

*David Goldschlag*

## **blue mules in the distance**

i once heard about this shrinking thing maybe from some poet about this death thing how it shrinks a dying person and how the shrinking shrinks the family i didn't think it was true then i saw you my grandfather shrinking shrunk to where i could only vaguely recognize you in your own home and when you saw me you tried to shrink the shrinking thing but you didn't see me in your own home you asked jackie to check the chickens out back on the farm (later i asked mom who jackie was but it doesn't make any difference) you kept talking barely audible about the blaze a fire that smolders somewhere in the distance dramatizing the disease the shrinking the poem from some poet

you can't remember losing gold new gold watches in the freshly poured foundations of the new houses you built or laughing at me losing cementing my size two tennis shoes permanently you kept talking barely audible and began a new story (old to your wife in a day or so) about a couple of blue mules staring at one another wondering what the other is thinking and as you say they pass from enigmatic pastoral sequence to sequence like the old chicken farm of the forties i was hearing about

then i saw your blue mules in the distance stuck in a smoldering pastoral sequence shrinking trying to transfix their mode of shrinking thinking at each other and as they began to shrink you burst into song (my little becalah) barely audible and instantly the mules disappeared the blaze the disease disappeared the shrinking the poem from some poet gone on the first note i momentarily metamorphosed you back into my grandfather not shrinking and in my suburban sequence saw you driving the bulldozer proud like a cowboy breaking the spirit of a steer pouring the last load of dirt of the last house you built.

## the grey cat

7.7.90  
12:03am  
my white spotted cat knows i am high  
docile this time of day  
reading Wichita Vortex Sutra  
aloud to you  
asleep in the next room  
Tripmaster Monkey dogeared spread open  
slips off your naked chest  
the high like a shot of caffeine  
finds its way out through  
the words i read penetrating your subconscious  
"equal in nature to the Wheat  
that made your bodies' muscular bones"  
your bones curled next to the grey cat  
against the breezy night  
against a wrinkled sheet along the backs of your  
knees.

7.13.90  
9:38pm  
my black cat knows i am high  
stares cool waits for me to scratch its tail  
reading Baraka's Preface  
trapped\* \*inside my psyche  
to the ends of my fingernails  
because you are awake  
because i cannot swallow a single line  
the high like death  
dead from the suicide note  
he left me to read

“each night I count the stars  
and each night I get the same number.”  
your star hovers over the staid grey cat  
a transmission satellite  
beaming a broken signal.