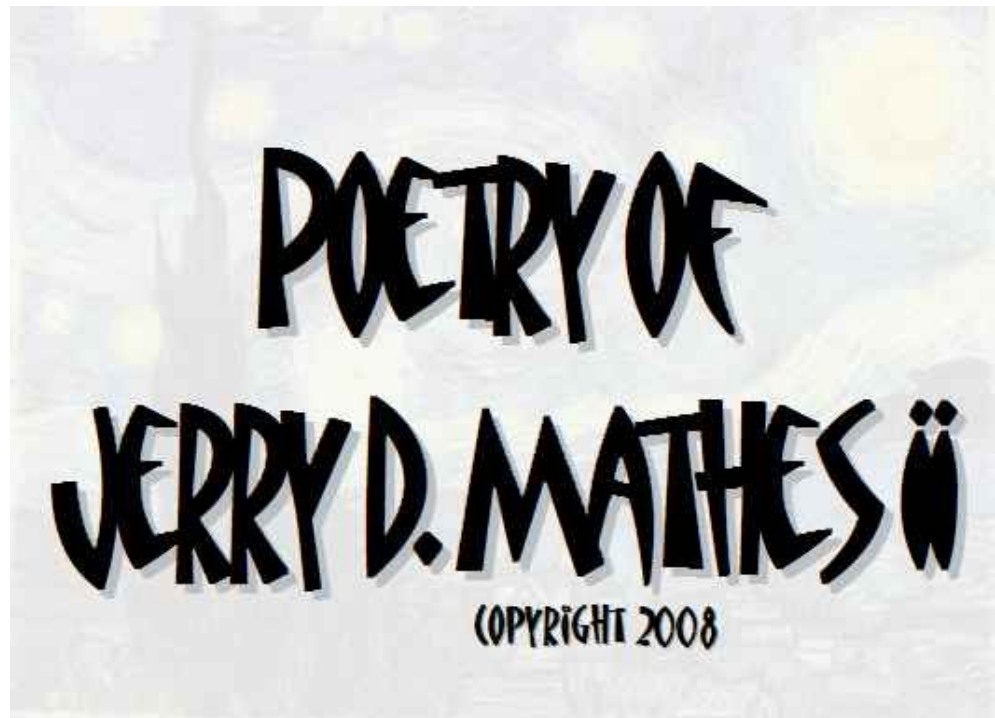
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### **A Dozer Swims the Clearwater River**

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.

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## 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

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Mexican border.