

**Absolute**

**Spring 1981**

## Self-Portrait 3

i have seen you there  
beside beggars  
kneeling  
i have tasted  
the very words  
you've tossed  
about you  
like offerings  
yet time  
circles earth  
in light  
and shadows  
and you  
sit here  
drinking

—*Dewayne Mathews*

## **Peyote Meeting — South Dakota 1975**

inside the gourd a song prepares to meet morning  
like water  
inside the drum  
our blood

our father rests upon earthen moon  
and dwells within the fires strength  
forever

within this circle of life  
we come  
children of God  
praying  
all night

*—Dewayne Mathews*

**Rosebud, South Dakota 1975  
for Crow Dog**

I

for a long time we have spoken our thoughts  
in the language of smoke  
and time lingers heavy upon  
the window screens

II

morning star  
glistens above our prayers  
so that we may know ourselves  
once again

“we must be like children”, he said  
“there is little time and you have so much  
to learn”

III

eagle wings guide our prayers  
gracefully into forever  
and morning is like the first  
pure and cleansed  
of sorrows

IV

today  
our greatest fears  
are pebbles to be cast aside  
my brothers  
we are so few  
yet  
we are forever here  
within the everlasting circle

—*Dewayne Mathews*



## Refugee

there is a flock that follows you  
around the world  
the birds of sorrow      call you in the night  
each is a number to measure the days  
you have wandered

    they are the houses of memory  
from that place where your dreams  
once thrived and  
all the miles behind you reach out  
like long fingers of pain

in the vacancy of night  
home is the child that mourns you  
where your generations have emerged  
    and its ghost leads you like a chain  
to a place you might belong

    even now, the dead you have left  
walk the skies of dawn      aching  
for your return      they weep  
for you      as if  
you pain  
is so unlike their own ----

---*Dewayne Mathews*

# All The Sky You See Before You

## I

highways of the sun      unfold like wings  
stirring the backgrounds of memory  
in these fields      images ride within  
the core of dust devils      across the  
jagged landscape  
like lost vessels of time  
they hover above the furrowed earth  
and walk with you  
in a corner of america  
where the wind refuses to sleep  
it whistles down the barbed wire  
like a lonely train  
bearing the weight of destiny

## II

at work on the old section line  
you pause to wipe the sweat of dreams  
from your eyes  
it is late afternoon and multitudes of  
locusts sing in ragged choruses  
piercing the thick heat with a metallic  
ringing  
their songs filter the hours (you spend  
working) in a shrill monotone  
that carries (you) to the threshold of  
evening

## III

and alone in the night you sort the  
parables of yourself  
you fall down to dreams  
you never understand      walking in the  
shadows of places  
far above the earth

—Dewayne Mathews





Wes  
Perry  
'16



# Wild Dogs

## I

in the late of summer  
the wind runs upon the earth  
rustling the shadows beneath the pines  
rattling through the branches of hickory  
teasing the persimmon      waking  
the old  
in nearby marshes      bullfrogs  
sound the gut of their existence  
like ritual songs      to a new moon

## II

they blend with the wind  
chasing through the nightwoods  
through an underbrush of jimson weed  
and thistle  
running and dodging along  
treelines of sapling plum and cedar  
they pause to listen at their own breathing  
and bark raspingly at shadows  
crossing the moon

### III

rummaging through a clearing of bracken  
in the half-light before dawn  
they peer cautiously into the gullies below  
above them clouds move through morning  
skies like animals through the  
forest toward the east  
and the great mystery  
following their own instinctive drive  
they listen at the edge of dawn  
and contemplate  
the wind

### IV

it is here among the rocks and cliffs  
that you pause  
with fatigued lungs      expanding  
then exhaling      again and again  
then with a weight of anticipation  
day comes

—*Dewayne Mathews*

## Mayes County (May 1972)

### I

upon feathered flights  
into sleepy evenings  
owl talks  
in lonely tongue  
to young boys  
hurrying home

