

ANN STRUTHERS

*The End of the Day*

To watch the sun set at Wadi Rum  
we ride across the desert on benches  
in the back of the 1950s pickup,  
past the petroglyphs on the red rocks  
to the outcroppings smoothed by eons  
of time with sand in their teeth.  
The princes in their sheepskin cloaks  
breast the January wind from their new jeep.  
Sun diffuses from marigold to pale peach,  
persimmon, coral, cerise, sheen of crimson.  
Clouds' edges lit with gold  
like Bible pages, finally suffusing  
into cool mist, fine as silk.

Lawrence and the Arab army  
camped here, exhausted but exhilarated  
because the Turks at Aqaba thought  
no one could cross the fierce wilderness  
behind them. Camels ridden hard,  
men ridden harder by their fantastic hopes,  
tomorrow their triumph. I can still feel  
it here where Lawrence sat, knowing the sun  
that evening set on an age, and he must have shivered  
as I do, as he thought of what was to come.