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New Native American Writing

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INTRODUCTION

It has been clear to me for more than two decades that tremendous vitality and creative excitement are to be found in contemporary American Indian writing. Putting together this special issue of *SAIL* has made that even more clear. In 1983, I edited an anthology of contemporary Native American poetry entitled *Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back*. I included fifty-two writers and tried to be as inclusive as possible in representing the strongest work then being done. So much has happened since then that it would take another book to *begin* to represent it. This modest sampling of some of the new work being done by American Indian writers indicates the continuing strength and growth of Native American writing.

Of the twenty-five writers here, only eight were in that 1983 anthology. Of the remaining fifteen, ten are writers whose names I had never seen before they submitted to this issue. Their voices, tribal nations, and backgrounds are extremely varied; there are great differences--in geography, education and experience--and yet there are certain similar notes in their voices. These similarities include an awareness of the earth and of old stories, a respect for elders and for the power of the word, a subtle sense of humor . . . and also a strong "political" thread. Though I do not wish to attempt to define or limit what "Native American writing" is, it is clear to me that much of the work in this issue is written for an audience which the writers perceive as being similar to themselves, for *native ears*.

Several writers are from Canada and I hope their inclusion is an indication that there will be greater contact between Native writers on both sides of that invisible line imposed on this continent and called a border. The vitality of Canadian Native American writing has yet to be fully appreciated here to the south.

In putting this issue together I quickly realized that I had received far more publishable work than I could fit into one special issue. I am especially regretful that many of the fine short stories sent in could not be included. A large problem is lack of outlets: the market for fiction remains glutted, and for every Louise Erdrich or Michael Dorris who is accepted, twenty other Native writers are rejected.

Something has been happening and continues to happen. Native American Literature is growing, and those of us involved in it as writers, editors, critics and readers have a special responsibility to it at this stage--a responsibility to continue to work, to pay close attention, to encourage where we can, to support when we can, to never think that we know it all, and to hope that we can do enough.

Joseph Bruchac

Charlotte DeClue

Voices

(for Joy)

I

I go to the lodge
to be with the women.
Though I am old
and no longer bleed
I go to be with the women.
No man enters here,
not even Hawk nor standard bearer.
We are the doorkeepers,
Tse-xo-be
emblazoned on our hands.

II

Once all the horses got sick.
I felt their flanks
and could see the sickness there.
I had a gift for such things,
seeing sickness and death
in animals.
I passed this gift along to my daughter.
She was born mute and could not hear
and remained a child.

III

My sister says
"you eat too many sweets,"
says the food from the Agency
will rot our teeth
and make us crave more of it.
But I don't care.
She talks too much and is always grumbling.
I know it is because
of the way things are changing.
"There will be no place for us,"
she says. "No place at all."
So I just eat sweets
and watch the horses die.

IV

The whites grew in number
and could no longer be ignored.
They brought with them the Book
and said we were not properly married.
That our children were "illegitimate."
But their children did not live long,
especially the girls.
And they beat their women
and marked their dead.
We knew this must be wrong.

V

I am a man
married to a strong woman
and sometimes
strong-willed women are headaches.
But I am not stupid
else she wouldn't have wanted me.

They come and say
"where is your title?"
I tell them we have many titles,
many names.
They get impatient, "no . . . title,
ownership."
No one owns the land.
They sneer "stupid,"
humiliate me in front of my woman.

VI

I have a story
because it was my daughter they took.
So shy and innocent.
A gift of beauty, bore three children.
But they called her an "imbecile"
said she could not care for children.

They came at us
pounding their fists,
breaking us apart
like they broke open the land.

VII

Stop poutin'.
They cut my hair, made me wear funny clothes.
Tied my arm down
'cause left-handedness was a sign
of the Devil.
Ha! fooled them.
Now I just use both of them.
Just say your prayers
and be good.
SUFFER THE CHILDREN.
Don't talk about it anymore.
Remembering hurts.

VIII

No light shatters the darkness
and silence of this room
'cept for crescent moon
green through flowered curtains.
No wind
moves across open plains
to mock with songs of freedom.
No hand
reaches through haze
of gin and seconal,
nor breath
left
but for what is sucked in
and barely moving the belly
of a sleeping man
who will awaken,
leave,
not remembering
name
nor blood.
The voice on the other end
is unfamiliar
'cept for the low drawl.
She asks Jesus to forgive me.
Razor
to vein.

IX

SPIDER WEAVES, SHE DOES.
WIND PLAYS, OAK DANCES, THEY DO.
MOON OPENS HER EYE.
AMARILLO RUNS IN WET GRASS.
QUARTER MOON,
SLOW-EYED MOON.
OH MOON!

Gus Palmer

People of the Mid-Summer Sun

So the distance north
was supposed to be
at close quarters
to the places
he named well.
Before his people could
remember what to call
him, he felt the cold
of the mountain
with tips of
fingers the
clouds trailed by.
All in a day
he sat upright in bed.
He could feel
the snow of
mountains unlike
most men.

Before he could
remember, before his
people could call out,
he put his hand out
and summoned the
chief Tipi Mountain
to his lodge.

Maurice Kenny

Philadelphia

January 5, 1985

No, I didn't do it. The bell was cracked before we rumbled under those clogged streets still smelling of pigs and horse-piss, leather seated carriages and whips; still smelling of printer's ink and Ben's dirty feet and his outcast son's disbelief. The bell cracked when Ben proclaimed to all and sundry . . . "exterminate the vermin": meaning us. I winced and Wendy took out her notebook again. Like back in D.C. when the Shoreham Hotel didn't much like my sneaks, my sweat-shirt and dungarees, and said there is no room at the inn, but how they pay-ed with a \$200 suite, a jug of wine, crackers and cheese, two plates, two knives, two cloth napkins, a king size bed for two . . . and a brief apology from the disconcerted manager. (I never knew my words had such power.)

Well, Ben's bell is cracked. We did not surface in Philly.

From *What the Mohawk Said to the Hopi*

* * * *

Manhattan

(I think this is in N.Y.C.)

January 7, 1985

Robert tried to hire Floyd Westerman, but Floyd had shuffled out west, or any "in-dee-un" available. So we got a drum, who drummed "inja" instead in good chicano style, and I rather longed to be sitting before the "Jewel" on passage to the real India.

But we got "cheap" in the *Village Voice*. Could have us for \$2.50 . . . with coupon. We became "a thing" in *N.Y. Times*, and misdated in the Goose Calendar. Doomed, I'd say, until Dawad sparkled into the reading. I knew there was a glow in his hands. I knew Robert taped that glow for Helene who stayed at home breasting Evan.

The drummer left us on our own for richer folks, fatter calfs . . . up-town. We sang out our red hearts beating the drums with our own bones.

The Alternative Museum

Forrest Aguila Funmaker

Hesitation

He sits chained up to a neon cross
Waiting there with wind swirling
His long black featherless unbraided
Hair. As in a sweat he waits for the
Hell fire from the valley to cool
Before he descends again into the heat
Which forced his soul to manual labor
For the rich. The nuns and priests
Called him savage now and again to
Crush what was left dangling of his
Already weakened spirit. He chose not
To listen when trash speaks its horrible
Name over and over again until the
Silent songs of his people out beat
The prevailing echoes that bounce off
The schools' walls only to hear the
Sobbing of a little boy trapped in the
Perpendicular world of one box after
Another to form other hybrid communities
Of culture based on a wicked economy
Set about for the exploitation of
Values long held by the deafest of ears.
Is it any wonder that a Native child
From Saskatchewan could be harnessed
And harassed by the smell of a whip or
Ruler to move the attitude ingrained
Only with good breeding to blame. Some
Say the sorrows won't end today or
Tomorrow but someday when the grass
Finally starts to grow and the sun shines
Forever maybe Peace will hold up the head
Of Justice and wake it up.

