

All Pictures Are For Sale

The plasterboard walls
between the Men's
and Women's stalls are
shakily thin. Someone
is pissing noisily. You
can't help hearing
the tearing of paper; everything.

Back in the café
all the pictures on the walls
are cut-outs of animals:
monkeys, peacocks, dolphins
in parcel-wrap brown,
their attitudes frozen
on newspaper backgrounds.

In the far corner
a television mimes: soldiers
who crouch and run.
I know because you told me
you read the stories around
the animals once,
to see if they were random.

A sleek pigeon strikes poses
on the windowsill
in the sun. Everything
goes on: animals, televisions,
wars, digestions; words
reaping the world in lines
like peasants in a painting,

in a field of corn.

Wayne Price

Desert Stop

A lean dog carries its grin like a bone
through the rippling noon.
Three workmen crouching in the tiny shade
of an orange tree watch it cross
a football pitch marked out on dust
at the edge of some small town.

I was sleeping; I don't know
where I am. The coach is stopped,
the engine idling. Two soldiers
in green uniforms, cradling
their guns, are moving slowly
up the purring aisle. A woman
whispers in French; the air-conditioning hums.

The workmen shade their eyes and turn
their burning indifference onto us,
onto the bus's sheer wall
of flashing steel and glass.

Beyond the goal posts somebody
has fenced themselves a yard: a few scruffy hens
are dabbing at the dirt.
When I look for it again
the loping dog is gone.
The brighter the sun at noon, the more
the windows blind. The more the chickens
scratch, the harder the ground.

Wayne Price