

SAIL

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Sherman Alexie

Portrait of the Indian as a Young Man

Hunger is no excuse
for a fast car, cousin.

Horsepower has nothing to do with horses.

Some stories remain:

Sonny Six-Pack drove so hard we wedged a commodity can between
the gas pedal and fire wall so he could only travel so fast but Sonny
drank beyond vision and drove his foot down with the weight of 500
years, crushed that can flat and rode against Ford Canyon Road until it
knocked him off his hinges.

There are doors we don't need
to open, locks without a key.

Cousin, when you stop
at The Trading Post, empty
beer cans rattling
against the skeleton
of your reservation car,
do you think it's a new kind of music?

There's no medicine in a whiskey bottle; no vision rising out of IHS
detox.

Some stories change:

Broken Nose rode his fastest pony against a BIA pick-up, winner-take-
all and Broken Nose won by three lengths and the BIA was forced to
give up the pink slip for the reservation but Broken Nose got drunk that
night and had to give it all back when he lost a chess game because he
thought he was playing checkers.

Cousin, any dream worth repeating
walks home on two feet at closing time.

for Junior

Sherman Alexie

Hypothesis

How would your heart change
if I told you Jesus Christ had already come back
for a second time and got crucified again?

He called himself Crazy Horse
and never said anything about a third attempt.

Going on the Wagon

So many old Indians stopped drinking
one drink before
the drink which would've killed them.

I'll write poetry exactly that way.

Storyshepherd

She was sitting on a boulder high on the sandstone mesa that rose, rocky and dotted with small cedar trees and lava boulders, above the backyard of the house she had grown up in. Her family and her grandparents had shared a yard graceful with elm and poplar, spruce and willow, and lush with painstakingly watered and mulched lawns and flower beds, blooming in the midst of the high, semi-arid plateau where in those years of drought little bloomed. Her grandmother had gardened almost obsessively when Effie was young, landscaping the yard with flowering vines, berry patches, rose bushes and shrubs, bamboo, a lattice-work semi-gazebo hung with Queen Anne's lace, and a small lily pond. Behind her house and raised above it five feet or so, Effie's grandma had made a rock garden, and it was from this pad that Effie and her companion had launched their ascent of the mesa. As they made their way upward toward the towering sandstone that bordered the rock garden and where the mesas began, Effie greeted each shrub, bush and tree like old friends, remembering every event connected in her mind with each of them as she passed.

"See this pussywillow?" she said to Lucy, stopping by it and mentally measuring its growth and vitality. "Grandma used to get us up here to get the pussywillows. I always thought they were a miracle, the way they so perfectly imitated the soft feel of a cat's paw. I used to stroke and stroke them and wonder if they were really related to cats." She laughed, remembering her childish wonder and acknowledging to herself that somewhere in her mind she still carried the suspicion that pussywillows were somehow connected with kittens.

The mesa they were heading toward loomed several feet above the rock garden, twenty feet above the lawns and houses and the store that stood next door. It had stood sentinel to Effie's growing—sheltering, protecting, mysterious. From these sandstone hills had come the howls of coyotes while she lay in bed or on the lawns listening to the talk of the adults and staring up at the clear, bright stars. The mesa still seemed mysterious, though the houses and the yard she had known for over forty years had changed, subtly but almost completely in that time.

Her house had changed so much that she didn't think it was really the same house: it seemed like it had been torn down and another dwelling put in its place. But it was the same structure, only its once mud and straw finish had been replaced by stucco and its insides had been so transformed with walnut paneling, formica ledges, tile floors

and carpeting, that when she went in to briefly visit with the woman who lived there now, she felt out of place, disoriented. She knew that this had been the house she grew up in, but she also knew that nothing remained of that once safe and familiar place. She never stayed long because she felt so uncomfortable and somehow vaguely angry to be there.

After Effie and Lucy had hauled themselves up the sandstone rocks, each as large as a small house and as high, Lucy had gone off to "hunt for arrowheads" as she announced to Effie. Effie had watched her move slowly away across the mesa, back hunched, head down, searching the smooth stretches of rock and the small interstices of powdery dirt between them for bits of flint or pieces of old pottery left by some of the Indians who had traveled through here on their way to somewhere so long ago. Effie didn't follow Lucy. She didn't really approve of taking things out of the mesas. Best they be left where they belong, she believed. But Lucy, like many of Effie's city friends, had some sort of obsession with removing things shaped by unknown humans they saw as exotic creatures. Most of what was recovered from that stretch of mesas were small bits of recent pottery or unsuccessful arrowheads that some unlucky would-be artisan had discarded. Effie imagined that the flint flakes lying around had been left by a youngster trying to learn how to make arrowheads. She had engaged in that same surmise for over thirty years, and it was still intriguing, though she had taken a course or two in anthropology and knew that the chips were more likely pieces chipped off by an arrowmaker as the larger stone was being worked.

As Lucy made her way angling slowly southeast of where they had come up onto the mesa, Effie walked slowly in a north-easterly direction, carefully stepping only on stone or the tough springy grass that grew in some places between the stones. It was a habit she had developed when she was a child, imitating the Indians, trying to leave no trace of her passing that would disturb things on the mesa. She headed toward a hill that rose above the flat top of the mesa like a gentle dome where she could sit and gaze over the village and watch the sky. From there she could see Mount Taylor, the fourteen-thousand-foot peak that reared, lofty and powerful, above the plain the village stood on. Tse'pina, the Lagunas called it, Woman Veiled in Clouds. The highest peaks of the mountain were well above timber line and rose like a smooth skull out of the flanks of hills and peaks.

Effie had been coming back to Cubero to roam the village and the mesa for years. She came infrequently, but regularly. It cleared something in her mind, restoring a certain balance and sanity to her life. Her visits followed a pattern. She would drive up the paved road

that passed by the outer perimeter of the village; it had been the original highway 66, built long before she was born. She would park just where it curved to cross the large arroyo that carried runoff of mountain waters during the rainy season in the summers in front of her grandmother's house. Getting out of the car, she would cross the road to look into the arroyo, the bottom of it some ten or fifteen feet below the road. She would remember how she had almost gone down the side full tilt on her tricycle. Had it not been for the quick action of a Laguna man who was watching her in her mad ride out of the yard, she would have plunged the distance. She would also remember the time her aunt Susie had been visiting her grandmother and had forgotten to put the brake on when she parked. An Acoma woman they called Little Susie, to distinguish her from Effie's aunt, had been sitting in the car waiting for Aunt Susie to come out and the car had suddenly begun to move forward, sliding down the slight incline and finally plunging over the side into the arroyo, Little Susie and all. Luckily, by some miracle, she hadn't been hurt. Finally, Effie would remember that one of the Cubero men had been found in that same arroyo. He'd fallen into it somehow, in the middle of the night, they supposed. He wasn't found until morning, and he was dead. He was the one who played the accordion at the dances and for the Feast Day celebration at the Church. Effie wondered if anyone had learned to play so there would be someone to take his place. Not at dances, though. They probably didn't have them any more in Cubero. The young folk probably went out to some disco in Grants or Albuquerque when they wanted to party. But for the feast, the *Matachines*. She remembered the few times she had ever seen that dance—how astonishing and riveting it was, the flashing mirrors the dancers held, their brightly ribboned headdresses also set with tiny mirrors that flashed in the sun, their shuffling steps that bespoke the ancient source of the dance. She figured they probably couldn't do it any more; probably no one would want to do such a strange dance that seemed so pagan, so sprung from another order of things. It certainly wouldn't fit in with the modernized church, the suburban appearance of the village or the urban low rider image the Cubero youth indulged in lately.

After she made her ritual visit to the side of the arroyo and recounted its bits of history to herself and whoever was with her, she would go into the store that was adjacent to her grandmother's yard. The store had been owned by her grandfather, his son-in-law, her father, her mother's uncle and her grandfather's nephews. The nephews and her father were the owners now; her uncle and grandfather were dead. In the store she would look over the merchandise: the small stock of groceries they carried, the small stacks of dry goods. She would go

through the rack that held an assortment of jackets, dresses and shirts, choosing things to buy. While she was there she would picture the store as it had been when she was growing up—the wood plank floors that were oiled with something that made them dark brown and vaguely sticky, the old stove that had stood near the back of the store, the shelves filled with canned goods and yard goods, harnesses for cplowing, tools, implements. She would see the small appliances and television sets that stood in their place, and somewhere inside would mourn for what was not there.

Having completed her shopping trip, she would head to her grandmother's house. Always before this trip her grandmother would be waiting with a pot of thick, strong coffee and some cookies—just like grandmas are supposed to—and maybe something for lunch. They would sit in the kitchen enjoying the sun and exchanging gossip and news. Her grandmother had loved to hear about what Effie had been doing, about her kids and what they were doing, about her friends. She would offer bits of news of her own—how this son or granddaughter was, where they were, what had happened to them since she'd last talked to Effie. After a companionable lunch, Effie would head out the back door to the mesa, to "go exploring" as she had all the years of her growing up. "When you get back we'll have some coffee before you go back to town," her grandmother would say. Sometimes she'd go out with Effie and climb up to the rock garden with her before sending her on her way. But ever since she'd had her stroke her grandmother had been staying in Albuquerque with Effie's mother, so this visit had taken on an eerie quality. Effie went as usual to her grandmother's house, but it was empty and dusty. She wandered through the rooms, showing Lucy the treasures brooding there—her aunt's paintings and woodcarvings, her grandmother's antiques that had come from California when the folks there had "passed on" as her grandmother would say. They almost tiptoed through the house, keeping their voices lowered as though they might disturb the shadows with loud tones, and escaped soon into the outdoors. They climbed, relieved, to the mesas where death and change never came.

On reaching the mesa, Effie let her companion go her own way while she climbed the hill to sit and remind herself of Cubero and the years there she remembered and held close in her mind, however far away from there she ever went. Now, sitting on a boulder on the hill, looking over the village and plain of her childhood, Effie sat, quietly. The sky was very blue. A few thick, multidomed clouds hovered overhead, with more piling up to the southeast. Rain in a few days, she thought, as she had always thought when seeing those clouds over the years. Idly, she wondered if her Laguna grandmother was in any of

them, and scanned them with a practiced eye to see if she could recognize the old woman's presence there.

She began to feel warm in the sun and she wished she could take off her shirt and leave her breasts and shoulders free to the air and light. It was late summer. The whir of cicadas filled the air and there was a golden, almost winey tang on the breeze, warning of coming autumn. She sat reclining easily, familiarly, on the blue lava stone, the same one she had sat on every time she had come up to the mesa since she was small. The stone was smooth from wear. Many of the people from the village below had sat there, she imagined. Much use had made the curve of the chair-like boulder smooth and satiny. She knew her mother had ranged these hills in her own youth, before marriage and children had ended her forays in the hills. She had probably sat where Effie now sat, and thought things much like those that now filled Effie's mind with pictures and speculations, her chest with remembered emotions, vague gropings toward understanding.

The rock she sat on was shaped like an easy chair, high-backed, short-seated. Its grey color was softly blue where bodies had rubbed it. It was volcanic, and Effie had often wondered how it had gotten perched on just that high point on the mesa, offering the perfect spot to contemplate the landscape all around Cubero. There were volcanoes all around, but they were miles away from here. As always, she tried to imagine a volcano spewing such a huge boulder and landing it just exactly at that spot where it commanded a sweeping view of the mountain and the plain, the village and the roads running through it. The only part of the panorama it did not allow a view of was the tiny hollow where her family's dwellings clustered. That must have been some volcano, she concluded, as she usually did when she thought about how the rock had gotten where it was. She wondered, now, if the rock would be there the next time she came, or if some stranger would cart it off to put in their front yard.

She knew her mother hadn't taken things from the mesa. "Leave it alone," she would say. "Put it back where it belongs." She had said that over and over—about lizards and small snakes Effie would capture and bring in the house to show her—about stones and pieces of glass or shards—even about flowers. "Oh, poor thing," she would say. "You should leave it alone so it can live like it's supposed to. That poor creature must be scared and mad when you take it like that. It needs to find things to eat. They don't like being handled. Go put it back where you found it." Her mother had kept a bullsnake under the house and wouldn't allow anyone to try and chase it away. "Leave it," she'd say. "It's not hurting anyone. And it eats mice. Heaven knows we can use its services!" And she'd grin at the idea of a snake that serviced people

like the Maytag dealer or the butane company. She used to put spiders on a dustpan or a piece of cardboard and carry them outside. "Go on now," she'd say. "You don't belong in here. Just go outside where you belong. There's nothing in here for you anyway." She always talked to creatures like that, in the same tone of voice she used to talk to her children or her husband. A firm, humorous voice that acknowledged their presence while making her opinion and wishes very clear. There was nothing sentimental or pious about it; it wasn't some idea she had about being noble or "good" to the spider or the snake. It was just the way she saw things, like she was certain that they understood quite well what was what, and that if they didn't, well, she could discuss it reasonably with them. Effie thought now how odd her mother's life must have been, and how lonely. She was probably never understood by anyone outside of her immediate family. Everyone else must have thought she was very strange.

High on the mesa Effie studied the village below, each house, each tree. In her mind she saw the geraniums and hollyhocks and morning glories and yellow rose bushes she knew grew in the yards. She pictured the hard packed earth that surrounded each house. She pictured the tamarack trees that grew in a few of the yards, and followed the roads that wound between the clustered houses. She looked at the old school house where she had gone to pre-first and first grade. It was run by the Franciscan nuns then, though it was a public school.

The sisters had founded the public school system in the state long ago, before the Anglos came. Sister Blandina had started education European style there, just as another woman, named Candelario, had started the sheep industry. They were both Spanish, though the Sister had gone to Santa Fe at the behest of Archbishop Lamy, while Candelario had come with the earliest Mexican colonials and had settled the land around the mountain Effie sat surveying. Cubero had been settled by some of the spill-over from San Mateo or Seboyeta, she didn't know which. She knew how it had been, and how they had lived in uneasy truce, in bloodshed and war, in marriage and shared fears and strategies with the Lagunas and Acomas, against the Navajos and later the Anglos. That was part of what littered the village, the hills. Like the imperfect arrowheads, the late-day shards, the invisible presences.

She noticed that Alphonso's house and the little store that had been next to it were torn down. She noticed that the mulberry trees that had stood like gates between her house and the part of the village they had always called "uptown" were almost all gone; only one was left. That was the one she and her friends had played in when she had attended school there. The school house was also uptown, just past the mulberry

trees, across from the church. She looked around for Lucy, who seemed to have disappeared off behind the juniper that dotted the sandstone cliffs. Effie finally caught a glimpse of Lucy's head as she straightened up. Evidently she had been picking up some rock or something. Effie watched for a second more, then returned to her thoughts.

She remembered the day one of the boys had been hit in the head by a rock flung by bigger boys during a rock-fight. She remembered the hole in his forehead, the blood streaming down his face. She wondered if the tree still gave fruit, or if it had gotten too old. The fruit had been dark and sweet. They had picked it and eaten it, spilling juice on their clothes, heedless. Later she had had a crush on the boy whose skull had been fractured in the fight; she wondered now if she had been attracted to him that day when he had been so hurt. She knew he was a peaceful boy, and that was why he had been wounded; she also knew he had never learned to fight. Maybe she had felt a bond between them even then, because she never learned how to have rock-fights like the others, never felt part of the usual village life, and had seen in him that same separation from the rest. She wondered about that, and remembered the time he had met her behind the school house at the merry-go-round on Christmas day to give her a present. She had had to sneak out to meet him; her parents didn't want her seeing boys, especially Cubero boys. How she had managed to get away on Christmas she didn't remember, but she had met him as they had arranged, and he had given her a bottle of perfume. It was golden, amber. It smelled pungent, spicy, good, not gooey-sweet which she would have hated, even then. That was the last winter they were sweethearts.

They broke up that spring when she was fifteen. But she hadn't forgotten their meetings, her parents' fury, the lying and sneaking she had had to do to see him, or what she knew about the difference between what her mother thought she and that boy were doing, and what was really going on. They had been so young, and they were innocent. Especially him. They held hands. They engaged in simple kisses, lips pressed together, unmoving, tightly closed. They had talked to each other. She remembered the winter nights when she would sneak to the kitchen window after her parents had gone to bed and open it. He would be waiting, standing on the road near the house, separated from her by the house, the fence, the little arroyo that ran between the house and the yard. He would be huddled into his jacket, lit by the moon, or in the complete shadow of winter dark.

She had met him on the mesa sometimes as well. They had sat on this very rock. She wondered like she always wondered when she

thought about those times what they had talked about, supposing again that they had talked about the people, his sisters and brothers, school, the cattle, the sheep, the rain, the heat. They talked about Indians and Mexicans, she remembered that. The fights at the bar in San Fidel just up the road. The stabbings. How hard it was for Indians and Mexicans to be together; how sometimes one fell in love with the other, and what that meant. She wondered about that—it never made much sense. She remembered what someone had told her—that Cubero had been founded by a Laguna woman and Seboyeta man who had gotten married and couldn't live in either village so they had built a house there away from both people.

She remembered the story her mother had often told her. How she had gone to the same school and how the Cubero children had chased her, throwing rocks at her as she ran down the hill on the same dirt road Effie later walked every day. They had chased her, calling her names: "India!" they had shouted, "Judea! Indian! Jewess!" Her mother was an Indian girl. She had come from Laguna to live in Cubero when her mother had married a Jewish man, an immigrant from Germany. He had a store there, in Cubero where he brought his Laguna wife to live. The Cubero kids were all Mexican, Chicano. But they didn't call themselves Chicanos; they said they were Spanish. *La Raza*, *nativos*; The Race, the natives. If they were the natives, what were the Indians? She had always wondered about that, what they thought. The immigrants—Jewish, Anglo, whatever—were outside of all that. They were another order or being entirely. She understood that, it seemed very clear.

She thought about how each family had been part of that land for so long, who they were, how they had found their way there. The Cubereños were all heirs to the land grant the village stood on, they held the rights to it in common—had done so by order of the King of Spain, of the government of Mexico after the Mexican Revolution or the American government after the Mexican-American war. The people were still there, and when Effie was growing up they still lived much as they always had. They grazed their livestock around the town and in the foothills, raised their children, fell in love, got drunk, held dances to celebrate marriages, christenings, special occasions, grieved over their dead, went solemnly to church and kept the holy days, celebrated the feast-day of Cubero on New Year's day, the feast of Our Lady of Light, confessed their sins to an Anglo priest who gamely sermonized in poor Spanish from time to time, cooked their meals on wood and coal stoves, chopped wood, hauled water from their wells, drawing it up or, for some of the more fortunate, pumping it with a hand-pump.

She knew she was supposed to feel sorry for them, or envy their simple way of life, but she couldn't find it in her to do either thing. She just accepted their ways as she had accepted her own, unquestioningly. There had been some talk of putting in a sewage system some time back, but the villagers had voted it down. They saw little reason to hock their lives and welfare to some company or another just so they could shit in the house. The older people thought that was an unhealthy, unsanitary thing to do anyway. They were undyingly loyal, then, to La Sangre, their blood.

So life in the village went on. The old church had been remodeled by some crazy Anglo priest. He had stuccoed the outer walls, torn down the bell tower, paneled the interior with fake walnut paneling, installed a cheap carpet. She had only been inside it once since his remodeling, at a cousin's wedding. She had been furious at the changes. She wondered if she was just wanting everything to stay the same, if she had any right to want that, but she'd heard that the people felt the same as she did. Now Cubero had a church that made some Anglo priest happy. It wasn't the people's any more, though they still came on Sundays like they always had.

But then, little of the village was the people's anymore, at least not as she'd remembered it. They had dune buggies and motorcycles, low-slung cars like the *cholos* all over the Southwest drove; many of the houses sported new stuccoed walls and aluminum window and door frames. And many of the old houses of her youth had been torn down, leaving space where life and continuance had been. The *baile* hall was in ruins, the old hotel that had housed a small bar, *la cantina* they called it, was falling in on itself, an implosion in slow motion. The drinkers of the evening had played the jukebox there and she had sat in her livingroom or on the porch of her house when she was a teenager, waiting to grow up, waiting for her boyfriend to come walking down the road, waiting for something to happen for her. The song she remembered most was "Don't let the stars get in your eyes." There had been a version of it they had played loud enough for it to be heard quite a distance away, and she had listened gleefully, trying to imagine what would happen when the stars got in her eyes. From the look of it, here, now, as her eyes roamed over each house and yard and the remembered faces they brought to her, the stars had gotten in a lot of people's eyes. The village she watched from her seat on the mesa was yearning toward its own version of starry life: even the store where she'd worked, stacking cans, waiting on customers, warming her frozen hands over the tall kerosene stove, had been remodeled to look like a supermarket instead of the trading post it once had been. They'd remodeled it because the people didn't like to shop there, would rather

go to Grants or even Albuquerque to shop in Anglo stores—so much more attractive and real to their television and movie enchanted eyes. Even the mesa itself showed the signs of the new day: much of the pottery she had seen up here on her walk to the igneous chair she now occupied were pieces of melmac and cheap pottery ware you could buy in a grocery store—the kind they gave you store discounts for when you bought so many dollars of groceries. She had been saddened by that, holding the black shiny pieces in her hand, trying to understand what they were doing up here, so far away from the houses or the trash barrels behind each yard. She continued her examination of the village from her vantage point, taking stock of it, of herself, of the changes the years had been bringing while she was gone.

She noticed that most of the houses sported television antennas. Some of them had nice mobile homes parked in the yards—where grown children lived, she guessed—those who didn't move away to Albuquerque or L.A. The new school, far on the northeastern edge of the village, was twice the size of the old one and had modern playground equipment. They probably had those funny plastic desks inside—the kind that you couldn't carve things into. She remembered the desk she had sat in in first grade, how she had studied the things that had been carved into it by other children. She had wondered who had been bold enough to do that, and how the teacher hadn't noticed them when they did it. But she supposed the teacher had been too busy—trying to teach children from pre-first to third grade in one room, trying to keep them all occupied, all quiet, all distracted from their daydreams, their thoughts, their longings to be outside, their fights, their rages, their hurts.

Effie remembered the long hours of recess or lunch when she would wander disconsolate, trying to have a good time like the others seemed to be having. She remembered her desolation when her beloved beautiful Anglo teacher was suddenly replaced by a Chicana woman who made no attempt to be warm or friendly to the children in her charge. How Effie had hated that woman—for taking the beautiful real teacher's place, for being mean, for insulting and punishing the little ones, for making them all miserable. The kids used to draw pictures of her—mean, ugly pictures, and laugh when she was out of the room. They were unanimous in their hatred of the woman. That unified them, brought them together. It was during those months, she realized, that she had felt like part of the village—probably the only time.

On the mesa now she recounted to herself the stories of Cubero that she knew, feeling the old sense of confusion, loss, the restless feeling of not quite understanding what her childhood had meant to her. She was taken again by the feelings of that time: the longing to get out, to

be free, to find someplace where she would be accepted as she was, where she would feel not so strange. She almost recaptured the emotions of then, the rushing dark whirling that used to take her over and leave her frozen and panting, shaken with a fury and force she could never acknowledge or understand.

Her eyes ranged over the landscape spread out in front of her; she wondered what ever happened to them all—the bleeding boy, the mothers, the fathers, the shrill little girls, her best friend. She had been away from the life of the village most of her life, and it had gone on, decaying, remodeling, razing, building, spreading, closing-in, without her all that time as she had without it.

