

Eternity Blues

BY HAYDEN CARRUTH

I just had the old Dodge in the shop
with that same damned front-end problem,
and I was out, so to speak, for a test run,
loafing along, maybe 35 m.p.h.,
5 down the old Corvallis road,
holding her out of the ruts and potholes.
That's out in Montana, the Bitterroot Valley.
Long ways from home is how they say it.
Long ways from home, boys, long long ways from home.
10 Might as well not put this clunker in the shop
and keep my hard-earned in my pocket,
she wobbles and humps like a scared rabbit.
But it's a real fine summer day in Corvallis,
and I'm loafing along watching the sprayers
15 do their slow drag on the fields of alfalfa,
and I come to a side road with a little green sign
says "Kurtz Lane" and I said to myself out loud,
"Mistah Kurtz—he alive. Him doing just fine,"
because of the sign, you see, and because I'm lonesome
20 and maybe kind of bitter in spite of the sunshine.
It's still a goddamn long ways from home.
That's one thing, though, that *Heart of Darkness*,
I read that story every year, I never forget
that crazy old son-of-a-bitch, that Kurtz.
25 And the next thing I see about a quarter-mile
down the road is somebody small on the shoulder,
a kid looking for a ride home, I figure.
And he's a kid all right, maybe ten or eleven,
but no Montana boy, he's an Oriental,
30 one of those Laotians that got resettled.
Can't figure why they brought them to Montana.
He's got those big eyes and caved-in cheeks
like the pictures on the TV during Vietnam,
and his mouth is open a little. I say to myself,
35 I'll give him a ride if he wants, and I even
begin to slow down, but he didn't
put up his thumb. Just when I went by, he waved,
real quick and shy, but still like he was trying
to reach me. I drove on. Then I bust out crying.

Billiards

BY WALKER GIBSON

Late of the jungle, wild and dim,
Sliced from the elephant's ivory limb,
Painted, polished, here these spheres
Rehearse their civilized careers--
5 Trapped in a geometric roil,
Exhibit impact and recoil
Politely, in a farce of force.
For this, I utter no remorse
But praise the complicated plan
10 That organizes beast and man
In patterns so superbly styled,
Late of the jungle, dim and wild.

Joseph Conrad

BY RUTH SCHULER WILDES

Polish sea captain
penning tales of ships
and whales, of mists /and fog and solitude
at sea. You recorded /shapeless shores
5 and fortresses of rock :
on the other side of the horizon.
You wrote heroic sagas
of frail men tested / in turbulent terrains,
of treacherous voyages
10 and primitive passions,
cruel crashing seas,
coral beaches, reefs and shoals
and the aroma of terror
breaking men's minds / beneath tropical suns.
15 You imveiled forbidden truths
and etched reality onto
the realm of literature.

by e e cummings

**no men, if men are gods;but if gods must
be men, the sometimes only man is this
(most common,for each anguish is his grief;
and, for his joy is more than joy, most rare)
5 a fiend, if fiends speak truth; if angels burn
by their own generous completely light,
an angel; or (as various worlds he'll spurn
rather than fail immeasurable fate)
coward, clown, traitor, idiot, dreamer, beast such
10 was a poet and shall be and is
--who'll solve the depths of horror to defend
a sunbeam's architecture with his life:
and carve immortal jungles of despair
to hold a mountain's heartbeat in his hand**