### II

near low-water dam  
icy waters  
    flow  
        across  
            november graves  
and water birds  
rise into  
southern skies  
grand river bleeds  
before my eyes  
coming and going  
like me

### III

and again  
    we are here  
touching the breath  
of life  
in these hills  
beside the river

—*Dewayne Mathews*

## Pit and Pendulum

When little eohippus browsed in ferns and palms  
and no man was,  
yet the dark pit waited  
and injustice,  
Time changing all things, until  
cantering, cropping, foaling,  
clover-smelling, sun-and-rain-weined  
domesticated horse  
was led to the shaft,  
lowered into the pit  
to eat, sleep, smell,  
die in the pit,  
for the dubious benefit of him  
who was, in eohippus' epoch,  
arboreal, sharp-eyed and,  
though diminutive,  
comparatively clever.

—Joyce Marks

## Daisy Miller

In the moonlit arena  
    no blood of ancients stained her thought.  
Rome watched  
    and hummed about her,  
    seeing her ruinously among lesser lions,  
    strays,  
    running in the shadows.  
Her life was 'as she pleased,'  
    and to tease  
    she spread her own pretty claws.  
  
Ghosts cheered in shadowed tiers.  
Her hungry foe  
    cared nothing for innocence.

—Joyce Marks  
Sept. 14, 80

## Off Guard

While I sleep you enter through the wall,  
dark shapeless night terror,  
to annul my countenance.

I am in danger, fearing your trespass.  
911 does not reply.

My cries echo down the corridor  
where the flashing Pinball waits for me,  
hurtling toward its red alarms.

Into its eyes I press my fingers  
to kill the hateful glare.

A thin, tin voice informs:

*This device is presently out of order,*  
but fills my trembling hands,  
spills over my sweating hands,  
a fountain of gold and silver.

—Joyce Marks



## *A Matter Of Dignity*

Betty wished she had taken the subway, even if it was a sun-sparked day. She had forgotten why she had stopped riding the bus until the midget boarded, then she remembered.

He made his usual valiant attempt to scale the steps without looking as if he was some small child climbing the rungs of a giant's ladder, when the bus driver suddenly closed the doors, entrapping him. The edges of the doors were encased in soft rubber so the midget wasn't physically hurt, but it was such a senseless thing to do! The driver derived some sort of satanic pleasure from it, she guessed, because he did it every morning. He pretended he didn't see the midget, while it was obvious that everything he did was directed toward making him look foolish.

Sometimes the driver's timing was off—just enough for the midget to escape getting caught. If this was not possible he remained calm, with that serene expression of patience of his face, until the doors were opened to admit the next passenger. The moment the vise was released the midget stepped forward, extended one tiny hand to deposit his fare while he held his attache case in the other.

Everything about him was immaculate. His finger nails were polished. His feet encased in expensive oxfords. Betty suspected his suits were tailored since she could not imagine his combing through racks of clothing to find something to fit him in the boy's department. The proportions of his tie, even his lapels, were exact. A stylish gray, snap-brimmed fedora skimmed his owlish eyes.

Betty kept wondering about him. Do you go home to a wife who is my size? Does she treat you as a mother might treat her child? I don't think so. And where do you work? An attache case isn't carried around by everyone. An accountant? I wonder what.

It was obvious that this man could never be an exhibit in a carnival, nor a clown in a circus. No. Everything about him whispered wealth and education. Behind him was perhaps twenty or thirty years of experience in remaining an adult male while trapped in the body of a child.

She tried not to stare at his attempt to walk down the aisle to a vacant seat. She noticed that others in the bus watched him with mixed emotions. The gray haired lady smiled as he passed her. The elderly man with thick glasses and a cane sneered. She was surprised to find that there were two factions on the bus: the ones who were sympathetic to the midget's cause, and those who were not.

When he was almost to a seat the driver suddenly slammed on the brakes, then revved up the motor, causing the bus to veer in a zig-zag pattern.

The gray haired lady shouted towards the driver. "You make me sick! Everyday you try to hurt him. You crazy fool!"