In her mind she walked by the old *baile* hall, crumbling down now. She remembered the movies she had seen there when she was a child—Charlie Chan, The Three Stooges, Laurel and Hardy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers. She remembered the political rallies—*juntas* they called them, meetings. She had gotten to go to a few of them, listening to her father and her grandfather speak, listening to some of the other men. It was always funny when her grandfather spoke: he was born and raised in Germany and so he spoke with such a thick German accent that his Spanish sounded like some curious parody. But people listened politely and told him he had spoken well. They had always voted for him, and he went to Santa Fe as their State Senator. He saw that the roads stayed in reasonable repair and that the school got funded. He donated building supplies for town projects like repair of the church or the *morada* where the *Penitentes* did their rites, and she supposed he guarded their livestock interests. He bought their sheep and cattle for resale elsewhere; he traded their wool on eastern markets, carried their accounts when they didn't have any money and in such ways repaid some of what they gave him.

That was a long time ago, she thought. A very long time. But she couldn't remember how long he'd been dead—maybe twenty years. Her oldest had been born before the old man had died, but she was never sure whether her daughter had been born by then or not. She had asked her mother, but she couldn't remember exactly either. Oh, well, Effie shrugged now, like she always did when she came to this part of her train of thought, it's been some time now anyway. She remembered then, like she always did, how white, almost luminous his hair had been, and how his mouth was shaped, the upper lip curving in a way she would always associate with Jewish men and Sagittarians, because he had been both. She wondered why she didn't associate it with traders, Masons or Lions Club members, but she knew it was because the other men she had known who were those things hadn't had that exact shape of lip, and other Jews and Sagittarians had. He was the

only person who had taken her seriously while she was growing up, treating her opinions and accomplishments with the real respect of arguing with her about them and not presuming to appropriate them as though they had originally come from him. He had told her to go to college someplace other than New Mexico, so that she could experience real power. "It's better to be a big fish in a big pond than a big fish in a small pond," he had said, and she had appreciated what he was implying—that she'd be a big fish in some pond, anyway. And that she could choose the pond! Heady thoughts for a half-breed girl from a Spanish land grant town in New Mexico, she thought now. But at that time it hadn't seemed at all strange.

A shadow fell over her shoulder, breaking into her thoughts. "I made a pretty good haul," Lucy said. Her fair skin was reddened by sun and wind, and she squinted against the glare of the afternoon sun. Her thick dark red hair, flecked with silver, was tumbled by the wind except at the neck where it clung, sweat-saturated. She hunkered down next to Effie and opened the shirt she had taken off to stash her treasures in. She picked through the flint flakes, potsherds, small brightly colored stones and bits of glass she had collected. "Boy, is it hot," she grouched, wiping the sweat that was running into her grey eyes with her forearm. "Lookit this one." She held up a dark shining piece of stone. It was an almost perfect small tip, only chipped at the lower edge where it would have been tied to an arrow shaft. "It's a nice one, for sure," Effie said, smiling slightly. "I wonder if it got broken when someone was making it, or later, after it had been used." She took the arrowhead in her hand and stared at it, trying to decipher its history from its shape, its touch.

She handed it back to her friend and stood up. "Maybe we'd better get on our horse and hit the road," she said, eyes sweeping once more the village, the plains, the far-off mountain, the sky. "It's getting late and we have a long drive back to town."

She watched uncomfortably as Lucy carefully tied her finds back in her shirt. She wondered if she ought to tell her how she felt, that it was wrong to steal those things from the mesa. Then she shrugged. Let her take them, she thought. They're just old bits and pieces of things, discards that no one's interested in anyway. They climbed back down to her grandmother's yard, circling around it through the yard to the road where the car was parked. "Let's go home," she said.

Outdoor Cafe

Did we not meet
Once upon an ancient bridge
Or upon a winding street?
Yet somewhere as summer came to an end,
With days sputtering to a close,
As the night air carried our word,
Beneath the cafe lights
Burning just within as we sat
And talked, saying once again
What seasons or the years would bring,
What time was about, and why,
With hardly a smile, we would part
As friends, you and I, and that
Would be it—each moment without
Regard to the next, and the past
Also an empty glass beside an empty seat
At an outdoor cafe, now left
For others to rearrange, to play
The songs, to pick up the refrain—
For we have said goodbye and are gone.

Kamchatka

Ravens circling in a desolate sky,
Moving from a low line of hills
Down to a narrow sandy shore.
Today my thoughts once more
Are on the holy fires of snow-bound
Kamchatka—a faraway land
That is not mine except
By scholar's rights, since I
Have seen it often in my mind,
Have endlessly pored over tomes
In corners of libraries and
Have imagined life, portions of life,

Clinging, burrowing in dark sand
Near its feral, inhospitable dunes,
Near its tangled hills, its narrow streams,
Wondering how in that first dawn
We began to move—move slowly,
Sullenly, gladly, or with resignation
Across the straits to a strange new world.

Kimberly M. Blaeser

Trailing You

for Ike

Trailing you in stories
and then in the dreams
that come just before morning
so that I wake listening for you to finish
what you were saying
or I sit up, swinging my legs to the side of the bed
rushing until my feet feel the carpet
and the rest of what I was expecting
becomes a dream too.
Those mornings I won't talk until
I go over it all the way I remember it
waking up because my nose is so cold
and the fire has gone out in the bedroom stove
lying under the crazy quilt
peeking out of the blankets that cover the window to see
who is out in the yard
what kind of day it is
what's hanging on the clothesline
feeling the last warmth of the flannel sheets
before I swing my legs out and my bare feet touch
not carpet
but ice cold linoleum covered with bits of gritty sand
that stick to my feet
as I run into the kitchen
where a fire is going in the cook stove
where you have been sitting drinking coffee.

Sometimes I see your face when you turn
other times it won't come clear
but I refuse to look at the pictures
I want you more real than that
not to cry over as if you aren't still here.
If I could tell you the things I'm doing
bring them to you over smoked fish and coffee
you'd make them over for me with your talk and teasing
link with your eyes my past and present.
So I trail you waking and sleeping
hear you laughing as you splash cold water on my face
when I've slept too long
see your hands and hear the water
trickle into the wash basin as you pour for me
smell the side pork and hot biscuits
listen to you call "Kim-a-dill, Kim-a-dill"
as if I were a bird
and in these memories and dreams and stories of you
I find the places you sat and rested while cutting wood
I see the hole you broke in the ice when you fell through
and the path of broken ice as you kept heaving yourself up
over and over with your gun ahead of you all the way to shore
and I wonder if these poems are the path I make and I wonder
how far it is
to shore.

How Beans Make Decisions

Eddie Nightwalker, a graduate Agronomy student at the State Agricultural University, was stimulated by Professor Johnson's soils course. The old man obviously knew dirt. It's true, Eddie smiled with the others when Professor Johnson got poetic about the streaks of a tulip or the power of a compost. But Eddie had grown up in The Qualla Boundary, near a cross-roads and general store called Cornstalk; so he knew what Professor Johnson meant when he talked of the way a good soil would crumble in your hands, and he knew the feel of fecundity in it. Eddie understood the language of moist dirt.

Eddie was delighted when he learned that they expected him to do research, to add to the world's fund of knowledge; but even Professor Johnson smiled wryly when Eddie told him he wanted to study how beans make decisions.

"You talk like they were sentient," said Professor Johnson. "I mean, intelligent, like they had minds of their own. They're just beans."

"No. Yes," said Eddie, whipping his forelock back. "I mean, they know what they're doing. They don't sprout just anytime, but only when they've read—when they've determined that the circumstances are right. They know what they're doing . . . and how to get it done."

Professor Johnson was not convinced.

"Look," said Eddie, his adam's apple bobbing around uncomfortably, "all plants act like their basic motivation is to produce seeds to propagate the species. I mean, it's uh—it's their purpose in life."

Professor Johnson nodded.

Suddenly, Eddie could see, as surely as if he could touch it, the network of forces that drive the juices in beanstalks; the genetic magnetism that directs which nutrient to become which leaf, which bean; the cosmic magic of maturity and reproduction. And his nervousness was gone. "When we pick a crop of green beans," he said, "the plant promptly sets on a new crop. The bean plant doesn't think it's feeding any starving children in India; it just thinks it's doing what it's supposed to be doing: making seeds. If the farmer doesn't pick a setting of beans, the plant will let the beans ripen and the vine die, because it thinks it's done its job. We depend upon the indomitable, ethereal will of beans to make beans."

Professor Johnson just stared at Eddie, wide-eyed.

"You taught us yourself, Professor Johnson, that beans must have their elements. Each plant must have its earth, its oxygen, its nitrogen,

its quantity of carbon dioxide. Each plant must have its warmth, its light from the sun, its water to live by, to tickle the chlorophyll into synthesizing food from mere air and dirt. When we loosen the ground with a hoe, we are talking to the beans. When we spray water from the sky, when we shade the bean patch, or plant it near the exhausts of the freeway, we are talking to the beans. Everything we do is a message to them. I am determined to know the language of beans. For then I will know how beans make decisions."

"Sheeeze, Eddie," said Professor Johnson, shaking his head in acquiescence, "you might have become a good farmer, if you hadn't've got mixed up with beans."

Eddie had acquired his passion for beans in his American lit general education class, where the instructor awakened him one day by saying, "I am determined to know beans." Quickly, Eddie drew up his lanky legs and tried to reconstruct what was going on. The writer was Thoreau, who isolated himself in the woods around Walden Pond, where he planted thirty-four rows of beans, and the instructor was saying Thoreau's excuse was: "I am determined to know beans."

That night, Eddie pored through *Walden*, looking for the sentence. He never found it. So, after the next class meeting, he asked the instructor to point it out. "Oh, I don't think it's in the book," said the instructor. "I think it's in one of his diaries he was keeping at the time. Or maybe in a letter to Emerson. It's probably the source of our saying 'So and so doesn't know beans about such and such.' I'll look up the source for you, if you're really interested."

Eddie shook his head, letting the instructor off, for he had already discovered the meaning of it. He had read the book a second time and read it again that night, sensing his way by degrees into Henry's values: how Henry had gone to the woods to live deliberately; was determined to know life as completely as he was to know beans; convinced that to live was to suck the juice out of every experience, every piece of knowledge; to live as completely and as naturally as a bean; to know, when it came his time to die, that he had lived, lived truly, and had not been walking around his whole life dead.

In the library, Eddie looked up Thoreau's diaries, his other works, his letters to Emerson. As Eddie read those stirring commandments toward independence, knowledge, honesty to self, the continents and planets of his inner world began to stir and look for their orbits. Then, one day, the image of Emerson in a photograph opened its mouth and spoke to him, not with words, but with images of the farthest orbits of roots in their soil, the tendrils of stars in their places, and the spider

webs of gossamer connecting them all.

Now, as Professor Johnson described a good friable soil, Eddie could feel the flimsy web of connections in the earth that crumbled in his fingers, yet were not destroyed; he could smell the rich organic power, see along the tendons of its mere chemistry to the roots that thrust, parry, grunt, and cry with jubilation. Agronomy had given Eddie a whole new vocabulary that the farm where he grew up could not offer, and Thoreau gave him a will to see. Eddie jumped upon each new discovery with an ecstasy far greater than any explorer finding a new continent.

In time, this farm boy from a cross-roads named Cornstalk graduated in agronomy, with distinction, and won a fellowship that aroused the envy of his more-urban, more-social fellow students.

In a thousand trays of sprouting beans he learned the temperature, water conditions, light, air, and nutrients that beans most wanted in order to sprout and grow.

In a thousand measuring cups he mixed the fertilizers and measured the meals for his potted beans.

He ran out of laboratory space; so he lined his apartment with bean cases, then installed ultraviolet vegetation lights and row after row of floor-to-ceiling shelves across the room, so that his apartment began to look like a library of beans.

He walked reverently up and down the aisles, eye-dropper in hand, feeding each plant its diet, and he kept careful records.

He began talking to his beans, and they sent messages back to him. Each shining leaf was a message, each tilt of stem, each yellow streak along the leaf that said "I need more nitrogen," each red fleck that said "I need phosphorous," each burnt edge of leaf that said "Give me potash."

Eddie expected his beans to grow toward the source of light, as do all plants. And he was not disappointed. But his beans surprised him when he noticed they grew away from the rock 'n' roll, disco, and reggae in the apartment to his right and toward the Beethoven in the apartment to his left. He moved a representative selection of his bean pots to a sound-stage and, controlling all other factors, played them various kinds of music. It was true: beans disliked popular music and grew away from it, as if trying to escape. But they liked classical music, Beethoven better than Tchaikovsky, and leaned toward it, as if opening their little ears. They were indifferent to the folk tragedies of country-western.

Professor Johnson scoffed and wouldn't even read Eddie's interim

report on "The Musical Tastes of Beans." Eddie sent the article to a dozen professional journals, all of whom also scoffed, except one off-beat editor who sent a Xerox copy to a friend who edited a literary journal that specialized in satire, *The Put-on Newsletter*, where the article was eventually published with only partial credit to Eddie. Three months later, the magazine forwarded a letter from the Bean Institute of Southwestern Colorado (BISWC), inquiring if Eddie had any more such entertaining articles.

Eddie's central analysis, however, was crammed with arcane details, fully substantiated, and his dissertation, *Modus Deliberandi de Phaseolo Vulgari* (without, of course, the chapter "De Gustibus Musicis Fabarum"), was well-received. A few people even read it, for it was fairly well written, Eddie having learned some principles of style by reading Thoreau. Professor Johnson even managed to parlay his protegee into an entry-level teaching position at the State Agricultural University. "Anyone who can put that many beans in one pot can't be a bean-brain," he quipped, and his joke won over the hiring committee.

To everyone's surprise, including Eddie's, he loved teaching—and he was good at it. He knew Agronomy well, and he spoke a language that boys and girls understood, from Cleveland to Belle Fourche, from Calgary to Corpus Christi. Once his initial nervousness subsided, his voice became smooth and his gestures strong. He spoke of the corn and beans, the earth and air, as if they were people to whom he had a personal relationship, as if they were partners to humans—and they came alive to his students. His "Basic Agronomy" grew in the second and third weeks of the term until he had no desks vacant. His "Soils Chemistry" in the second term had to be moved to a larger room. His "Bean Culture," a special study the department chair allowed with a snicker, enrolled more students than any special study in the history of the State Agricultural University. At the end of the year, an overwhelming number of students voted Eddie the best first-year teacher at the University.

"That's all well and good," said Professor Johnson, his arm across Eddie's shoulder, as they were on their way to a tete-a-tete lunch, "but you do realize, don't you, that that's not what you were hired for."

"Oh?" said Eddie, not realizing.

"Dammit, man, you've got to— Look," Professor Johnson said, taking another approach, "have you quarried any articles out of your dissertation? I mean, other than that literary joke."

"It wasn't a joke," said Eddie, seriously, his throat twitching again.

"Dammit! You know what I mean."

"Well, no," admitted Eddie. "I sent the whole dissertation to a couple of University Presses, but I don't think they publish dissertations called 'How Beans Make Decisions.' Of course, they say they can't print dissertations until they've been revised into a book. I thought mine was already a book."

"So it is. So it is. But that won't satisfy RTP."

"RTP?"

"The Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Committee. Where have you been? Don't you realize you're coming up for review?"

Eddie was silent.

"Look, Eddie. I like you; you're almost like a son to me. I want to see you get on here. So I'm going to tell you: this is the way it's done. You take a chapter or a segment out of your dissertation, write some jazzy introduction so it looks like an independent study; you renumber the footnotes, and send it out to a professional journal. If one of our friends is on the editorial board, they print it, and RTP is happy. Winning that teaching award won't hurt you—much—in the first year, because you're still on probation. But you've got to shape up—and not let it happen again."

Eddie took Professor Johnson's advice and revised several chapters from his dissertation. After a few months, two of them were accepted in third-rate journals, with the proviso that the jazzy introductions be stripped off.

"Well," sighed Professor Johnson, "I guess that's about the best we can do with beans."

Unfortunately, Eddie won the Teacher of the Year Award in his second year, and a thousand students submitted a petition to make his "Bean Culture" a regular offering in the curriculum and designate it as fulfilling one of the General Education requirements in the philosophy of life.

RTP was not impressed, though they did give him an additional probationary year. The chairperson's letter acknowledged that "the committee recognizes that it sometimes takes a certain period of time for some candidates to adjust to academic life. It is hoped that the committee will be able to make a more favorable prognosis next year."

But it didn't happen. Eddie was still a popular teacher. And, though he managed to get two more chapters from his dissertation into print in friends' journals, RTP noted that "candidate has not initiated any new areas of research beyond the material that was in his dissertation" and granted him a "terminal year," a grace period to find another job elsewhere.

Eddie was disillusioned, of course. The only thing he knew was beans and dirt. But where in the world could one sell a knowledge of dirt and beans? Dismayed, he nevertheless continued watering and nurturing the beans on his thousand shelves. There, he could lose himself. There, amid the grunt of bean stems growing and bean leaves slapping the air, he could attain a degree of contentment. The burdens of acquisitiveness melted in the sound of one bean clapping, and he once again centered the orbits of his internal continents. And there, he began to realize that he had been untrue to himself. A bean never tried to be anything but a bean.

At that point, a middle-aged man in a plaid shirt and blue jeans knocked at his door. "Hi," he said, "Ah'm from Biswick."

"Pardon me?" said Eddie.

"Ah'm from Biswick. Y'know? The Bean Institute of Southwestern Colorado."

"Biswick?" said Eddie, not able to think of anything else to say.

"Yeah. We heard that you've been aholdin out on us. We seen some of them other thangs you printed in them journals."

"Journals?"

"Yeah. Like this-un. 'Distress Signals that Beans Send.' You got any more little ditties like that?" The man was holding up a copy of a semipopular journal that had printed one of Eddie's chapters with the jazzy introduction but without the renumbered footnotes. "Say, c'n Ah come in?" asked the man.

"Oh. Yes, of course," said Eddie. "Please excuse me. Excuse my manners."

"Oh, that's all raght," said the man. "No harm—" He stopped suddenly upon seeing the rows and rows of beans in Eddie's apartment. He walked forward, slowly, circling the end of one case, gazing at shelf after shelf of bean pots. "Golleeeee," he said at last, "you shore got a lot of pets."

Eddie just shrugged. He didn't want to admit to a stranger that they kept him company on long evenings, comforted him in times of adversity, never asked to be treated as anything but what they were, never treated Eddie as anything but what he was.

The man lifted a bean leaf with an index finger. "Hello, there, little feller. You're alooking mighty chipper." When he dropped the leaf to touch another, the leaf went on nodding. The man walked up and down, between the shelves of Eddie's library of beans, surveying the plants from ceiling to floor. "Yessir. Ah reckon Bill was raght. He ses to me, he ses, 'Jim'—that's me; Ah'm Jim—'Jim,' he ses, 'Now, thare's a man that knows beans.' Ah reckon he was raght."

Eddie waited, not quite wanting to admit to himself that the man

made him feel good about knowing beans.

"Well, le's get down to brass tacks," said Jim. "We know that you've done a whole, complete book about beans. We want to see that—if'n we can, that is."

So Eddie laid a copy of his dissertation out on the coffee table, explaining that he himself did not know enough Latin to even re-translate the titles of the chapters, but he could tell Jim his original titles. "I called the whole work—" He paused, brushing his nose with the back of his hand, trying to wipe away his embarrassment. "I called it 'How Beans Make Decisions.' Of course, we can always change that. I've been told it's kinda dumb."

"Don't sound dumb t' me. 'How Beans Make Decisions.' That's kind of catchy. Good title, provided that's what the book is really about." Jim paused, his words hanging like a question in the air.

"That's exactly what it's about," said Eddie.

"Good. That's what Ah like t' hear. Le's quit beatin around the bush, Mr. Nightwalker. Biswick wants to consider publishin your book as a premium for our members and people everwher that loves beans."

How Beans Make Decisions was job-printed in a gift edition of 40,000 in less than a month. There, on its slick pages, in language almost as smooth as music, farmers saw their own vague, inarticulate awareness of beans and dirt take root, sprout, and blossom into truths they could talk about. There on the pages were their voices, their experiences, and they began phoning one another, as well as their cousins in Poughkeepsie, to repeat the phrases. The book generated so much attention that a New York paperback house contracted to publish an illustrated trade edition on soy-coated paper, and another publisher asked Eddie to write a book on Zen and beans.

"But—but—I don't know anything about Zen," said Eddie.

"Oh, we think you do" was the publisher's response. "And what you don't know, we'll help you along with. We want you to spend some time with a Zen master we know."

When *Zen and the Art of Bean Culture* was released, the publisher got him a spot on Donahue. Again, once Eddie had wiped his forelock out of his eyes, his voice smoothed, then arced out to the remotest corners of TV-land, embracing and linking the trajectories and orbits of human yearning, soothing and assuring hearts everywhere that there was purpose in the universe, just as there was purpose in beans and dirt. Twenty thousand people rushed out to buy the book on its first day.

When the book sold out its first edition to solidly appreciative

reviews and Eddie had appeared on seventeen more talk shows and book news programs, he got another letter from the Retention, Tenure, and Promotions Committee. They had read his two books, found them solidly informed, as well as readable, and were now offering him tenure and simultaneous promotion to associate professor. "Why didn't you tell us," the chair of RTP added, "that you are a representative of an ethnic minority? This university affirmatively strives to recruit, retain, and promote members of underrepresented population groups."

"You mean you're an American Indian?" cried Professor Johnson, bursting through the laboratory door, where Eddie was feeding his beans. "Why the hell didn't you tell me? That would have fixed everything from the beginning!"

"It ought not to—"

"And don't you believe in checking the little box about ethnic background? We've gone back and looked at your applications for admission, for employment. Don't you believe in giving people a clue?"

"No. That's a matter of principle with me. It ought not to make any difference," said Eddie, after his momentary astonishment had passed. "Besides with a ruddy complexion, a name like Nightwalker, and an address like The Qualla Boundary, I thought everybody would know."

"Sheeze," said Professor Johnson. "Eddie, Eddie, Eddie. . . . And that reviewer in the *Times* said you're a goddam Cherokee medicine man! A holy man, fer Christ's sake. A seer!"

"That part's not true," said Eddie. "That was my grandmother. They got things mixed up. That's just advertising hype." He went on, measuring each bean's diet with his eye-dropper, noting in his records the quantity delivered to each.

"Put that stuff down," said Professor Johnson impatiently. "We've got to talk."

"But my beans—I've got to take care of—"

"Eddie, Eddie. Don't you realize you can have a couple of graduate assistants, now? You can hand over this—this—mechanical part of your experiments to others."

"But," said Eddie, feeling that something was tearing at his diaphanous, personal relationship with his beans. "I couldn't—"

"Sure you could. We'll get you a first-rate bean-sitter for your babies."

The next day, a letter from the University President invited him to receive an honorary doctorate and deliver the featured address at commencement.

"I can't do that," Eddie told Professor Johnson. He was packing his

books, getting ready to go back to Cornstalk, then on to Colorado.

"But, Eddie. It's your big chance."

"It's all sham. They're so full of hypocrisy."

"Oh, I wouldn't go so far as to say that," said Professor Johnson.

"Tell me, Arne," said Eddie, his heart hitting a couple of beats harshly because he had never before used Professor Johnson's first name, "tell me, what makes my ideas different now, from what they were six months ago? Why was my research unacceptable then, but acceptable now?"

"Why, the exposure."

"But they're the same ideas. Exactly the same data, the same interpretations, the same conclusions. They're even the same words! What changed all those votes on RTP? What gets me elected now, that lost me my job six months ago?"

Professor Johnson could only make a helpless gesture. "The reputation, dammit, the status. That makes it possible for you to say what you want to. Prestige is what makes people stop and listen."

"Exactly! The politics of reputation is what gets me elected. That committee has no way of evaluating on its own, no way of making a decision, until some flag-waver comes by with a bandwagon, and then they all hop on. Don't they have minds of their own?"

