Wind from The Willows

Wind From The Willows is published quarterly. We welcome all submissions, donations, comments, and contributions with great enthusiasm. Please contact us at Wind From The Willows P.O. Box 15095, Fresno, CA 93702-5095.

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First I would like to point out that the Wind has a new mailing address which is:
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Would you please use it to notify us if you are moving. That way we can hold off mailing your copy until you are settled in your new place and you have provided us with your new address. I really appreciate not finding a copy of the Wind in the mailbox stamped “Return to Sender, No Forwarding Address.”

Secondly I would like to thank Dave Hurst and Mike Karby for their efforts to get their submissions in by the deadline date. Speaking of which, the deadline date for the next issue will be January 5, 1987. Hopefully we can get the materials to Annette by January 17th, for her to work her miracles on the layout, so we can get the next issue to you on time. The only stumbling block is if we don’t receive the minimum number of submissions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Annette Grigsby for her efforts and accomplishments on the last issue of the Wind, and for her efforts to catch my typographical errors.

For those of you who like to plan ahead, or are working on a special piece for the Wind here are the deadline dates for the following year, provided the quantity of submissions improves.
January 5, 1987
April 1, 1987
July 1, 1987
October 1, 1987

Jerry Adams

in the dark closed window
of the pharmacy across the street
i can see my clothes tumbling tumbling
in the circle of the dryer
next door
sitting in my truck
relaxing to the stereo
i am um! Venus
apparent in the blue dusk
above the buildings
shines in the heart of Mozart
hum!

deh
'86
Dear Editor,

I took a while to really get down to reading this last "Wind" (Vol. 4, No. 2 at this time). Why? I dunno. Things kept cropping up and getting in the way. I skimmed it a bit when I got it and it has floated about my room since then, waiting patiently to be read and then put with my earlier issues. Today, (September 27th) I finally sat down to read. I got as far as the letter at the bottom of page 2 by "(name withheld by request)."

I've never seen such naked hate before. It's stunning, shocking. I want to deny that it exists. I feel the need to answer this man in some way. If nothing else, to try to make him stop hating. (me more the fool to think I hold such power) He hates me, someone he has never met, because of the country that I happened to be born in! This thinking surpasses me. I cannot understand it. I have never seen this man write that patriotism is a valid excuse for slaughter. Slaughter? Who? Why? Just because I'm an American, I may be slaughtered? Or this man because he is Arabic? No! I say! Again no! I refuse to believe that the God who is the God of both Islam and Christianity created us to kill each other! In the Bible, it also says "Come let us reason together..." That's in a Psalm. God talking to humans. If I aspire to be like God then let me echo the words. This time to the author of that letter: "Come let us reason together. Why must there be hatred between our two peoples? Why "blow the brains out of some American's head who is foolish enough to travel abroad"? Set aside your anger and simply speak to me. It's easy to kill. It's easy to hate. Anyone can do them. If we are to be true servants of God, we are called to do the hard thing: seeing beyond what divides us to what unites us. Let us affirm that unity. Your leader will never see his dream of a single Arab state unless he can do this thing with the brother nations of Libya. The Earth will never know peace until all men, all women, remember that we are one.

John Trauger

Salmon skies,
Sitting together.

behind us, a small voice says "Hello!"

Although we'll never have any,
We speak of children.
The Eldest Son

The year my brother died I was twelve, a number I once considered lucky. He was struck by a car while training for the track team. It was spring, roads were slushy and the driver didn’t see him coming up over a hill and it was like that. Years later, when talking about the incident with a man who had been there as a boy, I was told the hardest detail to reconcile in his mind was the awful sound of contact. What a sound that must have been. For the following several days Richard lay in a coma. He never did come out of it and perhaps that is a good thing for I sometimes wonder how affected he would have been. He died in the hospital from complications with pneumonia and looked like what I’m not sure for I never visited him there, being motivated out of some deep vein of fear. I didn’t even attend the funeral, feeling sure that those events were somehow connected to life in a different world. That summer, prior to our annual vacation at the lake, we stopped at the cemetery to visit Richard’s grave. I remember feeling as cold and numb as a wart while my mother wept for a lifetime lost.

