

Lee Stockdale

Washing Machine

In a washing machine set on *heavy* load: children,
pots and pans, automobiles, careers,
deleted texts, all of it churns. Faces
press against the glass,
distorting lips, noses, first and last names,
before they're yanked back
into *splashing* detergent.

The cycle ends. It all has to be dried.
Children can't be put in a dryer.
She spreads them out in the happy sun,
hangs sheets of mirrors on the line with safety pins.
The lawyers are still mildewed,
she can't get the smell out.

Her husband is a towel she folds and sets
in the center of the room, it starts to dance,
she steps around it. When the music she can't hear
stops playing, she lays it out,
pulls the corners back, pretends
it's a spaceship she flies past the sun,
the only place she thinks it will be safe to tell him.

Smashing Glasses

The owner demands
we hurl our wine glasses
into the fireplace
at his restaurant.

The cost, he insists,
is part of the dinner.
Something I've only seen
done in movies.

"Make a wish! Whatever you want!

Or *don't* want!"

He smashes first,
with gusto, though he leads this ritual
every night
with a new group of Americans, Nigerians,
Koreans, or Russians.

The fireplace is a confessional,
ex-lover,
career.

Each of us heaves and shatters our glass,
with flames of personal,
unexpected joy.

Back at the hostel, no one talks about
smashing their glass,
or about it at all.

George Washington at Walmart

Of course it's George Washington,
in the dairy section,
of the Super Walmart on Highway 61.

He looks out of place in his white stockings,
britches over his knees,
powdered wig unless that's his real hair.

Out of place yet at the same time at home,
like he owns this Walmart and everything in it,
plastic lawn chairs from China, dish towels, chainsaws,
owns the entire United States of America,
Statue of Liberty, redwood forests,
every song ever written by Woody Guthrie.

He looks puzzled by choices—*non-fat, 2%, whole, enriched*.
I want so much to help him decide,
want to show him a dairy, electric pumps hooked up to cows,
want to google *America* on Wikipedia,
see him be dumbfounded at the country he fathered.
Except it's a well-observed unwritten rule: No one talks
to each other when they shop at a Walmart.