"Sure, they've got minds. Some of the best minds of my generation, best minds of *any* generation."

They were both silent a moment.

"I know what you're thinking, Eddie. But look around, and you'll see art critics that can't distinguish chimpanzee finger paintings from art. Music critics that can't distinguish street noise from music. Literary critics that can't distinguish word-salads from literary art. Why should you expect a group of agronomists to be different?"

"But they don't have an intelligent way of making a decision. Has the decay of judgment gone so far in the culture?"

Professor Johnson did not respond.

"You see, my friend," said Eddie, "when a culture loses its aesthetic and critical ability to distinguish failure from success, it no longer has a logical way of choosing what is successful. It has to get its decisions from somewhere else. So, there's where the politics of reputation serves. A voter no longer needs to know what is good and what is bad, or what is true; he only needs to know what is popular."

"You talk like they were sentient—I mean, intelligent, like they had minds of their own," he said. "They're just an academic committee."

"Why does it happen, Arne? You take a group of men and women that are reasonably intelligent, put 'em on a committee, and they're not even as intelligent as beans," said Eddie. "That's why I can't accept—"

"But—but—the honor!" cried Professor Johnson.

"No," said Eddie. "An honor is not honor when it's offered by hypocrites and losels and lob-lolly men, men and women that have to be lobbied into an opinion, men and women that have no opinion of their own and are incapable of evaluating mine. No, that's not an honor. That's less than an empty husk that was once a bean-pod. I can't work for—"

"But, Eddie, you can't—you can't just throw away your. . . ."

"My integrity?"

"No, dammit. Your chance. You've got a chance to change something now. With your reputation, you could work the system for some good. You could change RTP."

"Oh? Just like you old-timers, hunh?" said Eddie, turning to leave without saying goodbye. "I doubt that," he added. "There's not anything to work with. RTP is not even as intelligent as beans. The whole damned culture is not even as intelligent as beans!"

R.M. Caudell

Grandmom Used to Say

(for Lula A. Butler, my maternal grandmother)

Grandmom
used to say
when we were wild
when we ran and ripped
"It was the injun in us,"
and she would smile.

My cousins, we flew
with Deer, Crow and Wind.
We danced
beneath Grandfather Sun
not knowing his name
just knowing he felt
good on and in us.
We imitated Little Deer
and his brothers
"real Indians"
from out West
who pow-wowed
in the pine clearing
behind our house.
At dusk,
they stomped and shuffled,
stomped and shuffled
around sacred red drums
and sang old songs low
over fire and smoke.
When they left,
we stripped
to our waists
and hollered,
and yelled,
and screamed
and chanted,
chanting,
chanting.
Our feet,

our souls
were dusty
with sand
no Cherokee
had touched
in ages.

Grandmom
used to say
when we were wild
when we ran and ripped
"It was the Injun in us."

My Grandmother's
skin is red
like the clay
at the brook
where we caught
tadpoles
in green, mason jars.
Her eyes
are the colors of creation:
grey, brown and blue.
Her cheeks
are steep
like the banks
of the Choptank
and her hair
is short and snowy
like the white owl.

Grandmom
used to say
when we were wild
when we ran and ripped
"It was the Injun in us,"
and she would smile.

Beneath the Shield

(In honor of my father, Fox)

We must be quiet
We must be still
A warlord has passed here
 through fire, water and blood
 he has gone
 where Little Bird
 received Creator's song
 and Condor and Eagle
 soar

We must be quiet
We must be still
His horse, Firewalker, is near
 drinking sage water
 where three brooks meet
 he waits for the time
 when Robin greets
 Raven

We must be quiet
We must be still
The great mist is lifting here
 Crow will fly
 northeast to tell
 seven sisters,
 "Red River runs
 clear
 and Trickster
 has gone forever."

We must be quiet
We must be still
We are beneath the shield
 Wind holds
 us close
 as we spiral
 inside
 the brown eye
 and blue eye
 of One-Who-Sees-And-Knows
 all.

The Beautiful Way

The hoarse, grinding rumble of the garbage truck vibrated from the alley through the solid walls of the bedroom. The foul sound broke into Anthony's dream as the sound of jets making low training runs across the sparsely populated, northwestern New Mexico desert. In his dream, he and Micole were making love in the south shade of a sandy wash. Each time a jet flew over, the ground beneath them quivered, and Micole's prone body trembled. Her vaginal muscles contracted, and Anthony pushed deeper.

The subliminal sound of airborne craft transmuted into the Saturday morning sound of the garbage truck. Anthony woke up with an erection. He turned toward Micole and gently pulled back the covers without disturbing her. Her breathing was slow and regular. He watched her pale brown breasts rise and fall in rhythm. Her deep-chocolate nipples pricked upward and goosebumps freckled the naked flesh he had exposed to the cool air-conditioning. His finger traced around an aureole lightly, barely making contact with the sensitive skin. Micole mumbled in her sleep and turned her back toward him. He pulled the covers back over her and went into the shower to relieve the erection himself.

When he came out of the bathroom he was wearing Levis. His black hair was tied back with a double strand of white yarn. Micole was awake, but not yet out of bed. She was watching the black-and-white TV they had in the bedroom.

"*Shi t'oo hodiina'go deya*," Anthony said to her from the bathroom doorway.

"Speak English," Micole replied irritably.

"I'm going in a little while. I want you to go with me this time."

"It's my only day off. I wanted to go to a movie."

"We'll come back early. *Shimasani* says you never come with me. She says you are ashamed of her."

"I'm not ashamed of your grandmother. I just don't like it out there. The water is brown and tastes bad, and it's too hot without air-conditioning. Besides, why should I go? You two always talk together in Navajo and I'm left out with nothing to do."

"How else should I talk to her? She doesn't understand English. And I tell you what we talk about."

"Yeah, on the way home. But the whole time we're there you ignore me."

Anthony considered what his wife was saying. He did not think he ignored her. She probably misunderstood. She expected to be treated as company at his grandmother's, like they were when they visited at the home of Anglo friends. But she was expected to make herself at home, and to entertain herself. He supposed, though, he could make an effort to include her more in conversations.

"I'm sorry if you think I ignore you," he apologized. "It's not on purpose. Please come with me today. I'll just check on *Shimasani* and we'll come back early."

He could see Micole hesitate and knew she still did not want to go, even once she'd agreed. He wasn't sure if he should be angry or sympathetic. It wasn't much to ask that his wife go home with him on weekends. In fact, he thought it was good for her to be exposed more to some of the traditional ways. On the other hand, she'd grown up in Phoenix, and just because she belonged to the same culture didn't mean it would be easy for her to adapt to his grandmother's lifestyle. He thought she could try harder, though.

His grandmother's allotment land was sixty miles from town. The last twelve miles were ungraded dirt road. Anthony tried making conversation, but Micole sulked the entire hour-long trip. He finally gave up and retreated into reverie. His grandmother had told him marrying Micole would be a mistake. He was rez and she was city. His grandmother had told him Micole would not fit in. At the time he'd thought she just did not want him to get married and move to town. Now he was thinking that she'd been right.

He tried to teach Micole Navajo, but she resisted his efforts, never attempting to understand or pronounce the words. He always wanted her to go with him to visit his grandmother, but she complained so much about feeling tired, the long trip, and lack of facilities, he rarely bothered to ask her anymore. He foolishly thought that by bringing her today they might experience the closeness they'd shared in his dream, as if he'd had a vision.

He parked the pick-up in front of the tar-papered dwelling the Chapter had built for his grandmother when she'd taken him to raise after his parents were killed in a drunk driving accident. They waited respectfully a few minutes so his grandmother would be ready for them. The first few times he brought Micole home, he hadn't thought to explain to her why he always sat so long in the truck before going inside. Finally, she'd asked him. He told her it was the custom, sort of like calling ahead, but without phones the Navajos on the reservation had to compromise. He purposely didn't tell her it confused any *nilch'i*

which might have followed them. Traditional Navajo have a thing about spirits, and he wasn't sure how much of it he believed in, but he knew for certain Micole wouldn't understand.

After several minutes they got out and went to the front door. Anthony knocked once.

"Aoo'," his grandmother answered.

They went inside and shook hands and hugged his grandmother. She motioned them to sit on the bed, and poured them coffee. Besides the twin bed against the back wall, the only other furniture in the single room home was a card table and a folding chair, also set against the back wall. A loom was set up in the middle of one half of the floor. It looked like his grandmother was starting a new rug. The only other large objects in the room were the gas stove in the corner, and the wood stove. Anthony held his wife's hand lovingly, wishing she would feel more comfortable here.

"*Dine lei' yah abi' doolt'e'*," his grandmother said.

"*Haaleidzaa?*" he asked, noticing that Micole's grip tightened.

"*Ndaa' di oodlaa'. Bil honeezdogo ahihe la' yil ahigaago yah abi' doolt'e'.*"

Anthony nodded that he understood. He got up and poured himself and his grandmother more coffee. Micole hadn't finished her first cup.

"There was a squaw dance near here a few days ago," he translated to Micole. "*Shimasani* says a man was there drinking and got into a fight."

"There's always too much drinking at those squaw dances," she replied.

"It frightens her to be out here alone so much. I think we should stay overnight. It would make her feel better."

Micole gave him a nasty look. "You said we would go home early to go to the movie. Besides we didn't bring a change of clothes or anything." She got up and put her empty cup on the card table. "The only reason I agreed to come today was because you said we wouldn't stay. If she's so afraid of being alone why doesn't she move into town with us."

Anthony didn't answer her, and she stomped out of the house. He heard the pick-up door slam. When they'd gotten married and moved into town he'd tried to explain why his grandmother didn't want to move with them, and why he had to come out here each weekend. But Micole was raised in a large city and it was difficult to explain his grandmother's tie to the land, and his tie too, for that matter. His grandmother told him to let Micole go. Some time alone was what she needed. He complied and talked some more with his grandmother about the squaw dance, the weather, and the rug she was making.

When the conversation was worn out for the moment he went out to the truck. Micole was sitting on the passenger side sulking. The window was rolled down and the radio was going.

"You'd better turn the radio off if you want to go home. It's going to be a couple of hours. I have to haul in some water and stuff. Why don't you go for a walk, unless you want to help me."

He knew she wouldn't want to help. She flipped off the radio and got out of the truck. Without a word to him she started walking toward the canyon a few hundred yards away. He slammed the door shut, angry because she was angry.

He meditated while he did the heavy chores for his grandmother. He didn't want her to be right about Micole. But he didn't know how to make his wife comfortable in his grandmother's home. Indoor plumbing, running water, and electricity would help. It would also help if Micole could learn some Navajo. But none of these were going to happen soon. He loved Micole, and they normally got along well, except for this one conflict, which seemed to be coming between them more often. Even when he didn't pressure her to come with him, she whined about spending the weekend alone.

He finished the chores and told his grandmother they would have to be leaving because he promised to take Micole to the movie. She turned away from him and examined her weaving. He sensed her disappointment when she told him it was okay, she'd already guessed that would be his decision.

He headed to the canyon, taking his time, not expecting to find Micole. Most likely she would get back before him and then be mad because he wasn't there.

A grey earless lizard daringly ran in front of his path and under a small sage bush. Anthony kicked the bush and the lizard bolted to the next nearest bush to hide. Anthony laughed and started again to chase the lizard, but decided he didn't have time for children's games. The sun was on the second half of its journey, and if they were going to make it back in time for the movie they would have to leave within the hour.

He climbed down the canyon. He didn't think Micole would go all the way to the bottom alone, so he explored the middle level, which afforded privacy and wasn't too difficult to get to. This part of the canyon was blocked off on two sides by sandstone cliffs, and on the third side by a steep drop, so this would be the only area he might have any chance of finding her.

He purposely made a lot of noise climbing, by kicking rocks and

loudly greeting passersby: *Ya'at'eeh gah!*" he called to the disappearing back of a rabbit. He figured if Micole was nearby she would hear him and find him.

After half-an-hour he gave up and figured he'd better get back in case Micole had already returned. He wanted a few minutes, though, to take in the sight and sounds. He started toward the edge of the canyon where he could look down and he came across Micole sunning on the floor of a small ledge. She opened her eyes to look at him just a minute, then closed them again.

"It's warm here," she said.

Anthony climbed down and lay next to her. The warmth of the sandstone felt wonderful on his back, and he lay that way until his body had soaked up all the heat.

"Why don't you like it here so much?" he asked her.

"You wouldn't understand."

"Maybe I will."

It took a long time for Micole to answer. "You grew up here. You know how to do things out here. I'm always afraid of doing everything wrong. I'm never even sure when it's okay to use the water. I'm afraid if I wash my hands, or drink too much, your grandmother will say I'm wasting it."

Anthony thought this was funny, but he didn't laugh. "I guess it's my fault," he said. "I don't realize all the things that were different for you in Phoenix. But you need to tell me when you have questions. I can't always know."

"I just feel so stupid always asking questions."

"But you don't have to. In fact it would probably please *shimasani* if you would ask questions. It would show her that you are trying to learn. When you just walk away you make her think you are ashamed of her."

"I'm not ashamed of her. If you want to know the truth, I'm sort of afraid of her."

Anthony sat up and looked at Micole. "Why would you be afraid of her? She's an old woman, smaller than you, and she doesn't even raise her voice."

"I know, but she intimidates me."

"How does she intimidate you?"

"I don't know. She just does. She always talks to me in Navajo like I'm supposed to understand what she's telling me, and I never know what to do."

"She doesn't mean anything by that. She doesn't speak English, and besides she thinks speaking directly to you will help you learn Navajo. If you can't figure out what she's saying, then ask me. But you should

be able to figure it out with some hand signs. You can't take everything so personal. Nobody's out to get you. You have to meet us halfway though, if you want to fit in. Be more aggressive if you think we're shutting you out."

He stroked Micole's long hair and kissed her compassionately. She kissed him back and let him undress her. He laid her down gently, and she was barely aware of the hardness of the rock under her. Anthony removed his own clothes and lay down next to her. They kissed, and fondled, and stroked one another's copper bodies. Anthony knelt between Micole's thighs. She pushed her hips upward, invitingly. There was no earth-shaking trembling beneath them while they made love, but Anthony quivered as he released his fluid.

They wearily settled in each other's arms against a stone wall and rested. It was too late to make it back in time for the movie, even if they left right away. Anthony asked Micole what she wanted to do.

"I want to go back to town," she said.

He was disappointed.

"And then we can plan to come out and stay next weekend," she continued. "We didn't plan it this time, and at least I'd like to have my toothbrush and a change of clothes."

Anthony hugged her with a new sense of optimism. They dressed and started back to the house. Along the way he showed Micole the tiny green stalks which indicated a plant his grandmother used for stew flavoring, and how to pick them.

What This Man Said

Coming home I walk backwards in my footprints.
Horses are grazing,
County road 4411 is still unpaved,
Smoke rises from our hogan.
 Mother weaves a rug
 Sister fries bread
 Grandfather drinks coffee.
I shake hands with each one and
Sit with Grandfather on the bed.
This man is why I left.
This man,
Who's known many winters,
Is why I am returning.
 "Get an education," this man said.
 "Climb the ladder and reach for your feather."
I translate the Diploma I earned at the university,
Stumbling over native sounds my tongue had almost forgotten.
I remember it is disrespectful to stare so I divert my eyes.
 His hands are chapped and calloused,
 Almost worn to leather.
 Four years ago those hands were steady.
There is no wild celebration.
No flighty words of praise.
Grandfather tenderly folds the paper.
He seals it safely in his medicine pouch.
 Enough said, Grandfather.

The Wild Geese

The wild geese were flying south.
The wild geese were flying
south for the winter.
I heard them honking
the way wild geese do,
the way my Objibwa grandmother
said they do.

I heard them then
when she was still alive
as we watched them fly
over the tamarack, jackpine,
the tall evergreens
by her log cabin
in the far northern reaches
of Minnesota.

We watched them, all of them
fly in formation,
their sounds loud now
as they flew over the meadow
and beyond—
their honking dissipating
as they grew smaller
in the distant sky.

Sound and sight
of their formations
in enduring flight
evaporated
as a wash of paint
in the vast expanse
grows from nothing
to something alive,
then ends with a brushstroke
off the edge of creation.

Ritual of Death

On my reservation
the wake was held at the home
of the deceased's relative.
All the mourners shared memories, duties
connected with sustaining the living,
telling the deceased good-by ritually.
At dawn, they shared the last meal
spread on the floor,
but not before small portions of food
were set outdoors for the lingering spirit.
They prayed, smoked and drank water
at the grave site.

Karen Coody Cooper

To All the Women Who've Led the Boys

The truth is
A female leads
The wolves.

The Boy Scouts
And Kipling
Laud Akela
Saying he leads the pack.

Well, they are males
Ignorant of wolves
And can't survive
Without leaders
In spite of themselves.

If You Can Live with the Memory

The oldest things on Earth
Have the longest memory
Where blood is memorized on rock
The past lives

Pipestone is a place
To gather memory
And take it with you—
If you can live with the memory.

The oldest things on Earth
Have the longest memory
Where blood is memorized on rock
The past lives

They told us to never forget
And, so, we live with the memory—
Like the oldest things on Earth.

Charlotte DeClue

When Anger Came to the No Anger People

(for Kim Mommadaty)

there were no deer
no buffalo
even the rabbit evaded
the hunter's glare
that once would have taken down
a whole herd of elk
running them
running them
until they sweated salt
salt pouring from their veins
pouring into dry lake beds
running them
down
into murky pools of sand
down
down
to utter one small cry
"take me heart up, my beloved Little Ones."

but those hunters
came home hungry
retelling how the buffalo
had disappeared in wallows
under tiny oak trees
belly down on the ground
their hearts ripped open
"tell me who did this"
said the Grey Hairs
but the hunters/warriors
were too stunned to answer
and clashed their shields.

the Creator heard them
and sent rain on the Earth
and rain beat
against the faces
of those with blood on their hands
beat

loosening tears from their throats
and for the first time
their ears heard Anger speak
and Anger made them walk deaf
across the land.

now
when spring rain clouds gather
over what is
now
the Canadian River
the Little Ones look up and say
"the gods are clashing"
and the Kiowa looks at the Osage
and says
"what's all the screamin' about?"
and the Osage wakes up
rubs his head and says
"what a nightmare I had . . .
I dreamt we were enemies."

arm in arm
the two thunder gods
guardians of these two skies
the North
the South
mingled their blood
and roared
roared off
to dwell in the cedars.

The Fields

I must have been "school age"
as they say
judging by how tall I was compared
to the other girls. Especially the one ahead of me
stooped over rows of dusty peanuts.

I used to think she was a woman.
She had breasts like one. She kept tucking them
behind her apron.

"I'm Creek Indian . . . from down the road,"
she told me one day
like it was a secret.

I thought she meant she came from the river.
The one I could smell at a distance.
Mama used to say I was like a deer,
the way I could smell water.

"A-ha" I said thinking I understood,
glad that we had something in common.
'Cause I came from Water too. All my people
came from Water. And before that we were Stars.
The Creek girl used to say
we had a friend up North . . . "a friend
to all us little children." One day
this friend was going to come
and get us and put us in a school.

That idea, I didn't like very much.
The way I was . . . was fine with me.
I was learning to say my "p's" the way they
did in the fields.

Pick,
pull,
pack and plant. But the girls didn't do that
part . . . the planting.
The boys, and the mule, and the plow did that.

Afternoon sun turned my hair
the color of acorns falling from the trees "back home."
At least that's what mama used to say
about "back home."

"A-hiu-ta-ta," she would sing,
swinging me in her arms. I would cling to her

like a young bird fighting the wind,
till I fell asleep.

The plow kicked up dirt, slinging
it in our faces. "Pretty soon with all that
dirt on you
you'll be as dark as me," the Creek girl said.
Towards sunset we'd take our burlap bags
to the barn across the ravine, spread them out
like blankets and wait for the stars to appear
through the broken slats above us.

And I'd lay there and pray
that tomorrow
Wa-kon-tah Hon-ba would take pity on me
and not roast me alive!

"There ain't no sound like `BAH'," the Creek girl
would say. No sound . . .
like soft clouds rolling over
in a hot sky. No sound . . .
like the warm, milky lips of my baby brother.

"There's only `P'." She'd say it like
the foreman spitting out tobacco.

Pick,
pull,
plow and plant . . . and peanuts,
rows and rows of peanuts
waiting to be freed from the shallow roots
and red earth.

She'd reach for my hand and squeeze it.
While I closed my eyes
and sucked the gentle finger
pressed to my lips.

"I can smell the water down the road,"
I'd say.

"Shhh . . . sleep now."

Salt

I was living with my great Grandmother that summer.
It was hot at Santa Clara Pueblo,
and I lived with her in the heat.

It was late this night.
She was expecting visitors.
Her niece and her niece's family
were coming from Georgia.

I slept with my great Grandmother in a shaky old bed.
She talked in her sleep.
Cough drops and wads of hair
lay on her bedside table.
Saints and crosses hung on the west wall.

The dogs were loud this night.
My great Grandmother was
up waiting for the visitors from Georgia.

As I was meeting sleep
they pulled into the driveway.
Dirt crunched under the tires of their truck.
Headlights shone through
the bedroom window
illuminating the saints and crosses for a moment.

The dogs grew louder.
I heard the visitors greeting my great Grandmother
in Tewa.

They sat around talking for a while.
I could smell coffee.

I heard my great Grandmother say that the hippie's daughter
was sleeping in the other room.
She told them to go in and look at me.
"Go look at the hippie's daughter," she said.

I tasted salt.
I wondered where my mother was.
I heard them coming down the hall toward the room.

They opened the door.
Light filtered in and illuminated the saints and crosses
again.

I could feel their eyes upon me.
I pretended to be asleep.

Home

Grandma I miss your soft hands.
Grandpa I miss your blue eyes.
The old Hank Williams song echoes near me
and reminds me of home.
I hear the wooden gate closing behind me.
I hear you laughing near the firing pit.
I see you smiling through the smoke.

Grandma I miss your soft hands.
Grandpa I miss your blue eyes.
Carving tools are scattered on the floor.
I hear the polishing stones
clicking against each other
as you search through the box
looking for the perfect one.

I want to hear the legend of P'oe se kw'a sedo* again Grandma;
how he turned into a red coyote
when the sun rose.
Play Hank again Grandpa,
so I can be near you.

*P'oe se kw'a sedo was an unfaithful man who lived,
long ago, at Santa Clara Pueblo. He, because of his
unfaithfulness, turned into a coyote.

