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Journal

The Vernal Pool, 4(2)

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Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.5070/V342038050

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Puppets and strings
By Charles Conklin

Custodians mop tear-filled floors
in the halls of Wal-Mart.
Crystal auras rip apart
like innards and gore on tile floor.

Screams of a child echo,
rebounding off the cardboard boxes
of Pepsi, Sony, Lays...
Their scaled claws seep into

The mother's meated eyes.
She stands as the sand-
filled doll scans and dimples
from its sewn-threaded lips.

They leave in their steel-barred
mobile car that heaves
at the blood-red light.
These shiny metal cells

locked behind thick glass
where trenches of asphalt
and fumes of carbon smoke
parch their rusted bars.

In one steel cell,
a teenage couple laugh.
Behind another fat glass,
porcelain mother, cheeks cracked.