

Hoss Men

by Ann Bogle

"hoss": a survey that provides monthly and quarterly statistics on new single-family non-farm house sales

Previous day:

Sonia quoted Oscar Wilde to me in my kitchen at 1747 Kipling, Houston, "If you can't tell a lie, tell the truth and get it over with." I wonder now whether I ought to have looked that up then. We didn't have Internet yet, and the library on campus was picked over, like chicken bones, and the public library downtown required underground parking. Think of what guards once did to keep people away from the books. In high school, the "geeks," as the intellectuals were called, had to cross a line, like a picket line, where cheerleaders and their jock boyfriends sat on the steps in protest of knowledge, to get to the library doors. Call Sonia and ask, "Where did you get the Oscar Wilde quote, the one about truth, get it over with?"

We loved to yak, the truth is, in my kitchen or her living room, aware that her bearded jock poet boyfriend may not have approved our unsupervised pursuit of intelligence. Our books, not our books for writing (the books we thought we were and would be writing, and more than writing, but sending and publishing, a game still mysterious to us, though we meet people every day who have mastered it, their lines and pages glued together between glossy paper covers for which they did not "pay") but others' books, our reading (a fragment). The men forbade books in their non-absolutist way—they agreed that one lesbian should disseminate (word)—and recommended the sexual life to the rest of us instead, to those thin enough for it, as if sex were patriotic, as if the sexual life were the only life they would reward in us, not minding their anger and rage when it came to conflicting lines of ownership, the words they would

slur us with—*nice*—a number, what we knew in our rental units of “zoning” and “no zoning.”

The men in bidding us to lead the sexual life did not sublimate (Freud).

We did not learn “publishing” at school or how to turn “writing” into “books,” or, if we did learn “submissions,” it failed. The pupils at other schools learned more—they learned the books, and they “have” the books. For girls it is better not to “have” them. Living, as God said, is paradise (prelapsarian) without the tree.

Save a tree than to publish a book, helper to be a ghost.

Next day:

A few of our *compadres* in Donald Barthelme's school were “waiting” to walk through the door of the “establishment.” A car from the service would escort them. Donald Barthelme had died. Someone said talent was not enough. I said if a single thing could be enough, talent then. The quiet surrounding the elections was the quiet of a library or the quiet of the secret service. Were you with “them” or against? Were you one of them or one of the others? Were the others us or against us? Were you “for” war or against it? Were you for Israel or for the Palestinians? Were you an upstart who had seen a thug from your car window late at night? Did you know whom “paggers” were for? I said paggers were for doctors at the symphony, but someone else—who knew more about new technology than I did—said paggers were for drug sales, drug, not meaning pharmaceutical.

Years pass, years without remittance, admittance to salary as a professional, years spent swallowing the pills of conformity—I said it was like communion. What had the hoss men said? I focused on my friend's family in Jerusalem and on my early boyfriend from Haifa. Despite the controversy, the confusion over drug v. non-drug, a pill might be needed to balance the mind/body. But was a war needed to balance the economy? I did not think so.

There were poets' "wars," waged with toothpicks. The front was not in the South nor in the North. Nor was it out West where the bookstores flourished nor in the East where a tree grew. In Brooklyn? where rent was a little lighter. We were guessing. And what of "the short story," literary genre that proliferated yet ceased to exist after the "renaissance" of the 1980s? A few of those writers had gone down "early." Carver had died. An epic novelist, men reasoned, would live longer. A heart attack was reported as a suicide; a suicide in an epic novelist was based on "experimental." The turnstile let one slide in beside the others. No car would await thee at the airport, but the train would arrive.

Same day (as "next day"):

What I mean is: You—one—could go it on your own, research the mechanics of printing, hire or appoint an editor, see about distribution or wait for someone to ask you, someone kind with a good disposition, someone adept at handling her own affairs. You could litmus test her or more likely, she, you, about the Palestinians. "My tobacconist is one. His wife is from Jordan." Are there K-marts in Jordan? Can you see Jordan from your apartment? She could test you on "post-modernism." You could take a position. You could try a translation. You could post it.