A Navajo Woman's Compassion and the Whiteman's Response

a hand motions to the rising sun
making a beautiful path of old age
with sacred corn pollen which
sprinkles from between the thumb and the index finger
a rugged face of an old woman shows years of working and
living from the tenaciousness of faint landscape now
slipping from memory her voice penetrates the vast emptiness
earth my mother sun carrier my father we are your children
in your womb earth mother we felt warm and learned about love
beneath your glare sun carrier father we learned about patience and
perseverance in your encounter may we discover harmony and may we
walk in beauty
her voice brings the still vastness to life

years later in the lifeless house provided by the great white father her
mind wanders back to big mountain black mesa the land she loves so
his god merciless made tears run down her grooved cheeks
like rain water that once streamed down arroyos her last quick glance
at the land brought images of machines raping mother earth tearing out
her
liver her heart and she felt the pain too for she is of the earth
a little child was born and a big one too no not monster slayer and
child born of water little boy big boy atomic brothers to destroy
sun carrier father earth mother is not unfaithful
earth mother you are not unfaithful
modern technology rapes begets bastards america lives where justice
lives
where justice protects both the bad and at times the good

we are blessed children today we live yes even the prodigal son will
feast
rape bastard twins monsters horror death
the great wall of china trembles for past glories
concrete and steel buildings shatter for strength of the day
a shuttle explodes with priceless knowledge for security of the future
where are the human beings possessors of earth caretakers of earth
look there his head there her finger and there their eyes i
cannot see where is the brain it just splattered beneath your step

blood oozes from cracked ground and refuses to dry clouds of puritan dust
prevents sun carrier father from claiming what is his death reigns satan or
is it reagan where is uncle sam uncle who oh uncle sam he is socializing
in guatemala sipping a drink in lebanon the spinning world

somewhere in washington perhaps in the plaza people are
laughing smiling look listen yeah i was born in the usa
born free statue of liberty donate to her majesty's make up
you know that she stands for no no yes yes democracy and freedom i
bet no iniquity imperial capitalism veni vidi vinci
ultimate death destruction total oblivion black hole
america is still giving birth to modernity dreams of the founding fathers
lifeless and feelingless children raping mother earth incest rules
atomic brothers nuclear sisters beauty in brotherly pollution long life
in sisterly cancer still her wavering voice meets the in-rolling darkness
yellow sacred corn meal prepares the way her voice sets with the sun
earth my dear mother we come from you we return to you

I Like It Like This . . .

I like it like this

Driving along the narrow roads
She Sitting so tall
Looking straight ahead
As we talked about life.

I like it like this

Stopping now and then Along the lonely roads
Out on the "Res." Buying scrumptious tamales
And soft yeast bread Still warm Made by Navajo hands

I like it like this

Driving over the peaks of the highest mountains
And beholding wild turkeys During this quiet Saturday
noon time hour
(Everyone rushing about town, But us . . .)

She squeals in delight and surprise

Said she always heard about them turkeys
But never had a chance to see them until now . . .

(She's convinced that she's been blessed this quiet day)

I like it like this

The cool air Whipping through our hair

(The sun is setting and there is a tinge of sadness
along the canyon walls . . .)

Navajo Medicine Men did always say—

To revere those high canyon walls

I never ask why . . .

I like it like this

Driving quietly Each wrapped in thoughts
Toward home
Respecting each other's presence

I wonder if there are any Prayer Meetings tonight—

To end this special day

Driving along Like this.

Della Frank

She Pursues the Man

For Susan

She pursues the man
Wandering
Between narrow roads
And barren hills.

Faint marks in canyons
Mist drifting in valleys.

Heavy clouds Obscure hills and mesas
The moist is captured in her golden hair.

When she converses
He becomes abstracted.

The male and female rain
Had been here awhile.

Within clouds
Blowing steadily
Among vacant hills.

She pursues the man
Wandering
Between narrow roads
And barren hills.

When I Was a Little Girl

When I was a little girl
I often wondered about myself
Back home
Near my mom and dad

I remember my grandpa
Tall and handsome
He traveled to the local Trading Post
to buy me sweet soda pop

I always asked of my grandpa to bring me candy
and gum.

I remember asking my mom
Where I was born When I was born
"In a tent During the month after Christmas"
She would say Softly Weaving her rug into gentle strokes

I remember playing with store bought dolls
All day long With Natanabah and Hanabah
We often played on top of tall red canyons
Near our home

I remember playing with many other children
On hills near our home
During hot summer days

I remember the early morning hours
When my mother arose to get milk from the goats
Outside in their corral
As I snuggled deeper into my thick grey shawl

I remember watching my mom
boiling milk and making hot round tortillas
Over the open fire inside our hogan

I remember how we used to dip hot round tortillas
into the bubbly milk during the early morning hours
Eating our food There was always much to go around
The loved ones of our mom and dad

I remember herding sheep and goats
Across the barren desert On hot summer days

I often carried a jar filled with cool water
And a sack filled with cold flat tortillas
And mutton jerky during hot summer days

I remember watching the green lizards
Bobbing their heads up and down
On hot summer days I would wonder
what would happen if I should choose to hurt them

"They will run after you Catch up with you And `pee' on your
head And you shall die—" My mother often told me so I never
bothered the green lizards I would simply ignore them whenever
they were near-by. I considered them to be friends of mine

I remember sitting on top of tall red mesas
guarding our family sheep and goats
"Where does the desert end?" I wondered as I gazed across the
barren earth On hot summer days

I remember coming home
with the family herd
putting them in their corral
for the night And run home to my mom and dad

These are the things that I remember
Long ago During hot summer days

Earth Dirt

I want to feel
Earth Dirt
Beneath my feet
And between my toes.

Each time I visit
My mom. My dad.

I want to feel
Earth Dirt
Under my feet
And within my toes.

Sometimes. Earth Dirt
Turns to Earth Mud: Soft and "gooshe"
The coldness: Oh So subtle!

I want to feel
Earth Dirt
Beneath my feet
And between my toes.

Each time I visit
My grandma: I look into her eyes.
I look into her heart. I see earth dirt. I sense earth dirt.
I know Earth Dirt!

In my heart. In my eyes. In my mind!

I watch her skin.
 Brown. Sandstone.
Like layered red mesas.
I watch little brown children.
 Skipping. Chanting.
Celebrating Earth Dirt!
It is then!
 I feel.
A silver thread.
 Weaving in. Weaving out.
Dancing. Dancing.
 In expression of life!
I want to feel
 Earth Dirt
Beneath my feet
 And between my toes.

Diane Glancy

First Lieutenant Marine

When you were born I didn't know the spirit world. I didn't know to bless you. But now you're on the Pacific in your ship to the Philippines. Just after the earthquake. And now you write, Howdy, you're off to the Persian Gulf. I think of the upheaval in the world. I think of you on the table when you were born. I go back and put my hand on your chest and say your life will be long you will see the ocean someday you will cross it to the other side you will come back. Indians you know can change their name. Their day of birth. Even the directions. Does not the sun rise in a different place each day moving North in summer and back for winter? Aren't all things relative? I can reach back and bless you at birth. I can even shift the directions one place to the left like the Mayans. East being cardinal is now on top and you sail West not toward darkness but North to purification. Oh it's such a comfort to hold things in your hand. To say to a child just born you will be strong. You will endure your struggle. You opened the child-bearing years. A daughter followed. But it's you going first again into the cold white air.

For My Daughter

There are things I didn't tell you.
How in Indian legend
we change sometimes to animals or birds
as if tired of ourselves.

I remember your first transformation
into a tapping clover bee.
How you stood in the hall before your performance,
little knees together, feet apart,
antennas exaggerated as your penmanship.

I sewed those stripes of black sequins
on the bib and stinger of yellow felt.
I didn't tell you I've kept your bee-parts in a trunk.
Who knows when you'll dare again to be blaring as a jive bee,
little hive bee.

I'm not throwing them away.
Who knows when you'll next need wings.

I never told you how once
on a red-eye flight from the coast
I sat upright all night between two men I didn't know.
Our heads fell forward to our chests
and somewhere someone breathing sounded like a kazoo.
And each moment I got close to the cell of sleep
I jerked back from it,
feeling myself fall through the bottom of the plane,
not knowing if there'd be return in human form.
I still can feel the pollen bucket
and the fuzz on my belly.
I still see the yellowish light in the hive.

I've kept you in the dark about what happens to us.
Not telling you
how once you cross the edge of suspension,
a part of you never comes back.

Diane Glancy

Portrait of the Sufficiency of Winter

Fenceposts mark a trail across the land.
Harvestor, baler, combine
under snow.
The witchy trees letting the stars shine through them.
Behind the manure pile
a string of hayrolls,
the blue swollen landscape.
The air itself is frozen against the window.
Uni:hlana:hi
Great Spirit
I work with a coat hanger to get into the car.
I think we're not on our own here.
The spirits strain with the pulley
hooked to the bale of sun.
It will burn when the clouds move on.
Then we'll get to the locked reason under snow.
Meanwhile there's another storm
whipping a comet's tail against the dark pines.
But under the hayrolls & manure piles
the ground remembers.
Somewhere the soft green grass unwraps the bolt,
pokes its warm air in
like the sharp point of a hanger.

Peeling Red Potatoes for the Pow-Wow Soup

The dull knife scrapes the skin with a skipping sound.
Adhesive pulled off a window,
or chirps of a bird,
or a small animal in the woods
disturbed over some intrusion.
Or the sliding sound of cardboard down a hill
over rough places.

I peel the freckled skin
off a shoulder of the potato to the light underneath.
There's an Indian legend
of the stars as holes in the night sky
to let the other world shine through.
I remember once my brother stepped on a flower pot
in the basement.
It broke and he fell on it
cutting the back of his leg to the white fat underneath.
It's the spirit world
just under the skin,
the spirit world
above the tarp of sky.
I felt it
when rage passed over our house
like new paint.
Somehow the boards held together
and we were clean.
There must be no boundary between spirit and self,
no distance more than a crawl space
from the adoring light.

Dorys Crow Grover

Prairie Creek

A touch of frost
feathers the brown grasses
along the bottoms.
The sky runs west.
The short winter days are here.
Snow will cover the fields
when the new storm arrives,
flowing out like the tails
of white horses running.
The wind will pant and blow
against the windows.
Prairie Creek will be cut off
from the world, alone.
A ragged flight of geese
angles south, crying lost,
a wavering V barely visible.
Theirs is a melancholy sound
because they signal winter.
In the canyons,
the dark blue mountains wrap
themselves, slowly bending white.

McArthur Gunter/Tashunka Raven

**Global Blues:
A Post-Columbus Dissertation on the Earth Mother:
An Experimental Poem**

Cities sometimes
Appear or Disappear
Like they've been sprayed by a
Pesticide, or a homicidal spray upon a
Patient of an infection by an
Industrial Virus: the sun a blurred object or maybe glaucoma!:
Sulfur dioxide moon: *Tatanka Yotanka faints on the*
TEATA wails "Fly Me To The banks of the Little Bighorn
Moon" by a windmill on River
Jermyn Street. Smogged stars:
Maced trees. *Woquini dives headlong off the*
Like the product of a chemical or *top of Noahvose.*
Germ warfare by alien beings. Oxygen masks: breathing propaned:
Poisoned pedals: fluoride fly ash: *Tashunka Witko retreats,*
Wovoka prays daily and does the becomes a hermit in Paha Sapa,
Ghost Dance near Walker Lake. and dreams.
Automobiles smoking more than cigarettes:
Goyathlay shouts a war cry by the headwaters of the Gila River.
x-ray or Mercury fish: Agent orange fertilization:
Wolf cusses and swears along Son of Light calls for a council with
the Humboldt River! Spider Woman and Mole in a kiva.
Acid Rain: Decimated OzOnes:
Shalako frowns on top Sutaio screams by the
Of Thunder Mountain. Washita River!
A Ph.D. in PCB and PBB magna cum laude!
Tsali cakes himself with red earth paint in the Smoky Mountains.
Factories fuming, eyes likened to wild cherries!
Smoholla boldly preaches the "Dreamer Cult" in Wallowa Valley.
Noses twitching. Dustbowl three-piece suit.
Spent-fuel rod tour:
Child of the Waters grotesquely cringes along Canyon de Chelly.
Ears blasted.
St Lawrence and Chalk Rivers resembling
Dishwater which hasn't been drained.
Hiawatha rapidly ages like Methuselah in the Longhouse.

Roy N. Henry

Young Inupiat

Young men, all of us, full of strength and vigor,
willing to go great lengths to show ourselves
as strong, handsome, and capable lovers.

But what good do the lovers we have known,
those women of relative beauty, and hardly used,
do us when we are broke, and in prison.

We claim, young men, all of us to be
loyal to one God, and to His Son,
but is it not true that we are such
the prostitutes the one God and His Son
scorn and lay waste to always?

We must cease our ways of lusting,
of boasting the strength we claim to own,
for we have become vile in our language
from using our tongues as the dogs do.

Our eyes sag from staring too hard
at the upcoming and innocent women
who have begun gathering their senses
and see us as we have really become.

Scars show on each and every one of us
from fighting, drunk and most of us stoned,
and our bones are broken from driving
in stupors for those very same reasons.

Even the fat, broken toothed old women
laugh at us and wonder how next, we,
young men, will get the money we need
for wine, women, song, and more boasting.

The old men, our elders, laugh at us too,
and watch us in our weakened, thoughtless,
and miserable states of mind as we try
to fumble on in search of another party.

The children, our brothers and sisters,
nieces and nephews, are afraid to see us
because of the paths we choose to follow.

Let us gather us, every one of us,
our thoughts, and at least think through
the truth you have just seen, think
of your futures, and see whether or not
you wish to see the young men, there
in the future as we see ourselves now.

DAMN!!!

How did these walrus
get way up here
in this river?

What drove them
miles and miles
up fresh water
only to face
certain death
at the guns
and ammo
I hold?

What in the world
is going on here?

My ammo cannot
find their heads,
and I only put holes
in their hides.

All nine of them,
I cannot see
what keeps them
swimming.

They have no spirit,
no will of their own,
to continue moving
up this river.

What in the world
Have I blundered onto?

What are these beasts
which have no souls?

They appear to be
as walruses,
which I have
hunted before
and eaten.

DAMN!!!
Never before,
and when have I,
seen such things?

Kai'auqiuq (Red Fox)
Perforce

The fox, she pounces on lemming
and mice, day after day for food;
we have harvested in the same manner.

The fox, she stores some of her catch
to use when hard days come;
we do that too for much of our food.

But the fox, she is known to steal
at any opportunity just to spite;
this is what the Inupiat, we,
are doing now. Where, however,
is the sense when we hunt,
and fish, and gather off
the same lands our fathers had?

Maurice Kenny

Photograph
Carlisle Indian School (1879-1918)
For Geary Hobson and Paula Olinger

I hear ancient drums in the eyes
see dances on the mouth

* * *

why is this teen-age boy
stiff in the shutter
punishment, pain on the cheek
loss in folded hands

* * *

who is this boy . . . nationless
non-descript in an army uniform
devoid of hair-feather, fetish and paint

* * *

stiff young sapling rising from some eastern wood
straight as a Duwamish totem
tall as a southwestern mesa pueblo
collar so tight it proclaims a hanging
no pemmican or jerky or parched corn
in the clenched fist that your mother
gave to eat on the road to Pennsylvania
where Delaware once built Longhouses
made fires, loved in furs, fished rivers
praised the Creator for boundless beauty

* * *

who is this boy . . . hair cut, tongue cut
whose youthful warrior braids lie heaped
on the barber's floor
spine straightened by Gen. Pratt's rules of order

* * *

ancient image scattered over forested hills
so many leaves from a dying apple tree

* * *

who is this teen-age lad with eyes cold
in utter fear
mouth viced and shut of prayer and song

whose thin legs tremble within the army trousers
arms quiver in dread of the un-expected
(an instructor standing off from the flash
of the insensitive camera demanding compliance)

* * *

there should be a flute to his lips
making songs, music of love
there should be a lance in his grip to take home game
there should be a future on the roll of his dark cheek
there should be a vision quest in his spirit
a name given for honorable deeds
a drawing of the deed on stretched skin
of the winter count/calendar

* * *

he stands before the photographer
amalgamated in uniform and shaved head
he stands compromised before his teachers
all that is left to him which is him . . .
beaded moccasins below the cuffs of his pants
but the bead work so faint in the photo
his great Nation cannot be fathomed
(it can be guessed that probably the supply room
ran out of army shoes the morning
his wagon arrived at the boarding school)

* * *

who is this lad
he has no name.
no land.
no Nation.
Is he Jim Thorpe. Louis Tewanima.
Where was he born. When was he born.
Who was his father.
His uncle. His siblings.
Who was the mother who suckled him at breast.
Is this boy entombed in the un-marked grave
of the Military Institute
which won so many wars by bringing
so many proud children to their young knees.

* * *

I listen for the drum in your eyes
wait to see the dance on your mouth

all I hear are your bitter cries
of anguish

* * *

He has no name
only a reflection

* * *

his is one of the many spirits
which will forever roam this once
free and beautiful land
before it came to be America.

* * *

this photograph . . .
a reminder
of this nameless boy
who is he . . .
my Grandfather.

Eva

Karonhisake

carving
hawks

in her kitchen
and

wolves
turtles
bears

as she becomes

"Searching Sky"

Maurice Kenny

**Heard:
Somewhere in the Southwest**

I

Turn
that canned
guitar off
and hear pipes
of wind.

II

Close eyes
and feel
the dunes move over
the moon
of your belly.

III

We should all
naked
run the skin
of bare sand
wind raging
in armpits and crotch
of this time
in this valley.
The only.

IV

Stars black out
as the Honda
streaks
into sky
cerulean night.
Curve. Embankment.

V

My god . . .
I've never seen
the world before.
Nor tasted.

for Chad & Bobby

12 Arrested as Women Protest Rape

August ends with late thunder
and the heavens in rare alignment.
The 5,125-year-old Mayan calendar closes.

Alfie, the monkey, escapes the Pittsburgh
zoo and finds freedom via rooftop TV antennae.

Reagan becomes concerned.

Rifts develop further in the Persian Gulf.
Metal Medusa in hot rollers lures sailors
to their deaths.

At the local mall, orange-haired troubadours
crank out 60's revival muzak: loose change
glitters in the fountain.

Kids hang-out behind the overflowing dumpsters,
dealing Nirvana.

Radicals grown paunchy write barbeque cookbooks
for the cause.

A freeway sniper in a rusted Dodge crooks his
cold metallic finger at the world; a cross is
carved in his forehead.

Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec god, wades ashore in
Sausalito, brandishing an ancient sword tagged
with a 6 year warranty.

Meanwhile, at Great Serpent Mound in Ohio,
the faithful chant for rain or love:
both are overdue.

Carol Miller

Quantum

She is five, her fixed compass point
the comet streaking sparks down southern skies.
The moving one five hundred years away from Cristobal,
conqueror, thief, perdido.

"Negrita!" pointing to blankets on the swept clay.
Impossible slants of paper walls.
Sheered mud track to climb there.
Windows paneless, waterless, no light.
Suspended misery above the city lights,
below the stars.

"You'd better feed her quick.
She's been on sugar water
for three days."
Mi niña Miskita, my Spanish one.
Inheritress of history, bequeathed to me.

"Green Country," read the billboards.
And April to July, it's true.

But Oklahoma is mostly, often, brown.
Summer scorches pastures,
Tree canopies of dust line chat.
Winter fields are buttered,
The woods like sooty beards.

My grandfathers were mixed blood, Daniel, John.
Daniel's grandmother, Eliza.
Hers a Bushyhead,
Hers Coo-Tay-Ya.

My grandmother, spare flint, baked red Drumright clay.
Haughty, bruised, passing silently to ground.
The other, whitest woman,
Made whiter by corn starch she powdered with.

Her father-in-law's advice: "He's no farmer.
Better move to town."
They did. The land was lost at once.
Except for fifty acres,

Leased for soy beans, wheat, watermelons.
That went later.
Henry, Pechy, Regret and other Wilkersons
still sleep there,
windswept, unvisited,
among seedlings in springtime.

My brother, Daniel too, has black eyes, dark skin.
Mine are the precise green of his favorite aggie.
He still has it in a rawhide bag.
"They're not Jewish, are they?" asked his wife's grandmother
when they were alone.

In history and blood, what is enough, too much?

Who is she, my girl of the Americas?
Not Malincha, Sacagawea, Pocahontas.
Not Squanto, either, or any helper/victim.

Who she is
Is not for you to know and her to find.

Treat her well.
Treat her well.

She is the breathing legatee
of loss and possibility.
She is the liberated future
Unburdened by degrees.

She is the sky child, whose marker
Visits in just seventy years.

Whoever she will be,

Find her well.
Find her well.

For Halley

Birch Canoe

Dark men embraced my body's whiteness,
cutting into me carved it free,
sewed it tight with sinews taken
from lightfoot deer who leaped this stream—
now, in my ghost's skin, they glide over clouds
at home in the fish's fallen heaven.

An Eagle Nation

(for the Camp/Jump brigades)

You see, I remember this little Ponca woman
who turned her back to the wall and placed her palms
up over her shoulders flat on the wall
and bent over backwards and walked her hands down the wall
and placed them flat on the floor behind her back—that's
how limber she was, Aunt Jewell,
when I was a boy.

And *fast*, you wouldn't believe how she could sprint:
when an Osage couple married, they would ask Aunt Jewell
to run for the horses for them.

Now she's the eldest in her clan, but still the fastest
to bring the right word, Ponca or English, sacred or
profane, whatever's needed to survive she brings it,
sometimes in a wheelchair, since her heart
alarms the doctors now and then.

So one bright day we loaded
the wheelchair, and ourselves, and lots of chicken
barbecued and picnic stuff
into our cars and zoomed away
from Ponca City and White Eagle, *Southward Ho!*
To the Zoo, we said, the Oke City Zoo—we'd picnic there!
Grandchildren, see, they love the zoo,
and has she got GRANDchildren? well, maybe

one of her children knows how many, the rest of us
 stopped counting years ago, so there were quite a few
 with serious thoughts of chicken barbecue and we all rolled in
 to the Zoo and parked, and we walked, and scrambled, and rolled,
 we scuttled and sprinted, we used up all the verbs
 in English, she'd have to get those Ponca words
 to tell you how we made our way,
 but somehow we *all* of us got in, and found
 the picnic tables, and we feasted there and laughed
 until it was time to inspect the premises, to see just what
 the children of Columbus had prepared for us.
 Snow leopards and black jaguars, seals and dolphins, monkeys and
 baboons, the elephants and tigers looked away
 thinking of Africa, of Rome, oceans, dinnertime, whatever—
 and as for us, we went in all directions,
 grandchildren rolled and bounced like marbles up and down
 the curving asphalt ways, played hide and seek, called me to look
 at camels maybe. And then we were all
 getting tired and trying to reassemble, when Casey
 came striding back to where we were wheeling Aunt Jewell
 and said, "Mom,
 there's this eagle over here you should see,"
 and we could tell it mattered. So we wheeled along
 uphill and down and around and we came
 to this cage set off to itself, with a bald eagle sitting,
 eyes closed and statue-still,
 on the higher perch inside, and there was a couple
 standing up next to the cage and trying
 to get its attention.
 A nice white couple, youngish, the man
 neatly mustached and balding, the woman
 white-bloused and blondish: the man clapped hands
 and clicked his tongue and squeaked, and whistled. The eagle
 was motionless. Casey wheeled Aunt Jewell
 a little to the side. The man stopped making noises.
 He and the woman looked at each other, then at us, and looked away.
 There was a placard on the cage's side that said:
*This bald eagle was found wounded, and
 although its life was saved, it will never fly again,
 so it is given this cage to itself.
 Please do not feed it.*
 Aunt Jewell, from her wheelchair, spoke in Ponca to him,
 so quietly that I could hardly hear

the sentences she spoke.
 Since I know only
 a few words of Ponca, I can't be sure
 what she said or asked, but I caught the word
Kahgay:
Brother, she said.
 The eagle opened his eyes and turned his head.
 She said something else. He partly opened
 his wings, and he leaped down
 to the lower perch. He opened his beak
 and crouched and looked head-on toward her,
 and made a low shrill sound.
 The white couple were kind of dazed, and so was I.
 I knew she was saying good things for us.
 I knew he'd pass them on.
 She talked a little more, apologizing
 for all of us I think.
 She put one hand up to her eyes and closed them for a while
 till Casey handed her a handkerchief,
 and she wiped her eyes.
 "I guess we're 'bout ready to go now," Aunt Jewell said,
 so we wheeled along back to the car, and we gathered all
 the clan and climbed aboard
 and drove from the Zoo downtown to where
 the huge RED EARTH powwow was going on, because
 her grandson Wesley, Mikasi, was dancing there.
 We hadn't thought Aunt Jewell's heart
 was up to Zoo and Powwow in one day, but as usual she
 knew better. They charged admission, and that really
 outraged my Ponca folks for whom
 a powwow should be free. Worse than that,
 the contest dancers had to pay a fee.
 But once inside we found our way,
 wheelchair and all, up to the higher tiers
 where we and thousands of Indian people looked down
 to the huge Arena floor where twelve drums
 thundered and fourteen hundred dancers spun and eddied round,
 and dancing in his wolfskin there
 was Mikasi where Casey pointed, and we saw
 his Grampa Paul Roughface gliding
 with that eagle's calm he has,
 and I saw how happy Casey and Mike were then
 that their eldest son was dancing down there, and I felt

what the drum did for Aunt Jewell's heart and ours, and she told
 of seventy years ago when she was a little girl and her folks
 would load the wagons up, there in White Eagle, and go
 and ford the sandbarred Arkansas into Osage country and drive all day
 and camp at night on the prairie and then drive on
 to the Grayhorse Osage Dances, or those in Pawhuska even.
 I remembered then how Uncle Woody had told me
 of going to the Osage dances, and seeing her
 for the first time, and asking:
 "Who IS that beautiful Ponca girl over there?"
 and someone said,
 "Oh that's McDonald's girl,"
 and he and Uncle Dwain would tell
 of the covered wagon in which they rode,
 my Irish and Scotch-Irish folks, from Missouri out
 to the Kansas wheat harvests and then on down
 to the Osage Reservation where mules were needed
 and our grandfather hauled the bricks to build
 the oil-boom agency town of Pawhuska where the million-dollar
 lease sales, and Osage Dances, were.
 So I was thinking how the eagles soared,
 in their long migration flights, over all these places,
 how they looked down on the wagons rolling
 westward from Missouri, eastward from Ponca lands,
 to meet in Pawhuska, and how the wheels
 had brought us smoothly here this fresh June day, and what
 had passed between cage and wheelchair before
 we came here to see, on this huge alien floor, the long-ago drum
 in a swirling rainbow of feathers and
 bells and moccasins lifting up
 the songs and prayers from long before cars or wagons,
 and how it all has changed but the voices still
 are singing, the drums
 still speaking here, so whatever the placards on
 those iron cages may have to say, we are,
 as my Ponca cousins say,
an Eagle Nation now.

