

# feel the rhythm of the wheels, thumpbump

*Mike Burns*

there is a bridge in Vallejo  
stretched across  
the full arm of the east bay  
pulled like a thin strand of tinsel at christmas, branch to bough.  
the brackish sea that ebbs through these straits  
mingles with the water  
of the rock peaks in Desolation, water passed through  
dry cotton plains of Bakersfield and Arvin  
its murky tidal wash  
carries the brown silt of flooded fields  
and farm yards, top soil  
of last year's lettuce.

from above, I peer through the steel girders  
taut green cable webbing  
shivers in the northwesterly breeze

clinging to the banks away from the tidal reach, fishing piers  
cargo wharfs held tight  
by tar soaked pilings driven deep

the floor boards in my Chevy growl, heavy rumble caught  
in the throat of the ravine  
welling up out of mud-brown waters  
sustained in the erector-set-genius of the bridge  
its energy surges through concrete flooring  
as truck and I lurch forward  
thump bumpthump bumpthump bump  
suddenly aware of height, feeling the cold water in my boots  
I remember washed out trestles  
hovering above the Eel River.