The scowling features of the driver's face appeared in the mirror above the steering wheel. "Shut your face, you ole bat!"

"Old bat, am I? You should live so long. You listen to me, now. If you ever do hurt him, I'll be his witness. I've got nothin' else to do but go to court. What do I care? I hope he sues you, the bus company, the city of New York. That's what I hope."

Back and forth across the aisle passengers joined in. "Yeah, I hope he sues ya, too. And before ya hurt him. He's got a case already!"

"Aw, pipe down. Who can see him? Da little shrimp. Youse try sit-tin' up here, herdin' dis bus, and see if you can spot 'im. I betcha can't. Try it. I'd like to see youse try it!"

The elderly gentleman with the glasses could contain his views no longer. "That's right. He would be difficult to follow from up front."

"How about when he's coming through the doors? He could shore see him then, anyways."

"Aw, tell it to the chaplain. Tings are rough all over."

The driver smiled, making mental notes of his enemies. "Tomorrow it's you at the doors, you Ole Bat!"

“Now you watch yourself!”

“Yeah. Pickin’s on da shrimp is one ting, but she’s a lady.”

“Hell, she’s no lady. She’s a bat, I tell you. Plays blind. Puts on black glasses when she gets downtown and begs! I know what I’m talkin’ about. She’s blind in the daytime and sees at night.”

During this loud exchange of insults the midget remained calm. The expression on his face never changed. He had managed to seat himself without once losing his balance.

“Look who’s driving the bus! It’s God, everybody!” the gray haired lady shook her fist. “Hey, God, don’t you know there’s a war on? Why aren’t you over in Europe taking care of that? Don’t tell us it’s more important for you to be driving this bus than to stop the war! Hey, God. Dear, great God, are you listening to our prayers? Are or you just here on this bus to pass judgement on everyone?”

The driver pulled over to the curb to pick up a young sailor. His face still fueled with anger, he closed the doors too soon and the sailor’s left foot was caught. As the bus lunged forward the sailor was shipped to the floor, striking his head against the fare box. It sounded as if someone had dropped a melon against pavement. Blood spurted like red ink from a fountain pen. The driver’s face was a shade of pale gray as he watched. His features froze in a rigid pattern, as if was wearing a death mask.

All the passengers were shocked into sudden silence. The midget opened his case and extracted a small card, which he tucked into his outside coat pocket. He walked slowly to the front of the bus, bent over the prone body as the driver, in a panic, released the lever which opened the doors. There was a muffled moan as the sailor began to feel the first wave of pain.

“Son?” the midget asked softly. His voice was mellow and tender, not the squeaky tenor of child. “Son?”

The sailor’s eyes opened.



“Can you see me?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good.” The midget pressed a handkerchief against the sailor’s forehead, and held it there for a moment. The sailor tried to get to his feet and he looked as if he was well over six feet tall.

“Are you sure you are all right?” the midget asked.

“Yes, sir. Except for my left ankle. It hurts when I try to put my weight on it. That, and this throbbing of a headache.” He tried to smile.

“Don’t try to stand. Sit back down. Slowly now. That’s it.” The midget turned toward the passengers. “Someone please call the police and an ambulance. Thank you.”

A middle aged man scurried through the doors to see to these matters.

“I regret to inform you ladies and gentlemen that there is every possibility that you may be delayed in reaching your destinations this morning. I hope none of you will be too inconvenienced.”

He turned his attention, again, to the sailor. “My name is Victor Thomas, senior partner of Thomas, Sloane and Whitlow. In the event that you should wish to press charges in this matter, we would be pleased to furnish you with legal representation.” He smiled gently. “I assure you I would take a personal interest in the case.”

Betty settled back in her seat. She watched Mr. Thomas take the neatly engraved card from his pocket and slip it into the sailor’s hand. She smiled as a smug feeling engulfed her. I may be late to work this morning, but this is certainly going to be worth every cent I’m docked. The little midget may be the size of a dime, but that’s pretty good when one is among nickles.

