

Martin Willitts Jr

Cow Barn

Thought I'd never escaped that smell
of urine and straw. It seemed in my skin
as much as the muck in I raked and hosed.
Was in more places than I could tell.
Leaned on the air. Squirted like milk
in buckets. No cleaning eliminated it.
My brother's bed after night-wetting smell.
There was nothing glamorous in this work.
At first it was fun. After a while it grew old.
From urine colored sun to when night fell,
it was endless, like a curse, like penance.
Days were squeezed like a cow being milked.
Years later, the smell comes to me in swells
like sea foam. My hands remember milking
the difference between punishment and work,
love and anger, heaven and hell.

Martin Willitts Jr has poems in *Stone Canoe*, *Comstock Review*, *Centrifugal Eye*, *Blue Fifth*, *Nine Mile*, *Flutter*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Lampeter*, and many others. He has 10 full-length collections and 28 chapbooks including forthcoming "*Martin Willitts Jr, Greatest Hits*" (Kattywompus Press), "*How to Be Silent*" (FutureCycle Press), and "*God Is Not Amused With What You Are Doing In Her Name*" (Aldrich Press).