THE PROSE POEM:
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 8 | 1999

Wild West

J. David Stevens

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

The Prose Poem: An International Journal is produced by
The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress)
for the Providence College Digital Commons.
http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/

J. David Stevens

WILD WEST

But after they rode into the sunset, she started to wonder. Shouldn't she get a horse of her own? What did his mother think of her? How many children would they have? She made him remove his boots on the porch, clean his dishes after eating, scrape the manure from his fingernails. He wasn't allowed to bring his lariat to bed. Sometimes he beat her while he was drunk, but apologized with wildflowers the next day. After she missed her period, she asked him to add a room to the cabin, only to watch the wind whip the prairie grass at his feet. At first, he left for just a week at a time. "There's rustlers in Reno," he'd say, strapping on his gun. "There's bandits in Bozeman."

She learned to work the farm by herself, milking, slopping, digging. In the end he brought her an Indian's scalp and told her how squaws had sung lamentations over the corpse. Laying his head against her belly, he said, "Name my boy for me, okay?"—then fled during the night. She almost felt sorry for him. In the months that followed, she watched the sun rise out of the mountains at dawn like an old miner from a sickbed. And at night she watched it set again, surprised not to find herself moving toward it. In the cries of her newborn daughter, she heard hoofbeats and gunfire, pierced flesh, choruses of Native women singing (like only women could) painted dirges for the honored dead.