Trigger Happy

In the lost land of everything at once,

of every color at once in its compartment,

*ou Boer* South Africa, disseverer of plenitudes,

in a black & white snapshot, barefoot in buckskins,

a kid cowpoke poses.

Where can he have learned such swagger?

Not from his family, warm as the air, not from TV, here outlawed,

not from his sundering country, about to seal them out.

Yet here he stands, as coddled and cocksure as any little kid

before the facts weigh in to whack the strut from him.

He tips his cowboy hat, accepts the lens’s brief obeisance.

Should his six-shooter feel (as it will) inclined to comment,

it points a silver finger, and his bare throat growls

an unspellable imprecation, a plosive *B∂*,or *P∂,*

their ricochets of Scots-Teutonic *KH’*s.

His father teeters. His brother spins like a plugged dollar, plucks at dust.

A trick of light tries sneaking up on him and he wheels; the shot silk

blue air sags, drapes in its flag his muddle-colored skin.

No one has taught him anything.

He shoots what he loves; he loves what he sees.

So *B∂KH,* his bestie’s house. *P∂KH∂KH,* across the tracks, a rugby scrum

of white boy blobs, their bug legs scuttling. Somewhere farther off, gin-

sodden brown men slow-dance to a guitar’s jangle; black girls swoosh

tin-pails from a river, *KH∂shplosh,* grenades of watery laughter shriek.

He squints to sight them: men, girls, river, who could but love and shoot?

And coming to look hard, to see Cape Town, South Africa, the world,

how could he help but covet what cuts harder, darker; to work the hinge

between the hammer and the barrel’s eye until what hurts bleeds rain-

bows—to smear those crazy purities in one fat crazed glaze and fire?

*Simplify, simplify!* real bullets sing, as they select, eliminate.

*Complicate, accrete,* this boy cries, wanting everything at once.

So see, it’s me all right, in my big-fringed leathers.

I'm aiming my *kapow*s like kisses at whatever moves,

or doesn’t, *B∂KH, P∂KH∂KH,* I see you, you're mine, you’re mine.

First published in "Urban Spaghetti." It's well-rooted in true memory, but it's ultimately more of a credo poem.