

Paul Martin

LAUGHING BUDDHA

Three weeks without rain, the vegetable garden turning
to dust, I water the limp tomatoes, the drooping
eggplants and turn the hose
on the laughing Buddha my friend gave me
one night without my knowing, placing it just
inside the wire fence that keeps out
the rabbits and groundhogs where he now stands,
both arms raised above his head in delight
as though I'm his long unseen friend,
his robe open, exposing
his huge, low-slung gut,
the water showering onto his bald head as he laughs
like some grotesquely bloated baby, joyful
for relief from the heat, laughing as he always
does, come bird shit on his round shoulders,
come blue skies and moonless nights,
come lightning storm, come ice,
laughing through no money,
through his tooth decay, narrowing
arteries, lost chances,
laughing through the year
of my three friends' deaths,
laughing the wide pure laugh
of someone who knows
something I don't,
or gone plainly mad.