Armand Garnet Ruffo

Settlers

Tonight you are safe, your family is safe, behind the walls you've built, logs peeled perfectly hammered into place. But out there is the bush, where you feel things lurk ready to kill and devour.

So each night you lock yourself
in and listen to animal sounds,
watch for the bush to stir.
There are also other sounds
you hear dark and wild, the ones
you think are human
but aren't quite sure.

These sounds you approach only
in the safety of daylight
and never alone
and unarmed.
When we see you coming
we greet you with our best voices
and ask, what is it you fear?

* * * * *

Influences

One window too high to reach,
a room in darkness.
Husbands beating wives the colour of night,
swollen eyes
seeing what some refuse to admit.
(You, have you been there?)

And children running
through that darkness
children
who have no idea

where they are going,
when they are too small
to even make it
over the fence, the locked gate,
these children
jumping from moving cars
or cars momentarily stopped
at liquor stores or bars,
children depending on their dogs
for protection & love.

A small town explodes
in a night of alcohol fists
turning the brain
into anguish & hate.
Snow & distance piling in on itself
isolating & smothering.
(And like you, no one tells.)

Television boredom, broken furniture,
wrecked cars, bottles
filled with tears
& stacked in the bedroom,
traded in for deposit.

Allthewhile our elected members of Parliament
merrily singing
"life is just a bowl of cherries,"
singing & arguing for first place,
for expense cheques
& suburban comfort.
Politicians who gave up believing
in small towns,
politicians who never did believe,
who never stood under one black window
too high to reach
& whose children never will.

Earle Thompson

Lessons

She listens to cottonwood leaves that mine gold,
afternoon sun creating blotches of orange.

She rests on the glistening rail
talking with her boys.

"Sometimes, when you're out walking and if you're lucky
you can find Indian potatoes alongside the railroad tracks."

She sits with bare feet
tucked under her swirling dress.

"There are many things if you want to learn
how to use sage to cleanse or cure yourself."

Truck hauling apples passes, their heads turn
to the gravel road.

Listening to the collapse of their words
brushing against the stained bone-coloured bark.

* * * *

Whale Song II

"My Brother, let me hear you sing,
Feel the sunlight on your moist fin."

Bleached bones gather sound and seagulls twist
and plunge greying the edges of the ancient rocks.

Hawk screeches, killdeer skitter and scurry
into the yellow field as the salmon return from the sea.

On the shore, I carve cedar into a whale
and feel the smoothness of the abalone fin inlay.

Whale joyously surfaces, its arc becoming blue.
"Yes, my Brother, I watch you emerging

My Brother, let me hear your voice,
Let me listen and learn your song."

Glen C. Simpson

Overnight at Boundary House, 1984

I awoke in the darkness of that great hollow house.
An outboard peaked and went on
into the depths of night.
Heart and lungs picked up the beat
as my grandparents returned to that space:
young and strong they walked about.
Bread was baking, sled dogs chafed on their chains
out there in the rich coastal grass.
For one bright unhurried moment
I looked in on the zenith of their lives.

I dared to move and it was gone;
the screen door hung askew,
the windows fly specked and stuffed with rags.
A pack rat searched like a thief in the back room.
Tomorrow night I would sleep in the tent.

* * * *

People in Parts

Seeking beyond the Western world
some made new lives,
finally knowing this place as theirs.
Foreigners became just strangers;
strangers, friends;
friends, lovers.
But their children
were not like them:
not Indian, said the Indians;
not White, said the Whites;
not cannibals, would say the cannibals
if we could find them now.
No one has ever seen them,
but they're always there;
over the distant mountains,
from wherever you are.

Only they could sort out
our parts and pieces.

LeAnne Howe

Choctaw Mortuary Practices

"Tukbreeni." Bury me.

"Hol-lop-i." Bury me.

You say it in Arabic, and I repeat it
in Choctaw. "Bury me."

"I will bury you."

"Bury me in love."

"Ya habibi," for the Arab.

"Anh esta anhollo," for the Choctaw.

"Yes most beloved," for the English.

Yours IS the last voice I want to hear,
the last and only thought

I want to have before I close my eyes
to sleep . . . to dream . . . to die.

Esta anhollo, you are the bread
and the yogurt and everything.

And everything IS everything,

And everything IS

Chunk-ash ishi ful-lo-ka-chi . . . The Circle of Bliss.

From "No Passing Zone"

Roy N. Henry

Brevig Mission

We hunted those grounds
Those boys and I
Waded through Qingaaq
Slept in Piktaalgzhuk
And paddled through Evvalgzhuraaq

Rubber boots never helped
We slept close for warmth
Attu, he always worked the oars
Yes, I know those grounds

Renee Matthew Singh

Woodsman

The one who wanders

We run wild, all day
"keep still" our parents say
as they cut strips from fish
not listening
we scream away, until Gramma says
the woodsman is near
she saw them once, screaming on a river bank
dark, hairy man-creatures

Trembling in our tent
we dare not go out, even to pee
Laughing, our parents
talk outdoors by flames
reassuring us,
they are brave.

Dim light appears, cold coals flicker out
a thin blue line, slopes along the hill
Woodsman comes stealing
fish

dogs don't wake, leaves
lay flat, dry sticks don't break
willows close their mouths watching
not whispering his presence.

Tent flaps open
turning in my sleeping bag
I see his hairy back
hurrying into the woods,
back to secret camps
where stolen children plead
to go home.

Blinking, light streams into camp
stump, gathers a mossy head
sweat trickles down its wooded back onto
rocks, boughs, limbs suspending him up

I curl in
my Gramma knows, and smiles
letting me see
all is safe

Maureena C. A. Manyfingers

Sleeping clouds
encircling mountain peaks
Creator giving an
unemotional sideways glance
breezes touching our
eyes.
Mother Earth, Father Sky
take control
show me all the rules.

Terri Meyette

I Wish My Mother Had Named Me Wind

Wind
sacred breath,
I have seen your age
etched in sandstone wrinkles.
 You teach me of age
 in the Beauty Way.

Wind
I have watched you,
like a young warrior
move swiftly among flower people
racing across desert prairies.
 You teach me of youth
 in the Beauty Way.

Wind
invisible one,
you entice old women
as you dance under velveteen skirts
tickling their weathered ankles.
 You teach me of humor
 in the Beauty Way.

I wish my Mother
had named me wind.

Petroglyphs & Other Voices

In an ancient cave halfway up
the sandstone cliffs
some elders you know
say an evil ancient renegade
had once been buried
until white settlers
removed his dusty bones
and scattered them in jest.
I look at your lovely fullblood ass
and know you would understand
what my old lady does not.

*That bastard comes over here drunk
then we invite him in and make him calm.
Then I sucker punch his nose hard enough
to make him bleed out the back of his head.
That ain't enough I drive my buck knife
up into his balls. Self-defense. The tribal
cops will understand . . .*

We scurry up towards the cave,
two sweating academics catching our breath
before entering a threshold
marked by irrational petroglyphs.
Something makes my skin crawl and prevents
me from entering the soft darkness.

