A few years ago I used to tell myself I wanted to marry a cowboy. Why shouldn't an English professor say this to herself—living alone, fascinated by a brown landscape, spotting a cowboy in a pickup truck sometimes in her rearview mirror as she drives on the broad highways of the West Coast? In fact, I realize I would still like to marry a cowboy, though by now I'm living in the East and married already to someone who is not a cowboy.

But what would a cowboy want with a woman like me—not very easy-going, an English professor, the daughter of another English professor? If I have a drink or two, I'm more easy-going, and often these are university people or the people they live with, who also speak correctly. Although I don't correct and don't know how to joke with people unless I know them well, or the people they live with, who also speak correctly. Although I don't mind them, I feel cut off from all the other people in this country—to mention only this country.

I told myself I liked the way cowboys dressed, starting with the hat, and how comfortable they were in their clothes, so practical, having to do with their work. Many professors seem to dress the way they think a professor should dress, without any real interest or love. Their clothes are too tight or else a few years out of style and just add to the awkwardness of their bodies.

After I was hired to teach for the first time I bought a briefcase, and then after I started teaching I carried it through the halls like the other professors. I could see that the older professors, mostly men but also some women, were no longer aware of the importance of their briefcases and that the younger women pretended they weren't aware of it, but the younger men carried their briefcases like trophies.

At that same time my father began sending me thick envelopes containing material he thought would help me in my classes, including exercises to assign and quotes to use. I didn't read more than a few pages sometimes when I was feeling strong. How could an old professor try to teach a young professor? Didn't he know I wouldn't be able to carry my briefcase through the halls and say hello to my colleagues and students and then go home and read the instructions of the old professor?

In fact, I liked teaching because I liked telling other people what to do. In those days it seemed clearer to me than it does now: If I did something a certain way, it had to be right for other people too. I was so convinced of it that my students were convinced too. Still, though I was a good teacher, I was something else inside. Some of the old professors were also old professors inside, but inside I wasn't even a young professor. I looked like a woman in glasses, but I had dreams of leading a very different kind of life, the life of a woman who would not wear glasses, the kind of woman I saw from a distance now and then in a bar.

More important than the clothes a cowboy wore, and the way he wore them, was the fact that a cowboy probably wouldn't know much more than he had to. He would think about his work, and about his family, if he had one, and about having a good time, and not much else. I was tired of so much thinking, which was what I did most in those days. I did other things, but I went on thinking while I did them. I might feel something, but I would think about what I was feeling at the same time. I even had to think about what I was thinking and wonder why I was thinking it. When I had the idea of marrying a cowboy I imagined that maybe a cowboy would help me stop thinking so much.

I also imagined, though I was probably wrong about this too, that a cowboy wouldn't be like anyone I knew—like an old communist, or a member of a steering committee, a writer of letters to the newspaper, a faculty wife serving at a student tea, a professor reading proofs with a sharp pencil and asking everyone to be quiet. I thought that when my mind—always so busy, always going around in circles, always having an idea and then an idea about an idea—reached out to his mind, it would meet something quieter, that there would be more blanks, more open spaces; that some of what he had in his mind might be the sky, clouds, hilltops, and then concrete things like ropes, saddles, horsehair, the smell of horses and cattle, motor oil, calluses, grease, fences, gullies, dry streambeds, lame cows, still-born calves, freak calves, veterinarians' visits, treatments, inoculations. I imagined this even though I knew that some of the things I liked that might...
be in his mind, like the saddles, the saddle sores, the horsetail, and the horses themselves, weren’t often a part of the life of a cowboy anymore. As for what I would do in my life with this cowboy, I sometimes imagined myself reading quietly in clean clothes in a nice study, but at other times I imagined myself oiling tack or cooking large quantities of plain food or helping out in the barn in the early morning while the cowboy had both arms inside a cow to turn a calf so it would present properly. Problems and chores like these would be clear and I would be able to handle them in a clear way. I wouldn’t stop reading and thinking, but I wouldn’t know very many people who did a lot of that, so I would have more privacy in it, because the cowboy, though so close to me all the time, wouldn’t try to understand but would leave me alone with it. It would not be an embarrassment anymore.

I thought if I married a cowboy I wouldn’t have to leave the West. I liked the West for its difficulties. I liked the difficulty of telling when one season was over and another had begun, and I liked the difficulty of finding any beauty in the landscape. To begin with, I had gotten used to its own kind of ugliness: all those broad highways laid down in the valleys and the new constructions placed up on the bare hillsides. Then I began to find beauty in it, and liked the bareness and the plain brown of the hills in the dry season, and the way the folds in the hills where some dampness tended to linger would fill up with grasses and shrubs and other flowering plants. I liked the plainness of the ocean and the emptiness when I looked out over it. And then, especially since it had been so hard for me to find this beauty, I didn’t want to leave it.

I might have gotten the idea of marrying a cowboy from a movie I saw one night in the springtime with a friend of mine who is also a professor—a handsome and intelligent man, kinder than I am but even more awkward around people, forgetting even the names of old friends in his sudden attacks of shyness. He seemed to enjoy the movie, though I have no idea what was going through his mind. Maybe he was imagining a life with the woman in the movie, who was so different from his thin, nervous, and beautiful wife. As we drove away from the movie theater, on one boy, and have a worn-out cowboy come along, a worn-out middle-aged cowboy, alcoholic if necessary, and marry him. I thought I knew of a little boy I could take with me. Then all I would need would be the aging cowboy and the motel. I would make it a good motel. I would look after it and I would solve any problems sensibly and right away as they came along. I thought I could be a good, tough businesswoman just because I had seen this movie showing this good, tough businesswoman. This woman also had a loving heart and a capacity to understand another fallible human being. The fact is that if an alcoholic cowboy came into my life in any important way I would probably criticize him to death for his drinking until he walked out on me. But at the time, I had that strange confidence, born of watching a good movie, that I could be something different from what I was, and I started listening to country-western music on the car radio, though I knew it wasn’t written for me.

