

5-1-2005

## Photo

Claire Shipman

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### Recommended Citation

Shipman, Claire (2005) "Photo," *Forces*: Vol. 2005 , Article 48.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2005/iss1/48>

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**after reading  
other poets...**

I don't know where your words  
come from –  
what fleshy  
folds of language they live in –  
at times like maggots  
on rotting tissue – other times  
like airy green-tinged  
sprouts reaching  
for sky.

I read your words and weep  
that I didn't write them –  
or else I rock-skip over them  
so I won't get wet.  
Sometimes I don't want to swim  
in their murky brownness –  
their swaying fields  
of cold elodea. Too much effort  
not to drown.

But the truth is –  
and this is the real truth –  
I exhale my words the same  
as you – and like yours, they push up  
through morning dirt like daylilies  
or spew like vomit  
from my gut. The relief is just the same  
and neither of us sleeps  
until then.

*Dallie Clark*



*Photo by Claire Shipman*