There was in those days a small landfill at the end of the pitted and poorly gravelled road that halved our village on the lake. For most it was a necessary heap of trash, but to us it was a type of kingdom. I suppose that was why we braved the promised punishment of our parents to search its treasures. My mother and father worried about the broken glass and tin edges, about the refrigerator caskets and rusted nails that littered the spillage of that mound, but Richard and I went there anyway. We sprinted down the road, the way boys seem to be able to sprint forever, casting guilty glances over our shoulders until well into the shadows of the blue spruce and Saskatoon bushes that rimmed the road.

Alberta was outrageously green in late summer. The second cutting of alfalfa was harvested and beginning to yield its stacked freshness to the curing breath of sunshine. Each swathed section was etched in fences of oxidizing barb, the posts so weathered that knots stood out in whorled knobs of grey. Those fields were huge and plush, like bolts of fury emerald rolled out from some inventory of the infinite. Upon them in occasional locations were relaxed and spreading farms peppered with glossy, barrel-bellied mares and long-legged colts. And crisscrossing the crops of rye and oats and wheat were varying geometries of conifers, sage green like color dusted from routine. All of this ringed the landfill and strangely highlighted its presence against the affluence of such a landscape.

The mound flew banners of white and pastel outhouse
tissue like ribbons of celebration, beckoning us to that
trove of torn cardboard, opened cans and shattered glass.
Perhaps it was the lure of the discarded that made the
landfill so compelling. It was only garbage but it was ours
to scavenge under the lemon lake sun and we traveled often
to prowl the depths of its provision. We went there, too,
to watch the gulls coast in on wings of muffled sound
and poke yellow beaks into the rubbish for their daily fare. The
landfill was their territory and they resolutely refused to
do anything more than sidestep as we made our tour. Even
now they drift in the purr of my memory as saucy,
bright-eyed shavings of ivory fluted in marble grey and
black. I was ten then, soon to be eleven. Richard was
twelve, soon to be dead. We were boys, as boys will always
be, going down the road for innocent adventure. I still
walk that road, doggedly, head down, while the wind blows
through the gaps in what I am. It whistles the tune of some
hallowed remembered song. I just can't recall the name.

We had a slingshot, Richard and I. The pulls were
black rubber cut unevenly from tire inner tubing, the sling
an oval of fuzzy leather worn smooth where stones were set
and the frame whittled in awkward, adolescent chunks from
the crotch of a green ash. For a short time we shattered
soda bottles, thrilled by the sound of sudden separation,
but quickly bored with that pursuit and started on the
gulls. It was then we switched from stone to steel ball
bearings for the trajectory achieved was more accurate and
potentially more lethal. To say it was sport in any form
was to disguise something primal within us. A fascination
with death and power inflated our desire to a pitch that
bordered on something nauseating in its rhythm.

Our best attempts merely made the birds stagger into
forced flight. With enough errant shots they began to
disregard us entirely. Still, they moved, they reacted and
we continued to stalk them amidst that peculiar trashy
smell, that scent of old clothes, food left out too long and
fresh earth. Each day we waited as they flapped in over the
bulldozed edge of the clearing.

Since we took turns missing, I had the slingshot the
afternoon the big gull landed. Richard tapped my shoulder
and gestured, wide eyed, with a shining eager face, in the
direction of the bird. Behind me grasshoppers sang in the
foxtail grass. Adrenaline pumped and laid my ticklish stomach
on its edge. I settled behind an old tire, tareless but
supportive to the tremble of my hands. The atmosphere
abandoned time as if I could not possibly position the
bearing in the sling in time, as if the bird would at any
moment sense his imminent danger and prudently wing away
to safer distances. Yet none of those things happened as he
preened vainly andaid his head into a downy amit.
I was momentarily astonished by the wonder of his
feathers, by the visual magic performed when he rearranged
mussed plumage. The manner in which he took something as
ragged as a feather out of place and set it back into the
perfect symmetry of his body with the proper amount of
nudging and nipping had a certain dazzling effect on me.
The dump odor rose into my nostrils, thick, substantial and
bodied in decay it hung in my senses with persistence. I
breathed deeply to break the trance and let the sweet stink of rot fuel the hammering urgent rhythm of my racing heart.

The gull, looking sartorial in black and white, turned and nonchalantly searched for something interesting between his toes. A cloudless copper-blue sky outlined him above the glittering of wind-whipped leaves. I closed my eyes when I released the sling. It was a final moment of insecurity, a show of shallow faith in my ability to carry off the whole affair. By turning away in that last instant there was relieved some of the responsibility of success, what was lost was a wonderful bit of chance.