*Ground blizzards swirling and hypnotizing.
I must have blacked out and momentarily
lost my soul at sixty miles an hour
buzzing from Pine Ridge to Rushville
through the mountains to make last call
at the cowboy bars.
Hurtling through the white blindness I saw
my face reflected in the windshield.
I smiled and slowed down and lived
to beat the gaping embrace
of smashed flesh soon to freeze.*

Let's get out of here I say to you.
There's a bad feeling here.
We back away from the cave's entrance
and I stumble and drop my pack loaded
with camera and your papers and tools
for making rubbings.
We had planned to burn sage and offer a prayer
before we ascended but we forgot to.
We gather ourselves at your four-wheel drive
and eat cold ham sandwiches and cold coffee
from a defective thermos.
A palpable power resides in the cave, an evil
spirit, we both agree.
The ghost of a renegade who killed all races.

*At a redneck bar in Rushville, Nebraska
some silly jughead Pine Ridge breed
angered because beer had rendered him real,
accosted me because I had flunked his woman
in Freshman English.
When I asked if he were her tutor
he attempted a sucker punch
and to my chagrin I ducked and kicked
him in the gonads. He fell and I bid adieu.
Through the snow somehow I
made it back to Pine Ridge.*

Finishing eating we regain our strength
and lose purported foolishness.
We decide to climb to the cave again.
Panting from the dusty ascent we hear whispers.
In this bloodfire cave a sooted singer
decries the fire of our noonday womb.
I drop my cigarette and hold your hand.
We shake our heads and slope down the hill, again.

*It was Saturday, the day after my Rushville jaunt
and I was in bed in the afternoon, sweating
whiskey and bad judgment.
My day off and my woman would not talk.
The white people I work for at the Indian college
would, and did, and questioned me at length
on my use of sick leave.*

*My boss called me on a Saturday!
I hung up and there came a pounding at my door.
The silly breed from the night before
was there with a sawed-off shotgun.
Come in, sweet illusion, I shouted.*

The charred remains of animal night
rips into dream vision and startles our hearts
like a light bulb to hand.
The evil spirit carries his soul from the cave wall
and into my mind.
The spirit warms my flesh and congeals
my emotions with coldness.
I feel like throbbing meat meant
for bloated starving.
I know the renegade killed for pleasure.

*I did not mean to be a hunter but I am.
I did not mean to be the hunted
but the spirit of an evil renegade is at my door.
A yellowed snapshot on the wall reminds
me that I was once a good boy.
I try to be good but am evil at times.
When my dogs fight other dogs in the street
I stumble out in sullen resolution to shoot
some rounds into Indian night air.
The neighbors peek from behind curtains
and whisper that I teach at the college.
They might as well shout that I violated
some sacred
ground because, God-damn it, I did.*

Late at night in bed
after our expedition to the haunted cave
I think of you and still shudder from nightmare.
No spirit is at my door
but someone is pounding, thumping, whining, growling.
My dogs have returned from their dream.
The voices disappear.
The petroglyphs remain
unseen, except for the whisper
of the wind
of the ghosts
of my words.

Lance Henson

veterans hospital
oklahoma city oklahoma

for my brothers

at two a m someone is walking down
a long hallway
the color of fatigue in his thousand
yard eyes

i want to call to him
telling him that i forgive him

i want him to tell me
that he forgives me

* * * *

leaving bents fort

for floyd bringing good

riding the high plains from colorado
to kansas
a whirlwind gaunt and alone crosses the landscape

i drive the truck south toward oklahoma
crossing the same path two moons and roman nose
once wandered

i am on the edge

barely in america

somewhere between rage and freedom

bents fork	george bent and his family were mediators, warriors and victims of the cheyenne wars
two moons	northern cheyenne chief two moons led his people successfully in the battles of rosebud and little big horn in 1876 but was forced to surrender to u.s. troops a year later
roman nose	roman nose was a famous tsistsistas war chief; he fell in the first combat line in 1868

Della Frank

Shimasani My Grandmother

For Rose

My grandmother's house is small
It sits on a hill By itself
She has a shade-house next to her house
She keeps hay for the sheep
Feed for the chickens
And food for the dogs and cats
That wander

Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

When I visit her
I sleep in the same room with her
She is small and fits
Into her bed

She chops wood every-night
And lights the fire Before
Beginning her chores of cooking

I watch her carefully
As she brings in the wood
And begins boiling the coffee

Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

I watch her carefully
As she throws meat
Into the boiling water

I watch her carefully
As she adds chunks of potatoes

I watch her carefully
As she mixes the dough
To make fried bread or tortillas

I watch her carefully
As she tells me about
Her aches and pains

Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

I nod carefully
As I listen to her
Talk about her misgivings

I help bring in the wash water
Careful not to use too much

I help set the dishes
As I quietly wonder
About my grandma
Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

She has lived many years
 She has lived in the hills and the canyons
 She has given birth to many children
 She has herded sheep far and wide
 She has married many men Men who went to war
 She has walked many canyons Herding her sheep
 She has crossed many rivers While tears of pain
 Marked her face Holding her stick Singing her songs

Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

We sit down to eat
Hot mutton stew and crunchy fried bread
As she glances shyly across
Lights playing off her features

This lady talks about her generation
How we extended from her Branching out
And if she got mad at us It was coming anyway
 We were a part of her
And if nothing else We had to listen!

Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

We put the dishes up
On the cardboard shelves
And begin to settle down for the night
The stars glittering Shadows dancing
 Dogs barking in the distance Cats meowing under the small
 bed
 Sheep grunting in their corral

And I wish my dear grandma Good-night

Shimasani 'Ayoo'aniinishnih

Louis Littlecoon Oliver

Ah'-cho-lot's Omen

Wrinkled old Indian smile and say:
"I saw on TV big sky rocket."
That just whiteman's Tinker-Toy.
In time his super intelligence
Will kill him and the people!
My old dog wag his tail.
I'll be gone by that time
---and I'll shake my finger at him in Hades!
Whiteman does not see---is blind!
 to the purpose and finality
 of the laws of Creation.
Earth is his home--never to leave!
If he trespasses outer-space
Then he must suffer the consequences.
My dog wag tail in approval.

Ah'-cho-lot: An old Creek Indian

Cheryl Savageau

At The Pow Wow

my mother, red-haired,
who lived with my father
forty years,
who buried my grandparents,
whose skin was brown, she said,
from age,
watches the feathered dancers
and says, so that's
what real Indians look like.

I wrap the shawl around my shoulders,
and join the circle.

Trees

You taught me the land so well
that all through my childhood
I never saw the highway,
the truckstops, lumberyards,
the asphalt works,
but instead saw the hills,
the trees, the ponds on the south end
of Quinsigamond that twined
through the tangled underbrush
where old cars rusted back to earth,
and rubber tires made homes for fish.

Driving down the dirt road home,
it was the trees you saw first,
all New England a forest.
I have seen you get out of a car,
breathe in the sky, the green
of summer maples, listen for the talk
of birds and squirrels, the murmur
of earthworms beneath your feet.
When you looked toward the house,
you had to shift focus,
as if it were something
difficult to see.

Trees filled the yard
until Ma complained,
where is the sun.
Now you are gone,
she is cutting them down
to fill the front with azaleas.

