

### Exercise 141 (3 AM Epiphany): The Bridge

(*In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote) Down by the depot, the postmistress, a gaunt woman who wears a rawhide jacket and denims and cowboy boots, presides over a falling-apart post office. The depot itself, with its peeling sulphur-colored paint, is equally melancholy; the Chief, the Super-Chief, the El Capitan go by everyday, but these celebrated expresses never pause there. No passenger trains do--only an occasional freight. Up on the highway, there are two filling stations, one of which doubles as a meagerly supplied grocery store, while the other does extra duty as a cafe--Hartman's Cafe, where Mrs. Hartman, the proprietress, dispenses sandwiches, coffee, soft drinks, and 3.2 beer (Holcomb, like the rest of Kansas, is "dry").

The aging wood inside the post office retracted the heat that would have otherwise escaped back into the dry Kansas air. The lobby of the post office was nearly empty with the exception of the faulty desk that wobbled when the postmistress moved her chair, and her countertop fan which was one July away from complete disintegration. Most of the people who frequent this post office are nearly identical to the postmistress; not necessarily in stature or physiognomy, but in countenance: they all had the same innate small town sense of community toward each other that I could not participate in or replicate. I waited for the postmistress to acknowledge me standing there, but the old newspaper that she was so violently waving in front of her face took precedence to whatever I needed sent off. I figured that if she took off her jacket, she would have been a little more comfortable, but the look that she gave me when she finally glanced in my direction suggested it would be best to say what I needed to say and be on my way. "Whachu need, youngin?" she said in a long, airy drawl. "I just need to send this money to my mama in Wichita. I've been working here for a while rotating this soybean and wheat and I promised I would send her some-". "You talking too much boy. The mailboh is ova yonda" she said, failing to complete the end of any of her words. "Okay then". I dropped the package in the box and headed towards the door.

(*Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck) A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheelers butt with a bullwhip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love.