

Ina Jespersen Hobson

CANYON COUNTRY

The bend, sharp thrust, and color
Of this land abide the centuries
Unchanged. Earth keeps another time
Than man, and soon and late inters
Each vanished traveler in her dust.

Edith Melissa came this way
Once in the long-ago, late winter weather
Of seventy-two. Snow doubtless lingered
Near cedars, and frosted the red bluffs'
Tableland. Silent in cold starlight,
Or stirring to chill dawns, riding
The lean fierce beauty of this time-carved land
She knew the towering presence of primeval cliff—
Always the long, bold line
Thrusting vermilion skyward.

Daughter and wife to pioneers
Had she grown weary of the male demand
For newer horizons, and progeny?
Schooled in the cost of wilderness
Did heart and bone turn from another venture
Farther on? Yield at the last goodbye
To tears of mutiny? Or spirit will
Obedience to the end?

Answers are hid with other ghosts
Of this still empty land.
Beyond a few remaining poplars
And the vacant walls in one far field
Editha Melissa lies — once of the green hills
Of New York — and her eleventh baby.
Grave place of days and years is rounded
In two words: "Johnson's Canyon."