



1980

Foxes

Lisa Hanson

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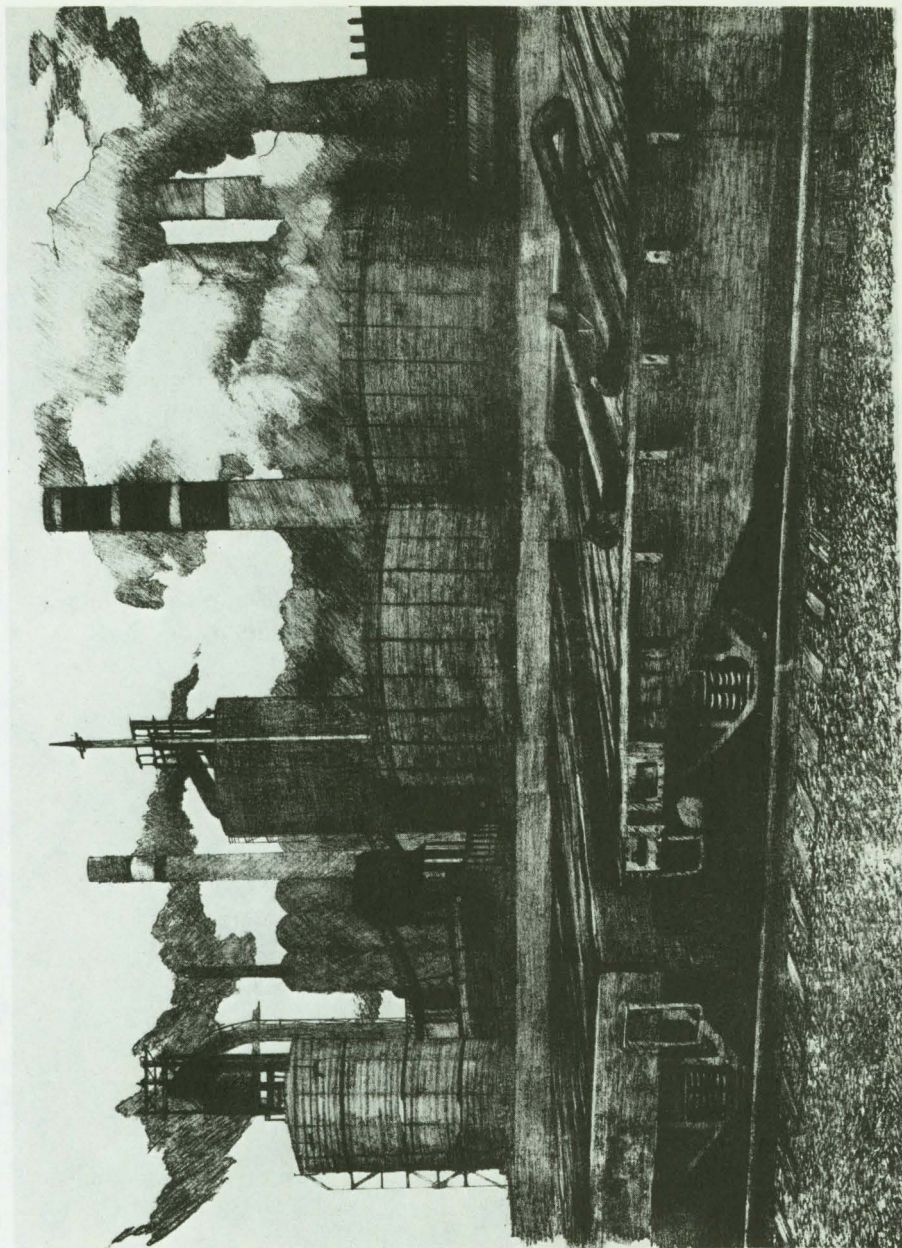
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lithograph print by Lana Sumsion

Foxes

Lisa Hanson

The grass had gone to sea again. The wind
Was licking the grain into waves, splashing into the trees.
Through the window, moonlight laid a study of shadow
Across the spread, dark sculptures of hollow
And highlight, geometrics that slid melting to the floor,
And, when the door opened, spilled into the hall.
Mara stood framed between the jam and the wall,
Lace floating at her feet, puddling in the glow,
Both hands clenched tight around the knob. "There's something
Dying outside." The shadows leapt and slithered
On the bed. Sarah shoved the pane higher.
"I could hear it." They lay, not breathing, eyes
Shifting in the dark to hear such a hush
Of sounds. "Listen." The wind brushed the elm, beating
Scattered rhythms against the clapboard. The dog
Barked. A diesel passed on the highway. "Listen."
Through the window from the night came a cry that filled the room
And shivered on the walls. Twice it came,
Up from the woods or the field or the draw. "Mara,
Go down and tell mother."

"She's asleep."

"I know, go tell her."

Mara went to the top of the stairs and stood.
They were steep and unrailed, plunging in meter,
Becoming softer and softer in the black cushion.
"I'm scared to go alone."

"Turn on the hall light."

From Monmouth, Oregon, Lisa M. Hanson was a senior in history when she wrote this poem.

The harlequin pattern settled again, rocking
Lightly with their breathing. Languorous and careless
With sleep they heard her on the stairs, then the soft
Murmur of waking, and the blend of voices beneath them.
"Coons." The night exploded. Bare feet
Hit the floor and swooped down the stairs.
Already behind, and alone.

Waist deep in the oats, their father stood
Holding a lantern over his head, stark
In the yellow flood, armed with a rake. The dog
Danced around his legs. Advance and retreat.

Bark and run.

He was flashing the light along the trees
When they heard it again. A cold weirding wind
Of a bark that swirled up the draw and slipped
Down their nightgowns, stubbling their legs.
Their mother stood behind him, curtained by the dark.

"Charles, let's don't go any further."

"That's foolish."

"I think it's leaving."

He stepped into the winnowed grain, soft piles
Of clippings running in smooth rows down
To the creek. The light tripped in the sharp bristles
Of straw, scoped the hill, and got lost in the fold.

"What is it Mama?"

The light kept combing the hedgerows, probing
Across the hill.

"I can't see anything."

They stood arm in arm, brooms trailing in their hands,
Feet aching in the cold grass, watching.
He flicked the lantern once more into the gully
And turned back toward the house. They followed close.
Mara was holding her mother's hand.

"I was afraid it would get the little
Cochin Banties."

"Don't be angry with me."

"I'm not angry."

"Come sleep with me, Sarah."

"It wasn't coons, Charles."