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## Mother and Henry

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## MOTHER AND HENRY

1

There is the hillside  
and the yellow grass,  
the stream, almost dry,  
and the dusty road,

mother and her lover Henry.

We are on an old road in California,  
west of San Juan Batista, west  
of the memory of stagecoaches  
rolling toward Monterey. Horses  
and shotguns. City slickers  
in silk hats. A trail of dust  
disappearing for miles and miles.

Black Bart.

Dave and me stick our feet  
in the creek, eat a sandwich  
and listen for hoof beats.

Mother and Henry talk  
under an oak,  
and hold each other's hands.

2

There is the road  
through Carmel Valley  
and there are the vultures.

Henry is out of the car  
and flapping his arms.

There is the deer  
dead in the road.

Mother lights a cigarette  
and turns to us.

“They have bald heads.”

3  
Every Sunday that summer  
we went somewhere.

I remember blood  
on Jesus' face  
in the Mission Carmel,

a big wave in Big Sur,  
mother running up  
in her pink swim suit,

sand in my teeth, on my tongue.

4  
We are on the coast road  
again, driving to Nepenthe.

There are the cliffs  
and the surf's thin line,

the ocean, blue  
and breaking,

way below. I  
am terrified.