

PATRICK WHITFILL

For Plainview, TX: A Double Take

Take 1

Dirt sleeves skinned from the drought and June
roared road print tracks across the wine
flush scoring up the sky. Downfield, cattle fume
toward feed. Horseflies posted on barbed-wire line
zero over ditches. What doesn't jump, limps.
Leaving them wilted and itching in their gold,
the evening haze dries wheat tops to cramps
by the row. Every sweet girl's married, and the old
highschoolers roam lots where nothing clean
happens. Now one turns and says *Just because
there's no one chasing us down doesn't mean
we'll ever get away*. There's always loss
here, where you'll never pat the vest pocket
of your yellow jacket for a match and strike out.

Take 2

Moms, dirt fisted, clutch their faith. The steeple
shades grassy-kneed pastors. Our mud and banks,
our children, crumble like tipsy hymns. Still,
the cornbread, the bulls, the dead won't collapse.
Schoolkids skull the geese; farmhands, the lamb.
Burned prairies gristle in the distance, seeds
our neighbor's poverty boasts. Pellets,
owl to mouse and bone, have all gone hearse bait.
Because, downfield, the old girl and her drought-
cattle dusted the road where haze married
the lots, loss sleeves in the skinned-cork skywilt.
A match strikes out of line and dies barbed.
Just when no one's pointing you out,
you pocket up. You'll never get to love this town.