

Jennifer Fenn

Sound Through the Walls

*For Jerry Cooper, Roger Kiser, Larry Houston, John Wagner, and all the "White House Boys",
dead and still living.*

Metal crosses mark the graves
by this so-called reform school,
Florida soil stifling
the century-long cries
of boys beaten and unnamed.

A leather strap strikes the ceiling,
then buttocks, ceiling, buttocks,
countless times per boy.
Blood spatters the thick stucco walls
of the square, white building,
door now sealed.

Stings still smart through scars decades later
as surviving men hear stories
of boys still beaten by staff
until the school finally closes.

Staffer Troy Tidwell's
eighty four year old denials
still echo through the town of Marianna,
as the graves are opened
to exhume the dead boys' stories.

Songs of the Voiceless Bells

Brown cast iron bells
on El Camino Real
stand still as we pass.
Made without ringers,
they're empty and voiceless,
like the Spanish soldiers
tried to make the natives
as they flogged them
into labor at the missions
with long leather straps.

Those natives lie still
in mission graveyards.
The wind carries their stories
across the land,
down the highway,
spinning them into elegies
inside these rusting bells.

Will we leave our cars and listen?

Rain

Driving to the office,
I listen to beats and melodies of Prince's songs
I never paid attention to as a teen,
not caring about what my peers liked.
He pours out his heart
about a friend who died,
about a lonely Christmas.
Full, gray clouds pass over
as I think I really missed out
on 'Purple Rain'.

That evening, I leave the office,
walking on pavement,
still damp from afternoon rain.
The clouds, still a dark, grayish purple,
drift to the next valley town.
No gentle taps will fall
on my umbrella, tucked under my arm.
I missed out on the rain.

Jennifer Fenn's poetry has appeared in fifteen different journals, including *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Brevities*, *Faces of the Goddess*, *Nomad's Choir*, and *Tiger's Eye*. She has two self-published chapbooks, *Blessings* and *Song of the Katabatic Wind*, created for church fundraisers, and has also won prizes in contests as well, including the Poetry Matters and the Wild About Books contests.