At that point I met a man in one of my classes who seemed reasonably close to my idea of a cowboy, though now I can’t tell exactly why I thought so. He wasn’t really like a cowboy, or what I thought a cowboy might be like, so what I wanted must have been something else, and the idea of a cowboy just came up in my mind for the sake of convenience. The facts weren’t right. He didn’t work as a cowboy but at some kind of job where he glued the bones of chimpanzees together. He played jazz trombone, and on the days when he had a lesson he wore a dark suit to class and carried a black book. I might have gotten the idea of marrying a cowboy from a movie I saw one night in the springtime with
The bizarre concept of Israel's "non-existence" has been around for over forty years. Many people, including Jews, have no "official" knowledge of the existence of Israel. They learn about it, just as they learn about sex, by whispered comments in the schoolyard. Schedules of foreign airlines that show Israel on their route maps or that list Israeli destinations are not allowed in the countries. Foreign publications (among them, one regrets to report, such U.S. magazines as Time and Newsweek) print special editions for the Arab countries, since no publication carrying advertising of Israeli firms may appear in those countries. And, of course, tourists of any nationality may not enter most Arab countries if their passports show evidence that the holder has ever visited Israel, the "non-existent country". Not too many months ago, a U.S. Senator was barred from entering Saudi Arabia, our "faithful ally", because of an Israeli visa stamp that had been placed in his diplomatic passport.

As an inducement to Israel for yielding land that is absolutely indispensable for the country's defense, the Arabs now and then offer the possibility of the "recognition" of Israel's existence. The sad and almost incomprehensible aspect of that is that many well-meaning people in the U.S., in other countries, and, yes, even in Israel believe that this might be an acceptable bargain for Israel. But Israel's existence is in no way dependent on the recognition of any Arab state. It's simply: Israel exists because it exists. Therefore, supposing that any meaningful face-to-face meetings came about and if, say, a Syrian diplomat should ask Israel what it would be prepared to "give" if Syria would consider acknowledging Israel's existence, Israel should reply that Israel might in turn consider acknowledging Syria's existence. Or, Israel could declare a boycott of the Arab world and could offer to relax or to rescind such boycott in consideration of parallel gestures by the Arabs.

The bizarre concept of Israel's "non-existence" has been around for over forty years. Many good people, including quite a few in Israel itself, have been led to believe that Israel should bring substantial sacrifices, even to the point of imperiling its own security and survival, in order to get the Arabs to acknowledge Israel's existence. It is often said that Israel needs to be "recognized" by the Arabs in order to "normalize her condition". But need not the Arabs, too, live in "normalized conditions"? And Israel is often promised that, in return for yielding vital strategic territory to the Arabs, she would be assured of "safe and secure borders". But don't the Arabs also need borders that are safe and secure? The Arab countries and much of the world have come to believe that peace is only good and desirable for Israel. But it is surely at least as important for the Arabs, who have lived through and have been bloody defeated in five wars with Israel - the "non-existent country". Peace and prosperity can and will come to this troubled region only when the Arabs accept the reality of Israel's existence and negotiate with her openly and in good faith.

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
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though everything that added itself to what I knew already would be a revelation. When we got into the car he reached across me and unlocked the glove compartment and when we prepared to get out he reached across me and locked it again. I asked him later why he did that, and he lifted up a bundle of papers in the glove compartment and showed me the wooden butt of a gun. He told me a couple of men were after him, and that it had something to do with his little girl.

We parked near the restaurant, he took a gray jacket off a hanger in the car and put it over his arm, and as we walked along he tucked in his shirt and then put on the jacket. I thought to myself this was how a cowboy might do it—carry his gray suit in the car on a hanger, and when he neated up to go into some place with a woman he would also touch his hair gently.

He drank milk with his Chinese dinner. He talked about his job, offering me pieces of scientific information, and then told some bad jokes. We didn't either of us eat very much, embarrassed, I think, to be alone together like this. He told me that he had married his wife right after he got his hearing had been damaged in the war. She was half Chinese and half Mexican. He told me his difficulties, the mysterious men he had been alone with his little girl for six months now, and his wife was coming home in a few days to try living with him again, even though nothing he did had ever worked. He said he wouldn't be able to see me again. I told him I wasn't expecting that anyway, because I was leaving the West soon. It wasn't quite true that I hadn't expected to see him again, but it was true that I was leaving soon. Finally he took me home and kissed me goodnight.

As far as I could tell I didn't mind the way the date turned out, though I started crying the next day in my car on my way to the drive-in bank. I thought I was crying for him, his fears, his difficulties, the mysterious men he thought were after him and his daughter, but I was probably crying for myself, out of disappointment, though exactly what I wanted I'm not sure. Months later, after I was living in the East again, I called him long-distance one night after having a couple of beers by myself in my apartment, and when he answered there was noise in the background of people talking and laughing, either his family or a party. I can't remember which, and he sounded just as pleased to hear from me, and flattered, as he had sounded when I asked him out on the date.

I still imagine marrying a cowboy, though less often, and the dream has changed a little. I'm so used to the companionship of my husband by now that if I were to marry a cowboy I would want to take him with me, though he would object strongly to any move in the direction of the West, which he dislikes. So if we went, it would not be as it was in my daydream a few years ago, with me cooking plain food or helping the cowboy with a difficult calf. It would end, or begin, with my husband and me standing awkwardly there in front of the ranch house, waiting while the cowboy prepared our rooms.