

# Phillips Hill

## HOW ART BECOMES WINE

The painted car is resting in an abstract swimming pool at a funny angle. A car is an abstraction after all and the kids did use to use abandoned swimming pools for recreational purposes, and what is art unless it's the half-dreamed inventions of form given metabolism and momentum? The young man got tired of the east coast art scene, thought he'd head back to something familiar, San Francisco, was drawn up north into an idea of getting back on the land but with a bit more technology than the hippies managed. He gets handed a half completed batch of Pinot Noir and it begins to create itself in him, with all the pieces fitting funny but familiar, like a boy who never stopped growing up with form, never best except when the world seems to dream along the same length of heartbeat and knowing this he steps onto Shandel's land in Comptche. Oppenlander Vineyards it's called. Internal combustion engines were something invented to burn fuel and use heat to generate mechanical energy. There's a stroke in swimming that takes everything a man can save up and makes of him a single unit, fluid in the water, beautiful to watch. Rust is one of the elixirs of the plant universe, now transplanted to oxidized metal alloys that reinvent themselves over and over until just when you think you're standing in the middle of acres

and acres, decades of enforced mechanical  
obsolescence, you realize that the vineyard's  
just over there, and difficult as it is to grow Pinot  
when you have to fight the climate or the soil, here it grows  
as if it were a nursery for angels. Here, the misfit  
and the steel girder and the products of human  
creativity all rest, as if the perfect stroke had been  
found and this Comptche meadow was the vast earthy  
pool in which all things come together  
if given enough time, and fortune.

—Theresa Whitehill, Spring 2005

Theresa Whitehill is a California writer and poet. Her work has been published in *Stags' Leap Winery: A Guide to the Estate*, *Saudades*, and *Napa Valley: Portrait of a Community*, along with regional northern California literary magazines. Her letterpress broadsides and publications are in the collections of the Getty Museum, the Bancroft Library, Brown University's John Hay Library, and other public and private collections.