Given

this world to grow into, I know
they'll repossess it shortly, along with
 what's left of me—yet, rumpled
 into this little pocket
 of time, I wish
there were a little more of me to sing
the mortgage payments—how it really
 dawns on me this morning as
the light has brimmed and spills all rosy into
 the east with robins paying
 their rent in song and with the downy
woodpecker's telephone-pole tattoo explaining
 the nod of daffodils and endless
pinoaks, maples, ash and sycamore and locust,
sweetgum dogwood and redbud bowing into the April
 windstream over
 us blind and flightless creatures blundering
noisy and slow as brachiosaurs or squeaking and rumbling
like humpback whales beneath the birds where they
are singing that the springing wealth of new
 leaves and light and flowers has made it
practical to consummate the mystery of
 nesting, if
within earshot the right females would return
the secret signs that they will partner them.
 We see, we *learn*
 to see and hear and feel, the way
 those leaves come out of buds all tight
with liquid virtue rising from earth-blind roots
 into bright air to fan
 their soft translucent green as
 they ask the light into their bowers
of sugars, starches, lignins, as we see
in green and hear in song how light
 becomes a tree and holds
the singers in its branches where curving
 and blue as sky small eggs will open
and blind reptilian robins fledge and find how

to sing the light back into dawn,
their arias and duets soaring above starsongs
of tree-frogs in the summer dark, just as
into translucent salmon sunrise the stars
dissolve, white clouds set sail across
the blue dazzle above us walking on
our stony earth where clapping
and grating we look up into
those heavens of green and blue and white where the trees
without moving are given the earth and
the sun and the stars, and those who have wings now
are singing and those who have climbed
from sea to earth and air and live now on dew and the tree's
plenty are singing where the moon brings back
a softer light from the sun, where the stars bring us the great
glittering darkness that has no end.

[Editors' note: The following excerpt from the cover letter that came with this poem is reprinted with the author's permission.]

The other enclosed piece, **Given** was also written last spring. I had been thinking about Howard Nemerov, then in late stages of throat cancer. He liked to walk along the sidewalks and streets under the tall old trees between his house and the campus. And when the new leaves were coming on, and a downy woodpecker was drumming out back, and the robins and cardinals and tufted titmice were noising it up before sunrise, I got to thinking how the spring peepers would be starting up soon, and how they were amphibians, earlier than birds, and yet because of the peculiarities of old European ways we say the tree-frogs **peep** whereas the birds **sing**, when in fact the little treefrogs sing just as well as the birds do. And they sing to all the stars, the robins only to one. So it got to seem a good idea for me to praise both star-singers, those of the night and those of the day. And I got to thinking how after all they were praising both the great light that opens our eyes to the ordinary world of daylight, and the great darkness that opens for us to look out into a starlit world without end. We are given both, and given twice a day to realize this . . . that's how this piece started.

Patricia Riley In The Woods

after dark

all the way home
the road stretched
longer with each step
and there were voices
night birds in the trees
lizard sounds and silhouettes
long and snake-fingered
reaching out
i ran so fast
i lost one shoe
and mama scolded
but she knew
back there the trees
were moving
and scaly old men
hissed obscenities
in the shadows
in the leaping shadows
beckoning
while the owls
looked down
watched their prey

Selu's daughters

if you know those old time stories
then you know what breath is worth
sacred mist of consciousness
that tells you you're still here
we are not the helpless victims
others make us out to be
though some may question our ability to survive
but y'see long ago it was amazing
Selu told us all the answers

we know tomorrow is another day
and that corn can ripen overnight
we corn women are not fooled
by wind and weeping
hyacinth girls may snicker
but their fragile flowers
never make it through the storm
and they have no patience
for seasonal conversations
while they dry up or blow away
we sink our roots down deep
and sing for rain

to the mothers of nine who took their lives

wind river, wyoming fall, 1985

we walk the trail of broken treaties
and this is where it leads
today fresh graves disturb the earth
where is our future now
locked inside this frozen ground
our sons spin dreams of death
listen to the wind it mourns them

and this one here
he was my firstborn
i will not go home
there is ice around my heart
i can not leave this place
i can not leave my son my son

southern trees

too many whispered conversations
bitter tree memories
angry leaves rustle against the southern night
black and gray reminders of ugly laughter rising
memories of terror and ropes spinning
gardenia scented nightmares
too many barren tree memories too many
ghosts singing from leafless branches
songs of darkness made suddenly too bright
songs of men with rancid smiles
hiding ice beneath the bone
listen down south the nights are never still
the brooding air is loud with blood
and the sound of weeping trees

Nastasia K. Wahlberg

If You Had the Chance

I asked "If you had the chance,
would you be rich or poor?"

He replied "I would be poor,
so that everything I received
I could appreciate."

"Come on!" I exclaimed,
dreaming of rich cloth and home.
Flashy colors with streams
of ribbons—packages unopened
by my ten-year-old hands.

He sparkled at the dreams
with his peaceful laugh.
"The home I built with these two hands,
the mended and remended nets,
I yearly use,
the gathered foods
are labors of love. Of this
no man can take from me."

She Danced

She danced at a potlatch once
a long, long time ago
before the alcohol had crept its way
deep into her soul.
She swayed her newly ripened hips
to the beat of the drums
and her thick coils of shiny hair swayed
whenever she turned.
Eyes reflecting the open fire,
drums beating faster and faster,
heart strong and pure.
Head back, and laughing,
not knowing why,
not caring to know,
just laughing.
(Freedom!)
Rejoicing.
Dancing.

She sits on the curb of the street,
nowhere else to go
after the last bar has closed for the night,
cradling a bottle to her chest
as neon lights advertising
palaces of pleasure and exotic drinks
cast an eerie glow on her face.
She huddles over the bottle
as if trying to protect it from the world
or perhaps hide behind it.
Lean over her shivering and recoiled body,
inhale the persistent smell of her cologne
(\$3 a bottle at Woolworth's)
and Marlboro cigarettes
(come into Marlboro country!).
Ask her why she sits on the curb
surrounded by discarded beer cans and
candy wrappers.
Ask her why she allows her body
to grow old before its time.

She will smile at you.
A very slow, reluctant,
almost pained smile.
She will smile at you
from the safety of her mind's memory
and say that she danced.

My Grandfather's Hands

My grandfather's hands
have pulled in fishnets
 set snares chopped wood
and pulled triggers
to bring home food
for his family.
(tiny rivers of wrinkles map the skin)

My grandfather's hands
have wrapped themselves
 carefully gently
around his children
his children's children
and THEIR children.
(worn knuckles protrude from his fingers like small bumpy hills)

My grandfather's hands
have held dancing fans
 soaring weaving
gliding gracefully through the air
telling stories of days long past
and the continuance of life.

(nails with surfaces like smooth grained wood grace the
tips of those hands)

My grandfather's hands
lay folded, resting on top of one another
 stiff hollow
the spirit that was his
inhabits another shell.
it lives forever.

**RED MYTHOLOGY:
A GERMAN EAGLE, A FRENCH FOX, AND THE
NATIVE AMERICAN COYOTE**

Dan Runnels

As a child growing up on the Reservation, I listened to the old people talking around the fire at night. One of the elders would talk at great length while the others listened in a silence broken only by an occasional soft "whaiii . . .," which in our Salish language is more a recognition of another person's presence than an opinion as to the validity of their words. Having spoken, a gentle silence would blanket the room as everyone rolled the old man's words around in their minds. After enough time of respectful contemplation had passed, the next person would take a turn and share her thoughts on the matter, and so on, until everyone had spoken their mind. Words were weighed carefully and not thrown carelessly into the world from which they could never be recovered. Silence was a sacred space with a meaning all its own.

I remember the shock I felt the first time I heard white men arguing in their dialogical manner of claim and counter, statement and rebuttal, each running over the other's words and trying to impose his own truth on the other with "is" and "is not." For better or worse, the agglutinative Salish language doesn't even have the copulative verb "to be," only the root "kwul" which means "to turn into, to become;" everything in the Salish world is just "there" or "becoming," not "being" or "Being." Naturally, this linguistic vision of the world is authorized by the myths and legends that explain it; the world has always existed, but it was different, and Coyote made the changes. Coyote unintentionally did a lot of good things and a lot of bad things but that is just the way of the world: continually reinventing itself and "becoming."

This leads me to the question posed by Hans-Georg Gadamer in the title of the supplement to his text *Truth and Method*, namely, "To what extent does language preform thought?" (491-98). The very title of Gadamer's essay both poses and answers a question; the question is not whether a given language (or family of languages) preforms thought, but rather to what extent does it do so? And why ask the question at all unless we have an uneasy suspicion that our perception of an increasingly precarious and endangered world has been determined by and is a result of the very Indo-European language we use to describe it. Gadamer states:

So, with increasing urgency, we are led to ask, whether there may not be hidden in our experience of the world a

primordial falsity; whether, in our linguistically transmitted experience, we may not be prey to prejudices or, worse still, to necessities which have their source in the linguistic structuring of our first experience of the world and which would force us to run with open eyes, as it were, down a path whence there was no other issue than destruction. (491)

Gadamer goes on to say that the whole of the Occidental world's vision of reality, "the conceptual philosophical language and its derivative, the conceptual language of modern science . . ." is of Greek origin (493). However, through an infinite interior dialogue within ourselves and with others, all of the people of the world "can try to come to agreement about everything" (493).

He may be correct but I would hasten to add that this "dialogue" will undoubtedly be carried out in English. Isn't Gadamer's concept "that mastery is the fundamental experience of reality" (494) born of the Christian creation myth, wherein God created the world and all life upon it in five days and on the sixth day created man and gave him dominion over the world and all of its creatures? And does this God given dominion authorize Western man's anthropocentric vision of the world, justify his wholesale exploitation of the earth's natural resources and, by extension, the exploitation of his fellow man? And why this preoccupation with time, seven days from start to finish, totally absent in the creation myths of cultures whose linguistic tense markers are more spatial than temporal: "back there," "out there." How can an "infinite dialogue" bring us to an "agreement about everything" when, as Gadamer says:

In the act of speaking one word brings another with it and so our thought is eventually set forth. It is truly speech that emerges from the background and usage of a language already schematized in advance. (497)

How can we escape the confines of our language and its predetermined schematizations unless we can truly interpret exterior reality into universal terms of cognition? Again Gadamer:

The translation process contains the whole secret of human understanding of the world and of social communication. Translation is an indivisible unity of implicit anticipation, of presumption of meaning in general and of the explicit determination of what one presumed. (497)

Only by an "infinite dialogue" and a "sharpening of the inner ear" (496), whatever that is, will we presumably arrive at Gadamer's long awaited "understanding about everything." In the meantime, after one

hundred and fifty years, my people on the reservation have come to agreement with the surrounding Anglo community about the way of the world, only to the extent that they have lost their own language and acquired English.

However, before I leave Gadamer, I should at least attempt to initiate the dialogue and put his theory to practice; and that brings me to my second concern. Is it possible to translate a postmodern, deconstructionist theory of language in a way comprehensible to my people (or to anyone else, for that matter) without betraying the theory in the process? If I am to justify the support my people gave me when they told me: "Go to the University and find out what the white man is up to now," then I must try to tell the tale. So the infinite dialogue resumes here in the only style and manner which my people have ever known: a story. I talk, you listen, and if you want to give recognition to my presence and thoughts, just say "whaiii . . .," softly.

My understanding of the world was formed by listening to "capt-kwl," Coyote stories told by my grandmother in the quiet of the evening or during a long winter's day when even the hardiest of us ragamuffin half-breeds could not long endure the twenty below temperature of a bright sunny day. Days when giant trees would split asunder with the sharp crack of a rifle shot and the burning white snow would sparkle with spirits under the bright, cold sun of the hard, blue sky. Everything was possible and we all were of one mind and held in common the world around us captured in language, grounded in the earth, "tum-xwul-axw," of which we were a part and where we had lived forever, always, already.

Imagine now, if you will, the feeling of sadness and loss when I and my playmates of the woods entered school and after learning to read signs, those strange ant tracks on paper, we found that there was no room in the books for our People's world, only Jesus, Christopher Columbus, and George Washington. Later, we read Aristotle and Plato-Descartes-Kant-Hegel-Saussure-Gadamer and then, at last, that sly old French fox Jacques Derrida who called into question the stability of the whole massive edifice made of words. Here was someone we could relate to, who looked behind the mask of the words and only found the grinning face of that old trickster Coyote, "s-n-kl-ip," only the trace of his tracks drifting off through the snow, never in a straight line to the prey but here and there, looking for something to get his teeth into. Something substantive and solid, real meat to feed his gnawing hunger, not chicken feathers but the bird itself, something that would fill him up once and for all. Everyone knows what sign Coyote makes as he travels across the white snow; six distinct marks made by toes and pad. Very similar to his brother the fox, "xwkw-ilxw," who used to follow

him around to see what new trouble he had gotten into and bring him back to life by jumping over his remains five times when the trouble he had gotten into was death. Strange how death always caught up to Coyote, just when the randy old fellow was intent on grinding out some new life. Yet somehow the tracks of coyote and fox were so similar that, unless you saw them side by side, you could not tell them apart. One would have to follow the sign with patience, try and catch up to get a glimpse of their maker and meaning, defer for a while a final identification. You follow the tracks down through the red willows to the icy creek and past the round, white, snow-covered mound which both reveals and conceals the presence of Beaver and his family.

Downstream the tracks lead here to a flutter of feathers amongst the sage and there a flurry of fur at the mouth of a den, sure sign of the struggle. To a keen eye, the signs tell a story, many stories, freshly etched in the cold white surface of the earth. The cocked ears, the quizzical look, the locked eyes and frozen stance, then quick, mincing, high steps and the dash, a blur of movement closing the gap so fast as to stop the sun and leave his shadow behind. With the prey, the object of desire, firmly in his power, he looks around with a comical grin, a sheepish look that betrays his guilt, as if someone might be watching him, to see if he's up to his same old tricks. Then the return, the eternal return to the search as if absolutely nothing had occurred yet feeling renewed, confident, temporarily pleased with himself and his appropriation, his artful ways and the reaffirmation of his power, his coyoteness.

The childish eye of the mind sees it all from reading the signs, the tracks and traces in the blinding white surface that brings tears to the eyes. One wonders about the victim's young ones awaiting her return, the little ones sensing something amiss, a feeling of absence awaiting the presence that never comes—only their mother's scent in the nest remaining as a reminder—a reminder of the life-giving force that created them. They rearrange themselves to fill out the space in the nest, reassociate themselves in a new circle of warmth and well-being, then quietude and sleep.

The perfect circle of your reverie is broken by a shiver of fearful cold and you remember that grown men, hunters of deer, have failed to return from a mid-winter hunt only to be found later, sitting under a large comforting pine, with eyes wide open, embracing their weapon of death in an eternally frozen dream. At first light, the hunter's family follows the trail of his tracks, finding the signs both a cure and a curse, a magical remedy that reveals his absence and conceals his presence, the marks revealing the trail that promises life yet leads on to death. The trace of his passing remains long after he is gone and serves as a

bitter reminder of loss, the footprints slowly growing larger with time and Spring melt and like them, the man, who grows larger in death.

Your body trembles from the cold and the fear and you shake your head in the waning light to stem the flood of associations, to limit thought to the concrete reality of the sign, of the distinct series of marks that may lead to fox or coyote or even Coyote himself. The long, mournful wail of a coyote howling his name sounds in the distance ahead, but there is nothing to connect it to the trail you are following and no way to tell if it is really old Coyote or just coyote, that stealer of chickens, whom you catch in your traps. Is he aware that you are attempting to follow his signs? Does he even care or do his circles and backtracks, tropes and turns signal his awareness that someone is following close behind his tracks in the snow, the only ground on which he can stand, searching for the one transcending clue that will disclose his origin and ground, reveal his destination and betray his full presence?

High in the red evening sky soars the ancient spirit doctor, "pq-la-qin," the white-headed eagle, whose keen eyes can see all within the large circle of his distant horizon. From the lofty heights of his home in the clouds, the circles and turns of the tracks in the snow appear to be mere momentary detours around difficult terrain and do not detract from the ultimate destination of their meaning. You hurry on through the cold dimming light of the dying day, following the tracks from the creek up through the timber to the high, windswept bluff overlooking the endlessly flowing river. You pass the exclamation mark of yellow snow that proclaims the boundary of your wily quarry and then, close to the edge of the cliff, underneath the sheltering face of the painted rock of the ancient ones, you spy the steaming pile of his scat, a sure sign you are close to the source.

Our uncles have taught us the logic of scat, how to read from it the history and nature of its maker. The beak of a blue grouse, the teeth of a ground squirrel, the seeds of winter dried berries, all recognizable for what they were but different, the parts standing for the whole but changed through the time of their passage from one end to the other of that wily old rascal. This slender dropping tells a story, many stories here and now of the there and then and its mere existence creates the possibility of language.

Towering over the scat on the narrow ledge and obscuring it in its shadow stands the smooth surface of the sheer rock face, inscribed at odd angles with recognizable images of man and animal in ancient red and black paints. Off to one side, as if afraid to venture too close to the ancient ones' lingering presence, the brash white-painted letters shout out "Kills Deer was here." You follow the dangerously narrow ledge

until, suddenly, the tracks disappear where the snow has been swept clean from the naked rock by the wind of the river. Reaching the point of no return, fear grips you by the throat as you peer over the edge into the misty black void and hear the murmuring river rocks far below. You turn to hug the vertical rock of the cliff face and there pressed to your face you are confronted with the faint paintings of whorls, circles, spirals and zigzags of the most ancient and weathered abstract designs.

These curious signs you remember seeing before, copied on paper by the anthropologists that invade the reservation every summer. Compelled by the necessity of their curiosity and their addiction to meaning, they interrogate the full-bloods about these symbols' ultimate significance and meaning, as if this ancient knowledge were somehow transmitted genetically. The anthropologists are never disappointed by the ingenious interpretations brought forth by innumerable free drinks at the local Warbonnet Tavern. If science is not as well-served as its collaborators in the tavern, it's through no fault of my cousins, who regale their hosts with many a fanciful tale. In private, every Indian knows that these signs have no sure meaning other than that which their viewing inspires and another which inspired their creating.

You shake your head to clear it of the thoughts and memories of summer that the paintings inspire, and focus your total attention on the perilously narrow ledge to which your curiosity has driven you. The tracks that you followed here must have continued invisibly on across the bare rock of the ledge, unless they had their origin in the void. Calling on your spirit helper for courage, you scrape past the narrowest spot of the ledge, leaving part of yourself on the face of the rock, and reach the far side.

There, sheltered from the river wind, the ledge leads to a wide, white meadow whose quiet surface is broken here and there by outcrops of noisy blue splashes of mountain crocus whose turned faces pray to the dying sun. There, where the silent snow again covers the naked earth, the six distinct marks made by toes and pad begin anew as if born from the abyss. No way to tell if they have borne Coyote, coyote or fox. No way to conjure up their presence from the pit of the tracks' shallow blue-white depressions. No way to link them to the tracks of your prey, the fatal gap of the bare cliff edge disrupting their unbroken chain. No way to know if they are a resumption of meaning or a new beginning, the origin of the trail you have followed to its final destination at the narrow edge of the abyss.

You hurry on in the growing cold darkness of night, the tracks leading onward across the meadow and down through the moon-shadowed pine towards the warmth and safety of home. Below, in the distance, you see the flickering light from the cabin and hear the

reassuring laughter of the creek. Careful not to lose the trail of the tracks where they cross and mingle with those of "scla-chinm" the deer, you intuit the looks of silent disapproval you will receive from your elders when you enter empty-handed from your hunt. Only a foolish boy would waste his time following Coyote. Weary from the search and the deadly cold, you stop to rest and put off for a while your moment of shame. You sit with your back to a large comforting pine, cradling your rifle in the embrace of your arm. If one could just follow His tracks fast and hard enough to catch up with Him, catch a glimpse of Him and see Him in His wholeness, the promise of His entirety. One could sneak up quietly so as not to alert Him to your presence and watch Him, to see if what you imagined about Him from his tracks is true.

Grandfather will say that this is impossible and cannot be done. He will know you are watching and not be Himself. He will act the fool, jumping up in the air, snapping at imaginary butterflies and chasing his tail to entertain you, make you laugh but teach you nothing of himself, of his essence, of his Coyoteness. It is He, "s-n-kl-ip," the great imposter, the deceiver and imitator of that which really is. He is always coming and going, always becoming and never really "there." He will lead you in a big circle and leave you sitting under a tree, dreaming the story Grandmother tells, about the time before the arrival of the People when the Creator, "kwl-ncut-tn," was going to give out new names to all of the animals. Coyote did not like his name, "s-n-kl-ip," the Imitator. He wanted a different name. He wanted a powerful name like "ki-lau-na," the grizzly bear, or a wise name like "ml-qn-oups," the golden eagle, or an eternal name like "n-ty-tyix," the spring salmon. He wanted his real name, a name that would totally capture his beauty, goodness and truth. In order to get up early on Naming Day, to be first in line for the name giving, he will not sleep this night. He will prop open his eyes with two little sticks to stay wide-awake, to have first choice of the names, to at last be given his true name . . .

Then sleep creeps up with her warm embrace and dreams fill the wide open eyes.

