

**William Doreski**

Your Hair's like Bamboo

Today your hair's like bamboo  
in the Mekong River basin.  
Decades ago a bullet parsed  
the gap between its author and me,

knocking me flat. Uninjured,  
the slug lodged in my pack, I lay  
in the bamboo stalks and prayed  
to whatever couldn't exist.

Around me a surge of fire raked  
the grove, and when it ended  
no one on either side wept.  
Your hair has rooted as firmly

as that memory, so no one  
but me notes the cloudy mist  
forming, the broad Asian sky  
lowering about you. Small talk

blusters while I pull a bullet  
from the air and toss it hand  
to hand while it cools. No one  
will shed blood in my presence,

not if I can catch every bullet  
before it etches some insult  
in flesh or intellect. You nod  
at some remark and the forest

sways in a monsoon wind. I wrap  
the bullet so tightly in my fist  
it distorts and flattens and feels  
harmless as a stick of gum.

Your bamboo hair means nothing  
to the others, but behind you  
a smolder of mountains hunkers  
like a mystery I'm doomed to solve.

**William Doreski's** work has appeared in various online and print journals and in several collections, most recently *Waiting for the Angel* (Pygmy Forest Press, 2009).