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Cheyenne: Home, Home on the Plains

David Louter

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Cheyenne: Home, Home on the Plains

1.

The early sun melts the dark
filament of horizon, and the fluorescent
orange letters of the Cowboy Drive-in
Discount Liquors invite you to live
a life of men shooting pool,
deflecting wind and working the UP
coal run to Rawlins, twice a week,
to sleep nights lulled by a prostitute's
tapping on your motel door, and to wake
to an empty wallet, bottle of rye and pistol,
all six nickel plated chambers
lonely for action never seen.

2.

The wooden horse gallops
all day over the downtown
western wear emporium, reminder
that 1868 was a good year, cattle
grazing in the sage and cowboys
dying for a night in town.
Silk plants line windows
three hundred twenty days
in the sun--testament
to lingering drought and why
the principal business here
is defeat of change.

The endless view east
bears the heart of America,
all the same. Looking at it,
you will know what inspired
the couple's leap off the viaduct
to the coffin-wide rails of the UP yard.

Without jumping you can hear
survivors' words in your beating
pulse or in boxcars pulling away
in the night: Live. Live. Live.
Not because you want to.
Because you have to.

David Louter