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To Gunnison

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TO GUNNISON

Breakfast in Fairplay, freshest
eggs I've ever eaten off a farm.
First of November and the town's
closing down for winter,
layers of drifting clothes.
In vast quonset huts the county
keeps road-clearing equipment,
lizards of the rust age.
On I go through South Park:
Arabian horses, Charolais cattle
the color of old Meerschaum,
haystacks that look drenched
but they're dry (it's the strained
light in the sky that makes
them look that way). I go along
the Arkansas, its meanders
so turned back on themselves
that any of its cottonwoods stands
at the bulb of a cul-de-sac,
tree in the eye of a needle.
The road goes as straight as it could
be laid along the valley.
The river goes east and I go
on west, dry for a while
but over the divide
I follow the Tomichi in
to Gunnison, Western State College,
huge Holsteins grazing next
to the campus. I read some poems.

Off to the Cattleman's Hotel,
home tomorrow. Snow sifts through
the mercury lights in the parking
lot, orange flecks, sediment.
I say something to myself
in Slur, and it's funny.
Hotel beds are all too short.
Carapace of sleep.
Snow's rising in the passes
but I'll get through.