

SOFT PAVEMENT

After coffee at the rugged
neighborhood café,
we approached the door
to the old, used bookstore,
a deep-worn auburn red,
its paint flaking
like dry autumn leaves.
The inside's empty.
A rotting chair is free,
and so is a dusty silver lamp.
The owner welcomes us:
"Go ahead,
bring your bikes inside—
there's plenty of space now.
We're moving downtown,
over on East Hennepin,
open August first...
but 'open' is a mushy word."
We wished them good luck
and rode back in the city heat.
From one concrete box
to another,
familiar places drift and wander
like ghosts, with the lives
that filled them,
leaving behind their hollow shells.
On our way back home,
we dodge potholes,
weaving through excavations,
orange cones and blockades,
entire streets dug up,
lead and copper pipes exposed
in the gray-brown dirt,
mixed with scattered chunks of asphalt.
But soon we catch a satin stretch
of soft, uncracked pavement—
so smooth we coast, releasing hands,
letting our fingers glide
through the summer breeze,
flowing free beside the Mississippi—
and the new, used bookstore,
reborn with its novel shape,
takes root in my daydream.