The white birch you loved,
we love. Its daughters
are filling the back.
Your grandchildren play
among them. We have taught them
as you taught us, to leave
the peeling bark, to lean
their cheeks against
the powdery white and hear
the heartbeat of the tree.
Sacred, beautiful, companion.

The Dream Warrior

I am intentional to light,
never capitulating the stars
or the sway of grasses in my mothers mouth.

The red gash at my peoples breast
is a journey of words and deed,
exposed to the sun,
a river of blood that pours outward,
beating against the sky at dawn.

I am intentional to light,
dancing upon the moons altar,
where dreams recede back into their sacred
hole. I am a dream warrior, protecting
the destinies of my childrens children,
with fists of familiar medicines,
with songs of soft gestures,
and brutal forgiveness.

I am a dream warrior,
silhouetted against the day of bad sign talk,
against the signing away of my mothers breath,
against the part and parcel of your reality.
Silhouetted against the road that severs my peoples
dream.

I am a dream warrior,
sleepless around my peoples fire, remembering
the beating down of younger sisters,
the emasculation of fine young men,
all their smiles bright as the rivers moon.

I am intentional to light,
to the chins resting too long on sallow chests,
to the educating of my children of your missionary
positions. You return them lost to us.

I am a dream warrior,
intentional to light.
Never capitulating my peoples dream,
never capitulating the stars.

Heritage

Stolen velocity, snared energy.
I rocket past gravity's orbit,
elastic as string on a bent bow.
"Wa nombly cue-ay!"
"Come and eat," they call to me,
the Old Ones
and they mean it--welcome,
pointing with their lips in dreams.
Standing under waterfalls,
their singing is muffled by the roar.
Arms uncurl into wings
as they swing around on the beat.
Voices carry me up,
the drum moves my feet
to touch dusty earth.
Dust floats up around us
beneath my eyelids,
under my tongue.
What's in the blood
boils and forgets,
mocks me, catches me out,
freezes into skeleton memory
and tears my skin red.
For years, nothing,
not a sign, the barest image--
until I realized there'd be no sign,
no great revelation.
Only the precise movement
of brown fingers, brown eyes,
a love of living with distance,
the act of generosity,
the whirl of storms, feathered winds,
the return of rain
falling to earth in the night.

"Wa nombly cue-ay" is Osage for "come and eat." Osage people point with their lips; it's considered impolite to point with a finger.

Sidner Larson

Aunt Julia

It was dark a long time
before someone said
light the lamp.

Skinny for any age,
I wondered where Zortman was,
who the Bear girls were,
what prairie chickens
drummed out of sight.

Evening talk seemed like
more than it was.
A man from Havre
killed on the People's Creek bridge,
something broke in his head.
He was gone before he hit,
Doc Hamilton said,
snapping his scuffed bag shut.

A horse fell on Uncle Al
so he and Aunt Julia
never had kids.
She worked bitter hands
to write the Community News;
no rain since June,
large rattlers killed in yards.
He was always dead.

She knew I had no father,
ignored me with Strikes At eyes.
I dreamed of big fish
and watched a miller
crazy to die
in the wonderful yellow light.

For Dick

I was surprised when I returned. Not that you were dead but that Tuesdays could break hard work down to simple gestures. I imagine growing civilized and remember your forward Buick fondly. It was cars we had in common, and the need for reassuring distance in a rear-view mirror. Winter won't leave us alone. Missoula was better to you, and the pulp-belt bars gave you reflections in a romantic eye. I read the pattern of waves in my blood, know enough to sit tight next to the Red River until silent highways tap a better message.

It has been a long time. Remember that bar down by the mill? Lives cheaper than beer and the wrong look could tip the scales all the way to China. You got out of there just in time. Or maybe you would have preferred to go for it with Bogus Red. He squared things once and for all and is now talking accounts to his dick and a succession of visitors who never show at the crowbar hotel. Missoula was okay but I didn't ask for much more than a quick goodbye.

What can I say? I don't drink much anymore. Days go diachronic. Little Mayans watch our buildings from far away with knowing eyes. Some guy from Tacoma came inland looking to fulfill the need of his life. He read the signs, then immediately reduced murder to love. Another grand parable of sin, grace, redemption. Other lovers caught up with him in Florida and killed him back. I can't talk about the fish just now but they do seem to think that communication as we know it is about to change big time.

P.S. Yellowstone burned down last summer.

Ron Welburn

Basketball and Dancing

rejecting both as intimacies for now
I am seeking a design
for my breechclout and moccasins
and the truest leering grin for my false face.
I find several brass instruments,
bent, curved, valved and keyed.
I go out to the world and say
I am Young Singing Shield.
Your hoop I cover with the skins
of my enemies; your music I convert
beyond cognizance, for I seek this design
without finding the bear
or just the right sapling
to hang his meat from.

* * * *

Blackfeet

feet is black alright
blackfoot so popular with black faces
indian grandmothers and fathers
chaka chan
bev johnson
some other indian-looking you all know.
quite a motley caravan
wandering out of the high plains
to meet africa, who may instead
have trekked to montana, alberta
with cowry seeds.
did they dine on Piegan?
did they slap five with Bloods?
Blackfeet alright.
They must have known old crow . . .
Crowfoot, that is.

We Were All Bums Once

gopher eating days
sure remember
we all lived out of one room
over in Moccasin Flats
Saskatchewan

my love of literature
I found stuck in a box
of Reader's Digest
True Confessions
Awake

the best I read
"Tortilla Flat"
John Steinbeck wrote
I pronounced "els"
as in Tortilla

I "ee ah"ed after
eating my first
tortilla in L.A.
a quarter turned me
Chicana eating taco

back to work back
to how cheap I was
then now it costs me
a whole pow wow
for an Indian taco

Jeanetta L. Calhoun

museum pieces

for the seneca nation museum
salamanca, ny

i am shivering
falling breathlessly into an uneven sleep
filled with dreams

dreams of ancient masks chanting forgotten songs
no longer silenced behind iced glass

dreams of the three sacred sisters corn beans and squash
stretching their limbs after too many years of
being frozen in soapstone

dreams of wampum beads moving rhythmically against
one another remembering the saddened drums of women wailing
shards of glass explode from the vibration

dreams of the turtle and the wolf leaping down from platforms
vomiting the taxidermists stuffing from their bowels

i am shaking
waking abruptly into awareness shouting
we are alive

* * * *

decision

for carroll arnett
pfaffikon, switzerland
june, 1988

have i come this far
on my road home
to do this
to sit on antique brocade
wrapping red yarn around feathers
destined to be peddled as
"Authentic Indian Handicrafts"

i am an authentic indian, alright . . .
no matter how often i hear
"but you don't LOOK indian."
finding the way for us
mixed-bloods is hard enough
without having respect for an elder
tarnished by the awful feeling that
she's sold out and now asks me
to come along for the ride

i remembered to thank
my brothers and sisters for
their gift of black and brown plumes
lying lifeless in my hands . . .
still, i wash my hands four times.
the yarn dye feels like blood stains

i think of the last time i
wrapped his dog soldier braid
in the same color of yarn.
i remember the honor and beauty
in the act. . .
a thin black braid
shining and alive

i beg off this sacrilege of making hatbands
for german would-be cowboys by
pleading exhaustion
i *am* tired, tired of selling out

tell gogisgi
i am no longer
in the middle
of the road

Karoniaktatie

Indian Machismo (Skin to Skin)

