

What I learned out west

Glen Canyon Dam

Wherever there's an Indian walking
backwards, she says, there's rain. Rachel
on the nametag. Navajo. Some of this land
must be hers, somehow.

You're from Virginia, she says, do you know
West Virginia? The New Gorge River? Their
bridge is like ours, ours is second
only to theirs. New
River Gorge, I say. Yes.

Design and style. We're all
standing here – spillways
tunnels turbines tracks
for massive gantry crane – because
of design and style, she
tells us. Thin man, Midwestern, plus
wife. British couple, pensioners. Three
German boys, no good
English. Sister. Self. Last
tour of the day.

Please do not take pictures
of security. Do you need that #
in in. ft. mi. lbs?
Volumes. Pressures. Rates of flow in
m/s. Yes, you may
photograph this observation gallery. See
the water pooling in corners floors
on concrete? It is constantly
analyzed, an engineered
leak.

Grass like golf
course, not
orchard. No trees
here. These men
most highly skilled in the world.
Please observe their images. Ask
me any questions you want about
power water Western
space the science
of how this land was
reclaimed the science
of control.

What I learned out west

I Sing Now of This

highway, commonplace and
deadly as time. Signs
mark the miles. They are my
companions and we are
gentlemen of the road. Seconds
crushed under the tires. Blood

and fur punctuate its
interminable sentence, the
flat expanse of hours
black yellow stabbed through
with rain and neon. Curves of

unrequited space pull at my eyes
drag hands and arms, entire
bodies. Calamity of place
less
ness, trauma of location
ripped pulled stretched.
Jagged stroke of light exposing

once-dark innards of mountain
range, spikes of valley ridge
scape. I sing its limit
less
ness, eternity of
motion hurtling tumbling over
boneyards ruins bridges, under
cloud-shadows and sundogs.

If I must burn the world to be free
then burn.

What I learned out west

We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone

Here's what's gonna happen, she
shouts over jukebox country, 1 a.m.
Renegade bar, Beaver, Utah.
Anybody I ain't servin
is goin home. That's
fucking
it. I've
had
enough. Need me
to walk you to the door?

Old cowboys a few fat
Latinos antagonists
of this one-woman
shift. She'd rather
the table of ladies
in the back, brother
boys with skateboards
balanced by the door

or us, perhaps, two
out-of-town kids, quiet
polite, silent laughter and six
dollar tip. Just
smoke, ghosts
passing through Patty's
Friday night
leaving without
a trace.

What I learned out west

A scrape

One of dozens, almost
indistinguishable at first
glance. A wound
got in fun, a simple
mistake. You
should've known better than
slowing stopping braking raw tips of
white fingers versus river current
Rio Grande Algodones after
noon. Now

new cut new scrape new
wound of what
type laceration avulsion
pulled-back flap of flesh hiding
interiors of blood and nervous
the actual finger the stuff of all fingers
can't fight tides with fingers, not these
picked-over pulled-at peeled plucked the places

of dozens of simple wounds,
mistakes. Indistinct anxiety
made manifest.