Therefore it was chance that hit the gull, for what happened is what had never happened. Searching for a shred of refuge, that unfortunate bird took a bearing on the temple. He was knocked magnificently off his feet, wings flailing like loosened helicopter blades lend rolled limply into a depression. His feet twitched. There was a puff of white feathers when the steel struck him and an insolent signature of blood. Richard and I ran towards the spot, saw the bird laying askew and knew from the way the breeze pushed up his nerveless feathers that the gull was dead.

Sometimes I remember that scene like a person watching through a window lending such clear and unobstructed view that the compulsion to turn away from introspection is almost as compelling as the urge to watch. Something disturbing happened between Richard and I as we stared down at the gull. It was a mutual emptiness and I suspect a bit of chagrin about the whole episode, some sadness and guilt at the shocking results of such a hungered for inflation. I don't think we liked the way everything stopped so fast in the machinery of that bird.

"Nice shot" he whispered, "You hit him dead on. Bull's eye!"

"He's dead," I said.
"I know. Woah, huh?"
"Well, I just wanted to scare him. I mean, I didn't think I'd hit him."
"It's okay," he said. "Heck, it's only a dumb gull."
"I feel bad," I said quietly.
"Let's get out of here. 'Mon, we'll go back to the cabin and then down to the lake. Maybe we'll find something on the shore."
"Okay."
"Don't tell anyone about this. Just you and me."
"Okay."
"Don't worry about it, Alex. It's all over."
"I know," I answered.

I handed him the slingshot which he gingerly accepted.

Our hair was always very short when we were young and something about that reaches me now. It seems like such a youthful neck that bore his close cropped head, a neck flushed in sunshine, bent in tense anticipation, revealing a firm furrow where the muscles flex in towards the spine. I can see all that soft down on the nape of Richards neck. I can hear the smoke-laced corgasms punctuating that moment with the acute percussion of snapping seed pods.

"Being dead sure is quiet," he said as we turned to go. Richards freckles and blond hair were so different from
my clear skin and dark brown topknot. Both of us had teeth too far out of arrangement to avoid the orthodontist. He had green eyes and I blue. He was my brother. Now I am much older and he is still dead, still back there in the summer fields of my youth somehow, like a season stalled.

The sense of chronology startles me for an instant, but only for that long, because time and its deep consideration are far too weighty matters for the mind. I sometimes wonder how I passed him. Or if I really did at all.

In my life there will always be that afternoon, hot and reeking of refuse beneath a baboon-blue sky, clouded in our departure with shards of puffy oyster shell. Some of the almond-shaped milkweed pods had split and belched white and silver seed, like gull feathers, from their gaping mouths. Walking away from all of that wonderful color, the color is the language of God, and dead gull behind them like some thrown scarf of pewter and bone meal, are two boys. They are walking away because some things just look better walking away. And that's how I see them, clad in jeans and sneakers and sweat shirts, one bearing the marionette-like rubber sinews of a lingshot and one just walking: and both so utterly alone in their companionship that unless one lifts the isolation of his gaze above the brassy shimmer of the rattling treetops, beyond the lark buntings dipping into the lavender flex fields, to the movement of the lake village beyond, it would seem they are already, as they would be in years yet to come, spent.

It has been eighteen years since that first observance of Richards grave. Like some caught after chink of daze, my mother and I stopped there again on our annual visit to the lake. The city had grown some and my bearings were a bit confused. What had once been a cemetery in the country was now more like a turn on another suburban street. The late afternoon sun made Richards nameplate a pale bronze. There were dates upon it and a name, and down the hill from the silence our two cocker spaniels rolled in the high grass. A tree near the grave had been cut down and all Richards wonderful shade was gone. It was only my mother and I, but I fought, savagely, not to cry though I should have. Men are like that sometimes, they chew on a congealed lump of pain as if it were some adversary rather than a purging friend. We stood there for a moment or two and talked quietly, then walked away and broke the spell of time. It didn't seem to have much to do with Richard at all, that place. It was only August sun and box elder trees and a little grass. So I swallowed my chunk of apology and yelled at the dogs for rolling in manure and climbed back into the van for our journey north. People are like that.
Mike Molecular and his Trusty Electron Fang

Present: "Just how big is the Universe anyway?"

This sucks! Why do we have to drive to Honduras in the middle of the football season?!

