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Allen Mendenhall was raised in Marietta, Georgia, and graduated from Furman University, in Greenville, South Carolina, with a B.A. in English. He then moved to Japan to teach. He is currently a graduate student at West Virginia University, where he is working towards a dual degree in English and law.

To Wyatt Earp

You were the reason I started to draw.

Sitting in the backseat of a bright pink rental car.

My grandparents in the front seats, bickering

About whether grandmother would make a good

Park ranger, I sketched your profile from a book.

I was obsessed with you, could tell anyone anything

They'd like, or wouldn't like, to know about you.

And I wondered how my pencil scribbles became you:

Calligraphic mustache, bushy eyebrows, cavernous eyes,

And skin like desert sand. You were nothing, uncreated.

Then a thought transformed to shape, a stirring image:

Head to hand to page. And there you were. My lap.

On that vacation, in Arizona, riding along flat highways,

My grandparents taking turns at the wheel. I created you

Because you created me: I on my pilgrimage, our car
Come covered wagon. My bright white shoes tall boots:

My never-before-shaved face mustached:
My hide rough and russet as a bison's backside.

Tombstone, Tucson, the Painted Desert and Grand Canyon:
They became memory, but not you, not the man I made:

Not the lead lines on the white and wrinkling paper,
The lewd likeness of the man I pretended to know.

Silent, demonstrative: you, your gun, my flair.
And now a paling portrait in some dark desk drawer.

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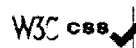
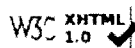
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