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COMMENTARY

From the Editors

Joe Bruchac generously took time from his extensive preparations for the "Returning the Gift" festival to make the selections of poetry and fiction that appear in this issue. Thanks go to Joe and to all the contributors who entered the spirit of celebration—of survival, of continuity, of new growth, of ancestral wisdom, of both sorrow and healing—invoked for this special 1992 issue.

This is the final issue of our 1992 volume. We hope our readers have enjoyed this year's volume, and also hope that all will renew their membership in the Association (and thereby subscribe for the 1993 volume) immediately. Membership rates for 1993 are the same as those for last year—\$25 for individuals (\$16 for those with limited income) and \$35 for institutions, with special thanks to sponsors (\$50) and patrons (\$100). We're confident that Volume 5 will be a good one: already in preparation are a special number on the work of Leslie Silko, a collection of papers from European scholars, and issues to be guest-edited by Greg Sarris, Susan Gardner and Rodney Simard.

For those who have not yet sent in 1993 dues, a resubscription form is included in this issue. Non-U.S. subscribers who do not have personal checking accounts with U.S.-based banks may want to consider using a U.S. Postal Money Order instead (some of our subscribers have paid in travelers' checks and even in dollar bills).

If you are one of our U.S. subscribers, you'll notice that we are now using a mailing envelope to help protect your copy of the journal as it braves the vicissitudes of the U.S. Postal system. We hope that the extra expense to the Association of these protective envelopes will be offset by decreased re-mailings to members whose journals have occasionally become mangled during the brutalities of bulk mailing.

Helen Jaskoski
Bob Nelson

MLA Division in American Indian Literatures

The MLA Executive Council has approved the creation of a Division on American Indian Literatures. The new division replaces the Discussion Group on American Indian Literatures; the change will mean more opportunities to include scholarly work on American Indian literatures in MLA programs. The first official meeting of the new division will take place at the 1993 annual convention in Toronto.

Many thanks are due LaVonne Ruoff for navigating the bureaucratic channels required to see the new division become part of the MLA.

Deadline Extended for Critical Approaches Issue

The deadline for the special issue of *SAIL* on critical approaches to American Indian Literatures has been **extended to 15 January 1993**.

Greg welcomes contributions on the following topics:

- * Approaches to oral literatures
- * Approaches to written works by American Indian authors
- * Critical theory and approaches to American Indian literatures
- * Issues of multiculturalism in American Indian literatures

Send all materials to

Greg Sarris
Department of English
UCLA
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Call for Papers on Feminist and Post-Colonial Approaches to American Indian Literatures

A forthcoming issue of *SAIL*, guest-edited by Dr. Susan Gardner, will focus on feminist and post-colonial approaches to literature as applied to American Indian literatures: at what points may these approaches intersect and affect each other? Since a number of non-Indians came to their interest in American Indian literatures via concern and involvement in women's or worldwide indigenous people's issues, the aim of this number of *SAIL* will be to explore the usefulness of studying American Indian literatures from these perspectives. Although we are looking for papers focusing on pedagogical applications of these various methodologies, theoretical papers are also welcome.

For further information, please contact Susan Gardner, English Dept., Univ. of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC 28223; phone (704) 547 4208; FAX (704) 547 4888; e-mail to fen00sjg @ unccvm.bitnet.

Call for Papers: New Directions in Contemporary American Indian Film, Drama, and Theater

In popular culture and imagination, Native Americans seem to cycle in and out of fashion once each generation, each peak of popularity provoked, or at least accompanied, by a singular and often Anglo effort: *A Century of Dishonor* and the "Red Progressive" movement; the Meriam Report and the New Deal for Indians; *House Made of Dawn* and the Native American Renaissance; the rediscovery of *Black*

Elk Speaks and proto-New Age shamanism. Recently, this phenomenon has evinced itself again—*Dances With Wolves* and America's rediscovered cinematographic romance with Native peoples. Quickly, a theatrical revival: *Son of the Morning Star*, *Black Robe*, and a rush of others; the entertainment pages of the Sunday newspaper list dozens of Indian films in various stages of production.

Hollywood—the movies, Film—has always been a prime source of widespread misconceptions and stereotypes, perhaps in America more influential, for good or ill, than any other creative or expressive medium, and now all cameras are trained on American Indians. Significantly, much scholarship, criticism, and theory has been directed toward the literary genre of Drama, of which Film has become an accepted and seriously examined mode. As an incarnation of ritual, and arguably the first human aesthetic expression, Drama has a uniquely central position in most Native cultures, making any consideration of Indian Film and Theater particularly multifaceted.

This special issue of *SAIL* seeks inquiries and essays that consider what has, what is continuing, and what will happen post-*Dances*, exploring not only the cultural implications but the literary, cultural, and theoretical dimensions of what may prove to be a paradigm shift in the ways American Indians see themselves and are seen in several dramatic media. Interdisciplinary and innovative approaches are particularly encouraged.

For further information, contact Rodney Simard, Department of English, California State University-San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino CA 92407-2397.

Deadline: January 1993.

Call For Papers and Panels at ALA

Once again ASAIL will conduct sessions at the American Literature Association convention in May. The 1993 convention will be held in Baltimore. Anyone who has an idea for a panel or a paper should contact John Purdy, Department of English, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225-9055 (tel: [206] 592-2076).

Deadline: 15 January 1993.

REVIEWS

Annikadel: The History of the Universe as Told by the Achumawi Indians of California. Istet Woiche. Rec. and ed. C. Hart Merriam, M.D. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1992. 160 pp. paper, ISBN 0-8165-1283-3.

"The world was made by the World's Heart. He was *An-nik-a-del*'s grandfather. *Annikadel* was the greatest man; he knew everything" (Merriam 1). The magical creation of the world and of life begins with unfolding intrigue, dangerous adventure, and alarming feats of physical, mental and spiritual vastness. There is the mystical and the physical. The imagination is unleashed and all of the senses are unchained. There is the terribly ugly human element of jealousy, and there is the possession of a greater power than human beings can either deserve or comprehend.

This is one original-California legend that has "proof" (the earth) as its foundation. However, it could be more properly identified as "A History of the Universe as told by *one* Achomawi Indian of California," since this is but a single lesson. Istet Woiche's expression of how the world was made, of the powers of the spirit-people who worked with *Todado Hedache*, *Annikadel* and (Cocoon Man) *Aponiha* (and *Jamul*, who worked against), is a history handed to him—one legend, one thought, one interpretation of a great dream. There are many others, as many as there are First People "dreamed" by *Aponiha* as a voice.

Todado Hedache created the world from a thought. The thought presented itself to *Annikadel* in the form of a shiny mist. The mist was floating down with the wind upon the vast waters. *Jamul* (Coyote) started his never-ending career by lying to *Aleum* (Frog Woman), the mother of all of life. Sun Woman and Moon Man were under the deep waters. *Annikadel* cast *Kwan* (Silver Gray Fox) a dream of how to make them bring light. Then Sun Woman stood on top of her eastern round house during the day and slept during the night. In these times sunlight was dim. *E-de-che-we*'s sister, *Nek-Neka*, caused the earth to shake by dropping a grinding stone. This was a decoy so she could help save the life of her smaller brother, *Yatch*. With the help of his grandson, *Annikadel*, *Todado Hedache* formed the world. *Annikadel* and the First Chiefs, all great people, made the world as the First People knew it. *Aleum* (Frog Woman) became the mother to all.

There was a Great Transformation and the spirits of earth changed into what they are today. Some spirits transformed into the First People, some became rocks, some misted into clouds, some mutated

into animals, some arranged to become birds, some evolved into everything else. Much of that which was made over appears today as it did at its transformation. But much has become gnarled and changed by human beings. Much has eroded and everything seems to have grown smaller and, somehow, insignificant.

In my youth, we traveled around the *Acho-mah-we* country, crossing the rivers on wooden bridges, through the winding and dusty (and often very slender) roads where brush or willows slapped a sting across our faces—our old jalopy bouncing over sharp lava rocks. Farther, still. Back into the forest. Finally, a barking dog, a broken down car, excited children racing to greet us with happy shrieks.

Visiting, entertaining, gossiping, getting the latest news on the political issues and being a living part of a throbbing community of original native people is a "way." It is an existence held together by messages, thoughts and ideas—carried, as *E-de-che-we* accomplished, from family to family. It is a "style" that is yet a part of our existence in the Pit River landscape. Traveling, communicating, bearing a message or receiving one—bearing a dream, or receiving another even greater. Also, bearing sadness.

My mother was born at Pecks Bridge (now covered by Lake Britton) a short way from *Jema-whalo-ti-wi-ji* (Burney Falls). Her mother came from *Hamma-wi* country (likely, California). In our way, tracing the life-line through the female side of the family, I am, primarily, *Acho-mah-we*. My father was born in *Hati-we-we Atsuge-we* (Hat Creek) country. Thus, my origin is of both small nations. Since each of the people of my origin possess legends and lessons, I truly received the best from two worlds—that of the *Acho-mah-we* and that of the *Atsuge-we*. The old stories are still told. The old people still travel. They still carry messages. They still discuss dreams.

In the *Acho-mah-we* country, we lived in Glenburn, Fall River Mills and, finally, Cayton Canyon—a short walk from Lake Britton down an abandoned railroad track. The family was large, four boys and four girls and a variety of dogs and other wild critters. It was often an explosion of life when we finally reached a destination—children screaming and racing in many directions between the barking dogs and behind the fleeing cats.

It seems like I always heard of Hulsey Bill (Istet Woiche). He lived in the Big Bend area, *Modese* country—where the Pit River exits the *Acho-mah-we* territory, and a dusty drive of about fifteen miles down River Road. This was just a few flat tires and several "emergency" stops for all of the kids. Usually at the emergency stops we would see *Annikadel* scurry onto a rock, a long, black shadow with a very long and pointed tail. He watched us with all-knowing eyes while he was

doing what we called push-ups. We rattled away in the decrepit vehicle disappearing in a cloud of red-yellow dust, leaving *Annikadel* sunning on the rock—peaceful again.

Often deer bounced past, or a porcupine ambled along, hesitated, ambled again, while squirrels raced in the dust.

Once in a while there was a bear and usually there were raccoons and skunks going to the river to fish or to gather mussels in the evening—or both. *Walow-ta* perched on the taller trees and *Put-is* (osprey) studied the river from their ethereal nests, waiting for the angle of the sun to show them a lazy sucker lolling at the end of a quiet place in the river, or for a rippling, or for a moiling of the placid surface.

Put-is flashed down bouncing off of the water, a dripping, writhing fish in its talons. Screeching, it rose sharply up into the whispering forest to the nest. Often *Walow-ta* would harass *Put-is*, hoping it would drop the fish. When the fish was dropped *Walow-ta* folded and streaked through time and space to catch the desperate, wiggling fish before it landed back in the river—or in the forest.

Too young to realize it, I could not know that Istet Woiche (William Hulsey—Hulsey Bill) was a special person with awesome responsibilities. The keepers of the history and the keepers of the wisdom, in my Nations, are few. Often the medicine people and the spiritual healers and the "doctors" are the same. Some keep the wisdom and the thoughts of the nation. Some keep the traditions and the histories. Some keep genealogy and maintain the lineage of the chiefs and the captains. At times some of them are everything. Of such responsibility was Istet Woiche.

We arrived at Big Bend usually in the early afternoon. There is a store there near the bridge, and there are people living all around in the trees. That is where Hulsey Bill used to live, not far from the "talking waters"—a place where "The Power" lived at the bend in the river. It was easy to make communication with that "Power." We jumped in the water and hit the permanent rocks with smaller ones. Then we put our heads under the water and waited. The "knock, knock" always came back. Sometimes we could feel it under our feet. We were thrilled, awed and scared all at once.

The story of *Tak-kil-mus* (Rock Man) always flashed across my mind. It is said that he travels the land in the evenings just at dusk, listening for crying babies. He knows the cry of the infants—when they are hungry, when they need attention, when they want water or milk. And he also knows the certain cry of the baby when it is lonely and unwanted. These unwanted children he takes in the night. It is said that the Rock Man has an entire tribe—somewhere. I always thought that

this other tribe was present and all around us but in another dimension—perhaps that is the reason for the feeling of never being alone, and, often, of being thoroughly studied in a velvet silence.

Like the shadow of *Annikadel* (before his transformation into the blue-bellied lizard) summer clouds moved between *Chool* and earth. Instantly there was a cooling, a shifting of life to match the atmosphere.

The day and night call of *Jamul* reminds me of how he never liked the way things were made and always tried to make them over—to make them better. *Jamul* did not like anything *Kwan* (Silver Gray Fox) or *A-poni-ha* (Cocoon Man) had made . . . and always tried to make it just a little bit different, just a few more adjustments, just a fine tuning—until he had "adjusted" it into chaos. *Jamul's* problem, one of jealousy, is that he never acquired the power to create, he only acquired the power to change.

After the long sessions of visiting and exchanging stories and, perhaps, "myths" from a friend or a relative, father and mother gathered the children from a dozen different places, counted us, threw us into the car and we headed homeward in the thick canyon darkness. In the summer we raced *Chool*, the man-in-the-moon. No matter how fast we went, *Chool* was just there beyond the trees, flashing just as fast as we were. We never did outrun him. And he seemed so calm when we finally came out of the trees and onto a prairie. Shortly after that we forgot about the race—and went to sleep in a pile like dusty, exhausted puppies.

Entering sleep, I sometimes dreamed of magic. The making of the world. The sun woman and moon man. *Kwan* and *Jamul*, the proper and the improper, clouds and eagles, rainbows and dancing, stories and singing, struggle and success. Death (thanks to *Jamul*) and torture, then a new birth.

Then the stories, the legends, the myths became focused and touchable and real. My spirit hovered like that of *Annikadel*, over the vast land, watching, studying.

Unfolding below, a panoramic lesson that has barely been explored by the academics. When the story is finally told and understood, there will be a gasping, for multitudes will learn that many of the greatest stories ever told were told in the land of *E-de-che-we* (who at the transformation changed into the Fisher Man) and *Walowta* (the north cloud woman who turned into the golden eagle).

So many people do not know, yet, that all of life is but a dream made visible and physical that people and all other forms upon earth have been granted permission to move within and to experience. The experiencing, it is said around the campfires, is to make better people

of us all. It is also whispered in the soft evenings that experiencing life and moving within this dream should make our spirits cleaner and should make us strive to live a life that is honorable.

In the land of my father, the legend of the origin of the universe is just a little different from that of the *Modese*. It is said that there was simply nothing but a silver darkness. *Kwan* thought himself into being, and being lonely for millions of years, thought up another being. That being was *Ma-ka-da* (*Jamul* or coyote). Again *Kwan* thought, for a million years, wishing for something shiny. Far off a mist appeared, floating towards them. *Kwan* caught the mist and breathed upon it, sang and danced, and it began to turn into substance. . . . But that, as the old ones still say, is another story for another winter season.

E-de-che-we travels upon a perilous journey, the same journey the old ones warn the young and strong about when they enter their individual sweat lodge to be cleansed before their quest to learn who or what they are and to discover their proper place within the tribal society. The journey may not be pleasant; therefore, the person has to be strong and has to think good thoughts. The mountain tops are not the only places to seek "power" and "self" through solitude, but most peaks are sacred. *Che-wa-ko* (McGee Peak), the home of *E-de-che-we* and *Yatch*, is yet beautiful—a place of a thousand lakes and streams defiled now by curious beings who travel to this land in order to obtain their fair portion of "the experience."

Et-ah-ko (Mt. Shasta), it is said by the wise ones of our nation, is the home of *Mis Misa*, the small power that balances the earth with the universe and the universe with the earth. It is the most powerful of all the mountains of the world. In the old days the top of this mountain was the most powerful place for a quest of "self." Today, the cities around its base are tourist traps and there are plans for this mountain to be turned into an entertainment center for bored citizens of the vast Sacramento valley who have to create chaos in their moments of leisure.

When *E-de-che-we*'s younger brother, *Yatch*, was kidnapped by *Kwilla* (the dragon man) and was being crucified in the sweat lodge in a satanic ritual with many beings present—entranced by the activity, the power of the moment, the intensity of the act—*Chool* (Moon Man) promised to help. It was then up to *E-de-che-we* to position himself so he could talk with *Chool*. He enlisted the mice brothers (the greatest shots with the bow and arrow) and two sons of *Cha-hah* (Spider Woman). The five of them traveled to the top of *Et-ah-ko*. The mice brothers shot their arrows into the sky so high that they stuck. Next the spider brothers made their ropes. One threw his rope as high as he could. The next brother climbed the rope and then threw his own rope

up until it caught on the arrows and was secure. *E-de-che-we* then climbed the rope and talked with *Chool* as he passed by. They had a casual meeting and *Chool* told that the dragon people had captured *Yatch*. *E-de-che-we* returned to *Et-ah-ko*, down the rope and told the mice brothers and the spider brothers what he learned, then sent them home. In the final analysis, *Yatch* was rescued. *Nekneka* (*Yatch*'s sister) and the good people, who were at the satanic ritual in a rescue posture or in a trance, were permitted to leave. *Jamul*, after killing *Kwilla* (because *Jamul*'s wife was dancing there, too), burned the round house where they were preparing to murder *Yatch*. *Jamul*'s wife, *Putis*, is spared.

Et-ah-ko, the most beautiful mountain of the Sierra Nevada chain and the most necessary for earth's balance, is now a shining pyramid of entertainment and passing curiosity—for American humanity and for my people who have taken on the costume of the Americans.

Annikadel is a volume that is a good introduction into the vast array of lessons and legends of my people, the *Acho-mah-we/Atsuge-we*. Herein is magic that is unbelievable and other magic that exceeds the last. Spider Woman makes a basket from the air and places a whirlwind under it so travel is almost in helicopter fashion—but with the power beneath it. The Earth's Heart is still beside the Pit River. The casting of dreams and thoughts through time and space, like *Annikadel* accomplished, is still a means of communication between the people and nature. The tree and the spring where everlasting life yet bubbles, where the first basket cup and basket bucket were made, is still in the land, resting in solitude. Should they ever be discovered, the curious would cut down the tree, dig up the spring and scatter the spirit of the thought across the land like mischievous children with too much holiday candy—carrying it for a while then abandoning it, or dropping it in carelessness, having too much in abundance to retrieve it.

Some sugar pine trees are still standing—the identical trees that produced the nut that was the origin of *E-de-che-we*. All of the animals and birds that *E-de-che-we* killed to feed his family when he was very young are still present—but not in abundance. Some of them are being destroyed by the advance of civilization or the advance of technology—sometimes both. *Jamul* still wanders across the fields and across the highways, usually alone.

The sun woman is still floating in the sky where she was cast long ago by the teetering game of *din-hin-na-oo-se*. *Chool* the moon man and his daughter *Te-chah-mah-hok-too-me*, the north star, are ever present in the night sky while we see *Waht-waht*, the south star, the daughter of the sun woman, only at certain times of the year.

Here is an enchanting expression where thoughts and dreams are

cast with more precision than the most modern means of telecommunication. Here is adventure, intrigue, danger. Here is murder and jealousy. Here is re-birthing and a changing of form and shape into another spirit in order to evade the pain of death. Here is magic working to its most fantastic precision. Dreams are turned into reality, thoughts take form and become physical beings, death has its origin with the insistence of the worst of all of the First Chiefs, *Jamul*—*Jamul*, the one who cannot tell the truth, the one who cannot find satisfaction, the one who can never locate "place" with enough velocity to become responsible and trustworthy.

Within the pages of this small volume is a lesson for all people from "the three corners of the world" to understand: All creatures have wisdom and knowledge, all forms of life have spirit—each experiences emotions and "thinks," each "knows," and each "is." Therefore, all of life must be treated with the utmost respect, even as an adult respects and enjoys the dreams of the children when they enter a room in the early morning rubbing sleep from their eyes saying, "Mom, Dad, I had a dream last night, it was about. . . ."

When the wind is not in motion and evening approaches in the *Modese* country, the river softly rushes and roars. Then the wind shifts and there is quiet. The next shifting of the wind brings a loud roaring of the river and a roaring of the forest. The land "talking," remembering the origin of the universe, "talking" about the adventures of the First People and the First Chiefs long ago. Just over there above the blue ridge, *Walow-ta* wheels in the vastness, floating just below *Annikadel*.

So very much of the landscape has changed since Istet Woiche's visits with Dr. C. Hart Merriam. The Pit River has been almost murdered by a series of cement dams that create electricity for PG&E and for the comfort of Americans. There are no salmon. Much of the forest has been destroyed by an uncontrolled interest between lumber companies and the U.S. Forest Service. Most of the animals have been hunted to near extinction or killed by motor vehicles and pollution. The descendants of Europeans have moved in and have claimed all of the land, all of the life, all of the spirit of earth. The legends, the lessons, the thoughts of the original natives seem to have no effect upon them—it is as if the intruders were all related, directly, to the *Jamul*, *Putis*, and *Kwilla* spirits.

There are many other stories such as those imparted by Istet Woiche. There is a story for every valley, for the top of every mountain, for the bends in all of the rivers and streams. There are wandering stories along the coyote trails, there are alert lessons along the deer trails, there are silent stories in the yellow eyes of the peering

mountain lion. The stories grow fewer and fewer with each passing year. Taking their place now are stories laced with anger, with fear, with confusion. The Owl People, The Rock Man. . . . Those harsh stories must be told or *Nilladu-wi* (wanderers, rootless people) will continue abusing earth until it is all used up and it becomes, in a moment of time, a moon, forever. Somehow, earth's spirit must be revered in these times of desperate human beings taking, damaging, polluting. Perhaps it is nearing the season when earth has to be made over again. Perhaps it is time for another great transformation. Perhaps *Tikado Hedache* and *Annikadel* are in this process today. Perhaps it is time for *Jamul* to burn the round house again. It is certain that "civilization," abandoning the mystical and magic of lessons and legends, has neither maintained a healthy "place" nor instituted a solitary rule for humanity to live by—"civilization" has not created a guide to make better people of us all.

Therefore it is necessary in these times of discontent to search the lessons and the legends of the original natives, to study the tribal thought, to seek a wisdom that has almost vanished. *Annikadel* is a good beginning to the exercise of digging for nuggets of truth among the boulders of deliberate, political, deception.

Darryl Babe Wilson

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Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood. Maude Kegg. Ed. and transcr. John C. Nichols. U of Alberta P, 1991.

The book, *Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood* by Maude Kegg, is the result of the combined efforts of Maude Kegg, an Ojibwe who speaks her own language and tells about her childhood memories, and the scholar and linguist John D. Nichols, who supplied the work of translation of the Ojibwe and the information for the beginning student of Ojibwe language and culture. The book presents information from two points of view: that of a woman talking informally about her childhood memories, and the formal work of the scholar. It appears to me that the formal work of the linguist, John D. Nichols, overshadows the informal work of Maude Kegg despite the fact that she is given the privilege of authorship inasmuch as her memories are recorded in this book. Maude Kegg's contribution to *Portage Lake* consists of her memories of her life through her early teens, and the transitional Ojibwe culture which they represent. Maude Kegg's memories are precious to English and Ojibwe-speaking scholars and

students because the Anishinabe history and culture were not recorded on paper but kept alive in the oral tradition. The linguist gets a large percentage of the credit for his translations of the Anishinabe to English, thus preserving not only the history and culture that is contained in the stories but also preserving the language in the bilingual accounts.