It's a secret mission Fang. We've been retained to make certain astronomical observations vital to our national security.

Phooey! That's what you always say when we're about to do something illegal, immoral, and stupid.

O.K. Fang. The truth is that I'm trying to determine the size of the known universe and I need to make some observations from a more southerly latitude.

Well, alright then... just how big is the universe anyway?

Well, let's start in our own backyard:

1) Our Sun and near planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth) are .000016 light years in radius.

2) The Sun's Poles, other stars like Alpha Centauri and Tau Ceti are all within 20 light years.

3) The Milky Way Galaxy is about 100,000 light years in diameter. Our Sun lies about 30,000 light years from the core on a branch called the "Cygnus Arm."

4) The "local group" of galaxies are 4,000,000 light years in diameter and are held together by gravitational forces. Even though the universe is continuing to expand...

5) The local supercluster is 150,000,000 light years in diameter, and is comprised of objects known only by their "NGC" or "M.G. Catalog Number."

6) The known universe is thought to be 400,000,000 light years in diameter. If diameter is an appropriate term, one of the furthest detectable objects in the universe is PKS 2100-330 at a distance of about 7,000,009,000 light years.

Next time: Mike Molecular and Fang present "The Torpedo-serious Fashion Statement or ominous Fad?"
Too Fast For Love

Why do people hurry,
from one place to another,
without looking,
to see what is around them?

Must they move so fast,
that they fail to see,
what goes past,
or pause to greet them?

Can't they slow down,
or make time to look around?

Why do people hurry,
from one place to another,
without looking,
to see what is around them?

Are they afraid to slow down,
because of what they
might have to face,
or deal with?

Do they move so fast,
to keep certain feelings in their past?

Why do people hurry,
from one place to another,
without looking,
to see what is around them?

Do they know of the beauty
--they've missed?
Can they remember
who they have kissed?

Do they move so fast,
to avoid questions they would ask?

Why do people hurry,
from one place to another,
without looking,
to see what is around them?

-JLA
In the late 1880s and early 1890s the political focus of the women's rights movement was the suffrage movement. That women should have the right to vote was an incredibly radical idea at the time, and it was supported by radical women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. The suffrage movement grew directly from women's involvement in the movement to abolish slavery and had the same basic roots: the idea that every human being had an equal natural right to freedom and dignity. In 1848, Stanton and Mott found themselves excluded from participation in the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, eight years later their determination to be heard culminated in the Seneca Falls Convention and the Declaration of Sentiments. The right to vote, the only platform not unanimously voted into the Declaration, soon became the right most fiercely fought for, eclipsing most other women's issues until well into the twentieth century.

The suffrage movement was born in radicalism and achieved its goal in 1820 largely due to radical activism, but it was not always characterized by radical women. In the 1860s, "the old, mainly abolitionist, pioneers who had begun the suffrage activism in the 1840s and 1850s died or retired, and a younger group rose to leadership. In ideology most of the leaders of this second stage were more conservative."* In the words of one historian, although working-class, Negro, and foreign-born women received the right to vote along with the rest, the suffrage movement was essentially from beginning to end a struggle of white, native-born, middle-class women for the right to participate more fully in the public affairs of a society the basic structure of which they accepted. With the changes in leadership, came changes in approach and the suffragists abandoned their original "equal natural right" platform in favor of more expedient arguments. In the South, they argued, white women were subject to laws voted for, at least in part, by black men. And in the North it was argued for immigrant and working-class suffragists. Anna Howard Shaw, president of the NAWSA during Carrie Chapman Catt's absence in the early 1900s, claimed in a speech in 1904 that "there is no race, there is no color, there is no nationality of men who are not the sovereign rulers of American women."* The suffragists were essentially claiming that voting blocs of "inferiors" held more power than their white women "superiors." Clearly, the suffragists had moved quite some distance from their abolitionist beginnings.
If radicalism had disappeared from the suffrage movement, however, a new crop of radical women was already appearing on the scene. These women, socialists, anarchists, labor activists, were concerned with the new social ills of the time. The framework of modern American society was then being shaped, in part by revolutions in industry and agriculture after the Civil War, and in part by a sudden infusion of foreign blood. In the mid-1880s, "millions of immigrants--Italians, Poles, and Russians, Jews and Catholics--sailed up New York Harbor and past the newly erected Statue of Liberty..." These people, the "New Immigration" as they would be come to be called, discovered the New World to be one of intense class stratification, xenophobia, tenement squalor, and working conditions that were deplorable by any standard. There were no child labor laws; men, women, and children worked grueling hours for just enough pay to get by, if that.