—Vida Mathey

## The Other Side Of The Coin

I dislike expressions such as:

“The bottom line--”

“Your pad or mine?”

“A memory like a sieve.”

“Would you believe?”

But the worst one --unworthy of rhyme:

“Not at this point in time.”

—*Vida Mathey*

## Culloden

Twice out-numbered, these mighty Highlanders gather  
On this indefensible site to suffer well-aimed  
Bombardment of cannon, wind, and rain. Blinded  
Still by the smoke of their own gunfire!  
There is no dishonor, Ye Scots, to sheathe  
Your swords and cast off your weapons.  
That name goes to Cumberland, son of the hated crown.  
Gone are your children and murdered your wives.  
A century must pass ere the pipes can lament.  
Gone, gone forever, is your own way of life!

—*Vida Mathey*



## Bionic Love

Hold me in a cestus,  
I'm your bionic Angel.  
Here today, gone tomorrow,  
What does it matter;  
Isn't ass  
All your after!  
I don't remember laughter...

Little young 'n sweet,  
Naive as Eve,  
Why couldn't it be;  
I knew before I left my garden.  
Feeling my veins harden,  
Love's a cheap bargain...

Learn from once,  
Run from twice,  
Life's axis a pair of dice.  
Why can't I meet someone nice!  
I dreamed of blood last night...

Ramblin', Gamblin'  
I'm on the road again.  
Just like before  
Coasting memorized shores;  
I heard a knock on my door.  
I need more...  
I need more...

—*Angela Pressley*

## Vanilla Wafers

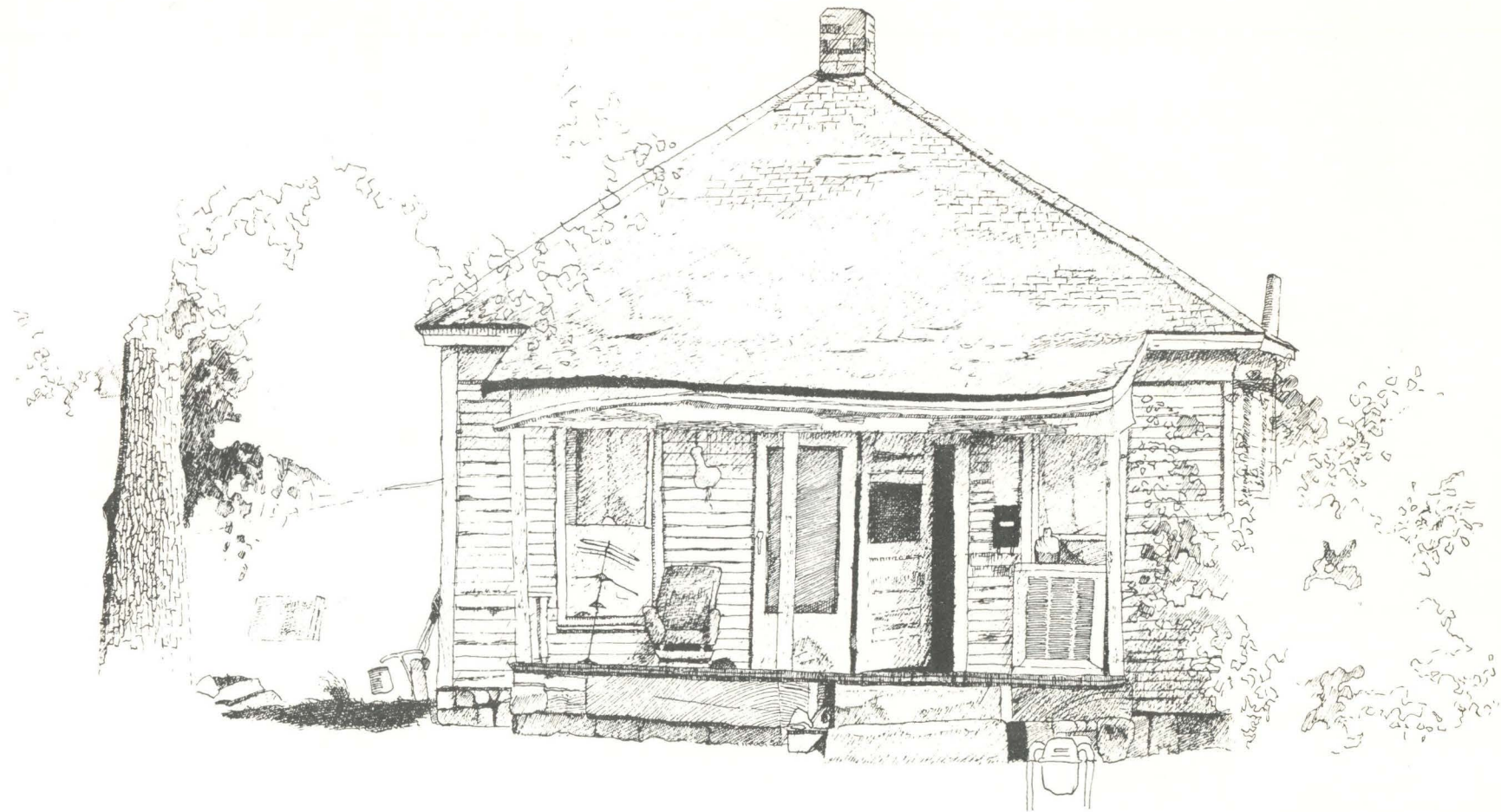
Vanilla people  
Detest chocolate chips.  
They prefer to be gummed by babies.  
No double frostings  
Nor triple swirls;  
They need the plains.  
Like aluminum cookie sheets,  
Imperfectly reflecting  
The image of their lives.