this is the Blue Jean nation speakin, bro
& these are the Red Mans Blues, sis
yo! yo! yo! & hey! hey! hey! what can i say,
well, you could say, we missed the boat, cuz . . .
we aint no alcatraz, no aim, no wounded knee
we dont vote, but who votes anyway
you kick out the blood-sucking scum
they just come back in a different face
wiser, richer, hard-core thieves
they need us weak and weak we get
so what? so what? so what?
you do your part, you get diddly-squat
how many meetings, how many cops
how many knocks in the dark
just leave me alone, just do your thing

hey, hey, we missed:
Floyd Westerman, Buffy Ste Marie, Russell Means,
Dennis Banks, we even missed Iron Eyes Cody,
we missed national indian day,
we missed the trail of broken treaties,
plymouth rock, the longest walk,
we missed the fish-ins, the sit-ins, the marches,
we dont know tom petty, the allmans, grateful dead,
we dont know jackson browne, bruce cockburn, neil young,
we dont know fritz scholder, r.c. or t.c.,
we missed Scottsdale, Custer, Pine Ridge, Rosebud,
we missed Crow Dogs Paradise,
we missed Ganiyenneh & Akwesasne &
Major Schneemans frontal retreat,
we missed Red Lake, Parliament Hill,
we missed the filming of all the new redman movies,
we dont know brando, dylan, dick gregory, jane fonda,
but bro, can i say, not proud, not wise, just reality,
we are the skins that drink in the ditch,
we are the skins that fill the tanks & cells & jails & wards,
we are the skins that need that spare change, bottle, baggie,
we are the lou reed skins, the funky skins, the bowie-zowie skins,
the ghosts of seattle and and the frozen dead of Big Foots Band,

we are burned down boarding schools, trashed BIA toilets,
government trailer trash, broken glass, broken treaties,
you mean you still believe in treaties?
you be bad, bad judges of character,
like the faith of clowns, you trust too much,
you believe in peoples smiles,
you ever see them smile when they stab you in the back?
its happened every day for 500 years, but i bet you be there
in your buckskins, when the politicos celebrate Columbus in 1992.

We are the skins that fill the bingos, the bootleggers, the afterhours
clubs,

we are the skins that speak the language of currency:
toyota, cadillac, columbian, sinsemilla, jim beam, jack daniels, gilleys,
coors, bud, zenith, sony, vhs, cd, kragers, headers, spoilers,
machined decks and state of the art funky crapola, its all payola,
where we put this stuff, i dont know, but it sure makes the rounds
thats for sure . . . we cant help what we aint got . . .

what we aint got, is what we be looking for . . .

i think we're asking for help, is that a flash, or what?

This aint bad, bro, you did it too and pretty slickeroo,

its reality, just say so, even if its not there,

& sometimes its there, but it dont mean a thing,

you can ask me & i can ask you,

"how much did you get for your soul?"

but this soul's been punctured, splintered, folded & mutilated,

sewn back together into a crazy quilt that catches the wind . . .

Im sending signals, bro, using my korean slicker, yellow tanned
genuine imitation leather bodybag, the same one they will carry me in,
when that last round-up happens in some bloody border bar . . .

bro, sister, can you help me, can you read the signs?

**& WHEN THEY PUT YOU DOWN, WHEN THEY KILL YOU
ACTIVISTS,**

DO WE, THE PASSIVE, BECOME SURVIVORS?

DO WE EVEN KNOW HOW TO SURVIVE?

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SURVIVE?

WHY DOES IT ALWAYS COME DOWN,

TO SURVIVAL . . . AND SURVIVORS?

written in the dark hours of the reagan regime, not with bitterness, or brutality, but
within a reality, even as people swim in dreams, written with eyes open wide, in fear,
in rage, in knowledge so heavy, you can never run . . . and hide

Chanco

Chanco sensed his brother's presence before he saw him, for he knew he waited there in the shadows of the short palisade. "You are to kill them tomorrow morning," his brother said in their own language, the language of Powhatan. "You are to kill him. And her and the baby too. When the sun shines through the first branches of the trees. Ope-tsan-kano has ordered all the villages to attack, all up and down the river. We will strike everywhere at once."

The dog, a big slobbering mastiff, growled then at his brother, and Chanco had to calm him, thankful that it covered his confusion. *Me? Why me?* he thought. *I'm only fourteen; that's a man's job.*

"You can do it, can't you?" his brother asked.

Chanco hesitated, glad to be in the darkness, glad that his brother could not see the quivering in his lip, the protest in his eye. "I--How? With a knife?"

"Take his musket. Use his own musket on them. He has taught you to use it, hasn't he? Or has he made your heart blue?"

The words struck Chanco like a fist. His brother had stepped close, so that his breath beat Chanco on the side of the head, hard but without anger. "You're getting to be a man," said his brother. "You've got to do a man's duties. We've got to get rid of them. Before they destroy us and our way. We will burn Jamestown, burn their farms, kill all these thieving English, and push their ships back into the sea. That is Ope-tsan-kano's plan. You must go along with it, like a brave warrior, or you will have no one to go along with you."

Chanco held the mastiff's collar and said nothing. If he had said it was treachery, his brother would have hit him. If he had said they only want us to be civilized too, his brother would have hit him again.

"Answer me," said his brother. "He has taught you to use the musket?"

"Yes," said Chanco.

His brother turned on his toe and faded away toward the west outbuilding where Chanco slept.

* * *

Four years before, Chanco had been captured when the English raided his village for slaves. At first, he had hated the English--and Richard Pace, his captor, in particular. He had tried several times to escape. Each time he was recaptured, Pace had not punished him, but had treated him with kindness, and, slowly, Chanco had come to

be content with Pace and the English. The Reverend Alexander Whitaker, who had taught Pocahontas to be a Christian, had taught Chanco how they were all really brothers in soul, and how the Indians were really one of the lost tribes, who were now found, and would live hereafter in peace and prosperity. Then Chanco had become a Christian, too, and tried to live, not as Richard and Isabella Pace's servant, but as their son, as an older brother to little George. He no longer had a desire to escape.

But now, old Wahunsenacock, the Powhatan, was dead. And Ope-tsan-kano, Powhatan's half-brother who had fought the English from the beginning, had sent Chanco orders to kill his benefactor. Chanco did not know where to turn, so he stood in the shadow of the short palisade, holding the mastiff's collar and trying to pray to Jesus, until Isabella Pace called him to supper.

* * *

At the supper table, Chanco kept glancing at Richard Pace. *He wants me to tell*, thought Chanco. *He would want me to tell, but I won't do it.*

When Pace asked about his brother, Chanco pretended to have food in his mouth.

"That was your brother you were talking to, wasn't it?" asked Isabella.

At last, Chanco mumbled, "Went west," pleased that he had told the truth about where his brother had gone, but had not revealed anything. He knew his brother would be waiting in the shed. Chanco had already slipped a wild turkey leg into the belly of his shirt.

"Any news of Opechancanough?" asked Pace.

Chanco tried to hold his outward expression absolutely still, as he had been taught when a very young child. He gazed at Pace to see if there was any knowledge in his eyes. At last, he shrugged.

