

JOE WILKINS

**Even Now,  
or Poem Against the Crumbling of the Republic**

Old friend,  
what is to become of him—  
the boy whose lank, mud-colored hair  
is always in his eyes,

whose grandmother  
after six straight hours drinking Jack & Pepsi  
at the video poker machine  
has just made rent,

the boy even now  
rattling the hay rake around a field  
of bull thistle & cheat grass—

don't say you don't—

you know him.

I mean, it's never  
been easy. We barely got by.  
Didn't we

get by?