In order to put more emphasis on the importance of Maude Kegg's experiences as represented in her stories, the introduction to history and culture of the Anishinabe (Ojibwe) could be revised to reflect this importance. It is true that John C. Nichols gives some information about the history and culture in the introduction to the book, but the connection between Maude Kegg's stories and the history and culture of the Ojibwe or Anishinabe is not otherwise made. If the student is an Anishinabe and is a native speaker, then it might be assumed that he or she knows about the history and culture of the Anishinabe and then can go on to add to that knowledge the information on the Mille Lacs Band. Members of this particular band were able to maintain their traditions and culture longer than other bands because they lived in relative isolation after White contact. They kept their language. They kept their means of livelihood: wild rice harvesting, hunting and fishing, berrypicking. They kept their bark wigwams. They kept their Midewiwin religion. But gradually they began to adapt to a way of life that their nonIndian neighbors had. They began to use horse and wagons, to live in wood cabins. They adopted as means of livelihood wage earning, the sale of articles made from natural materials to the nonIndians, and other practices. They began to use cloth for clothing, and made numerous other kinds of adaptations to nonIndian culture.

The Anishinabe young person and other Native Americans would greatly benefit from literary, audio-visual resources that could accompany *Portage Lake*. So many of the Native American families and individuals were displaced or otherwise deprived of upbringing by their own kind in Canada and the United States. In the United States the government policy of Termination and Relocation of 1953-54 displaced enough of the Native Americans from their homelands to large urban centers that within a relatively short time one-half of the Native American population were living in cities. Fortunately, in the United States and Canada, Indian centers, survival schools, colleges, universities, and tribal groups participated in the movement to revive the culture, including the language, and maintain it for numerous tribes. "The Anishinabe—from Quebec to Saskatchewan, from urban communities in Chicago, Detroit, and Minneapolis to the Hudson Bay lowlands—are struggling to retain and promote their language" (x).

If *Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood* were to be

depended upon solely by young Anishinabe students, it would be difficult to pick up the language without extra help from elders, and failing continuous and concentrated help from elders, the student would need an audiotape, or better still, a videotape of Maude Kegg telling the stories of her childhood memories and in addition to that, a videotape of Maude Kegg or an Ojibwe elder telling about the history and cultural background of the Ojibwe.

Other printed resources which the person, including Anishinabe youth, could use in addition to *Portage Lake* are given. These include the published collections of stories by Maude Kegg, *Against the Tide of American History: The Story of the Mille Lacs Anishinabe* by Roger and Priscilla Buffalohead (1985), *Ojibwewi-ikidowinan* by John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm (1979), and a dictionary. There are language helps for the student who wishes to simply translate the Ojibwe language into English or to begin a study of the Ojibwe language. There are categories of nouns, verbs, prefixes, suffixes, etc., so that the student can understand the English-Ojibwe corresponding terms. The table of sounds needs expansion and/or explanation of formation of the sounds and meaning of the symbols to the native speaker.

My critique of the translations is limited. However, I might point out that the translation in the texts of Anishinabe as "Indian" can be misleading to the beginning student of the language. The tribal name of Anishinabe (as well as that of other tribes of the United States) has a special meaning of its own, and so translation into the umbrella term "Indian" is not precise enough in meaning. It is clear from John D. Nichols' explanation that the work of translation by himself and Maude Kegg was shared. I realize that tribal persons of other tribes use the word "Indian" when they begin to identify themselves, or in such phrases as "I talk Indian," but at the same time it is very important for us to identify ourselves by tribe.

John D. Nichols tells the reader that it was his initiative to organize the stories by Maude Kegg into four sections under the headings of the four seasons. For many tribal persons the four seasons are associated with their religion rather than simply with the weather or the seasons of the year alone. Apparently, the organization of the stories by seasons was not offensive to Maude Kegg or her fellow Anishinabe.

In summary, it appears to me that the informal (Maude Kegg's memories) and the formal (the information on Ojibwe structure and some Anishinabe history and culture) parts of the book, *Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood*, might be balanced to show the importance of Maude Kegg's memories, told informally in Ojibwe, in relationship to Anishinabe (Ojibwe) history and culture.

Woesha Cloud North

Deer Hunting and Other Poems. Geary Hobson. 1990. 30 pp. \$4.00 paper, ISBN 0-937280-29-1.

Last Mornings in Brooklyn. Maurice Kenny. 1991. 28 pp. \$4.00 paper, ISBN 0-937280-27-5.

Engine. Gogisgi/Carroll Arnett. 1988. 31 pp. \$4.00 paper, ISBN 0-937280-23-2

another song for america. lance henson. 1987. 31 pp. \$5.00 paper, ISBN 0-937280-20-8.

Makers. Ed. Edgar Heap of Birds. 1988. 33 pp. \$6.00 paper, ISBN 0-937280-22-4.

[These books are all available from Point Riders Press/Cottonwood Arts Foundation, P.O. Box 2731, Norman, OK 73070.]

Point Riders Press of Norman, Oklahoma, has produced an impressive stream of chapbooks by recognized and new Native American poets. Their voices counterpoint one another in a variety of ways. These include observing the dominant culture and reacting to the anomaly of living in a country whose values (or lack of them) run so counter to native cultural values.

Geary Hobson's *Deer Hunting and Other Poems* reveals familiarity with American poetic traditions without betraying his Cherokee, Quapaw and Chickasaw ancestry. The two-part title poem "Deer Hunting" shows beer-drinking white hunters, then the remembered tribal hunt of initiation into manhood, blessed by the grandfather, and the contrast could not be greater. Just as Hobson seeks to balance outrage with water renewal and blessing, so the two parts titled "Away" and "Home" divide the volume evenly, balancing the seven poems in each part. The polar organization works on moral as well as geographical levels, since the opening poem looks back to Vietnam when the Meo people were destroyed in "napalm flashes." Dull Knife's people were also destroyed, the poet remembers, and the tears of those who mourned them were just as helpless. Hobson's terse summary defines the problem most succinctly: "The eagle flies blindly/ into the smoke of his past."

The subtle and selective eye of Maurice Kenny drew me again and again to *Last Mornings in Brooklyn*. Like a Japanese brushpainter who suggests detail with a minimum of strokes, Kenny repeatedly sets a scene, then reveals in a telling human gesture some incongruous detail, as in #32:

His hawk feather
straight as a warrior's;

he forages into
battle,
blond hair flowing.

This consistent and selective witness unfolds a highly unified series of miniature city scenes. Kenny, a Mohawk, closes his series with a response to Lance Henson's question "How can any self-respecting Mohawk live in a place like this?" "Response:/ I burn/ Cedar and Sage/ and keep/ an eye/ on the bridge."

Just as Maurice Kenny carries his consciousness unpretentiously, so Gogisgi/Carroll Arnett uses the language of daily life in the poems of *Engine*, a word which Arnett takes in the sense of "natural ability." Cherokee-born Arnett's voice sometimes celebrates survival through wit, and sometimes simply celebrates. "Sweat," a poem of the cleansing sweatlodge, closes "This is the only peace there is." This comes midway in the collection of eighteen poems, which opens with a three-part poem named "The Grant Boys," a comic pair whose "wise-guy" retorts border wisdom. For instance, one replies to a maintenance man "We got/ power, all we need/ is electricity." Another character, John Fall, has his own brand of humor worth noting, and then there is the wit of "The Old Man Said" poems, eight in all, which note in the last of them that "Statutory laws/ are made by those/ who do not have/ to break them/ and who do not know much/ about the laws/ of the earth, which/ are the ones/ I try to abide by." An occasional poem celebrates the natural world, prefigured in the dedication of the volume to the smoke of "Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage."

The Cherokee name for "smoke," Lance Henson tells us, is "Gogisgi." Henson, a Cheyenne poet, pays tribute to Carroll Arnett in "for a fallen uncle." *another song for america* presents twenty-six of Henson's poems, his voice reverberating clearly in an immense space. Within a single poem, like a candle lit in a dark window, a life sings. Outside, the great silence of the prairie moves within to shape the language. It's as if an enormous moment has been registered, giving significance and resonance to the words. I marvel in the variety of the poems which record this power, the manifold nature of these momentous occasions. Here, in entirety, is "driving near home":

near the north canadian river
a great horned owl has learned to hunt
by headlights

bright stars make their way through the dark
their plumes of light reflect on the ice

near the house
a cedar limb broken by the weight

of snow glistens
waiting in its cold name.

The deft use of space replaces the total lack of punctuation in these songs, some of which are translations from the Cheyenne. Travel in the U.S. becomes an organizing device in the volume, which closes with the title poem on a note of justifiable anger over the Kent State shootings: "god damn you america/ what have you done to your children/ the wind speaks their names/ any way you breathe it."

Makers is an anthology of five native artists/poets, which includes photographs, paintings and graphic visuals that lend specificity and direction to the poems. A Yuchi (Creek) and Comanche, Joe Dale Tate Nevaquaya's poems are the single exception to the word/visual presentations of the other four artists. His poems appear alone, first in his native language, then in English. Untitled, they are simple in that they name the elements, but powerful: "she kills/ raccoon/ belches/ black/ thunder."

In her own words, Shan Goshorn's "'Moontime: The Cycle of Life' honors many cycles—the four phases of the moon, the four stages of life, the four directions, the four seasons, and the four elements." She admits her information is a combination from "many" tribal sources and has appropriately photographed women of Southwestern and Plains tribes to accompany the two to four sentence statements she makes about each of the four phases.

Hachivi (Edgar Heap of Birds) describes his tribe as "Tsistsistas specific," and honors us with a detailed account in four songs presented in prose paragraphs beneath lettered graphic visuals. The account is of a tribal ritual of renewal around a circle of fire within a tipi. This is distinct from a sweat-lodge ritual. The ritual in part symbolizes the transfer of wisdom when the flame is used to light fires for days.

Patricia Mousetrail Russell (Cheyenne) explains the significance of the geometric symbols of her beadwork designs, which are photographed. The descriptions are specific and strong, ending with the haunting one of why the American flag is included: "The white soldiers ran over their flag when they killed Black Kettle and our other people, and they dragged it on the ground. Our people were the ones who held up the flag and respected it, so now it belongs to us."

T'soyanaha/ Richard Ray (Whitman) is of the Yuchi tribe (Creek nation). He is also part Pawnee. He follows a self-portrait with a charming snapshot of children seated around a buffalo skull. "Sun's children," reads the caption, "they are so generous." This is followed by three photographs of adults who are forlornly homeless and captions like "My brother is a wino." The sequence implies what the unhappy

future of the children might be, but clearly the artists of this volume, and the entire Point Riders series, suggest stronger possibilities for children in becoming Makers who shape and transmit past learning through art.

These poets make clear the importance of single sensibilities recording memorable observations and reactions to an age's daily follies, as well as its criminal trespasses and neglects. Thankfully they witness what we cannot afford to brush aside or ignore, and their voices deserve heeding in addition to recognition.

Roger Weaver

* * * *

Another view of *Deer Hunting and Other Poems*:

Coincidentally teaching Native American literature for many years at the Universities of New Mexico and Oklahoma, Geary Hobson has gathered together a chapbook's worth of poems in *Deer Hunting*, published by Point Riders Press's "renegade" series in conjunction with Strawberry Press of Brooklyn, New York, the press made famous in small and independent publishing by the Mohawk poet Maurice Kenny. Hobson, of Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Quapaw ancestry, is best known for editing *The Remembered Earth* (1979), a highly respected anthology of Native American contemporary writing. His own poems, some included in the anthology and in scattered other venues, have, for the sake of a personal collection, been obscured while he has given his time and energies to making pathways for other individuals.

The poems in this new book have a terse expressive quality, even when they are lengthy. Hobson seems concerned with each word contributing to his developing image-idea in what seems like laconic fashion. His brevity is neither bookish nor imbued with a haiku pseudo-sensibility. The poems read like vocalized ruminations of someone who shrewdly keeps a personal counsel. "Dead Rose Petals" reminds us through analogy of the value of life's true currency, as the sun-withered petals we step on,

... lie along the sidewalk
like cankered
misshapen pennies
They are seasonal payments
cashed in by the wind
...

we are casual spenders
who seldom learn a thing
of the joys of investment
by word and rain.

Value and meaning are explicit and literal in this poem strengthened by the appreciation of momentary grace. Two poems about New Mexico also possess fine lines, "Rain Song," dedicated to Laguna writer Leslie Silko and to Bernice Paquin, and "For My Brother and Sister Southwestern Indian Poets." These relate something of the subtle level of otherwise distinct cultural experiences of particular Native friends, for "Rain Song" opens:

In the desert
rain
comes like a welcome guest
bringing its own stock of booze

and more.

The second poem is, for the speaker, about Oklahoma and the historical homeland Southeast: "I come from a wet land/ . . . / . . . / and I/ never learned to sing for rain." The speaker of these poems also tolerates the white woman who, in "A Discussion of Indian Affairs," thought cartoonist Al Capp invented the Chickasaws and "a word like "Kickapoo," you know?" The poet ends the discussion musing "if we'd ever have/ anything to say to one another"; for if the names of Native nations seem made up, ignorant outsiders could never begin to understand the diversity of Native culture.

The eagle in "Central Highlands, Viet Nam 1968" holds fast the memory of the destruction of people and earth, then Dull Knife and his followers, and the indigenous Meo who will experience destruction by napalm. "Lonnie Kramer" describes a sixties-era ultra revolutionary who like so many has traded in Marx and Che to be reborn as "chief regional salesman/ of Dutton (or Bratton?) Industries," a man who changed with the wind's direction while the speaker, whose long hair remains a constant, still craves "beer bourbon shots/ and pool games" that continue to define his proletarian sensibility.

I still hang out in scuzzy bars
full of Indians street people
and other workers of the world.

The title poem is the book's longest, offering two view points of attending the killed deer. In part one the victorious hunters may be acting normally as they drink beers, shoot the breeze, and brag about the deer's gifting itself to them, all amidst the din of whining dogs. This is the "good old boy" way. Part two is a lesson, grandfather to

grandson for his first deer kill. The elder teaches him the ceremony of the kill and how it invokes reverence for the deer. One eats the liver to become part of it; one tosses a strip of flank to the bushes, "giving back part of the deer's/ swiftness to the place from which it came." The reverence is to life and all our relations. A spiritual harmony characterizes this section of the poem, a harmony that will balance the careless unthinking victors of another kill. "Deer Hunting" is aptly Geary Hobson's strongest poem in this book, culminating the implicit reconciliation of seeming dichotomies of perception and feeling that many of these poems address.

Ron Welburn

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The Business of Fancydancing: Stories and Poems. Sherman Alexie. New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1992. 100 pp., paper \$10.00, ISBN 0-914610-00-7; cloth \$18.00, ISBN 0-914610-24-4.

In his first published volume of poems and stories, Sherman Alexie displays a mastery of language, a breadth of vision, and an astonishing range of voice and emotion. While Alexie, an enrolled Spokane/Coeur D'Alene Indian from Wellpinit, Washington, will undoubtedly be praised as an outstanding Native American writer, in fact, his first volume leads this reviewer to suspect he may be one of the finest poets writing in America today.

The poems and stories in *The Business of Fancydancing* offer a stunning portrait of life in Indian country, its humor and sorrow, its despair and its resilient hope, as well as the motion which is always attendant. Alexie skillfully merges the local images of his northeast Washington setting with a wider view:

Orofino, Lapwai, Lewiston, Rosalia, Spangle, all the small towns miles apart, all the Indians in their bars drinking their culture or boarded up in their houses so much in love with cable television. . . . Every highway in the world crosses some reservation, cuts it in half. (13)

If the poems and stories strain toward a more universal picture of Indian country, Alexie is careful to root his pieces firmly in a specific locale, the area around Wellpinit, on the Spokane Indian reservation in eastern Washington. Wellpinit, "another reservation town of torn shacks and abandoned cars" (21), unrolls before the reader with its gray HUD houses, pawn shops, powwow grounds and everpresent

bars. Yet if alcohol permeates the text, it is not condoned or denied; rather Alexie simply attests to its presence. Wellpinit is a place where "No one never had no job/ but we could always eat commodity cheese and beef" (35), or where a girl hitchhikes to "by accident" and then spends "all her quarters using the pay phone that doesn't work, hasn't worked since 1876" (52).

Yet what makes Alexie's topography come alive is the authenticity of the voices of his characters which shape the sights, sounds, and dreams of life in a reservation town. A domestic scene unfolds with

INSOMNIA Father coming home from a job interview, limping only a little but more than enough to keep hearing no, no, no. Me, eating potatoes again in the kitchen, my mother's face growing darker and darker by halves. . . . Me, waking her up in the middle of the night, telling her my stomach is empty. Her throwing me outside in my underwear and locking the door. (63)

On the streets we glimpse the everpresent basketball players, the men sitting in bars, the dancers on the powwow circuit. And we meet Gordie the Glazer "making donuts, saving money for professional wrestling school"(59); Buffalo Bill, the reservation dog who listens to stories when no one else will (42); and Simon, the tribal philosopher, weaving down the street in his Chevy pickup even when he's sober because "This way the cops will never know when I'm driving drunk as a skunk" (40). And, of course, there's Seymour, a native hero, who attends the powwow where alcohol is not allowed

. . . so he walks in first with an empty bottle
right past the guards
and then I take a big drink from a fifth in our car
outside the gate
but I don't swallow and I walk past the guards smiling a
tight-lipped,
smile holding the whiskey in
and then I spit it into Seymour's bottle and Lester follows
me doing the same thing
and after quite a few trips we have a complete fifth and I
guess you could say
we won again, but it was only Indians versus Indians and no
one is developing a movie script
for that and it's too bad because Seymour who looks exactly
like Charles Bronson
when he was younger and multi-ethnic instead of a little
man with a big gun . . . (67)

Here we see the wry humor amidst the pathos, and the ingenuity that

marks Alexie's vision of Indian life.

Alexie's portraits are not solely of Indians. We listen to the foreman at Western Nuclear who advertises for Indians to carry buckets of tainted water by telling them they "will be able to find their way/ when you stagger home from the bar . . . 'cuz you'll be glowing in the dark" (50). There's also Trooper Reardon who pulls over a van of basketball players and walks up to the "driver's side cool and sure, like he was ordering a hamburger and fries or making a treaty" (13).

Perhaps the most complex and haunting presence in the text is the figure of Crazy Horse, not so much a character as an energy that surfaces in characters. Crazy Horse comes back from Vietnam and "sells his medals when he goes broke" (65), or in another poem "Crazy Horse gets a job at 7-11" (71). And there is the story of a woman who finds him "in her mirrors, in the bar near her house, fancydancing in the eyes, ears, mouths of Indian boys." Crazy Horse is less a character than a demonstration of will and survival, the energy to keep going.

Alexie's poems and stories demonstrate an unfaltering control of language, yet a control that seems more inherent than imposed. For here is a poet willing to take risks in timing and tone which never fail him. In a poem on racism or poverty, for example, the lines rattle off the page like gunfire, while Alexie gets almost lyrical in his love poems or those written about his family. In these few lines from "Penance," where a father and son shoot baskets, note the meticulous attention to line breaks:

I remember
the sin of imperfect
spin, the ball falling in-
to that moment between
a father and forgive-
ness, between the hands reach-
ing up and everything
they can possibly hold. (28)

This writer's confidence in language is apparent throughout the volume. Alexie is a master of the one-liner: "Have you ever decided to love someone because they loved you first?" (18) or "There is nothing as white as the white girl an Indian boy loves" (18).

If contemporary Native American writers have continued to voice connections between their work and the oral tradition, nowhere are these connections more effectively, more evocatively drawn than in the short story "Special Delivery." This story takes its place next to N. Scott Momaday's tale of "Arrow Boy" for its powerful reminder about the power of the spoken word. But Alexie also adds his brand of humor

as evidenced in the story's opening lines:

Thomas Builds-the-Fire told his story to every other Skin on the Spokane Indian Reservation before he was twelve years old. By the time he was twenty, Thomas had told his story so many times all the other Indians hid when they saw him coming, transformed themselves into picnic benches, small mongrel dogs, a 1965 Malibu with no windshield . . . [he] writes letters to congressmen, game show hosts, invited the president of the United States to his high school graduation. Every word Thomas used in his letters was part of his story; every word was exact and essential. (39)

As the story unfolds, circumstances begin to change Thomas's story, and things go dramatically awry. In a scene worthy of being filmed, a bizarre chain of events leads to a dangerous situation captured on the news:

"We interrupt regularly scheduled programming to bring you this special live report:

"In Wellpinit, WA, the Spokane Tribal Police have surrounded the United States Post Office where Thomas Builds-the-Fire, age 35, an enrolled Spokane Indian, has allegedly held Eva Ford, age 36, with the idea of a gun.

"I have with me Tribal Police Chief David WalksAlong. Chief WalksAlong, how would you assess the situation?"

"Well, we're worried about what Thomas might think of next. He's always had a very good imagination. . . ." (46)

The poems and stories in this collection resonate with passion and humor. Here are the stories of dreams, and even if some are "Crazy Horse dreams, the kind that don't come true" (72), others hold a key to that delicate dance, a balancing act of sorts embodied in the business of fancydancing. In the title poem we see Vernon Wildshoe, the champion fancydancer, who "could make a promise/ with every step he took . . . A promise . . . we can hold . . . a dream we reach. It's business, a fancydance to fill where it's empty" (69). In the spins and turns the poems and stories make, in their poses, positions, intricate movement, Alexie has fulfilled his promise to fill us all.

In the last two years we've celebrated the appearance of several long-awaited volumes from noted American Indian authors including Leslie Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and the collaboration of Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris. *The Business of Fancydancing* is a sparkling, if unanticipated, gem which takes its place among the best of them. I look forward to Alexie's next volume.

Andrea Lerner

Night Perimeter: New and Selected Poems. Gogisgi/ Carroll Arnett. New York: The Greenfield Review Press, 1990. \$9.95 paper, ISBN 0-912678-81-A.

Often a reader may feel an assured arrogance in the poetry of Carroll Arnett, Cherokee poet originally from Oklahoma, living and teaching now in Michigan; an arrogance of few words, but pointed, sharp as any war lance.

The Dare

I always
ask too

much; it's
the very

least I
can do.

The majority of Arnett's poems in this new collection are brief as the one above, and many could be classified as minimalist poetry. A mere handful of poems run across the second page, or further. These short poems, more than the two or three long poems, suggest the Roman satirist Juvenal (rather than brief Japanese haiku or tankas) or, especially, traditional Native American songs and poems, say, the Cherokee or even Inuit or Lakota. For example, from the Teton Sioux (Lakota):

I Have Conquered Them

Well, a war party
which was supposed to come
now is here.
I have obliterated every trace of them.

(Francis Densmore translation, from A. Velie, *American Indian Literature*, U Oklahoma P, 1991)

Arnett's forte is not narrative. He does not tell stories . . . certainly not in the very early collections included in *Night Perimeter*. He is witty; often an elegant wit surfaces, polished, occasionally cynical, and nearly always satirical. He is not devoid of humor. Chuckles and hardy laughter do rise while reading many of these verses.

Epitaph

He was a careful
man, mostly.

Or, the very playful:

Take Your Time

Pray tell us which
deserveth more pity:

he whose bladder
bursteth of beer
whilst in her bath
his wife doth linger,

or the cocksman who
hath caught the clap
in the cuticle of
his middle finger.

Night Perimeter has been taken from 10 previous published collections and a few un-collected. The first half dozen or so early books, such as *Then* (1965), *Not Only That* (1967), and *Like a Wall* (1969), suggest perhaps the novels of Henry Greene or plays of the theatre of the absurd, Beckett in particular. These poems are rich with wit and humor. The later collections, at least the poems published here, do show and prove a change, a departure, a development into Carroll Arnett's Cherokee culture: books such as *Tsalgi* (1976), *South Line* (1979), *Rounds* (1982), and *Engine* (1988). The poet stands tall and begins to grapple with the history and manners of his people, and particularly the Cherokee Nation. He begins to lose sight of the so-called Jonathan Williams repartee and seems to lean a little closer to the object/image of William Carlos Williams. It would seem he trades one Williams for another. He never reduces his images, the few there are, to the stereotype "drums and feathers" cliché. Arnett's "indian," as does he, lives more outside the dominant/academic culture, yet Arnett does not abandon his rapier views of social criticism. His outright angry sarcasm remains, and it is justified:

Homage to Andrew Jackson

May you, after 140
years, still fry
in your own
coonskin
hell, you
mother
fucker.