—*Angela Pressley*

## Ashtray Coffins

The shadow of time  
Regular shapes in the street.  
Speeding through the void  
that is  
Falling, falling  
Endlessly, but always  
still  
Meditate platformate  
Reflect, as a pool reflects  
Reflex  
Remember America  
Remember Valley Forge  
Remember Bunker Hill  
God save the Queen  
all is gone  
America died with the  
Discovery of plastics  
America America America America  
I am yours  
Wake me when you're ready.

—WDH

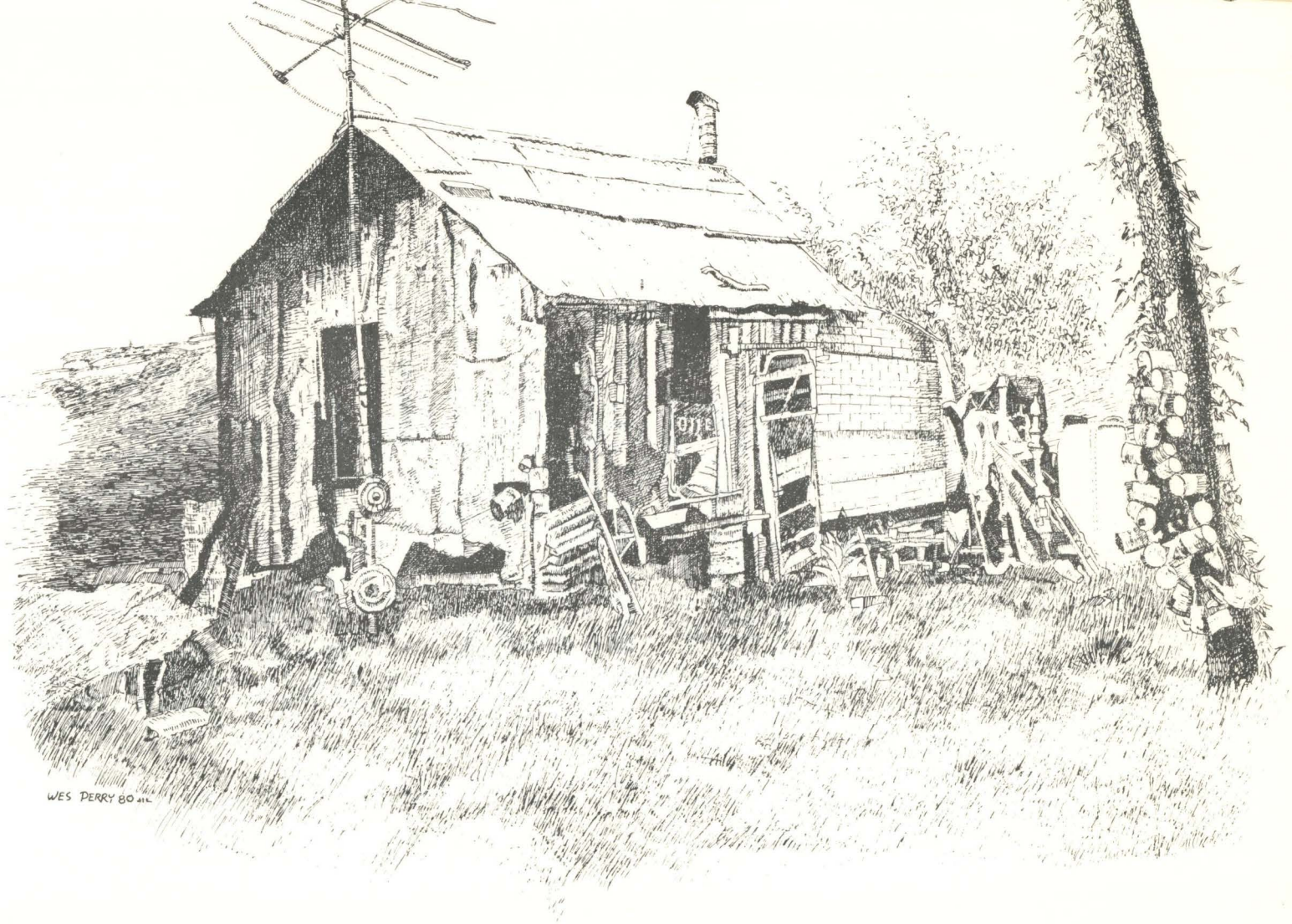


## Summer Storm

clouds on the mountains  
there's rain in the air  
this car is an island  
on the move down this ocean of asphalt  
passing-towns appear as ornaments to accent  
the passage of time through distance  
the flowing of green hills races along side  
distant peaks seem stationary spirits  
for the rowed fields that rotate as spokes,  
the total beauty captured only through this motion,  
    the rain is coming  
        sweeping like a great feather-duster  
        of long grey-peacock-plumes.  
overhanging trees cast not a shadow as  
they rustle their leaves in acknowledgement of my passing  
road-side flowers dance in colored skirts  
with prairie grasses green with envy  
A solitary hawk, wings like Picasso's hands  
glide effortlessly across the blue-grey canvas  
awaiting the terminal movement of its unseen prey,  
    a drop on the windshield, a few hit my arm,  
    like the harmony of a thousand voices the rain sings down.  
peering in between blinks of rubber and steel  
the summer storm speaks of landscapes encountered;  
of beauty through motion; and cars on their ocean.

—Jason Beckstead





WES PERRY 80 414



## Hindsight

leading by example  
can be like  
climbing a greasy rope  
every day

you get grimy  
you sometimes question  
the whole endeavor  
and your followers often  
behave as if they can see  
only your ass

—*GK Williams*  
*Moore, OK*  
*Feb. 8, 78*

## A Tank Commander Discusses Bibles

Marshal them  
solidly  
all colors  
sizes ages  
spines outward

Array them  
in tiers  
every  
edition since  
Gutenberg

See if they  
can stop one  
armor-piercing  
round

—GK Williams  
Moore, OK  
Oct. 24, 79

## The Change

Like oysters we wrestle  
With what lies inside  
Not seeing our beauty  
For we have not eyes.

—*Jason Beckstead*





Wesley  
Perry '76