In 1886, at 17, a young woman named Emma Goldman left her Jewish ghetto home in Russia for New York, gateway to the "promised land" of freedom and opportunity. She was already an anarchist, defying her father's attempts to marry her off, thirsting for knowledge and action, outspoken and passionately devoted to her beliefs. She was well-versed in the radical Russian politics of her time, eagerly reading the forbidden nihilist pamphlets and following the fortunes of radical heroines such as Sofya Perovskaya and Catherine Breshkovskaya, the "Mother of the Russian Revolution." It was hardly surprising that, as her illusions of America and her values in the American anarchist movement. As a woman, an immigrant, a member of the working class, America closed in on her. As an anarchist, in her long career, she was caricatured, humiliated, arrested countless times (so often, in fact, that she routinely brought a book with her, when speaking, to read later in jail), and was imprisoned three times (once for inciting a riot, once for disseminating knowledge on birth control, and, at the outbreak of World War I, for conspiracy to obstruct the draft). Labeled "Red Emma" by the popular media, she was hated and despised by thousands, but equally loved by thousands more. She was scrupulously honest and generous, a practicing midwife and nurse, a labor organizer, a champion of the rights of the poor and of women's rights. To list the entire range of her activities would take hours; these are but a fraction.

She was not, in her time, considered a feminist. She was called a "man's woman" by the suffrage movement from which she had nothing but scorn. Yet Emma Goldman was a feminist, particularly as we understand modern feminism; she was many years ahead of her time. Her opposition to suffrage and her dedication to emancipation seem inherently contradictory, how are we to understand this in her?
As I've noted, by the time Emma arrived on the scene, the suffrage movement was predominantly a middle class movement, at least one branch of which was deeply conservative, puritanical, even racist. For Emma Goldman whose life had been spent in the struggle of workers and the poor, such a movement would have to be suspect. She had no patience for the middle-class suffragists, remarking in her article entitled "Woman Suffrage" published in 1897, "the American suffrage movement has been, until very recently, altogether a parlor affair, absolutely detached for the economic needs of the people." "Needless to say," she writes,

I am not opposed to woman suffrage on the conventional ground that she is not equal to it. I see neither physical, psychological, nor mental reasons why women should not have the right to vote with man. But that cannot possibly blind me to the absurd notion that woman will accomplish that which man has failed... Are we to assume that the poison already inherent in politics will be decreased, if women were to enter the political arena? The most ardent suffragists would hardly maintain such a folly.

Furthermore, it is impossible to separate Emma's thought and action from her politics. She was an anarchist and despised all forms of government and the structures that maintained them. In one sentence, she sums up the political aspect of her opposition to suffrage asking, "...is it not the most brutal imposition for one set of people to make laws that another set is coerced by force to obey?" Emma had no opposition to women's rights--to the contrary, she was a tireless advocate of women's issues. She, and other anarchist women of her day, based their feminism on the basic tenet of anarchism, that all humanity has a right to individual freedom. Margaret S. Marsh, in her study of anarchist women, notes that,

Deriving their analytic framework from the work of an earlier generation of feminists, particularly such singular rebels as Mary Wollstonecraft and Sarah Grimké, the anarchist women insisted that the humanity of women was all the justification their cause required. Emma Goldman's insight into the roots of women's oppression coupled with her anarchic vision of a free egalitarian society produced a particularly powerful feminist philosophy, clearly visible in her many essays, speeches, and throughout her autobiography and letters.

Six days before Christmas, 1919, Emma Goldman was deported from the United States and if she had been just another anarchist or activist, her story, as far as American feminism is concerned, might have ended there. In 1920, with the passage of the 19th Amendment, women received the right to vote and the question of suffrage became moot. Emma Goldman and women's rights alike faded from popular thought for some forty years or more. But the 1960's saw a resurgence of radicalism on a number of political fronts, including women's issues. There was a new interest in women's history and politics and Emma Goldman, long forgotten (she died in 1940), came to be seen in a new light, as a shrewd feminist thinker years ahead of her contemporaries. As one biographer points out, "Goldman's prediction of how little benefit women would actually gain from the vote has turned out to be accurate, even to this day." "In the short run," writes Margaret S. Marsh,
the organized suffragists seemed to have been following the most assured path to equality. In the long run, however, American society still struggles with the issue abandoned by them but kept alive by the unsuccessful, unpragmatic anarchist feminists.¹¹

