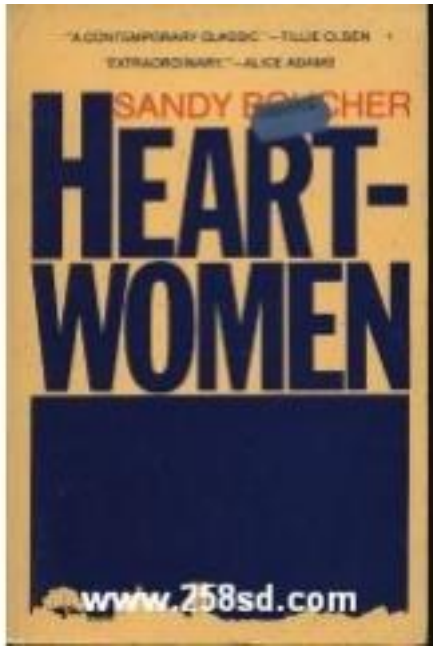


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Coming Back
It was early spring in Cloud County¼ Kansas. My friend Ann and¼ on our way across the country¼ had stopped in the town of¼ Clyde to visit her old Uncle Earl. From the house in town where¼ we stayed¼ we drove with Earl out to the farm that had been his¼ home for most of his life. There we explored the abandoned farm-¼ house¼ and I climbed partway up the flame of the windmill to¼ look out across the new wheat flowing in the fields¼ a tide of short¼¼ bright-green blades whipped into ripples and torrents by the¼¼ wind.¼ Back in town¼ we ate in the cafes and stood on corners talking¼ to neighbors¼ and in the midst of this homely activity I was sur-¼ prised to find the cpxpricncc of my oxen midwcstern past arising¼ in Inc. At moments I was caught in wondering sadness¼ then lifted¼ by joy that had nothing to do with the

circumstances or held in a listening that sharpened my senses almost to the point of pain. This awakening I had not anticipated for my native Ohio is situated in a different kind of Midwest than this prairie state of Kansas. But the people of Clyde were known to me; the land the smells the thousand details of ordinary life were familiar. For the first time in twenty years I felt drawn to the region of my growing up. That powerful pull aroused my memory of leaving the Midwest so long ago. I recalled how by the age of sixteen I had longed to escape to New York City. It was the "navel of the world" I thought where I would learn life's secrets and become a writer. I suffocated in my parents house on the outskirts of a

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