"I just thought maybe your brother--"

At that moment, Chanco hated his benefactor more than he had ever hated anyone. And hated him even more, because Richard Pace was so insensitive: he could not even see that he was hated. Pace's contempt for all things Indian was supreme. *I'll kill him*, thought Chanco. *Because he is our enemy, mine, all the Real People's. Even though he has been more father to me than anyone, I'll kill him.* With pleasure, Chanco thought of a way to mislead without lying. "Ope-tsan-kano, no change," said Chanco. "No change since last year."

"That's good to hear," said Pace, sipping his wine with satisfaction. He leaned back in his chair and became more voluble. "George Thorpe said he had a message from Opechancanough only a week

ago. Some had heard ugly rumors, about which Thorpe sent to inquire."

Chanco just gazed at Pace, pretending ignorance.

"Well, you know of the peace we concluded last year and ratified and stamped in brass, as Opechancanough wanted, and then nailed to the witness tree?"

Chanco nodded in the English fashion.

"Well, the messenger came back, saying that Opechancanough held that peace so firm, that the sky should sooner fall than it dissolve." Pace sipped more of his wine and straightened his vest.

"I tell you, Chanco, it's good to know that we are secure in our houses and the civilization of the savages is progressing well. I reckon now that there was no substance to the rumor that Opechancanough had tried to bribe some of the coastal tribes to poison all of us. I tell you, Chanco, this New England is fair on its course to be a paradise for us."

As Pace talked on and on, Chanco realized that it was not Pace's insensitivity that allowed him to say these things to a person who had been dispossessed and made a slave, but that Pace was talking to Chanco the way he would talk to another English man, or to a son. And Chanco was pleased. Perhaps they were brothers of the soul, after all. Perhaps there could exist a world in which Indians and English lived as equals. Hadn't the Reverend Mr. Whitaker died in the river while trying to give help to an Indian woman? Hadn't he gone to her aid as soon as he would have gone to the aid of an Englishwoman?

Pace's voice broke through Chanco's thoughts again. "I tell you, Chanco, this is the first day of spring and a new world is a-borning. Look at me: I've patented my plantation almost four miles from Jamestown, with nothing around me but a short palisade. And all up and down the river, men are living harmoniously with the natives, as we are living here at Pace's Paines."

Chanco looked down. It was true. He was living more comfortably now than he had before, more comfortably than he had in his whole life. He was warm and well-fed, and, more importantly, Richard and Isabella Pace seemed to care for him genuinely, and little George crawled on Chanco's knee as if Chanco were no different from his parents. They were Chanco's parents, too, now. How could he raise a weapon to kill them?

Pace was still talking: "Perhaps Mr. Whitaker and George Thorpe were right; maybe we could castrate the mastiffs to make them tamer, even though some maintain it unwise to drop security so far. Let us pray." Pace and Isabella drifted into the prayer with closed eyes, "Let

us thank the Almighty with all our hearts for the success He has seen fit that we enjoy as we so nobly pursue and advance our projects of buildings, plantings, and in effecting the savages' conversion by peaceable and fair means----"

As Pace talked, Chanco gazed at his plate and at the candle on the table, unable to pray. He sank lower in the chair the white man had made of tree limbs. *Maybe he won't see me*, he thought. *Maybe I'll look up in a while and both he and my brother will be gone. Maybe the task will vanish. He would want me to tell*, thought Chanco. *If I were really his son, I would be bound by duty to tell.*

Chanco slipped the wild turkey leg from beneath his shirt and returned it to the platter. Then, he waited those minutes he had been taught were polite and said good night. He went out without calling Pace father.

* * *

Even before his eyes had adjusted to the darkness, Chanco heard the mastiff sniffing at his leg like a friend. He knew Chanco. *Ope-tsan-kano will send assassins to the plantations where the dogs know them*, he thought. *Then they can get in without waking their victims.*

The big dog followed Chanco as he moved away from the main house. That made Chanco feel secure, for the dog would keep away the spirits of dead people that lived in the woods and frequently tried to do mischief to the living. He heard one in the woods down by the river, squawking like a turkey that had just been caught by a fox. Even though he was uncomfortable in the dark, he dallied, looking back at Pace's house, knowing, dreading, that he would have to face his brother again in the shed.

All of Chanco's life, the tribe had tried to deal with this same dilemma. When the English had been here only a year, John Smith had gone to Nansemond village and demanded corn: "You know our want, and we know your plenty. Somehow, by peace or by force, your plenty is going to serve our want." To which, Wahunsenacock, the Powhatan, had replied, "Why should you take by force that which you can have by love?" But Smith stuck to his line and extorted corn from the Indians as a condition of peace.

Even Powhatan was then ready to let Ope-tsan-kano execute Smith, but Pocahontas begged him to change his mind.

"You can't trust these English," said Ope-tsan-kano.

Not long after Pocahontas had saved Smith, they kidnapped her and held her as a hostage to ensure peace. Chanco, too, had been kidnapped and held hostage in the same kind of extortion that just

happened to produce slaves. Yes, he thought, *Ope-tsan-kano is right. They will never accept us.*

"Do you think we will find a place in their God's sight?" Ope-tsan-kano had once asked in council. "Don't you know they say we are infidels, servants of their devil in our dark and howling woods, not even so good as scum or sweat, until we consent to take their God by the arm? But do you think they would let us live among them? Would they let us work at our trades? Or theirs? Would any of them follow an Indian commander, or let an Indian be Governor of Virginia, even if he were as wise as Powhatan? They tell us that they are the chosen people, but who chose them? They themselves. They have no room in their hearts for brotherhood; they have no room for anything but their greedy admiration of themselves."

The tribe had always offered good faith, and the English had responded with extortion. Ope-tsan-kano was right. They would have to be exterminated--to the last man, woman, and child. And Chanco would help. He would be glad to help. He hurried toward the shed.

His brother growled at him from the dark of the room. "What kept you so long? Didn't you know I was waiting?"

"I got away as soon as I could," said Chanco.

"Haugh!" said his brother in disgust and disbelief.

Chanco let it pass. "Here," he said, "I've brought you some food." He handed his brother a small loaf of corn bread and a turnip.

"What is this?" scowled his brother. "Squaw-food! Do you think I want to eat that kind of truck and become stiff like the roots? No! I want to be able to spring lightly and swiftly through the forest. Couldn't you get me any deer meat? Or at least some turkey?"

Chanco hesitated, then decided to make no excuses. His brother fell to eating the food.

Chanco opened the shutter and stood listening to the night. He had grown up in the Powhatan's village, where his first memories were of men arguing to kill the whites, countered by Powhatan's world-weary answers: "We have not achieved our ends by force, nor will we. Is it not better to die secure in our lodges with our women and children near, than to strike these men, after which we must lie on the forest floor, eat what grubs and roots we can find, and forever be on the secret watch to attack again, lest we be attacked? Who of us can deny that their weapons are superior to ours? As friends, we will have like weapons. Who of us can deny that their copper pans are better than our clay pots? We, too, will have copper pans. And what man among us does not already carry one of their knives at his waist?"

Chanco hardly knew what to think. Pocahontas had adopted them

as her family, and look how comfortable she had become. Even the Powhatan had come to accept and approve of her choice. *What man among us could not adopt a family of them as his own?* thought Chanco.

Most of the tribe had said Powhatan was a great man, but Chanco's uncles and brothers had followed Ope-tsan-kano.

"Have you seen our uncles lately?" he asked his brother.

