

1986

Parking

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Recommended Citation

Wrigley, Robert. "Parking." *The Iowa Review* 16.2 (1986): 57-58. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3377>

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Five Poems · *Robert Wrigley*

PARKING

Today I live where I have always been
an adult, where I have always kept the same
job, known the same friends, driven
the same streets. What is it
that is not in me now, that has not been
in me for many years, that rigid
sense of direction that led me
always to where they were parked,
the coupled cars, bumper to bumper
or side by side, windows glazed,
sweat-ridden, sodden with fumbling
and passion.

Where are they?

Here, in the empty West, are they lost
so easily, so easily vanished into forests,
arroyos, the blind rutted ranch roads
to nowhere? Or were we—miners'
children, blessed in beer and whiskey, salted
early by the salty tongues of grandmothers—
allowed a wilderness our earth
could no longer afford? The times,
have they just got used to it all,
the motel lots each Saturday night filling
with jalopies.

I would not trade
the familiar bedroom, the creak of spring,
ease of middle age. But
somewhere I want to believe
the cars still rumble into place,
those hot rods, the lucky ramblers
in the station wagons of their fathers.

I want to believe the teeth still chatter,
from winter cold or summer passion.
I want to believe in an ardor as keen
as the homing pigeon's, who reconnoiters, banks,
lands, and coos like a fool in the dark.

FIXING THE WINDOW

It is the way some vandal left it,
like a spider's web askew—
a spin of shards, the spaces themselves
all hunks within the piecemeal shatter.

I tape the lines of it, follow them
as though they were the window's silver bones,
edgy in the sunlight. Then
I cover all the pane,
cellophane row on row, horizontal,
vertical—inside and out.

Serviceable window, light shedder
of slanted rectangles, kerosene rainbows,
and out of which I watch the school children
at play, rough-housing, tumbling,
half unclear through the distances
between us, the wishful scrim of repair.

THE CHORE

The night we arrived home from our trip, father knew
something was wrong in the root cellar.
It was September, very late, tomorrow would do

for us to see, but I saw his light later
on move quick across the yard,
down the low near slope, and disappear.