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## Dip Your Finger in the Water, Come and Cool Your Tongue

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MILTON KESSLER MEMORIAL PRIZE  
FINALIST

DIP YOUR FINGER IN THE WATER, COME AND COOL  
YOUR TONGUE  
Lori Anderson Moseman

This dude ranch so arid  
we got but an inch  
in our half-foot creek.  
Not enough for guests  
bent on baptism.  
Their theology of immersion  
leaves them no choice  
but the sewage leaching pond.  
Kinda hard to get into  
a god like that.

Those of us working here  
have no choice but to become  
a river each day after lunch.  
When the hailstorm hits,  
we hustle kids off rock  
and run with the ropes.  
We take water's path,  
act all gully-wash,  
side-winding boulder  
after boulder compacting  
the path as a pack  
down canyon's steep ravine.

We run 'til we feel  
our lungs in our throat.  
Altitude clamps down

on oxygen. I reckon  
when blood pulses in sync  
with surface water,  
we're finally *in*  
geological time not *on* it.  
Closest to god I get.

It's dry by dusk  
and locals in pick-ups shoot up  
road signs then send boulders  
down Devil's Slide.  
Sound will send you up a tree.  
Best not to look.  
Momentum no more  
desirable than immersion.  
Times like this, all you want is  
to step outside the flow.  
But, who's ready to test  
resurrection theory?

That summer's monotheism  
was a unicycle.  
One mountaineer managed  
to navigate glacial scree  
in drag on one wheel,  
hands free to finger  
the notes of his favorite Bach.  
Human achievement (Amen)  
The force of water (Amen)  
You'd raise your hands high  
for a story that praises both.

Best our east coast spiritual  
guide could muster was Woody  
Allen's early work: island  
allusions and *Manhattan's*

HARPUR PALATE

cadences lost on western  
laborers who only wanted  
an afternoon off, a summit  
sunset, a dark walk down,  
heat lightening lighting  
eroded stone all the way  
to (Praise the Lord)  
that temporary bunk.