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.,
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.
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 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 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.
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, 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,
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--

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

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

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

and primitive passions,
cruel crashing seas,
coral beaches, reefs and shoals
and the aroma of terror
breaking men's minds / beneath tropical suns.

You imveiled forbidden truths
and etched reality onto
the realm of literature.
Gruesome World Capitalist World
(Gottfried Benn, in a radio interview with Johannes R. Becher, 1930)
BY HEINER MULLER

In the hard-currency-bar of the Hotel Metropol,
Berlin Capital of the GDR, a Polish whore,
A foreign worker, is hitting
Up a very old man with a cold

5 Between the chapters of his lecture
About freedom in the USA.
He snorts into a snot-rag and yells for the trash can.
Still feeling pity for her difficult profession,
I hear two travelling salesmen,

10 Bavarian from the sound of it,
Dividing up Asia: WELL I WOULD LIKE MALAYSIA
THAILAND KOREA TOO IS PART OF IT
WELL I WOULD ALSO PLAN THE CROSS-TRACK SYSTEM
FOR YEMEN THEN

15 THAT WOULD TAKE CARE OF IT
CHINA IS PART OF IT TOO
CHINA IS THE ONLY PROJECT THAT'S BEEN SOLD.
In the elevated train Zoologischer Garten
Friedrichstrasse,

20 I came to know two citizens of the GDR.
One of them says: MY SON THREE WEEKS OLD
WAS BORN WITH A SIGN IN FRONT OF HIS CHEST --
I WAS IN THE WEST ON THE NINTH OF NOVEMBER.
MY DAUGHTER SAME AGE, I HAVE TWINS,

25 CARRIES THE INSCRIPTION -- ME TOO.
The horror the horror the horror
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)
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
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