The day after that (after "next day"):

The long interview referenced childbearing. A son before 30 meant two contracts.

Yesterday (the day after "next day"):

The hoss men selected one natural light blonde and two Asian-brunettes for young motherhood and timely publishing. I was a dark Swedish blonde—not gone gray—with a total of four fiancés and a Scottish name meaning "ghost." "Fiancé" could land a

redhead a teaching post, but could it land her a son-book on deadline?

It came down to fathers and schools, to *alma mater* and Dad.

Today (Oct. 14):

I suggest that we discuss L.'s piece as a whole on Oct. 21 and A.'s novel as a whole on Oct. 28 (or later); that will give me a chance to get A.'s whole novel from her. I have chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 12. A. gave me chapters a few years ago in Minnesota (which may have changed since then) and another set of chapters—T. says it is chaps 1-4—which she suggested I pass to T. over the summer. How many chapters are there? It's 350 pages, right?

I am getting tense as I write this because I also have C.N.'s rapidly changing and unfinished new novel parked on my hard drive and T.M.'s experimental novel. I would consider referring the two of them for an experimental "group." I am also supposed to work as editor for two journals and single-handedly publish a chapbook. I haven't heard from my own chapbook "publisher" in the collective, and I haven't been paid for this work in years.

The method for novel that I learned from Woiwode is to write straight through once in pencil, without (your or anyone else) reading or rereading it, before rewriting—three months or so for a 350-page first draft. To rewrite as many times as needed. To work on the next book while waiting to hear from editors. In the workshop at Binghamton, we met weekly as a group to discuss praxis in a highly focused way without "workshopping" chapters. Larry later read and line-edited all the novels. We heard read aloud every Chapter One at semester's end. Then we arranged with individuals to read next drafts as we liked. It was the only novel workshop in the country at the time ('87) besides Kesey's at Eugene in collaborative novel.

Gardner had died; he was no experimentalist nor was he short-shrift. People downstate thought "suicide." Everyone upstate

knew it was a fluke motorcycle accident, word spelled in Texas with an "x."

Agents, I have little idea. Woiwode supported his family in the 60s by publishing in *The New Yorker* (his friends were De Niro and Donald Barthelme), so perhaps there was little trouble in his finding one. E.W. met his at a bar. He publishes in Paris and Texas and just got his movie deal. L.R. sold her first novel without an agent and doesn't recommend it. B. met "my" agent at the Cedar Tavern, but that agent and so many others do not want short stories.

Virginia Woolf wrote her novels in the morning and edited her morning's work in the afternoon. She and Leonard Woolf self-published as Hogarth Press. How much is "500 pounds" in today's dollars? A room of one's own—with a lock from the inside not the outside as in psych hospitals—or no lock needed? *Angel at My Table*.

Day of a birthday (Oct. 15):

Donald Barthelme had picked G.W. as best, G.W., not G.W.H., who was best at Gardner's school. Twenty years later, a group of men arranged to get the best of G.W.'s six novels and two short story collections into print. They invested in hardcover. His daughter was already in college by then, his ex- still the subject of controversy if his name arose: I had always thought she was "smart." Some of the women had been strippers, but the ones we knew were smart.

There was an audience for it, for stripping. I had never been to a men's club. Later I queried in my hometown—no writers—about strip joints. Four had double-dated as marrieds there. There were strict laws in Minnesota about the width of the panty fabric. No panty, then a plexiglas window separated patrons from the stripper. I asked to go to one, and P. took me. He was from California. The drinks were expensive and abrasive. Men who looked beaten with the pole sat ringside beside women who looked like Henrietta Stackpole. There were two strippers—to call them

dancers elevated them but offended ballerinas. One was a teenaged Pacific Islander who draped herself over the pole like a moth. The other was a customized blond high-kicker. A group of four men surrounded the blonde where she sat on the edge of the platform to talk. This was before I had bought clogs, shortened my hair, and grown my hips and thighs. I stood there skinny-as-a-half in “big hair,” ankle boots, and black eyeliner. P. was in radio, not books. He had a sense of humor. I was researching a different man for a novel.

