

## PLAYGROUND

by Brian Bell

Beneath each play apparatus  
a three inch carpet of rubber,  
skid tape on the stairs,  
foam-lined support beams.

Not long ago kids  
frolicked on firmer terrain,  
coarse, cracked concrete with  
decorative lucky stone aggregate  
poking from the surface  
like raisins in cake batter.

They climbed steel superstructures  
to taste the brisk thinned air at its peak.  
Walnut-stain hands gripped the rusty bars,  
wary of exposed bolts and jagged tack welds.  
stuffing puffed from gashes in jackets;  
feet kicked to find purchase on slimy metal.

Or bare pink-skinned legs would climb  
perpendicular ladders to slip down the  
sun's silver rays, heat apparitions  
snaking upward from the surface.

Or small boys would pile  
into the center of a giant sunflower  
each grabbing an iron petal,  
as adolescent ogres ran circles,  
spinning the dial on its bearings,  
jumping on when legs could go no faster.

Watch as a child's grip fails,  
tumbling into the crushed gravel moat  
to be trampled by the oarsmen.