

history will not be kind

the land
where i live and love
she's unfaithful to me
and she lies about it
but i can't let her go
because i want her
again
and always
as when first i touched her
in blush

ahead i see the sign
for butte
60 miles
i think on bobby knieval
evel not evil
it rhymed with knieval
he'd grown up hardscrabble
across from the big pit
here no quaint streets
no sidewalk cafes
no shaded tables
where old men in white linen suits
played checkers
over tiny cups of espresso
instead a truncated reality
where tracked vehicles
clattered red brown dust
cacophonizing
a pick and shovel portend
for a life he could little abide
so he poached
and stole
before risking everything
for a guinness record
for broken bones
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for most
he was a sideshow
a diversion in elvis costumes
of stars and stripes
but for me
growing up
he was an american
laying it all on the line
time and again
throttling up ramps and soaring above
open boxes of
mountain lions and rattlers
or endless cues of yellow buses
an elvis who couldn't sing
a james dean who couldn't act
still he performed
without benefit from lies
without compromise
without book entries
he did what you never would

i see him as a boy
7 or 8
at a museum in great falls
in the cowgirl section
looking up at a photo
where alice somebody
is standing
as a roman gladiator
one foot on each rump
of huge draft horses
she's coming at us
airborn
in a ten gallon hat
and red lipstick
clearing a cord convertible

did evel see the photo
dunno
but i know he lived to do

whatever it was
he said he'd do
because
in this life
what matters most
is somebody sayin
that's one i owe you mister
im obliged!

i ride this morning
sensing mourning
gathered on the horizon
soon to accuse
those who did this thing
to my land
those who had no word
to keep
those to whom history
will not be kind