Today (Oct. 21):

We didn't meet as a group today to discuss and critique the novel and long poem because everyone was writing poetics papers on deadline, leaving me to question the art and practice of writers reading (again). The long poem veils its willingness to be about the poet herself, and like many novels under 300 pages (about the writer under 30) this one seems like a long story.

Later the same day (Oct. 21):

V, I gave Version 2 a rest. These (27 pages) are the distillation of 300 pages, sans any previously published sections. It has proven to be a pliable form—as I re-read, I'm riveted (even though I wrote it) until I get to a section about Australian birds and neurosis followed by the lake—the whole lake at a glance or that one fish—and “The Dream” and the rest. These are necessary passages (I assume that because I edited cautiously in '94 in creating a short work), but that is where I flag—around 20 pages or so. Is it me or did you flag there in reading it, too? I ask because I would like to keep working it a while if there is still a little time. The other 270 or so pages are in Minnesota, and this is the second not the first time I wrote so long and left out so much. I suppose it is a rant—it degenerates and becomes proof of inhumility and ignorance of very large patterns in the world (induction) as a direct response to being in isolation and eventually to breaking down. As a

proof it is sort of interesting, I supposed then, but I doubted people might actually follow it as such and just notice “bad writing.” Something reminded me of this recently when I read Tao Lin's passages from a recent book and could see how transparent and innocent and unaffected and mad the voice was—it is not that he is a lousy writer at all but that the lowness of the composition and the ambition of the project created it. If you have a chance, please offer editing ideas for the excerpts of *WOWHBS* I sent you, and I will try to shape it without leaping out of the chronological design underlying the full version.

Oct. 23:

After I had left school, I reflected that what I had learned about the business I could write on an index card. I knew of three deals.

Certain trails in my hometown are marked by signs with universal symbols on them, rather than words. One winter day, when it was bright like spring, and the snow was shrinking in its piles by the road, I returned from a mission at the mall: I had bought ivory gloves, a hat, and a ring. I had written a long story about a young academic in Houston who takes up with a rock ‘n’ roller instead of the man who had offered to marry her, the one who was more like her, because sex with the rock ‘n’ roller was better and more often. In bed with him one day, she realized that he might lie there indefinitely reflecting on China—the year was 1997—but not buy her an engagement ring, that he would more likely buy her an ice cream. Her school, she realized, might not pay her, and she would have to pay herself, buy her own shoes from Latin America (she said). The young academic in the story is a poet who rarely writes poems, not a novelist. By then I knew that fictions have a way of coming true—a compelling argument for carefulness, one we followed by model, not one that teachers elaborated due to fear of seeming religious. On the index card about the business, I could

have written “truth is stranger than fiction,” but even the tow truck driver might know that. Why go to schools?

After I had completed the beginning of the story, I set out to true it by buying items mentioned in the story—shoes from Latin America, for example, a diamond. I turned over every shoe in the women's shoe department at Dayton's downtown—all of them made in Italy—when the clerk, acting suspicious, came over to supervise me. I ended up buying a shiny pair of Italian black oxfords for \$163. I bought diamond earrings next, a half-carat, for \$285, reduced from \$425. It was my lucky day, the jewelry saleswoman said, and she was too right.

