

## C. K. Williams

### I Shot a Frog I Shot a Bird

I shot a frog

It had been squatting apparently waiting for something  
perhaps the end of the world I thought from its obstinate stillness  
on a rock at the edge of a tiny pond  
I'd say no more than a yard edge to edge

The frog was small too not one of those big bulls  
that lurk in the reeds by a lake who can scare you  
so solemn they are so sure of themselves their fat selves  
with their down-turned mouths  
and great oinks

I shot the frog  
the very small frog  
with a Winchester .22 caliber rifle  
because there was nothing else to shoot there right then  
or nothing but an inanimate target and how boring that had become  
meaningless thwacks into wood  
once or twice splinters and the thing was half blasted apart  
so  
so what?

Then there was the frog and my rifle lifted itself as though by itself  
aimed as though by itself  
fired as though by itself  
and the frog

well

the frog vanished  
not even a splash or sprinkle of blood  
not even a cloud of blur the way computers do it these days for films  
just gone disappeared vanished kaput

frog  
no frog

I wasn't pleased  
this was not as I'd planned it

I'd shot the frog  
because I wanted to shoot the rifle again  
someone had loaned me to amuse myself with

I'd already felt the subtle painless jolt in my shoulder each time it went off  
that very benign but definite crack  
in more than your ear

you sense it in the drum of your chest in the tangle even of your groin  
nothing like pain  
nothing really like pain  
but a definite crack a definite

jolt

☪

I shot a bird

This was another year though the same rifle  
the same person letting me use it

He was sick in bed nothing serious a slight fever  
he just couldn't go out  
I remember there was nothing to do  
so we took the rifle out of the closet  
and a bunch of those inconsequential appearing bullets  
hardly half an inch long  
and shot out the window first at a paper target I stuck on a tree  
but that was boring

then he had a model plane he'd made as a kid  
hanging from his ceiling of his bedroom  
and I suggested what about that and he said  
why not he was over that kid stuff

so I hung the plane some war plane a Messerschmitt maybe  
from a branch in the tree and we were going to take turns  
but on my first shot my bullet blew it apart  
nothing was left but a string swaying  
nothing to shoot but the string and who shoots at string?

Then a sparrow I think or a lark I can't bring it back quite  
so long ago was it I only picture some common sparrow or lark  
flittering down to the branch next to the one  
the plane had hung from

and my rifle still in my arms  
as they will as I've mentioned they will  
lifted itself  
aimed itself  
for I had such incompetent aim  
my hands would tremble  
the sight-thing on the rifle's far-end would swing  
back and forth and almost always I'd miss  
except with that frog

And now this bird

Foolish thing to have stopped there right then  
foolish thing to land there and stay there how long  
half an instant on that branch  
and the gun went off as they will and the jolt jolted my shoulder  
and the bird fell

It didn't vanish though as had the frog  
it didn't take itself out of the world  
it just had no head any longer  
it lay on the ground whole but headless

Do you believe me?  
There was no head on that bird  
only a body headless therefore frightening therefore repulsive

Broken clump in the dirt wings tucked into its body as though it still lived  
flightless and broken in the dirt  
almost the same color as dirt

Or so I remember  
I'm not making it up  
I swear everything else here is true  
so why would I make up a bird?

Haven't I proved  
I aimed a gun  
shot a gun  
had fun with a gun?

Had fun with a gun  
with a gun?