That women today would have the right to vote and yet still be oppressed was common sense logic to Emma, who wrote more than 80 years ago that “true emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in the courts. It begins in woman’s soul.”¹² Emma Goldman believed that regardless of any external gain, as in politics, or the job market, for a woman to be truly free, it is “far more important for her to begin with her inner regeneration, to cut loose from the weight of prejudices, traditions, and customs.”¹³ This idea, embodied in consciousness-raising groups, is one of the foundations of modern feminism. Emma “recognized issues of sexuality and the family as absolutely basic to women’s oppression.”¹⁴ The insistence by anarchist women that the roots of inequality lay in the domestic relationship has surfaced as modern feminists recognize the inability of legal and political reform to assure complete equality. The attempt to create a balance within sexual and familial relationships is one of the major problems bequeathed to feminists of the late twentieth century.¹⁵

Emma Goldman was the quintessential radical, and anarchist, and for many this brings to mind images of violence and chaos. It may be thought that her anarchism somehow occluded her feminism or rendered it worthless, but this is not the case. Alix Kates Schulman, in her article “Emma Goldman, ‘Anarchist Queen’”, writes that

Insofar as feminism is more that simply a movement to help women under capitalism get ahead, Goldman’s anarchism worked for, and not against her feminism. Anarchism, by definition, and radical feminism as it has evolved, share many premises, for both are anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian. Both operate through loose, voluntary social organization from the bottom up, relying on collective activity by small groups; both favor direct action to promote change. As the anarchofeminist Lynn Farrow wrote a few years ago, “Feminism practices what anarchism preaches.”¹⁶

In the final analysis, Emma Goldman’s radicalism was squarely in line with both the early radicalism from which sprang the suffrage movement and the radical elements of modern feminism. If nothing else, they are united by one shared idea, that all humanity has an equal natural right to freedom.

notes:
² Kraditor, p. xiv
³ Kraditor, p. 126
⁴ Kraditor, p. 123
Goldman, pp. 53-54
Goldman, p. 53
Schulman, p. 225
Marsh, p. 64
Ibid., p. 167
Schulman, p. 224
Marsh, p. 64
Schulman, p. 227
THANKS FOR THE TIME OF DAY

This moment, as you walk away,
Undaunted by the obvious questions our small exchange brings,
I hate you.

I hate you for your insensitivity, for your denial,
For your calm composure.
I hate you for your facade of righteousness,
For acting as though nothing's wrong or needs be said,
Hiding in your misconception of 'total honesty'
Outwardly unresponsive to my presence.

Your cruelty amazes me;
Your unaffected manner crushes me;
Your insensitivity deals me a fatal agonizing blow.

At this moment, I hate you.

-RJSL

UNTITLED

Passing each other beneath a porch light,
As I flee an awkward situation,

(How much do you hate me
for how badly I hurt you?)

We make shy small talk.
Three feet from me
You steal my breath.
I never wanted you more,
But for what? Not a future.
A variety of guilts
Stand between us,
So I go down stairs.

jack r. at francis 7/86
I would like to dedicate this issue of the Wind to Daniel James (Jim) Eidsen, who committed suicide two months before his 28th birthday. He was a good friend and I miss him. If I wasn't so damned human maybe I could make some sense of it... —d. hurst

jim (1958-1986)
you were like a brother to me
when we were high school
but then our different lives—
we did not seem to have much in common later—
a friendship of memories and laughter
we were closer than I thought
in between our brotherhood and friendship
becoming adults in our separate ways
we were always somewhere else
when we needed each other most
we were aim and aimlessness you and I
but we were closer than I thought
I was there once jim
living out of my car on ocean beach
with all tomorrow and hope
just so many meaningless words—
when a young woman begged me for spare change
as if I had any money to eat
I walked away my whole being
were dirty streaks and angular bones
like the tears dried on her face—
one drizzling day the words all stopped
and I sat in an empty schoolyard
on the edge of a blank sheet abyss
and leaned out
never suspecting after all
I would be the fumbling writer here
unable in the absence of a note
to grasp your not-here
what I need to understand is
where in those years from brothers to friends
did we trade places
we were closer than I thought
—d.r.h. 1986