

Human Ties in Kansas

for Marion Cott

She reminds us of our *stories that could be true*:
our characters, our character: our quirks, our jerks,
our low-key smirks; our stubborn affability.
We review together our history, impassioned
John Brown acts of raw and ruthless capability.

Our women, like Stafford's Aunt Mabel,
are blunt, invasive and real.
Our moments of real civility last
only as long as the one-fingered wave
from the smooth steering wheel
of the old pickup truck, pointing up.

Our poets tell us, seek *local knowledge*,
not what the world thinks we know.
We find cottonwood sighs under way too much sky,
interminable winds, dust devils, gospel hymns,
and we fear that our voice might just be noise:
a rasp of grackles keening into the west wind--
our wavering hopes, and old human ties.
— Raylene Hinz-Penner

Our Story

Remind me again—together we
trace our strange journey, find
each other, come on laughing.
Some time we'll cross where life
ends. We'll both look back
as far as forever, that first day.
I'll touch you—a new world then.
Stars will move a different way.
We'll both end. We'll both begin.

Remind me again.
— William Stafford

(**Note:** italicized lines in my poem are references to Stafford's book title: *Stories That Could Be True* and B. H. Fairchild's book title, *Local Knowledge*. The line, "a rasp of grackles . . ." is from Fairchild's poem, "The Last Days.")