

TRAVELOGUE (BLUES CHORUS#32)



Pale red sun rising
waterly—an eastern expanse
of purple sage and scrub pine
starting to shimmer in the desert morning...

Fresh yellow and green buds, still moist
from the cool night, on the pine
betray the desolation beyond—an “Indian” reservation,
sun-scorched shanties, bleached bones of graveyard cars and trucks...

A small untidy blight
lodged between the highway billboards
for turquoise and onyx trading posts
just ahead...

A nation in motion—
the past Sunday, sleek cabined semis
were lined up dozens deep

at the “Love’s” truck stop...

On the four Interstate lanes of fresh asphalt
RV’s whiz by—all tinted glass
and air-conditioned isolation...
In the neat rows of pumps, our Volvo,

its rear cross-hatched with feminist bumper stickers,
seems quaint...
Earlier we rolled past
casino after casino—

that American monument to possibility
(however long shot it may be).
Like worker bees forming artificial honeycombs,
semis and RV’s filled the parking lots

Dropping down through Nevada,
the sun danced along
the straight line of tarmac
stretched to the horizon...

Not much on either side
except square-holed, weed-filled ghosts,
vacant reminders
of Westward Ho!

Las Vegas itself
resplendent with sprawling new

subdivision after subdivision.
Plenty of newly prosperous—

in this Land of Empire the talent
paying homage
at the spinning alter
of that roulette Wheel of Fortuna...

At Santa Fe we skipped
the merchant's Canyon, with its
meticulously crafted turquoise and silver,
in favor of the Georgia O'Keefe museum. Inside

the time-wrinkled sandstone hills through which we'd driven,
dotted with green pine, log and peach-tinted adobe houses,
were transformed by the soft blends, colors of her vision,

into vulvas—a desert abloom with delicate wildflowers...

Winding along the Rio Grande,
amongst sun-darkened boulders and skree,
we arrive in magical Taos.

Sitting in the legendary Rainbow Room—

in overstuffed chairs beneath a crooked bamboo ceiling,
the one time literary sanctuary
cool and still inside the solid, hogan-like walls,

still pregnant with philosophical conversation—I wonder
Where have all the Mabel Dodge's gone?...

Downtown, the galleries full of knock-off O'Keefe's,
the cute stores full of expensive curios,
the over-priced, atmospheric restaurants
fail to garner our attention.

So we drive out that roustabout
Kit Carson's Way—on the steep hills around us
tall jack pines, poplars beginning to blaze
with early gold...

Here and there, amidst the big modern
art and pottery studios,
the "Moon Valley" RV Park—
a broad flat patch of crushed granite

next to the new golf course—
sit rusted-yellow school buses
tucked into nooks and crannies
of someone's one-time notion of a homestead...

In the rear window of one
hangs tattered
rainbow shards
of a shade...

Deep in the National Forest
we camp for the night
at a trailhead beneath the dark
expanse breathtaking with stars.

In the morning, walking a frost-glazed trail,
I see three huge black crows take flight—
one turning
in the clear, mountain-blue air...

As if arcing
protective wings
over the mist
of the valley ahead...

(Photo courtesy of Gary Crabbe)