

○ Getting To Know Your Oldsmobile:

A Book of Selected Hours





Sunrise

*Most people read
their Owner's Manual
from beginning to end.*

The sky finally begins, a rim,
a reddening, darkness
stunned, the deer disappearing
and a used moon, worth it.
You've been sitting for hours alone,
with your *Owner's Manual*, turning
the light on to read of the first Oldsmobile
at the New York Auto Show, 1897, a car
new as day.

Deer get what they want, pause.
Their day is a low place, a passage
of fine prints. Do they see you
looking up
from what you read?





9:00

*Before you drive the car,
it's a good idea to get inside.*

You do not drive your Oldsmobile
but sit deep in the driver's seat,
frosted, fogged, the light
not yet to you, idling. Breath
hushes the blues. The Olds is cold but warming
inside out. You're still,
half full of shadows, waiting
for the windows, to see.

You're beginning to get an idea,
an interior view. Your eyes open
circles in the frost.





10:00

*In this manual, you'll find
that pictures and words work
together to explain your Oldsmobile.*

Light is an Oldsmobile's
maximum load. You love the passage
and shine. Your Olds, like an iris
or solar corona squeezes
round the light, let's it in.

Seek, scan, a spot
of after-image on your dash,
a white circle with yellow flares,
a reading of what you've seen
on the everyday surface of the planet.

Your Olds *refers*.
Sun means sun.
You looked it up.





Noon

At precisely high noon the sunroof
admits a shaft of light that burns the open
pages of the *Manual*. As if revealing wisdom
pure and ancient as bells, the pages explain
what you must know: *release, signal, care*,
how to be clean, foil thieves, understand sound.

Every moment of sunlight teaches
air, fluids, how to set your own
climate, your *cruise*, how to restrain
your child, how to change, what to do
when something dies.

There is power in an Oldsmobile at noon.



3:00

*If there is snow between your tires
and the road, you can have
a slippery situation.*

Tracks on a soccer field: tractors did it, ditto
for skidoos. They cut into the spruce trees,
zip back, cross on the bias toward
the goalposts, spin about, zoom
nowhere fast.

Seen from the bleachers on the west side, the field
of loops and lines spells a word: a capital
O, possibly *I* and *d*, *s* for sure
and clearly *mobile* after, a snow-tongue's
lolling font. Seen from the CN
gradient north of the field, the *Oldsmobile*
letters look suspended like the bones
of a fish, head down.

Although a man's footsteps will sink
through the snow on the soccer field,
the vehicle tracks are firm. It's easy

to pace your snowy Olds. The deer have
walked here too, and a large dog,
sniffing the *O*, pissing on your new-found word.

You spend the whole afternoon out here,
reading.





5:00

for Emmaline

You recline with music on, tone
selected, a listening late
afternoon. You can believe your
ears: the Olds is a favourite gig for Ani
Difranco who climbs in with just
her guitar. As far as she's
concerned, the power features are swell, there's
plenty of sass under the hood, a V-6 to
get you out of trouble and in
again when it's good for you. Not much
to criticize, really. A crack
in the windshield proves you've been
alive. *Deviate, I dare you*, she says, switching
Off the Dolby Noise Reduction,
turning up the hiss.

You and Ani, sweet as can be,
h – i – s – s – i – n – g.





Sunset

*The mirror will gradually darken
to reduce glare. This change
may take a few moments.*

Your Oldsmobile is loaded with blues,
reds, violets, refinished every
evening, a rub the right way.

The Oldsmobile has a mirror eye
for memory. It knows
where you've been and how much
light gets away until all
of it's gone and the Olds
remembers only yesterday's glare.
It's free, but something tells you
vanishing isn't worth
the pain of day. You drive east,
light draining, adjust
your rearview mirror
to the last of it.



Night

There's a lot of night out there,
brand new, some of it clouded,
backed up in grey. The kind of night
that swallows, won't give you back. The Olds
disappears, black as wheels. Buried
in the deep sky. Forget about your
system, forget about that dime
you dropped. The sky's full of dimes
in open clusters, gassed by dying stars
you imagine. You see where everything ends.