"Yes, of course. Everyone is a part of the attack. All the villages, all the sub-tribes, all of the peoples that Ope-tsan-kano leads. Your uncles will strike at George Thorpe's place. The black servant there may know of the plan, but he will run away to save himself. We will bash in Thorpe's skull, then cut his body into small pieces, to be lost in the dark woods, so that his soul will find no rest."

"So much?" cried Chanco. "Does he deserve so much?"

"He deserves more. But we cannot cut his spirit in pieces."

"But he has been so good--such a good friend--"

"Friend? Ha! Is it being a good friend to humiliate even Ope-tsan-kano by dogging him to say that Thorpe's God is a loving God? Better than the Great Spirit? Or force us to say we love Thorpe and his mastiffs? For he rips out our souls, even as he has trained his dogs to rip out our guts."

His brother was right, of course. Thorpe had done those things. The thought of Thorpe's guts being scattered in the forest thrilled Chanco. It would serve him right, serve all the English right to be ripped to pieces so ruthlessly, as they had trained their mastiffs to kill Indians. Yes, he thought, *rip them to pieces and feed them to their own dogs!*

His brother was eating the last of the food.

I hope some of the assassins stop to have breakfast with the English, thought Chanco, before they kill them with their own tools.

His brother was still talking, though more quietly. Whitaker had been a fool and a meddler, who might have been a good man, had he been born an Indian. Thorpe and Pace and those other English were not friends, but thieves; they professed their undying love, but Indian corn and wild game still found their way to English tables, and the Indians were left to eat grubs and roots in the forests.

Yet, any Indians who wished to could live with them, thought Chanco, and be well-fed, secure in their souls, warm against the winter, even as Chanco had lived these last years. He felt paralyzed. What could be done? There was no solution for both these men.

I could run away, he thought, gazing at the dark woods. I could go into the forest and walk toward the hills under the sunset and never come back. Then I wouldn't have to answer to either of them. But, in

anguish, frustration, outrage, he knew, *I will have to do it. My brother is here to make sure I do it.* Hopelessness burned in him like the fires of damnation themselves. He leaned against the sash, sinking in his despair.

* * *

Then Chanco discovered with a start that he had dozed on the window sill, for his brother was shaking him awake. By the night sounds, Chanco could tell it was not long before first light.

"I have to go now," said his brother. "You too must awake and do your duty."

"Go?" asked Chanco. "You are going?"

"Yes, of course." His brother's voice had turned bitter and sarcastic. "My job is to bash in 'Mister' Perry's skull. I'll teach him what his slaves think of him and his slobbering dogs."

Then Chanco's brother was gone. Chanco sat long, listening to the quiet place in the woods where his brother had passed.

Their ancestors were out there. The ghost of Powhatan was there, too, in the woods. Were those great men still arguing after death? Did their souls carry on the problems they had struggled with in life? They had come to no conclusions in life, but was there something, some idea, some information that the immortal soul knew that the mortal did not? Could they tell a mortal? Could they give a sign?

Chanco got up and walked out the gate, leaving the mastiff behind. His skin shrivelled in goose bumps, though he was not cold. He could hear his heart thumping as he entered the woods. Everything was absolutely quiet.

Was that the sign they gave? Their absolute silence? He walked a short way on a path he knew, then stopped. He tried to speak, but no sound came. Then he whispered, "Wahunsenacock." He waited a moment for an answer. "Wahunsenacock, great father, elder uncle. Are you there? Give me a sign."

He waited. Nothing. He felt a chill in his backbone, and his hands shook. Was that the sign? Were they telling him to look into himself?

"But why me?" he whispered. "I'm only a boy. I'm only fourteen years old. How can I know a man's thoughts? Oh, Sweet Jesus, help me in my misery. Deliver me from my weakness, lead me from my confusions into righteousness. Purify me that I may see."

He paused to listen. There was not a sound in the forest, not a speck of light.

It would soon be dawn on March 22, 1622--Good Friday. It was the day the Lord Jesus had been tormented and crucified. Chanco

felt profoundly sorry for Jesus, because Pace had impressed upon him what a holy man Jesus was--how infallible, how forgiving and loving, how unselfish, how divine. This Jesus had promised to carry even Chanco's worries, if Chanco would only give freely of his love. How could Chanco not love such a brave warrior, who invented his own weapons and led his tribe in his own ways?

The Israelites were the chosen people of God. Yet they were constantly at war with the people that tried to push them out of their Holy Land, constantly in danger of suffering annihilation, driven on all sides by angry enemies, as a desert wind drives the sand, as the English had pressed the Powhatan people. What they saw as justice, others saw as greed. What the English saw as honor, the Powhatan people saw as thievery. What the English called plantation was invasion and war. And God had said, let there be a stop to this. Yes, God had said, gird up your loins and slay them with their own swords; let there be a stop to their evil.

Chanco returned to the house, picked up the axe he chopped Pace's wood with, and headed for his adopted father's bedroom.

He could not see Pace in the darkness, but once in his presence, he had no doubt. He shook Pace awake, saying, "Forgive me, father. Your life is in danger."

Pace was confused. "What? Who? Is that you, Chanco?"

"Yes, it is Chanco. Your life is in danger, master. Oh, please forgive me that I could raise your axe against you. I cannot---"

"Axe?" cried Isabella Pace. "What do you mean?"

Then Chanco told them of Ope-tsan-kano's plan, letting it tumble out, disorganized and apologetic.

"Quick! My shirt!" shouted Pace, throwing off his nightshirt. "We've got to give the alarm."

"No!" cried Chanco. "My uncles. They will be killed."

But Pace had already gone out, dragging his pants onto one foot, leaving Isabella Pace to hold a quilt to her breast. In the yard, Pace was shouting, "To arms! To arms!"

Chanco stood, stilled by shock. He had meant to warn only Pace. It meant less to him if all the other English were smashed. But not Pace. And yet, Pace was only a part of the whole English tide. If it were right that he live . . .

Pace broke through the door again, shouting, "Come on, Chanco! This is an emergency!" And he dragged Chanco out by the arm.

Pace had put his boat in the slough and laid the oars across the thwart. "Get in!" said Pace. "We've got to get over to Jamestown, quick!"

"No!" cried Chanco in his native language, as he ducked, turned,

dashed toward his shed.

Pace grabbed at him as he passed, catching only his sleeve. The seam gave way at the shoulder, and Chanco slid free. But it had slowed him enough that Pace got his other hand on the shirt.

Chanco spun, running backward, twisting to allow the shirt to slip over his head.

Then he was free, free soon of the homespun trousers also, running west in first light, in his own red-clay skin, springing lightly like a deer or turkey over the fallen logs in the woods, running, gaining a second wind.

When he came to Perry's place, he leapt over the mastiff with the crushed skull and knew that Perry was dead. By the river, he found Perry's skiff and rowed across to George Thorpe's place. They had cut Thorpe into pieces, as they had planned.

In all, three hundred and forty-seven of the eleven hundred English were to die that morning, but Chanco could not know that. He did know that Pace had rowed the three miles to Jamestown and warned the Governor, for he heard the cannon booming and the muskets cracking.

"My uncles!" he thought. "They are killing my uncles." Chanco found other bodies near Thorpe's burned house. It was a pleasure to kick them. For a moment, Chanco wanted to run after his uncles, catch up with them and his brother, join in the slaying. But they would soon know that Chanco was the traitor who had informed and allowed the English to prepare their defense at Jamestown. "If it weren't for you," they would say, "we could have killed them at their breakfast tables. We could have killed them all. Every last one."

