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The Nevada Glassworks, 4cc

Joshua Clover

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Three Poems · *Joshua Clover*

THE NEVADA GLASSWORKS

4CC

Ka-Boom! They're making glass in Nevada!
Figure August, 1953,
mom's 13, it's hot as a simile.
Ker-Pow! Transmutation in Nevada!
Imagine mom: pre-PostModern new teen,
innocent for Elvis, ditto "Korean
conflict," John Paul George Ringo Viet Nam.
Mom's 1 state west of the glassworks, she's
in a tree / K*I*S*S*I*N*G,
lurid cartoon-colored kisses. Ka-Blam!
They're blowing peacock-tinted New World glass
in southern Nevada, the alchemists
& architects of mom's duck-&-cover
adolescence, they're making Las Vegas
turn to gold—real neon gold—in the blast
furnace heat that reaches clear to Clover
Ranch in dry Central Valley: O the dust—
It is the Golden State! O the landscape—
dreaming of James Dean! O mom in a tree
close-range kissing as in Nevada just
now they're making crazy ground-zero shapes
of radiant see-through geography.
What timing! What kisses! What a fever
this day's become, humming hundred degree
California afternoon that she's
sure she could never duplicate, *never*,
she feels transparent, gone—isn't this heat
suffocating?—no, she forgot to breathe
for a flash while in the Nevada flats
factory glassblowers exhale . . . exhale . . .
a philosopher's stone, a crystal ball,

a spectacular machine. Hooray! Hats
off—they're making a window in the sand!
Mom's in the tree—picture this—all alone!
Unforgettable kisses, comic book
mnemonic kisses, O something's coming
out of the ranch road heat mirage. That drone—
an engine? Mom quits practice & looks
east, cups an ear to the beloved humming,
the hazy gold dust kicked wildly west
ahead of something almost . . . in . . . sight. Vroom!
It's the Future, hot like nothing else, dressed
as a sonic-boom Cadillac. O mom!
This land *is* your land/This land Amnesia—
they're dropping some new science out there,
a picture-perfect hole blown clear to Asia:
everything in the desert—Shazam!—turns
to glass, gold glass, a picture-window where
the bomb-dead kids are burned & burn & burn

1/16/91

No matter how far we back away from ourselves
this scene will not reveal itself as a movie set.
Not the low building not the couple meeting out front
& not the desk clerk who is sick of it all.
The sign flashing dirty green/pink/off & on again
eludes through its perfectness—a dull trick—
the possibility of being a propmaster's deceit.
STOP HERE / X-L MOTEL / STOP HERE.
Because this is all there is to know
we know that someone here is desperate.