It will be remembered that President Andrew Jackson was responsible for the Five Civilized Tribes' tragic trek, that infamous "Trail of Tears" from the ancestral homelands into Indian Territory, Oklahoma, and in the "human train" were Gogisgi's own Cherokee ancestors. It is here in these narrative poems that passion and open anger surface. The

poet can no longer hide behind his cynical wit, his anger felt life-long; now it must manifest itself, and it spills across the page not only in historical story-form but in images not discovered in earlier works, particularly in the long poems such as "Removal," "You," and "The Story of My Life" or in this short lyric:

Sweat

In the closed dark
of the lodge I hear
the rocks sing
and sing again, as
water searing,
cleansing.

I pray in
gratefulness.
This is the only place
there is.

For the time being, Arnett seems to have given up the quip/limerick, and at last has turned to the lyric to express the emotions and passion than can be expressed only in the lyric.

A divided world, a divided nation, a divided man, a divided poet comes to terms, an agreement in these last four collections. He has come home. He has temporarily, at least, forgotten the lectern at Central Michigan University, he has returned to the Nation both poetically and spiritually. He has come "home" to the Sweatlodge, to heal, and to steam off what taint the dominant culture has sprayed upon his being. He has come home to the rich song of the rocks, songs of his people. Readers of his poems can be thankful, thankful because the barbs of the earlier poems begin to tire after a while, sounding almost alike: the wit is sharp and clever, almost cute. You begin to wonder just how seriously to take these whiplashes, these Wildeian epigrammatic poses.

Gogisgi Carroll Arnett is a wisely intelligent, very talented poet who knows and wields language with deftness, aimed to the bull's eye in accurate measure, knows exactly where rests the heart of the game, and wastes few word/arrows to bring his game down: "I write in/ exactly/ this way" (from "Bio-Poetic Statement: Instruction to Warriors on Security"). It is good he has packed away those early influences: Ford Madox Ford, Camus and Orwell, for the "Littlecoons," John Fall, Billy Walkabout and Rueben Tall Horse . . . these last mentioned references will help bring this poet home to Tahlequah and off the podium, the arrogance of the academic posture at the lectern.

Maurice Kenny

Mean Spirit. Linda Hogan. New York: Ivy Books, 1992. ISBN 0-8041-0863-3.

After her considerable achievements as a poet, Linda Hogan, a mixed-blood Chickasaw writer, has written an ambitious and successful novel. Hogan has published short stories and essays before, but *Mean Spirit* is her first major prose work. Inspired by the "breakthrough" success of Louise Erdrich's fiction, especially *Love Medicine* which had both popular and critical acclaim, Hogan has expressed interest in moving on from her "really good fortune with small presses." *Mean Spirit* is, thus, her first attempt at "commercial writing" for a bigger publishing house.

Hogan takes an original approach to the writing of a novel about an important period in Southwestern American Indian history. In interviews, she has acknowledged that "there must be historical fact, although it seldom exists in history books." Hogan is not constrained by the historical fact, however, but transforms it into what she calls the "inner facts" of her vision. Although she is not Osage or even Oklahoma-born, she acknowledges that the state, her father's ancestral home, is the most important landscape to her and that her father's tales "about oil, land loss, and grief" brought her close to the events in *Mean Spirit*. Her own family's heritage, their land allotment, is buried beneath an airstrip. Hence, Hogan has a strong affinity with the story she tells.

The setting of *Mean Spirit* is "the great frenzy" of the 1920s when the Osage people, only about 2000 strong, became suddenly enormously wealthy due to the discovery of major oil reserves on their land. Unfortunately, they were not prepared for the brutal shock of this social and economic change and the attendant pressures of assimilation and exploitation. The Dawes Act, guardianships, trust funds, and payment days were all legal and quasi-legal complications in the lives of the Osage. Added to this were the overtly illegal events of what journalists at the time called "the Osage reign of terror." A white cowboy and trick roper of little initial promise, William K. Hale, became known as "King of the Osage Hills." Hale's name was associated with terrorizing and tricking the Osages in order to control their lands and inheritance; he was, in fact, implicated in more than a dozen murders—by shooting, poisoning, or dynamiting—in order to control headright incomes.

Mean Spirit, set in 1922 and 1923, focusses the events of "the great frenzy" and Hale's "reign of terror" through the story of the Grayclouds, Belle and Moses. Belle, the matriarch of the family, is a strongly drawn character, guardian of nature in her role of keeper of

the bees and protector of bats, and the source of domestic order and harmony. Moses is obviously deeply in love with her and draws on her strength. His cousin, Grace Blanket, one of the wealthiest members of the tribe, is murdered in a plan orchestrated by the novel's main villain, John Hale. Hale is also implicated in the blowing up of the home of Grace's sister, Sara, her heir, with a nitroglycerin charge, an explosion in which Sara is killed. The Grayclouds then become responsible for Nola, Grace's daughter, who witnessed her mother's murder and who is now the last obstacle between Hale and the Blanket fortune.

Hogan also develops the character of Stace Red Hawk, a Lakota Sioux agent who takes on the disguise of a traditional healer when he arrives in the town of Watona to carry out his investigation. Stace had moved from his home to the "swampland" of Washington because he believed he could do more for his people from there. However, he experiences growth and renewal through his contact with Belle and with Michael Horse, a water diviner who reintroduces him to the values of traditional Indian healing and vision.

Hogan has praised N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* for its power of "language and creative visualization," qualities evident in the artistry of her own prose. The following passage from her novel captures the quiet and majestic calm of an Indian at traditional prayer:

"I have prepared a pipe for you," Stace said to the deep winter air. He held the pipe up towards the north. He could see his own breath.

He was praying. He was asking for help. He was asking for the people, the Indian people. He was asking for the eagle people as well, those who had been taken out of the sky. Their absence had left the people downhearted.

The shortness and simplicity of the sentences and the use of anaphora help to project the depth and solemnity of the experience.

The spare phrasing and power of visualization so characteristic of Hogan's poetry is evident in the following passage where Lettie, Belle's and Moses' daughter, visits the site of Sara's dynamited house:

In the cornfield, too, parts of Sara's and Benoit's lives were strewn about. An unbroken jar of hair pomade sat beside the road. Lettie picked it up and twisted open the rusting lid. It smelled like Benoit and she remembered him leaning against the window of the car on the night of the explosion, and how his head had left a trace of the sweet-smelling oil on the glass. She laid her shovel down, sat in the field, and cried. The field smelled like spring, yet nothing grew there except devil's claws and other choking weeds, and at that

time of night, the weeds looked black around her. Still, it contained the dead, dry stalks from another year.

This passage conveys visual, olfactory, and tactile images. It also conveys the time of year in a precise way while clearly projecting Lettie's emotional state. Hogan can communicate such complex and subtle feelings and insights in economical and memorable prose that has the evocativeness and layering of her poetry.

One of the richest elements of *Mean Spirit* is the dramatic presentation of Native American ritual and myth. There are many rituals which appear throughout the novel, including white and Indian weddings and funerals, an auction and a peyote ceremony, and conditioning of the land for planting with "prayer and song" in contrast with chemical fertilizing. Fire and water are both central to the rituals guarded and preserved by Michael Horse. Perhaps the most noteworthy example, however, is the discovery and preservation of the sacred bats in their cave, symbolic of the healing and survival of the Osage people driven out of their Eden. The richest example of myth is the story of Ho-Tah-Moie or John Stink, a historical figure who was a hermit untouched by the changes brought about by white man's exploitation. Stink dies and is buried, but he refuses to remain dead and moves with impunity among the living. He represents in the novel the cyclical return and the endurance of the Native American spirit.

In Hogan's novel, the anger at the tragic dispossession and destruction of a vibrant, unified culture is eloquently developed and expressed. The novel presents graphic scenes rich with a Marquezian "magic realism," like the cricket invasion of the Graycloud home and Nola's freeing of the parrot, a gift from her husband Will, which takes on "brilliant, monstrous life" at the end of their tragic marriage. Hogan's work is at times comic, and the vision remains ultimately both affirmative and life-affirming. The elements of ethnic history and myth are part of the novel's cyclical movement from unity to alienation to healing. Above all, the integration of ritual with theme and the uncovering of the "inner facts" of Native American history add richness and depth to *Mean Spirit*.

R. A. Bonham

* * * *

Landfill Meditations: Crossblood Stories. Gerald Vizenor. Hanover: Wesleyan U P, 1991. ISBN 0-8195-6253-X.

Almost Browne, the lead crossblood in Gerald Vizenor's recent collection of short stories, *Landfill Meditations*, "was born in the back seat of a reservation car, almost white, almost on the reservation, and almost a real person" (6). For Browne, his nickname—"almost"—is an identity opportunity: it provides a pluralistic and interpretative space in which self-invention can take place; however, as an interpretative and ambiguous space, the site of identity can become simply desire or performance. We are a country of hyphenated identities, and Vizenor's "almost" can be read into the space of the hyphen as a metaphor for the American: not either/or but an indeterminate quantum of both.

In these short stories we hear a polyphony of Indian identities in familiar voices from Vizenor's earlier works: there's Colonel Clement Beaulieu, Griever de Hocus, Rattling Hail, the Pink Stallion, Token White, the Brownes and, my favorite, Belladonna Winter Catcher, a feminist essentialist, who urges us to "walk out of the known world backward" (114). These crossblood characters, covetous of a stable pigment and identity, reinvent themselves within "terminal" creeds and beliefs (107). Some are tricksters, all are skilled at duplicity and self-deception: saying one thing, meaning another; performing one identity, belonging to another, they are accessorized Indians with the correct mythology, and they are perfect sites for satire.

In the last few years the word "invention" has become a rhetorical strategy in ethnic, cultural, and gender studies. Invention is the power language behind history and self: it frees us from the essentialism of body and past, and it liberates us into the creative space of construction. From the beginning, long before invention became the tool of choice in identity discourse, Vizenor's writing addressed identity as a postmodern chance and a site of intervention for the post-colonial critic.

Invention, also, has the potential for colonizing and displacing differences into a theoretical theater of artifice and performance, and Vizenor warns against invention when it (re)produces identity which is solely self-reflexive and divorced from the experiential. His crossbloods represent the devastation of the Native American: they are "the lost and the lonesome," hollow men and women so deprived of identity that they mistake the sign of the Indian as an entrance to history and culture (67). In fact, it is collusion with white fantasies of the Indian; it is construction around an uncontested image which can lead only to self-annihilation.

Homer Yellow Snow, a de-skinned "pretend Indian" challenges his tribal audience: "If you knew who you were, why did you find it so

easy to believe in me?" (65-66). And this is the point of Vizenor's satire: self-deception is a necessary condition for deception. The enemy to Native American identity is within as well as without: the colonial imagination appropriated the Native American as innocent savage, reduced indigenous peoples to artifacts and displaced them as the indigenous living culture, but Native Americans or crossblood Natives who pursue their commodity as Indian are nurturing opportunistic images which feed on their host.

The title story, "Landfill Meditations," is a brilliant "seminar" on the detritus of "metatribal" identities (98). Like the characters that circulate around the dust heap in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, Vizenor's crossbloods and Indian pretenders sift through the rags and bones of Indianness, trying on this mythology, assuming this pose, returning to the rhetoric of the land and the tribal, organizing their "scrap collections" as identities and stories: "On the old reservations the tribes were the refuse. We were the waste, solid and swill on the run, telling stories from a discarded culture to amuse the colonial refusers" (100-01). The tragedy is that the refuse from Native American history and culture is recycled, exchanged for other goods, without interrogation into origin or intention.

Vizenor, I think, does almost the impossible: he keeps his satire in a crossblood space, privileging neither white nor brown discourse; his stories narrate the invention and disintegration of identity without prioritizing the postmodern or the post-colonial; he deconstructs the Indian sign in its own theater of performance, enjoying the masquerade while plucking masks; he tells the Native American and crossblood stories in his own anti-stories; and he inauthenticates the image without disowning the subject.

And, like Mark Twain and Nathaniel West, he writes of self-hate and self-deception with humanity and a worried heart. In the tradition of these great American satirists, he refuses to be bound by dream or illusion, he refuses to speak from sentiment or desire, and Native American culture and literature is empowered by his wise satiric voice.

Betty Louise Friedman

* * * *

Fantasies of the Master Race. Ward Churchill. Ed. M. Annette Jaimes. Common Courage Press (Box 702, Monroe, ME 04951), 1992. 288 pp., \$14.95 paper, ISBN 0-96288386-7.

Ward Churchill's critical scythe takes some very wide and close cuts in this volume of essays on what professor Churchill would, no doubt, consider the "weeds" of a colonizer's popular culture encroaching on the ripening fields of American Indian Studies. More than attempting simply to separate grain from chaff, Churchill is merciless, certainly zealous, in his attempts to dispel and discard the conscious and subconscious Euroamerican assumptions and arguments in any number of recent books and films.

In bringing together nearly twenty of Churchill's personal/critical essays on literature and film, editor M. Annette Jaimes, through patterning and positioning, reinforces Churchill's persona as a kind of radical cut-through-the debris "scissorhands." Not so much interested in reshaping and beautifying his subjects, Churchill virtually shreds them. And, as adept as he is in his cuts, apolitical or rightist readers will no doubt lament that after seeing the author's scissor-wizardry what is really wanted is some attempt at reassembly, just a gesture of reclamation. As justified as Churchill is in his incipient criticisms, and as humorous as he is in his satirical thrusts and stylistic flourishes, the "general reader" will probably conclude that Churchill ultimately poisons his blade with too many indictments—with too much sustained anger and indignation. A few such essays, such readers will claim, argued as antitheses to the assumed mindless Euroamerican masses would be less irksome. And these kinds of readers would have a point—but, ultimately, an unconvincing one. Taken together, one after another, these authorial retaliations, admittedly, might make even sympathetic readers wish for a greater degree of mercy from what will seem a writer whose own just cause is, ironically, not spared from certain wayward slices.

And yet, and yet . . . throughout the entire volume, throughout the radical vocabulary and the conviction of anger, surfaces the feeling that this kind of thing very much needs to be said and said in force. High time. These kinds of counter attacks need considering, need airing. Popular culture, popular history has and does indeed perpetuate stereotypes of American Indians which go much beyond harmless prettiness into cultural deicide and genocide. Books and movies, words, images, and ideas are serious business. History is deep and dangerous, thick and many sided, and it is past time to see things from what has heretofore been the underside, the inaudible.

From such a perspective even the well-intended, no, most especially

the well-intended purveyor of Indian subjects is also held suspect. Now, with New Age, *au courant* "seminars" in native manliness, sweating and drum beating; with best sellers about "wildness" and Anglicized Indian detectives; with Academy Awards for super-stars and films about want-to-be Indians; with clichéd theories about "Mother Earth" and teary-eyed ecology—with these things seeding, Churchill's seething is understandable. What he cries out for us to "SEE" is that Indianness, things Indian, should be beyond even heart-in-the-right-place commercialism. Churchill's "studies on the left," his American Indian Movement sympathies, all so eloquently and extremely stated result in a kind of ironic, strident stabilization and equilibrium.

Want to see why Tony Hillerman's novels might not be all that innocently entertaining? Need to know more about the scam behind Carlos Castaneda and the "teachings" of the old Yaqui man, Don Juan? Think Dee Brown's work, especially in Creek *Mary's Blood*, is legitimate scholarship? Not sure that Ruth Beebe Hill's *Hanta Yo* really did "clear the way"? Not quite convinced that Kevin Costner's bare buns and nighttime, war-hooping, fireside prancing personify the Red Man's way? Got some doubts of your own about how new, New Indian stereotypes perpetuate old, Old Indian ones?

Read *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians*. Get beyond what some would see as *ad hominem* smears. Forget, for a moment, about the fastidious search for sweeping generalizations and logical fallacies. Cool logic? Clear-headed argumentation? With a noose around your neck?

Kick back and groove in the hybrid blending of personal and critical essay which Churchill does so nicely. Above all, ADOPT this book for your classes. Students, most of all, need to read and weigh these scathing indictments of pop culture as they attempt either to sharpen, crank up or salvage their own best kinds of present-day weed-eaters.

Bob Gish

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux) is one of the country's most visible spokespeople for Native American culture, an award winning writer and a Professor of English. Her most recent novel is *Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook* (Boston: Beacon Press). Also forthcoming is *Voice of the Turtle: An Anthology of Twentieth Century American Indian Fiction*.

Charles Ballard teaches Native American literature at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. He is a member of the Quapaw and Cherokee tribes of Oklahoma and has published poetry and articles about Indian Literature.

Kimberly M. Blaeser, an Ojibway from White Earth Reservation, is an Assistant Professor in the English and Comparative Literature Department at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her publications include essays, poetry, journalism, and scholarly articles. Her book, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*, will be published by University of Oklahoma Press.

R. A. Bonham is a member of the English Department at Malaspina College in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. Presently on a year's leave, he is researching and writing about minority literatures in the U.S. and researching and travelling to archaeological sites for a text in progress on linguistics.

Charles Brashear: "I have two strands of Cherokee in my family. I used to be reticent about it until a Cherokee friend said, 'Hey, Charlie, everybody's got to have a grandmother.' An ounce of gold can be drawn into a wire fifty miles long. My Indian connection is like that: very thin, but real and shining."

R.M. Caudell (African and Tsalagi): "Raised in Maryland along the Chesapeake Bay,/ Choptank River and Atlantic Ocean, it took/ me a while to understand the ancestors'/ voices and to find mine./ Ga li? e li ga./ I am thankful."

Norla Chee (Navajo) is currently pursuing a Master's degree in English from Northern Arizona University. She recently won the Tucson Poetry Contest (1992). When not in school she lives on the Navajo Reservation.

Woesha Cloud North: "I was raised by Native American parents of the Winnebago and Ojibwa tribes to observe cultural values of generosity, hospitality, friendship and kindness towards others who were worthy of love and respect. I am now retired after teaching for twenty-seven years, and I appreciate my roles as mother and grandmother."

Karen Coody Cooper (Cherokee) sends her poems to *SAIL* from Enid, Oklahoma.

Charlotte DeClue (Osage) lives in Norman, Oklahoma. Her chapbook *Without Warning* is available from Strawberry Press.

RoseMary Diaz (Tewa): "My poems are a record of my existence. My work is fed by a connection to an ancient world. The Old Ones are always nearby to help with the poems, and to keep the connection strong. It was they who decided I would write."

Rex Jim/Mazii Dineltsoi (Navajo) sends his poem to *SAIL* from Rock Point, Arizona.

Della Frank (Navajo) is a counselor at Teec Nos Pos boarding school. "I would like to reach the hearts of American women who are single but have children to raise (on their own!), particularly American Indian women who struggle for survival and (an) identiti(es) of their own."

Betty Louise Friedman (Cherokee) is presently at work on representations of Native American identity in the texts of Gerald Vizenor. She will be teaching the first Native American literature class at Harvard University in Spring 1993.

Robert Gish is University Distinguished Scholar and Professor of English at the University of Northern Iowa. He has also been director of the Ethnic Studies program at California State Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo. His forthcoming book from Iowa State University Press is *Songs of My Hunter Heart: A Western Kinship*.

Diane Glancy (Cherokee) teaches Native American Literature and Creative Writing at Macalester College. Her many awards include the Native American Prose Award (University of Nebraska Press) for *Claiming Breath*. Her fourth collection of poetry, *Lone Dog's Winter Count*, will be published by West End Press. She is poet laureate of the Five Civilized Tribes.

Dorys Crow Grover (Iroquois), native of Oregon, is professor of English at East Texas State University. She received the Llano Estacado Southwest Heritage award for "Paso Por Hombre," and the Fort Concho Centennial Award for "The Ranch on the Limpia." She is author of two books and numerous journal articles and stories.

McArthur Gunter/Tashunka Raven is a native of Virginia. His work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Akwesasne Notes* and *Puerto Del Sol*. He has a B.A. in sociology and has worked as an offset pressman, construction laborer, CETA school teacher, cook, bindery technician, and computer scales technician. He lives in Maryland.

Roy N. Henry (Inupiaq) was born to Ernest and Anna Henry near Teller, Alaska. His many thanks are directed to his parents, and to his instructor Kathy Callaway. It was Kathy who tapped his writing creativity and in him left a spirit of belonging with creative writers.

Maurice Kenny (Mohawk) is poet-in-residence at North Country Community College. His best-known collection is *Blackrobe: Isaac Jogues*; he received the American Book Award for *The Mama Poems*. His work-in-progress, *Tekonwatonti: Poems of War*, is a collection of persona poems on the life of Molly Brant, the Mohawk wife of Sir William Johnson.

Andrea Lerner, Ph.D. in comparative American literatures (1991, University of Arizona), is currently assistant professor of English at California State University, Chico, where she teaches Native American literature. She is editor of *Dancing on the Rim of the World: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Writing from the Northwest* (U of Arizona P, 1990).

Jacki Marunycz is a writing student at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. Originally from Michigan, she is a member of the Potawatomi Indian Nation, Inc. (PINI), of which her mother is a Council Elder. Her poetry has been included in *Reinventing Ourselves in the Enemy's Language* (University of Arizona Press).

Carol Miller, associate professor at the University of Minnesota, is co-coordinator of the Bush Foundation Faculty Development Program. She is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and has a Ph.D. in American literature. Research interests: American Indian literature by women, multicultural curriculum/pedagogy, non-traditional learners.

Carter Revard was born in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. In 1952 he was given his Osage name by his grandmother, Mrs. Josephine (Strideaxe) Jump. Point Riders Press published *Ponca War Dancers* (1980) and *Cowboys and Indians, Christmas Shopping* (1992); *An Eagle Nation* will be published in 1993 by University of Arizona Press. Revard teaches at Washington University, St. Louis.

Patricia Riley In The Woods was born in Mobile, Alabama, of Cherokee and Irish descent, and grew up mostly in Fort Worth, Texas.

She is the mother of three children, a student in the Ethnic Studies Graduate Program at University of California, Berkeley, and teaches in the Native American Studies Department.

Dan Runnels is a graduate student in Romance languages. He read his essay at the Modern Language Association meeting in San Francisco in 1991.

Nastasia K. Wahlberg sends her poems to *SAIL* from Fairbanks, Alaska.

Joanna L. Wassillie is an Inupiaq Eskimo born in Nome, Alaska, and adopted and raised by Yupik Eskimos in Pilot Station, Alaska. She has made her latest home in Fairbanks, where she attends the University of Alaska (on occasion), skis (seldom), and struggles to become a vegetarian (a losing battle).

Roger Weaver teaches U.S. ethnic minority literature and poetry at Oregon State University. His poems have appeared in numerous quarterlies, including *Nimrod*, *The North American Review* and *The Massachusetts Review*. His recently published poet's handbook is titled *Standing on Earth, Throwing These Sequins at the Stars* (Drift Creek Press, 1992).

Ron Welburn (Cherokee-Conoy) recently joined the English Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He has written about literature and about jazz music, and is a poet. *Council Decisions* (American Native Press Archives) is his latest collection and other poems have appeared in *Gatherings II*, *Greenfield Review*, and elsewhere.

Darryl Babe Wilson: "It is good to see *Annikadel* in print and in circulation. I think it will not be long before the stories of the Original People of California, and the Lesson/Legends that mould, yet, our lives, will gain recognition among academics. That is my wish. That is the goal I work towards."

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