

# WARM EARTH

RACHEL BATES

'There's no point in planting  
if the Earth isn't warm'.

A voice plowed by time and scented  
with Camel cigarettes rasps to my young ears.

An ashy smell rolls from his voice  
filling the spring air around my visage.

Something that has existed for so long  
it belongs.

Hands spotted like the overripe pears littering the fence line  
cup my own, formed many wars later.

My children will never hear  
this advice from an old Air Force man,  
whose skin tanned from the suns of Korea and Vietnam loosely  
falls

around eyes that have seen humanity at its worst.

My children will never feel a touch gentled after holding M-16s  
by a younger version of my grandmother.

A name changed thrice over three generations,  
encompassed my hands holding warm earth,  
I now sprinkle over a casket buried within it.

# MASON JARS

RACHEL BATES

*For Lisa*

Nature's harvest sits frozen  
in time.  
My eyes still sting from the memory  
of chopping onions for salsa.  
A crescent scar,  
faded,  
still rises from my forefinger,  
a by product of slicing apples.

Now golden rimmed tops  
are thrones for dust;  
the jars have false names  
covering their given one.

*Apple Jam '76*

*Salsa '81*

Forgotten in a dark corner  
of a pantry  
in a young girl's mind.