Nor could Chanco ever go back to Pace, now that he had said "No!" in his own language, now that he had his own red-clay skin back. To Pace, Chanco would now be just an Indian, to be whipped, to be enslaved, to be guarded by a slobbering mastiff.

So Chanco ran west. Toward the hills where he could hide. Toward the hills where he could lift up his arms and ask the falling sky to forgive him, where he could beg the cold earth to receive him, where (he knew) none of the powers of the six directions would nurture him. For he was lost in the Universe, with no place to turn. Neither the Great Spirit of All nor God the Father would have him now, for he was a traitor to both his fathers.

These personalities and events of the Great Uprising of March 22, 1622, are documented in The Records of the Virginia Company of London, in the Pace family history, and other places.

COMMENTARY

National Native American Writers Conference

Joe Bruchac is currently putting together a national Native American Writers Conference for 1992, a gathering for Native American authors which will include as many American Indian writers as possible and address a number of topics while giving Native writers a chance to get together. Funding sources are being sought and a committee put together for an initial planning meeting. For more information about the conference contact

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From the Editors

This issue is a first for *SAIL*, and an experiment. When the announcement of *SAIL*'s revival went out in early 1989 I received responses both against and for including creative work in the journal, including one from a correspondent who wrote that "*SAIL* would not be *SAIL*" without poetry, which surprised me, since the journal had never published poetry. I knew that *SAIL* could not attempt such an enterprise without an experienced poetry editor, and only when Joe Bruchac generously agreed to handle creative offerings did this issue devoted to New Native American Writing become possible. We are all in his debt for the major job that editing the issue has been, from first contacting authors and sending out a call for work through correspondence, reading and selecting from the many replies.

Now that the issue is out, we need to hear from you on the question of whether *SAIL* should continue publishing new creative work. *SAIL* belongs to its contributors and subscribers; please tell us what you think.

Helen Jaskoski
Bob Nelson

CONTRIBUTORS

Annharte (Salteaux) is Marie Annharte Baker; she prefers to use her middle name as a signature to her poetry, which has appeared in Conditions, Backbone, Fireweed and Seventh Generation. She is a founding member of the Aboriginal Writer's group in Regina.

Duane Big Eagle (Osage) was born in Oklahoma and received his higher education in California. He has worked with the poets-in-the-schools program in California, and his work has appeared in various anthologies and periodicals, including Songs from this Earth on Turtle's Back.

Charles Brashears (Cherokee) has "a lot of sympathies with the two strands of Cherokees in my family tree, and I often write about them, as well as other Indian connections that call me." He teaches fiction writing at San Diego State University and has published a book of short fiction, Contemporary Insanities.

Jeanetta L. Calhoun (Lenni Lenape) has had poetry in Piecework and Mensokie. "I live in the thousands of cheap motel rooms scattered across the U.S. since I travel most of the year discussing Native American/human rights and the environment."

Charlotte DeClue (Osage) is from Oklahoma. Her work has appeared in anthologies, periodicals, and literary journals in the U.S. as well as in Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and France. Her chapbook Without Warning is available from Strawberry Press.

Della Frank (Navajo) is a school counselor on the Navajo reservation.

Forrest Aguila Funmaker (Salteaux) shares an interest in theatre and writing with his mother, Annharte.

Roy N. Henry (Inupiak): "I am an Inupiaq, the Kawerak dialect of the Seward Peninsula Region. I was raised and live anywhere in Nome, Teller, or Brevig Mission, which is on the western coast of the Seward Peninsula." Roy Henry is currently working on an AA degree.

Lance Henson (Cheyenne) is a poet and activist raised in his grandparents' home built on traditional Cheyenne campgrounds near Calumet, Oklahoma. He is an ex-marine, and a member of the Cheyenne Dog Soldier Society and the Native American Church. His collected works have appeared in the U.S. and Europe, and he lectures on poetry, the environment, and Native American rights and culture.

LeAnne Howe (Choctaw) is a journalist from Oklahoma. Two short story collections, Coyote Papers and A Stand Up Reader, have been published. Her Choctaw family name is Tells and Kills.

Karoniaktatie (Akwasasne Mohawk) is a writer, editor, artist and sometime steelworker; he has published in Akwasasne Notes and other periodicals. His collections are Native Colors and Landscapes.

Maurice Kenny (Mohawk), born on the St. Lawrence River, has authored 20 collections of poetry, the most current being Between Two Rivers and Greyhounding This America. He has received the American Book Award for The Mama Poems, and numerous other awards and fellowships.

Sidner J. Larson (Gros Ventre) was raised on the Fort Belknap reservation of northcentral Montana. "Jim Welch and I share a common set of grandparents by marriage and we both spent considerable time at their ranch at Fort Belknap. . . . 'For Dick' is dedicated to Richard Hugo."

Adrian C. Louis (Paiute) was born in Nevada and is an enrolled Paiute Indian Tribal member. He teaches English at Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He has published a collection of poems, Fire Water World.

Maureena C. A. Manyfingers (Yakima) was born and raised on the Yakima Reservation, located in south central Washington, where she was brought up in a traditional Yakima manner in the Seven Drum Wash-it Faith, long house. Her work appears in various publications, including the forthcoming anthology, Treasured Poems of America.

Terri Meyette (Yaqui) now lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Joe Dale Tate Nevaquaya (Yuchi/Comanche) lives in Oklahoma City and works as a poet-in-the-schools with the Oklahoma State Arts Council. His work has appeared in literary magazines and journals, and he is also a visual artist, exhibiting in New York City at Artist Space.

Louis Littlecoon Oliver (Creek) is now in his mid-eighties. He says, "My people spoke the old Alabama language now practically extinct." His poetry has appeared in Songs From this Earth on Turtle's Back.

Gus Palmer, Jr. (Kiowa) lives in Norman, Oklahoma, where he works for the American Indian Research and Development program. He has published poems in various Indian anthologies and has taught creative writing for gifted and talented American Indian young people in Oklahoma.

Armand Garnet Ruffo (Ojibwe) has been published most recently in the Canadian publication Contemporary Native Writing: Seventh Generation. He is the great-great grandson of Chief Sahquakgiele (Louis Espaniel) of the Ojibway Nation.

Cheryl Savageau (Abenaki) is of French-Canadian and Abenaki heritage. Her work has appeared in literary magazines as well as in the anthology An Ear To The Ground. She works as a storyteller and visiting writer in schools throughout Massachusetts.

Glen Simpson (Athabaskan) includes Tahltan and Casca Athabascans from Northern British Columbia among his ancestors. An artist, as well as a writer, he lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, where he works at the University of Alaska. His poems appear in Alaska Quarterly and the forthcoming anthology from Greenfield Review Press, Raven Tells Stories.

Renee Matthew Singh (Athabaskan) is from the interior of Alaska; she was raised in the village of Tanana until the age of seven when her family moved to Fairbanks. She is currently attending the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, majoring in English with a minor in Education.

Earle Thompson (Yakima) attended schools on the Yakima Reservation and in Seattle. His writing has appeared in various periodicals and anthologies including Songs From this Earth on Turtle's Back.

Ron Welburn (Cherokee-Conoy) has published poems in The Phoenix, The Eagle, New England's American Indian Journal, and several other magazines and anthologies. He teaches in the English Department at Western Connecticut State University and is active on the powwow circuit in the Northeast.