Deals were usually kept private, with little mention of money. These were not listings for *Publisher's Weekly*. I still had not bought the ring, the engagement ring that no man in my real life had seen fit to buy, concerned as he was that it should cost two months' salary. On the next leg of the mission, I bought a spring stone and diamond ring at the flea market at the mall. I paid \$287 for it, reduced from \$325. And I bought the ivory gloves and hat. Then I drove in a blaze of sun down the horse trail. I had not noticed the triangular orange sign with the picture of a horse on it. The car bottomed out at the bottom of the first hill, and I walked two miles home, wearing the hat—a woven one that felt like a basket on my head—the ivory gloves and under it the ring. The police were at my house two minutes after I got there, and I had to explain to them how I had missed seeing the horse sign. Long story short—I never finished the story as a novel—the sun down, I tipped the tow truck driver \$15.

Oct. 24:

It had been lost on me that shoes from Latin America were not available for sale but cocaine was—this was the 1990s; or had cocaine been replaced by speed manufactured in people's houses? Pictures of chemical explosions were on the news. Young people had burned their skin. One young man posed under a portrait of

Jesus. One young woman's skin would never repair. Her face and body would always look like that—an unmade bed. It was a drug war after the fact. It was the war of a generation, but who knew which generation or what the sides were? Was it Colombia flaming the U.S. with a forest fire of addiction? Was it Canada using the Internet to deluge the U.S. with prescription drugs without a prescription? Had it been the C.I.A. turning its back on crack cocaine manufacture in California while Honduran exiles sent millions in proceeds to the Nicaraguan contras? Was it a war against blacks and poor whites to help stoke the military and the burgeoning prison complex? John Kerry had stood up to the Senate, but he stood alone. When I voted for him, it was without fear. “My Crush on Daniel Ortega.”

Let's talk about “academic unemployment” for writers. Free speech was porn. “I'm sure there are many readers who can identify with high-educated Fred and her disappointment over the reality of the job market,” the agency in Minnesota had written about the story. “What do you want to be, a rogue journalist?” someone else had asked later when I had applied newspaper editing to writing on the Internet. He had published a story in *The Washington Post* when he was nineteen, a white Republican from a political family at school at Howard in D.C. He dropped out of college to do drugs. Now decades later he was bullying people at A.A. in Pennsylvania, a secular Republican opposed to the welfare state, to fat on people's bodies, and to bipolar disorder, an insurance salesman whose goal was to renovate his farm house and work three days a year. I never met him, but that is where I sent the beaver.

My short story collection had been returned nine times. It had had the following titles: *Table-Talk* in '88; *“Hymen” and other stories; Hogging the Lady; The Universal Girl for It*, and in 2000, *Institute of Tut*. I finally stopped sending it when FC2 rejected it. *Fax the Beaver* was its last, secret title. The beaver is a dirty trick, and it belongs on the index card. All the 21 stories in the collection have found separate “homes,” as people say in publishing (that and

“shepherd,” as if publishing were a gathering of Jews for Jesus), except one about childhood called “The Hostage.”

“Hymen” ran through workshop three times. It was another writer’s interview piece. It was becoming boilerplate for a textbook. Later it was edited until it was a story about anti-Semitism instead of a story about rednecks in upstate New York, egalitarian rednecks who were vigilantes for choice. That reader’s fear was of the hinterlands. One could hardly blame her that she had not read much in “the paper” about redneck vigilantes for choice nor met one. In fact, she didn’t read the paper, the paper once wrote.

Oct. 25:

Litmus

Last night a group of poets who thought my name was Alison or Susie invited me to eat with them at a Ukrainian restaurant. It was my duty as their guest to remember one fact and “divulge” it regarding my publishing assets. The obvious, though it slipped my attention, is a poem I had recited at a gallery in the Bronx that is to be translated to Ukrainian. I had momentarily forgotten it. The woman with a farmer girl’s blond braids whom I knew by her name and A.S.’s endorsement let me know at table—there were six of us—that I have an Internet “presence” that extends beyond explicable borders considering I do not “have” a book. I “have” a chapbook, I told her stupidly, joyously. Later I compared our Internet presences at Google—hers is vast compared to mine and pertains to two books that I could readily locate. She is a visual artist who is also a poet and disagrees with the academic study of poetry. I ought to have praised her for her letter and poem; instead I had praised her past revealed in a letter. I feel like telling her now about the town of La Crosse and the Tom Waits song about heaven. I feel like praising Truck for not showing. I had gotten lost and not shown for a reading in St. Paul and compared it to Arthur

Craven's disappearance. I rarely meet someone in New York who is not a Christian-Buddhist-atheist. The poetry hidden in the underground poetry market sounds gray through a cave of filtered light. The "difference" between Internet and "print" is transition.

