

**ANYA GRONER**

## In Class We Discussed Homelessness

Everyone had a friend who had a friend  
who wasn't homeless but had given a guy  
some coins and watched him spend it

on beer and then drive away in a black  
Mercedes. I learned that no one is really  
homeless. I learned that homelessness

is a fad, a choice. "It's mainstream now,"  
a girl said, licking her iPhone. She'd downloaded  
the new popsicle app. She told me ladies

wear rags to panhandle and return nightly  
to houseboats with three-port garages  
and turrets from which they can summon

their falcons. "If someone were homeless,"  
the smart kid said, "*actually* homeless,  
they might try *trying*." And I'd thought

I was in charge here. The bell rang. My students  
filed out. They wore see-through backpacks  
and off-brand visors. One had a briefcase,

another, a machete. "Do you love me?" I said.  
Without comment, each handed me a dollar  
or whatever gum they pulled from their pockets.

Outside, a truck honked. The sky flashed  
orange. A man emerged with a loaf of bread.  
A child tripped over nothing, a curb.

My voice was like toast. Was I speaking  
aloud? I smelled Chinese food and urine.  
I was by myself. I was not alone.

**Anya Groner's** writing has appeared in numerous journals,  
including *Ninth Letter*, *The Rumpus*, and *Carolina Quar-*  
*terly*. She received her MFA from the University of Missis-  
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teaches at Xavier University in New Orleans.

**WARREN CHANG**

*Returning Home*, 2006  
Oil on Canvas, 30 x 24 in



courtesy: the artist