

Safeway Cart
By James Harmon Clinton

for Anne Herbert and Neil Young

Deer stand beside I-10 late at night and watch
the passing cars. Sometimes only one or two, but
I have counted up to twenty between LaPlace

and Sorrento, between Port Allen and Grosse Tete.
They stand near the edge of the woods, watchful
as Cold War operatives. One 3 AM, I drove alone

from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. My headlights
found a man walking west along the shoulder,
striding purposefully, serenely ignoring the traffic.

No thumb tendered, he wore sandals and a green
velvet robe, gallant in the slipstream. Long black
hair spilled across his broad back, a white cloth

framed his bearded face. I slowed just enough
to attempt to dispel urban myths spiriting through
the passenger cabin. Sweet as gravity's gospel,

shuddering in the anxious half-life of passing cars,
deer gather in the tall roadside grass, burnt sienna
and maroon panning down to a swirl of coffee gold.