Oct. 25 (cont'd):

My chapbook in the underground market is a "book" at 30 pages with color art. She had asked, how are you "there" (on the Internet), not why are you "late," nor why are you here, nor what are you (as the square-faced lady had said on Halloween in '90). 56, the traveler. 22, grace. Fiction, I said, not meaning it.

Oct. 25 (cont'd):

rose
helmet
fink
bed
light
one

Submission guidelines:

1984-2008

[paragraph]

Sunday, Oct. 26:

rose helmet fink bed light one

Guidelines (1984-2008):

“old school” wait single submissions solicited unsolicited
 rejection slip form rejection slip written rejection acceptance
 word count deadline S.A.S.E. postage envelope street address
 postman post office contract assistant editor guest-editor
 genre editor editor publisher Gordon Lish *The Quarterly*
 agent William Maxwell literary journal George Plimpton *The*
Paris Review magazine *nom de plume* *The New Yorker* Daniel
 Menaker *New York Times Book Review* Radcliffe Publishing
 Institute M.F.K. Fisher's “war cake” Virginia Woolf H.D.
 Christa Wolf Margaret Atwood Grace Paley Adelaide Morris
Nineteen New American Poets of the Golden Gate Lorrie
 Moore J.S. Marcus Knopf small house large house vanity press
 mss. double-spaced 12-pt. nlqr nlqs Times New Roman floppy
 disk word-processor Word Perfect cut-and-paste pencil
 imagination pagination margins draft revision proofs I.B.M.
 Selectric typewriter *Writer's Market* advance royalties
 subsidiary rights first North American rights copyright Lillian
 Hellman Mina Loy e.e. cummings Theodore Dreiser Gertrude
 Stein Theodore Roethke Emily Dickinson Sylvia Plath William
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 Joyce D.H. Lawrence *The World Split Open* J.D. Salinger Beats
 Dada Alexander Cockburn T.S. Eliot Bloomsbury Group Anaïs
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 Hejinian Leslie Scalapino Ron Silliman creative writing
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 Hopkins U-Mass. Buffalo S.U.N.Y. U. of H. Ph.D. M.F.A. B.A.
 M.A. M.L.A. A.W.P. J.I.L. Ch.H.Ed. canon theory abstract
 concrete ethnopoetics Jerome Rothenberg Pierre Joris Larry
 Woiwode *MSS.* Robert Bly Allen Ginsberg Robert Creeley
 Amiri Baraka Naropa Binghamton Community Poets Eudora
 Welty Anton Chekhov William Shakespeare Sherwood

Anderson multiple submissions simultaneous submissions
 Timothy Liu Amy Hempel Lydia Davis Linda Gregg contest fee
 contest judge grant application writing retreat writing
 seminar writer's colony conference convention typography
 minimalism maximalism pomo experimental conventional
 collaboration text font illustration cover design author photo
 writer poet poem long poem series poem epic poem letters
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 Duras Clarice Lispector Jean Rhys Donald Barthelme
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 short story memoir autobiography letters creative nonfiction
 literary genre "stuff" James Robison Rosellen Brown contacts
 family partners lovers friends newspaper paper weight black
 pen blue pen red pen PEN read submissions reading period
 fall semester spring semester winter quarter summer quarter
 trimester international translation Nobel Pulitzer
 Guggenheim Mac Arthur N.E.A. fellowship grant St. Mark's
 Poetry Project Anne Waldman Woodland Pattern Laurie
 Anderson Diverse Works *Fiction International* Harold Jaffe
Washington Review Mark Wallace *Black Ice* Ron Sukenick The
 Loft spoken word slam Richard Howard Alice Quinn C.
 Michael Curtis Rust Hills children's books women's studies
 African-American studies Asian-American studies Hispanic
 Studies American studies comparative literature English
 politically correct multicultural Macintosh Apple I.B.M. P.C.
 name recognition full-length member dues AOL url disability
 Chaim Uri Bob Dylan Leo Kottke electronic submissions paper
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(600 words)

