



## Cowboy Pictures

I want to send away  
to California  
for pictures of the sun.  
That state of the Union  
is famous for its light.  
Even in black and white,  
the glamour of young men  
who've oiled up their skin  
till it shines with the sky  
is bound to make my day,

to say nothing of night.  
I can't imagine what  
colour could do. Or what  
those guys go through to get  
to that estate. Mountain  
passes, the Great Salt Plain?  
A still-hostile frontier  
might explain why most wear  
cowboy hats black and white  
as the pictures. But what

explains them lacking all  
other clothes? A couple  
are trying the wild  
Indian bit, child  
faces looking paler  
under the cheap feathers  
and war paint. And of course  
this grown-up guy as Horse  
needs some explaining too.  
Or at least a lasso.

All the other rules seem  
the same. Whatever game  
they're playing, the only  
difference seems to be  
the gold there was in them  
there hills is now a gleam  
of silver bodies, still  
as any mineral.  
Cold caught in shades of grey,  
never aging. Will they?

Picture yourself that way  
in California,  
some green rancher, say, out  
riding your range, without  
a thought for what sweet heart  
you left across the Great  
Divide. Or maybe be  
the little lost dogie  
he cradles to his chest.  
So the pictures suggest

some sentimental ways  
of bondage, yes, of boys  
being boys. Shining with  
the sky, in skin and breath  
and eye, they're the picture  
of youth—their six guns are  
shooting stars through the bars  
of the dark that covers  
more than half the planet.  
Try to bite the bullet.

DANIEL DAVID MOSES