**Near the Tracks**

Scott Lowery

*"Lest the parade of our mutual life be lost in the dark"*

*-William Stafford*

If these houses were men,

their talk would be hard lumps

in the gravy of silence:

affects backyard-flat,

mumble of thrift store colors.

Biceps inked in chain-link.

If these houses were cars,

they'd run week-long on empty

then tank up Friday night.

Loose wrenches living

in the trunk, jumper cables

if your battery’s dead.

If these houses voted, they'd

just as soon not tell you,

sidling up their driveway.

That clipboard, that smile:

they'd see an easy life

slipped in your hip pocket.

Say *mutual life* among

these houses, and they may

give that a microwave minute

in their too-tired hearts.

True faith? Safe in the back room

where the shotgun sleeps.