Oct. 27

One light bed fink helmet rose

one
light
bed
fink
helmet
rose

Oct. 29

1991 Mixed-genre multi-genre intergenre intragenre hybrid genre attention span reader multimedia audio video CD perfect-bound saddle-stitched folio alternative book fair *ABR Rain Taxi* innovative style form friction process product

Oct. 30

Garrison

New Year's Eve-to-New Year's Day, 1991

“In Israel, a garrison unit (Hebrew: *cheil matzav*) is a regular unit defending a specified zone such as a city, a province, a castle or fortress, or even a single building.”

T.C., her mother and I were drinking champagne by the bottle. We had drunk a case of it. We were in for the night, not driving. Outside it was cold, many degrees below zero; with the windchill it was 45 below. The doorbell rang. The dogs barked. T.C.'s mother, G.C., let them in. One of the men was T.C.'s first sex partner in high school. It could take a day to remember his name, and I might confuse him with someone else in high school, create a false attribution. I could place a call to get his name, but I'm no longer on friendly terms with T.C. I don't recall his name, but it was he, the same jock from high school who had broken her. She was not a jock. The nameless jock was tailgated by P.S., a different P.S. than one previously mentioned in this story, not to confuse them. P.S. had been my secret admirer in junior high. He had sent me a box of chocolates on Valentine's Day in 8th or 9th grade. The nameless jock was in high spirits because he was in the Air Force, about to be deployed to fly a mission over Iraq. He and T.C. hightailed it upstairs, and I stayed downstairs saying “no” to P.S. We must have been pretty drunk. We must have sat there for two hours. I didn't want to drive in that weather at that hour. P.S. would not take “no” for an answer, so I left. I drove three miles before the car stopped groaning in the cold. I thought of the word “garrison.” I thought it was on her part like sleeping with the enemy. It was unclear who the enemy was. The enemy was not our military. Knowing her, she thought it was sex in defense of Israel. I thought in her horniness that she had not had a choice. I thought in my lack of horniness that I had had a choice. It was the first I had heard of a mission over Iraq.

Oct. 31

Halloween

My first thought about the war, then, was of “Israel,” but I abandoned it when the war opened in favor of “gasoline.” I had months before that written a short story, “Texas Was Better”—in September 1990 before the war—that begins with a gasoline shortage for boaters. I wrote the story within days of my arrival to Texas from New York in the vein of “what I did on my summer vacation,” but I had, in fact, moved to Texas and was writing as a recent journalist in the vein of a reporter touching foot in a place and writing about it. The “news” in the story is of gasoline prices going up. The rest is a fiction, a poetical investigation of private life, especially of “daydreams.”

-30-

November 17

Postscript

Camille Claudel

L.H. would not remember this because she was not in school with us, but I had taken one look at B.P. and said, “no, thank you” when the other graduate students urged me to believe that he would or could make or break our careers. A. says I like alcoholics best. Here was one I did not seem to like. He was an ad man from New York, and, as it turned out, not half-bad as a comic poet. I have a stubborn streak. Perhaps B.P. made it for E.W. but broke it for the rest of us. Who among us is tenured? E.W. B.P. is E.W.'s literary executor. Is T.M. tenured? Did T.M. go through B.P.? A. and R.H. say T.M. is a sociopath. Is T.M. “missing”? T.M. got A. her “job.” Is M.M. still “missing”? Why did D.M. and M.M. and A.B. avoid drugs or not encounter them until 1993—into their 30s? What was going on in 1993? That is when I met G. and saw A. there in her cocktail dress. G. was on coke in high school. A. reminds us that T.M.'s

