

## For Willa Cather / Judith Moffett

Now whatever I glimpse qualifies the vast  
disc whose rim is the horizon. Past  
cornfields rumpling to the world's edge  
and over, past haystacks shaped into

great coarse-grained breadloaves,  
I am driving alone across Nebraska. I  
in my midget car am the circle's moving  
center, the whole horizon slides west

with me as the highway slides under,  
soil off a moldboard. Bicycle pince-nez  
glinting, one aluminum camper after  
another swings around me, outrageously

exceeding the dream-slow fuel-poor downward-  
adjusted speed limit. My car, blue dot  
humming through the trackless mirage-slow  
sea of grass's memory, steadily

exceeds the speed limit by so little  
no cop could possibly care, and passes only  
the fixed things I-80 ruts and gouges  
itself among: wheatfields; beetfields;

old homesteads the first sodbusters built  
soon as they could pay for lumber  
hauled overland from the Missouri,  
each house, barn, outbuilding

in its cottonwood windbreak rooted  
against the right hunch of landlong calm  
decades before the Federal plowboy  
leaned to his task. Their fitness here seems

absolute, but the contoured concrete furrow  
curves at the doorstep now. I know, I always  
know, that when I kill my pounding engine  
at every halt for tea, the perpetual

wind, blind and baffled, too ancient  
to change her ways, still will be ruffling  
the highway's beautiful shoulder-length  
thatch of blond weeds.

## Magic / Brian Swann

His relatives visited him once. That time, he had entertained them by holding an old coin between thumb and middle finger. When he snapped thumb and finger the coin disappeared. He did this with three coins until his relatives got bored. It's just a matter of terminology, said his father, not even looking at him. The structure of the unconscious is revealed in such tricks, and that's all. Time and space consist of nothing. They are hypostatized concepts born of the discriminating activity of the conscious mind. This *trick* is therefore essentially psychic in origin, and as such should not startle or even interest us. But, said the son, all the mathematical odds are against such an explanation. I don't know how I do it myself. If I'd done it once, then maybe. But three times—and I can do it more—is objective and palpable. Nonsense boy, said his father. A secret mutual connivance exists between those coins and your psychic state. Let us say no more on the matter. But, said his son, watch. I can make coins *appear* in the same way. And that's no trick. That's real. They're real coins. They're gold. Come as close as you want. There's no chicanery, psychic or otherwise. But the family had already moved off down the gravel driveway and out of the gates, which swung to behind them.

That evening, he finished dinner early and left the dininghall. On the way out to the exercise yard he overheard the Chief Warden talking to an older man. He stopped and listened to her, and recognized the name of the judge who had sentenced him to thirty days for a minor traffic offense. The warden was releasing the man at the recommendation of the judge for clemency. He went over and stated his own case to the Chief Warden. He too asked for mercy on the basis of familiarity with the same judge. The Chief Warden sat down at her typewriter and began to type on official notepaper. Then she looked up and said he was to be at the Barracks by five that afternoon. Outside, he told all this to a couple of women who had waited for him, and he explained that he didn't know where the Barracks were. They volunteered to help him and take him there just before five. All at once, however, he realized that during the short time he'd been there he'd grown closer to more