mother was schizophrenic. Am I still missing something? Was I “missing”? I was at home not writing. The therapist said repeatedly to write for therapy only, but it was counter to training, so I sat. Later I wrote about that. Six days at the psych hospital in Houston, so I missed a few conversations. Do the women who published books remember B.P.? L.A.M. may be tenured. B.P. was after her time. Is my forgetting B.P. why I said the other day that I have a life, not a career—I have a life, not a cigarette and coffee sobriety?

T. called B.P. the other day and put us on the phone together. We talked about squirrels. I told him that I was making a chapbook for someone in a chapbook collective, and he said that sounded “creative.” Does it? I will just be dropping someone else's work at the printer and paying for it. I am not to the point of asking B.P. to read my poems.

You may have heard A. say that only one of the poems in my poetry chapbook, my second, the one called “Borgo Was 29 on His Birthday” is glad to be female. I suspect that A. likes that poem because it has the word “consumerism” in it, not because it is glad to be female. The female speaker remembers for him because he forgets—is remembering female? and forgetting male? I thought the rememberer in “Head” enjoys watching him from his ceiling—the man in the poem, who is stoned, yet atoned, in his 10th step, exactly where he started. A.'s husband likes my vanity poem, the one I wrote in 1983 but did not submit for purchase until many years later, when I ordered in hardcover for my mother. When I presented it to her, I said, “This is not prestigious.” That vanity press had gotten more flack than usual because with W.D. Snodgrass at the helm, and larger cash prizes than most prestigious grants, people might mistake it for one of those. She laughed because she liked it, anyway. *Touch of Tomorrow* is the name of the volume.

Gals. Girls. Ladies. T. can't pronounce the plural and says “woman” for “women.” L., my former “hick” friend whom A. met, says “gals.” So L. sings but doesn't write. She sings a drastically deep and sonorous form of the blues and tells everyone to kiss her white ass. She is 5'2" and weighs 105 pounds—which is not fat, by

the way. She dropped out of college at 79 pounds. She remembers witnessing the rape of her poodle when she was young by a much larger dog, a mutt. Then Coco had one baby. L.'s nose is African as my green eyes. She gets Brazilians. She doesn't like the Jewish people due to the day the school canceled Christmas. She cannot forget it. She cried over it when she told the story to her Jewish woman friend, a bartender, who could not get enough of her. Many alcoholics in L.'s clan. Her dad was in the bar equipment and bar business. He died at 32 of a heart attack, but some of the kids said he had been shot at the airport. She is Catholic/Lutheran but nothing really, which is why it jolted her not to worship Christmas at school. It jolted me less, and I loved the dredel song. We went to Congregational church and had church music there, and my father was in the choir—these two men years later, Mr. Soules, who had had a brain tumor that had left a stitch near his mouth, and my father, Jack (not of Vanguard but of Gillette), whose prostate cancer had left him bereft but not without strength for the distance. He died in 1992, six months after my trip to the psych ward and the same year that B.P. got to Houston. My father's hair had been shiny and jet black before it turned gray. His father was of Scottish parents and brown.

When Sonia fantasized about mental hospitals, it was the gothic type that she had seen in *Camille Claudel*. When A. dreams of it, it is what? The woman the A.A. group stoned to a pulp was Jewish—why I left. She had been to Bellevue in high school for downers she had bought on 14th Street after early rapes. My family went to all lengths to protect her from her husband. She ended up “relapsing” on drugs she had never used before nineteen years of A.A., heroin for one. T. brags about heroin. He enacts shooting up. Does anyone go to N.A.? Is N.A. just plain out of sight? I agreed to go once with a schizophrenic woman pot smoker from A.A. Everyone was 17 years old. One man was 40. I said very nervously in that crowd something I would not say today except at an A.A. meeting—I was an alcoholic.

